

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### BAS / BRITISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES JOURNAL 2026

#### GOTHIC MATERNITIES:

#### TRADITIONAL vs CURRENT VISIONS IN LITERATURE,

#### CINEMA AND OTHER ARTS

A great number of Gothic fiction productions explicitly address themes such as gender roles and reproduction from diverse perspectives, which at times hold opposing viewpoints on certain aspects of these topics. The ability to gestate is often considered one of the key indicators of sexual difference. However, the subject of gestation and child-upbringing is not usually addressed in Gothic fiction, aside from iconic examples such as Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968). As Russ (2007: 25) has stated, these processes are often not described in many texts. Frequently, the women in these stories are either young and childless or middle-aged, with their children already grown and secure (ibid.). The reason for this may be the desire to avoid misogynistic attacks on fiction that dealt with these themes, a theory proposed by critics such as Shulamith Firestone (1970) and Jennifer Allen (1984), who concluded that pregnant women and mothers were, in a sense, biologically trapped.

However, as Adrienne Rich (1976) pointed out, in contrast to more traditional motherhood, which can be experienced as a patriarchal institution within this type of fiction, motherhood defined and centered on women can be understood as an empowering experience for women, which later paved the way for matricentric feminism (O'Reilly, 2016). In short, while motherhood as an institution is often a site of male-defined oppression, women's own maternal experiences can become a source of power (O'Reilly, 2021). It is, therefore, essential to look into the representation of themes such as gestation, childbirth, breastfeeding, and the physical, psychological, and emotional changes that the gestating mother undergoes after childbirth, as well as the various forms of motherhood and gestating bodies (consider, for instance, the masterfully depicted confrontation between Sigourney Weaver and the creature in the 1979 movie *Alien: The Eighth Passenger*, 1979).

The relationship between mothers and their progenies might be fraught with myriad uncertainties, fears, and sometimes outright hatred. These controversial aspects of childbearing, childbirth, and childrearing are addressed by countless unnatural creations, violent births, and terrified women—depicted as doubly vulnerable and trapped in situations of extreme danger (Harrington, 2018: 87). This preoccupation with maternal fear and monstrosity aligns with the Gothic tradition's continued engagement in the Othering of the mother (Carpenter 2016: 7), providing a compelling lens for exploring the uncanny and the abject (Arnold 2013; Creed 1993; Oliver 2012). As Kristeva suggests in *Powers of Horror*, this process of othering reflects a deeper cultural anxiety; she (1982: 73) describes the 'archaic mother' as a force of 'generative power' that patrilineal structures try hard to suppress. As a consequence, monstrous mothers—whether phallic, castrating, all-consuming, and absent—populate the Gothic imagination, from fiction to movies and video games. Yet, despite their ubiquity, this oppressive maternal figure has often gone unnoticed or deliberately ignored by scholars. Her existence resists traditional interpretations, challenging the widely accepted idea of maternal instinct (Williams, 2025: 1).

Moreover, contemporary Gothic art, by allowing projection into other universes and times, imagining various interpersonal relationships, and questioning the boundaries of biology and gender, inevitably engages with various visions of motherhood – some utopian, while others, dystopian – thus opening the door to the exploration of new possibilities. It is in this fertile terrain that, in addition to the previously mentioned themes, other pressing issues also find space for exploration, such as reproductive biotechnology, ectogenesis, cloning, xenobiology, grafts with living beings or artificial entities, microchimerism, and a long list of others that current fiction seems eager to depict (Marinovich, 1994: 189–205; Anolik, 2003: 25–43).

Therefore, we invite writers, researchers, scholars, and all those who wish to contribute to this volume dedicated to new visions of the Gothic. Or are they not so new?

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**The 2026 issue will also include, as usual, a chapter of papers on various linguistic issues.**