Weird-Fictional Narratives in Art, Architecture, and the Urban Domain

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Edited by

Andrew Gipe-Lazarou
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Katerina Vasileiou is an architect and researcher. Her work explores the vast temporal and spatial scales of the landscape through design, while engaging conceptual tools from disciplines such as archaeology and geology. She holds a diploma in architecture (2016, AUTH), a master’s degree in “Research in Architecture: Architectural Design-Space-Culture” (2019, NTUA), and an international master in Architecture, Landscape and Archaeology (ALA) (2021, UNIROMA1, UNINA, NTUA, UC). She collaborated with architectural offices in Athens and worked in the Archaeological Park of Pompeii (2020-21) developing design strategies oriented to the enhancement of the green heritage in historical landscapes.

INTRODUCTION

KONSTANTINOS MORAITIS,
ANDREW GIPE-LAZAROU

Why do we create dark fictional narratives in literature and art? Why are we seduced by them? And what empowers them to transform from individual creations to reservoirs of collective expression?

One explanation is offered by the theory of 'Defense Mechanisms' proposed by Freudian psychoanalysis and investigated by Anna Freud, daughter of Sigmund and a psychoanalyst herself (Freud: 1992). According to the theory, negative traumatic references, or socially unacceptable tendencies of behavior, may be effaced or 'repressed' by individual consciousness as a means of defending the integrity of the psyche. And the same, indeed, holds true for a collective response or collective memory; we may refer to this as the individual action of psychological self-defense triggered by a collective experience and itself becoming a collective experience.

'Repression'[1] is a key concept of psychoanalysis; it is described as a mental mechanism which ensures that what is unacceptable to established social ethics and thus to the conscious mind (and would therefore arouse anxiety if recalled), is prevented from entering into consciousness. In this way, repression acts as a mental 'defense mechanism', defending individual mentality and social ethics from undesired contradictions. This radical mnemonic and behavioral segregation appear to come at a high mental 'price', especially when exerted in an extended social context. Individuals and social groups need to express, at least partly, their repressed phobias, traumas, tendencies towards immorality in an acceptable way.

Psychoanalysis further asserts that negative, traumatic, or unacceptable mental tendencies, which cannot be socially accepted at face value, may be transformed and disguised under 'transliterated' forms. The act of 'transliteration' introduces the concept of 'metaphor' not solely as a poetic

[1] 'Repression' in English; 'Verdrängung' in the initial German Freudian terminology; 'refoulement' in French (Laplance & Pontalis: 1978, p. 392-396).

activity, but as a mental condition that facilitates social approval–that enables ‘sublimation’ of an initially unacceptable condition.

Image 1: Three paintings along the top row by the Italian mannerist painter Artemisia Gentileschi (upper row, right to left): *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (c. 1620), *Judith and her Maidservant* with the decapitated head of Holofernes (c. 1615), and *Jael and Sisera* (c. 1620), depicting the Kenite woman Jael about to kill Sisera, a defeated Canaanite general. Holofernes and Sisere seem to refer to Agostino Tassi, Artemisia’s teacher and then her convicted rapist. Gentileschi’s revenge murder, which would have been regarded as a criminal act, is here acceptable as a series of paintings in reference to the biblical tradition. The bottom image depicts Caravaggio’s *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (c. 1598–1599) in an analogous mood of dark art narration. Caravaggio had not experienced a trauma analogous to Gentileschi’s; nevertheless, it is well known that he led a tumultuous life, characterized by violent, aggressive and illegal behavior, which often drove him to prison. In this depiction, however, his aggressiveness is manifest as an ethically acceptable artistic masterpiece.

Described in psychoanalysis as a mature type of defense mechanism, 'sublimation'[2] is the act of expressively neutralizing and transferring socially traumatic or unacceptable impulses to a different domain of social activity from the one in which they first appeared.

Decapitation, for example, is a gruesome and terrifying act (perhaps even an expression of traumatic influence or a tendency to bloodlust); its painting, however, is rendered acceptable by its aesthetic value, as an artistic exercise. The unacceptable 'trans-formed' into a socially acceptable action or behavior presents a mechanism for the aggressive personality to defuse (the mental pressure to decompress) and perhaps even facilitates a long-term conversion of the initial impulse. Analogous expressive approaches are common in all arts, composed in agonizing musical forms, infiltrated figuratively into mythology, legends, and fairy tales. The total content of this volume presents this impressive procedure of mental and cultural transformations, from the dark imaginations of the ancients, to the macabre of the gothic medieval, to the uncanny agonies of the romantic 'gothic' across literary descriptions and painting, and on to the weird fiction of modernity, explored in film, music, comics and graphic novels.

In precisely this way, a well-known painting of the romantic era– *Napoléon on the Battlefield of Eylau* by Antoine-Jean Gros (1808)–at the same time presents victorious Napoleon and the artist's own critical reference to the malaises of war; a reference that would not have been acceptable of artistic expression (by the dominant political authority) within Napoleonic France.

This is the 'sublimatory' function of art, of the cultural 'camouflage' of artistic expression, which might otherwise be censored or rejected by the prevailing social and political ethos. That real mutilated corpses could not be presented to the painter's society, but their 'sublime' depiction could, is evidence of the collective defense mechanism in action, channeling unacceptable realities into an admissible, even honorific outlet. Finally, it may have been the case that the painter was not fully aware of his reaction to the war calamities but felt, unconsciously, the need to express, to externalize and relieve this mental pressure on canvas. And to the extent that the artist's need to 'sublimate' his reality is shared, so too is the collective act of sublimation by those viewing and experiencing his painting.

[2] 'Sublimation' in English and French, 'Sublimierung' in the initial German Freudian terminology (Laplance & Pontalis: 1978, p. 465-467).

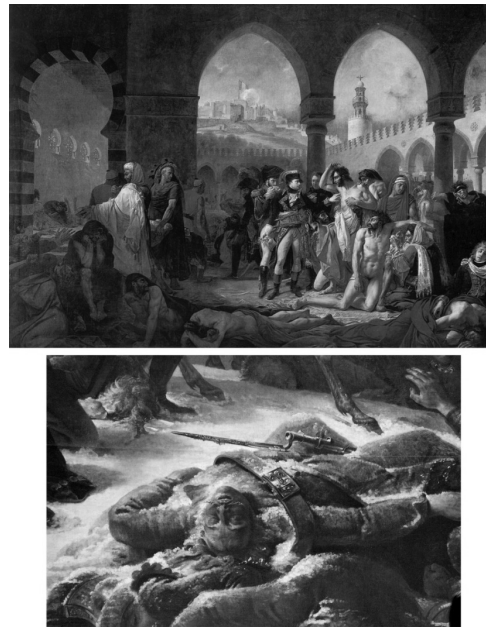

Image 2: *Bonaparte Visits the Plague Stricken in Jaffa* (upper image) is a painting commissioned by Napoléon Bonaparte and painted by Antoine-Jean Grosin 1804. It portrays Napoléon visiting his ill soldiers at the Armenian Saint Nicholas Monastery of Jaffa, on March 11th, 1799. The commission was an attempt to embroider Bonaparte's mythology and quell reports that Napoleon had ordered fifty plague victims in Jaffa be given fatal doses of opium during his retreat from his Syrian expedition. It also served as propaganda to counter reports of French atrocities during their capture of Jaffa. It could thus be regarded as 'sublimatory' insofar as it attempts to neutralize the traumatic memories of the Napoleonic wars. In Jaffa, Bonaparte was responsible for the slaughter of 4,500 war captives on March 10th, one day before his supposed beneficent visit to the plague-stricken soldiers. In a detail of the Gros' 1808 painting, *Napoléon on the Battlefield of Eylau* (lower image), the macabre results of the war are not disguised. The 'sublimatory' effect is realized through the transcription of reality to a non-real milieu of expressive, painted metaphor.

We may also point out that an author, a poet, a painter, a playwright or filmmaker, may not only present dark references but participate in them as a way of disguising their own unacceptable tendencies; they may sublimate their own phobias, desires, aggressiveness, immorality, etc. not necessarily or exclusively to criticize these tendencies, but to express their own destructive volition, without assuming the risk of carrying them

through or acting them out–likewise for the readership, viewership, audience of these works, who also experience the artist's creative vision. Through art, therefore, we may participate in gothic terror as spectators situated at a safe distance from reality or as mental actors of this dark reality, immune to social condemnation.

Image 3. The death of Talos, an ancient Greek mythological automaton, depicted on a 5th century BC vase.

Though these tendencies emerged emphatically in western expression via the uncanny visualizations of the romantic era and its cultural successors, analogous projections were also integral to the collective expression of earlier societies. In ancient Greece, the cosmology of mythographer and proto-philosopher Pherekydes describes "large pits and caves…as gates that souls pass through at birth and death", going up and down to 'Chthonia', "an abysmal underworld, hosting the buried and the unseen. A terrifying domain where primordial forces rule." We may correlate 'Chthonia' to 'Cthulhu', H.P. Lovecraft's fictional designation for a terrifying cosmic entity emerging from an "invisible world…

omnipresent and omnipotent".[3] Both terms, moreover, 'Chthonia' and 'Cthulhu', share the same first syllable (from the Greek consonant cluster "χθ"), pronounced with a guttural vocal sound originating deep in the throat. The architecture of the labyrinth–an architecture of emotion designed to provoke and relieve feelings of fear, confusion, despair, and hopelessness–finds its first expression during the Classical period in the writings of Herodotus (when describing the funerary "palace" of Amenemhat III in present-day Hawara, Egypt) and establishes itself in the mythology of the Cretan Labyrinth of the Minotaur.[4] The sublime qualities of its spatial composition are manifested along the North Atlantic shore of the United States in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the town of Marblehead, MA, and present, most recently, in the virtual horror of *The Backrooms*, an open-source collaboration featuring an infinitely repeating sequence of irrationally composed modern office spaces.[5] Even the ongoing cultural conflict with / fear of artificial intelligence, employed as the narrative basis of the most recent installment of the *Mission Impossible* franchise,[6] extends into our deep past. "Ancient Egyptian mythology included the tale of Ptah's metal man. The legend of Yan Shi's androids emerged from Ancient China", while in ancient Greece, mythic automata like the gigantic metallic Talos "appear in tales about Jason and the Argonauts".[7] We find the same vein of creative sublimation in timeless literary works, like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and E. T. A. Hoffman's *The Sandman* (1818), featuring the android, Olimpia, who's coming out (as an automaton) drives the protagonist to madness. It was in reference to the latter that Sigmund Freud coined the term 'uncanny' in psychoanalytic theory (Freud: 1985). These works, together with their later cinematographic corollaries–e.g., the *Terminator* films or *Androids*

[3] References from K. Vasileiou's contribution, "Stratifictional Narratives: Terra, Terror, Time".

[4] The first records of the Labyrinth of the Minotaur are drawn from accounts of early Greek writers Bacchylides (fifth century B.C.), Cleidemus (c. 420-350 B.C.), Philochorus (c. 306-260 B.C.), and others. See Matthews, W.H. Mazes and Labyrinths. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922. p.17.

[5] References from F. Ferrara and L. Lafasciano's contribution, "Archaeology of the Labyrinth: from Ancient Myths to Modern Fictions".

[6] Here referring to the film *Mission: Impossible–Dead Reckoning (Part One)*, released in 2023, in which the primary adversary is an active learning AI.

[7] References from S. Salta's contribution, "Architecture and Artificial Intelligence: Crafting Unfamiliar Worlds".

Dreaming of Electric Sheep[8]–at the same time address collective phobia *and* pose bioethical questions about the trajectory of society.

French philosopher, Georges Bataille, once crucially remarked that "the exclusive domain of literature lies in its ability to unveil the intricacies of transgressing legal boundaries, notwithstanding the imperative to establish societal order". We may extend this observation to both the domain of popular culture and the transgression of psychological boundaries. But, regarding his second remark–that "literature, like the infringement of moral laws, is dangerous"[9]–we here maintain the necessity of moral ambiguity. Dark and uncanny references in art and literature most certainly engage with the precariousness of human nature, typically by giving free expression to violent and unethical acts. These references, however, are also liberating and essential (insofar as violent and unethical tendencies are innately and unavoidably human), permitting our mental pressure, our agonies and phobias, to release and decompress without 'real' social cost. It is in this context that the use of expressive metaphor[10] permits the sublimation of the unacceptable and contributes to the cultural 'salvation' of the author, the artist, the film director, the performer, the graphic novel designer–they are paradoxically invited by society to subvert cultural rejection, by presenting the seductive amelioration of dark narratives to the collective psyche.

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Laplanche, J. & Pontalis, J. B. *Vocabulaire de la Psychanalyse*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1978.

[8] Referring to the films, *Terminator* (1984), and its sequel, *Terminator 2*: *Judgement Day* (1991), directed by James Cameron (1991), establishing one of contemporary popular culture's most iconic representations of an AI killing machine. Also referring to Philip K. Dick's dystopian science fiction novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), retroactively titled *Blade Runner: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*; the novel was adapted as a screenplay for the well-known science-fiction film, *Blade Runner* (1982), directed by Ridley Scott.

[9] Reference to D. Tsivola's contribution, "Thanatophilic Spatial Paradigms: Aldo Rossi and the Corpse at San Cataldo".

[10] In reference to the importance of expressive metaphor, see the contribution of K. Daflos, "Performing field acts on the basis of Reading and Writing".

Matthews, W.H. *Mazes and Labyrinths*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922.

Images

Image 1: (PD - Https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Slaying_Holofernes_(Artemisia_Gentileschi,_Naples)#/media/File:Artemisia_Gentileschi_-_Judith_Beheading_Holofernes_-_WGA8563.jpg - 7/26/2023), (PD - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemisia_Gentileschi#/media/File:Gentileschi_judith1.jpg - 7/26/2023), (PD - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemisia_Gentileschi#/media/File:Giaele_e_Sisara.JPG -7/26/2023) and (PD - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Beheading_Holofernes_(Caravaggio)#/media/File:Judith_Beheading_Holofernes-Caravaggio_(c.1598-9).jpg – 7/26/2023).

Image 2: (PD - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonaparte_Visiting_the_Plague_Victims_of_Jaffa#/media/File:Antoine-Jean_Gros_-_Bonaparte_visitant_les_pestiférés_de_Jaffa.jpg - 7/26/2023) and (CC BY 3.0, Sailko - https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoléon_sur_le_champ_de_bataille_d%27Eylau#/media/Fichier:Antoine-jean_gros,_napoleone_sul_campo_di_battaglia_d'eylau_(9-2-1807),_1808,_05.jpg–7/26/2023).

Image 3: (CC BY-SA 3.0, Forzaruvo94 - https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talos_(Crète)#/media/Fichier:Vaso_di_Talos_particolare.JPG–9/3/2023).

NUMINOUS NARRATIVES

1

URBAN VAMPIRES: PANDEMICS OF FRIGHT AND NEOTERIC REALITY

KONSTANTINOS MORAITIS

Introducing the 'Borromean Knot' as a metaphor for our imaginary correlation to reality

In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, reality can never be experienced at its full objective value. Its full potential is only accessible through the 'imaginary', through our fantasies–our desires or phobias. These imaginary projections appear in the context of our social and cultural expression (i.e., in the context of the 'symbolic' order) and constantly affect the perception of reality and the experience of societal change. Expressions of collective symbolism are perpetually created and recreated through the continuous participation of every individual in a broader social context, in networks of socially produced modes of expression and 'languages'. This psychoanalytic concept of multi-layered mental correlations is described under the schematic metaphoric image of the 'Borromean Knot', or 'Noeud Borroméen'.[1] It is described as a formation of three interlocked rings, each of which represents a different component of our mental existence [Img.1]. The first ring refers to the 'Real', to our correlation with reality; the second one to the 'Imaginary', to our fantasies, desires, and phobias; and the third ring depicts the 'Symbolic', the semantic structure through which social expression is possible. Those three different components of our mentality are in constant mutual

[1] "Lacan first refers to the Borromean knot in the seminar of 1972–3, but his most detailed discussion comes in the seminar of 1974–5, when he uses the Borromean knot as, among other things, a way of illustrating the interdependence of the three orders of the 'real', the 'symbolic' and the 'imaginary'–as a way of exploring what it is that these three orders have in common." [Evans 2006, p.20-21].

influence; or, more explicitly, they continually react in a state of reciprocal osmosis, as represented by the topological schematic in the right-hand image [Img.1]. The hypothetical destruction of any one of the three rings would result in the collapse of the whole formation; our relationship to reality would then be impossible and our existence altogether inconceivable.

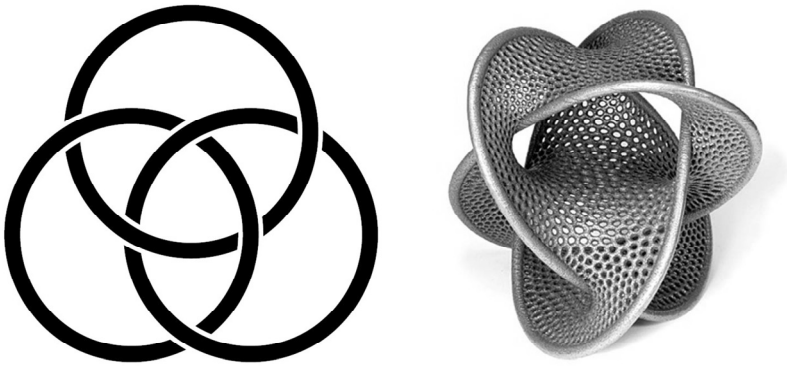

Image 1: The Borromean Knot; the continuous correlation of the 'Real', the 'Imaginary' and the 'Symbolic' depicted conventionally on the left, and as 3D topology on the right.

Romantic social agony in the social reality of the late 18th and 19th centuries

Literature and the arts are, 'par excellence', paradigmatic activities representing the combination of the previous three domains: the 'real', the 'imaginary' and the symbolic'. It is in the context of this triple reference that we shall consider 'weird fictional' narratives, attempting to correlate them, first, with a social, cultural and political reality which is, in many ways, dystopic; then, with desires and phobic imagination; and, finally, with modes of symbolic expression that find semantic denouement in primordial demonic formulations or dark gothic connotations–symbolic references generated in the previous, equally-dark social context and intensively introduced into neoteric culture through romantic expression. It was at the end of the 18th and throughout the 19th Century that the political disillusionment[2] of European societies–their disappointment with the

[2] Compare the use of the term 'disillusionment' in Sigmund Freud's "Thoughts for the times on War and death." The first part of text bares the title "The

unrealized political promises of the Enlightenment–was associated with the dark reality of suffocating urban environments, with slums, augmented adolescent, and female prostitution; with the criminality described in urban 'poverty-maps'. The uncanny urban descriptions of western literature, from the late 18th Century until the present day, have been a cultural response, a culturally phobic and symbolic response, to an equally uncanny reality. We shall refer to the 'poverty maps', as well as to the theoretical significance of the term 'uncanny' in detail, later.

Gothic 'regression', medieval figurative revival, and neoteric European societies

Frightening fantastical depictions originate in a multitude of cultures from across the world and throughout human history. What is interesting about their emergence in 18th and 19th-century Europe is their contemporaneity with and complete antithesis to neoteric Western civilization's supposedly rational formation. It is also significant to remark that, in search of paradigmatic irrational imaginary forms, neoteric Western expression was forced from its organizing ethics into a 'regression'[3] towards pre-civilized nature–to medieval references and to its own 'gothic' past. In both cases, the loss of mental stability is obvious. Horrifying sentiments correlating to 'sublime' nature or haunted medieval ruins and dark middle age legends–all these allusions seem to negate or contradict neoteric Western conformity and to de-form rational Cartesian prescriptions moving towards mystified irrational formations.

The most important observation here is that neoteric optimism never re-attained the full extents of its previously enlightened consistency after its first romantic contestation. A creeping uncertainty seems to have permanently infected the belief in guaranteed social benevolence. Since that remote romantic period, it has seeped slowly but consistently into the collective subconscious, calling modern and even contemporary aspirations into question. Fantasies of 'alien' invasions in our cities, apocalyptic scenes in zombified suburban neighbourhoods, and revolutionary 'androids

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Disillusionment of the War" [Freud 1985-B, p. 61-76], while the second the title "Our attitude towards Death" [ibid. p. 77-89].

[3] Referring here to psychoanalytic theory, the term 'regression' as a mental process describes a tendency to revert to a previous condition, to a previous state of mental development [Laplanche & Pontalis 1978, p. 400-403]; or, in our case, to a previous state of cultural development.

dreaming of electric sheep', are not remote 'odysseys' of the mind.[4] In fact they refer to the continuous nurturing of collective phobias, of weird realities projected by the collective imagination into fictional narratives– especially today, in our post-pandemic society.

Tracing the beginnings of neoteric uncertainty: is romantic pessimism the forerunner of cyberpunk dystopia?

Interest in weird fiction and the feeling of the uncanny has been reproduced again and again in the neoteric world. We have promised to unpack the term 'uncanny' later, in the context of early-20th century post-romantic Freudian theory.[5] However, this term and its correlated feeling, though important for our analysis, must not be associated exclusively with their Freudian influences. They may be traced, for what concerns their first intense appearance, to paradigmatic approaches of neoteric literature dating to the latter 18th and early 19th centuries. As previously mentioned, they tend to express the generalized cultural and political disappointment accompanying the failure of political promises of the Enlightenment and French Revolution, together with the adverse consequences of industrial European development.

It was in this context that Romanticism appeared, presenting the agony of a centralized civilization unable to redress urban poverty and social calamity. It was in this context that the triumph of neoclassical imagery collapsed, and the seductiveness of sublime nature was advanced, as

[4] Basic references to well-known fictional narratives; the first refers to the dystopian science fiction novel *Blade Runner: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) by the American writer Philip K. Dick. Its success was followed by a cinematic adaptation, the film *Blade Runner* (1982), directed by Ridley Scott. The second refers to the epic science fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) produced and directed by Stanley Kubrick and based on a screenplay written by Kubrick himself, in collaboration with renowned science-fiction author, Arthur C. Clarke.

[5] We must remark, moreover, that Romanticism was not solely limited to artistic expression; on the contrary, it constituted a wider field of cultural production where scientific approaches were also developed. Take, for example, the interest in biological and historic change, or in the irrational and unconscious as described by psychoanalysis. We may therefore refer to psychoanalytic theory as a post-romantic theoretical approach.

described by the earthquake metaphor of Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours' pessimistic paintings [Img.2].[6]

Image 2: *Earthquake in Greece*, by Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours (1805), also entitled as *Allegory of Terror*, a metaphoric depiction describing the collapse of classicistic ideals; the collapse of Enlightenment promises, produced in correlation to the ideals of ancient Hellenic and Roman democracy.

We could comment still further on the descriptions of Gustave Doré's engravings, or Charles Booth's *Maps Descriptive of London Poverty* [Img.3]. In 1869, French artist Gustave Doré, in collaboration with the British journalist Blanchard Jerrold, produced *London: A Pilgrimage*, a landmark pictorial description of the deprivation and squalor of mid-Victorian London. Some years later, Charles Booth worked on his *Inquiry into Life and Labour in London*, undertaken between 1886 and 1903. His inquiry was a social research survey, analyzing the life of the working class of late 19th century London using maps, which presented a pictorial account of poverty, an early, noteworthy example of social cartography.

[6] "He was the author of several idyllically calm pictures of Grecian subjects. But, a biographer tells us, he was so disillusioned by the French Revolution that in 1799 he executed the Creek Earthquake and painted several other versions of it…, as if he had become obsessed by the disaster." [Honour 1987, p. 186,188].

Image 3: Gustav Doré's engraving from his *A Pilgrimage to London* (left), and Charles Booth's map of the impoverished London quarter of Whitechapel (right).

Were the previous two descriptive efforts, by Doré and Booth, fictional presentations; or were they objective displays of a reality whose existence was terrifying in itself? Does dystopic imagery of the present-day also relate to feelings of uncertainty about an uncontrolled state of existence, about a social future which proves impossible to conceive?

Romanticism and the cultural expression of social and political disappointment

Romanticism was presented in the past, and continues to be presented, as a cultural current principally associated with literature and arts. We must not, however, neglect its political background. We have already mentioned the political disappointment of Western intellectuals following the mediocre results of the French Revolution, of its inability to establish social equality– 'l'égalité'–in a complete form. We may refer, in addition, to the cynicism and malaise produced by an extended period of European wars during the 19th Century.

Image 4: *Cannibalism on the Raft of the Medusa*, preparatory study of *The Raft of Medusa* final painting, by Théodore Gericault.

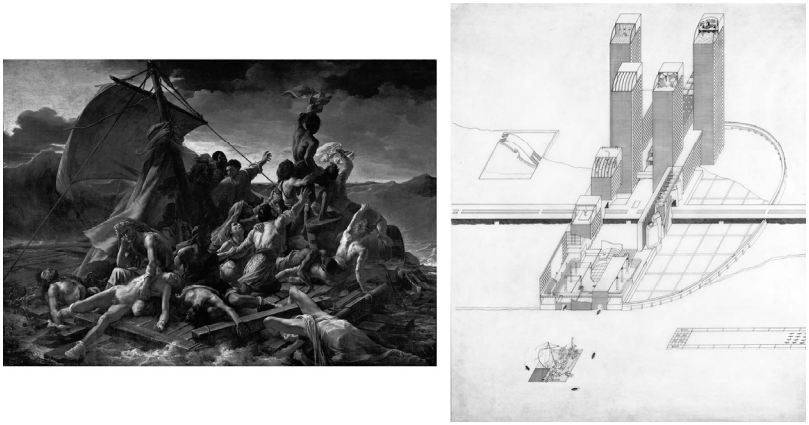

Image 5: Théodore Gericault's *The Raft of Medusa* (1818-19, left) and the raft as a symbol of Manhattan's 'metropolitan agonies' in a drawing produced by OMA (right).

Dystopic, weird fictional narratives appeared in Western imagery as the result of an equally terrifying reality or, even better, as a literary or pictorial metaphor of the dark social reality of Europe and the Western world. The cultural and political virility of the classical 'body' as promoted, for example, in Jacques-Louis David's classicist paintings was replaced by the hidden social cannibalism of Theodore Gericault's *Raft of the Medusa* [Img.4]; a reference lately correlated to the delirious condition of contemporary civic centers, as in the case of 'delirious' New York [Img.5] (Ravalico 2017).[7] Would the castaways of the wreck of the French naval frigate Méduse (i.e. the 'castaways of contemporary society') be saved by the Western metropolis, or do they ultimately accept a dark, 'cannibalistic' way of life?

The correlation between dystopic romantic descriptions and the equally dystopic social reality of the late 18th and early 19th centuries is astonishingly clear. Since then, as previously stated, gothic fantasies have continued unabated, through subsequent historical periods until the present day. We may refer to this historic continuity as a genealogy of symbolic forms persistently reproduced, which fertilize our social nightmares, reaching climax in wet dreams of morbid sensualism. Adverse urban living conditions, urban conflicts and the continuous collapse of our social expectations may explain this reproduction of dark nightmares and the metaphoric use of the term 'gothic', as expressed in romantic attitudes and more recently in the media of popular culture, in filmmaking, comic strip art and gothic rock music. Surely, this ill-omened imaginary was not only projected in arts; nevertheless, artistic presentation constitutes as already stated an important domain of its personal or social expression.

As noted in the volume's Introduction, the word 'uncanny' in Freudian terminology refers to a disturbing mental regression, correlated to a past traumatic experience [Freud 1985-C, p. 335-376]. It is this phobic reaction to a dark uncanny reminiscence, typically associated with familiar persons, which we here intend to correlate to the collective unconscious, to feelings that could neither be totally repressed nor totally expressed and had to be symbolically disguised, keeping nevertheless their agonizing response. We may therefore refer to collective phobias as associated not only with fictional narratives but with the obscurity of unsupportable social reality as well. What we may further emphasize in the present chapter is the importance of the romantic mentality as an elemental cultural, ethical, and political formation that enriched and multiplied preceding psychogenetic

[7] Reference to the book *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, written in 1978 by Dutch architect, Rem Koolhaas.

tendencies, mythical terrors, and dark fairy tales, and *even* gave birth to critical theoretical approaches, as those influencing the aforementioned psychoanalytic framework.

From Cronus' mythical, cannibalistic reminiscence to Hansel's and Gretel's terrifying fairy tale

Image 6: Hindu goddess Durga (left) presented with eight arms, killing the 'buffalo-demon' Mahishasura, rendered in green (right).

We have elucidated that "frightening fantastical depictions originate in a multitude of cultures from across the world and throughout human history". Alien monsters, demons, witches, and cannibalistic phobias (as in Hansel's and Gretel's German fairy tale) existed well before Lovecraft's invention of the destructive elder-god Cthulhu.

Image 7: *Saturn Devouring His Son* by Peter Paul Rubens (1636, left) and Francisco de Goya (1819-1823, right).

Pre-modern, ancient, archaic, and medieval fantasies are, all of them, full of monstrous descriptions, ghostly apparitions, and vampires. Among the first myths of ancient Hellenic theogony,[8] is the origin story of Cronus (equivalent to the Roman god, Saturn)–primordial ruler of the universe and father of Zeus (king of the gods, and equivalent to the Roman god, Jupiter)–who, according to legend, devoured his own children to prevent his usurpation. It is in a 17th-century oil painting by Peter Paul Rubens that we may find a detailed gory representation, 'une représentation

[8] *Theogony*, an ancient Greek word meaning "the genealogy or birth of the gods" was used as the title of a Greek poem by Hesiod, written between the 8th and 7th Centuries BC, describing the origins and genealogies of ancient Greek deities.

sanglante', of the devouring act, flesh torn apart from the child's body. Even more terrifying is Francisco de Goya's description of the same myth. Cronus (or Saturn) appears terrifyingly less human, and the child's body is represented as a headless, bloodstained, piece of meat.

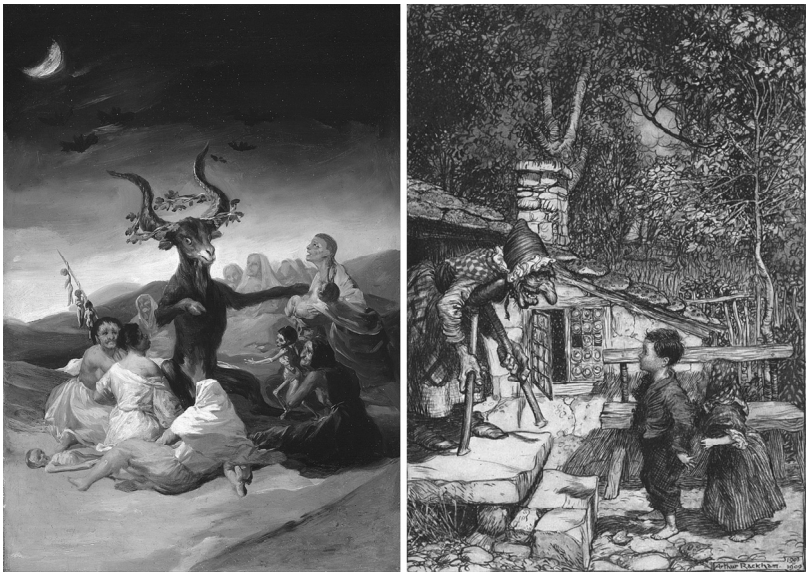

Image 8: Romantic depictions of occultism in 18th and 19th Century Europe–the *Witches' Sabbath* (1799), by Goya (left), and the cannibal-witch of Hansel and Gretel's German fairy tale, illustrated by Arthur Rackham (1909. right).

Goya can be regarded as a paradigmatic representative of early European romanticism, presenting a number of disturbing depictions: an unforgiving snowstorm threatening human life, the monstrous sleep of reason, witches riding magic brooms, the witches' Sabbath featuring Baphomet (the goat-headed demon), surrounded by a coven of young and old witches in a barren, moonlit landscape. [9]

[9] The paintings referenced here are, respectively: *La Nevada* or *El invierno* (*Snow Tempest* or *The Winter* completed in 1786), *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* (*The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, completed between 1797 and 1799), *Linda maestra!* (*Gentle mistress!*, a 1798 depiction of witches riding a broom), and *El Aquelarre* (*Witches' Sabbath*, 1799).