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Call for Papers

Gothic Cries and Whispers in Mexican Literature and Film

Kristine Vanden Berghe and Nicolas Licata (ed.)

Latin America, first decades of the 21st century. Cultural production has been marked by a proliferation of novels, short stories, and films that create a gloomy and disturbing atmosphere through the presence of unusual phenomena and characters—especially women—who fear losing their physical integrity. Cultural journalists have quickly identified this broad and varied production as a new boom, labeling it with various terms that echo the word *gothic*: "postcolonial gothic," "female Latin American gothic," "rural gothic," and "neo-gothic" are among the names used. These suggest a set of similarities with another abundant novelistic corpus known as classical gothic, which originated in late 18th-century England.

It is well known that transplanting a genre across time or space entails changes, and gothic fiction is no exception. A comparison between English (classical) gothic and contemporary Latin American gothic reveals both their commonalities and their differences. This has been demonstrated by Nadina Olmedo, Osvaldo Di Paolo (2013; 2015), and Carlos Zangrandi (2021) in the context of Argentine and Southern Cone cultural production, and by Gabriel Eljaiek-Rodríguez (2017; 2022) for Colombian literature and cinema. However, to our knowledge, no comprehensive study of this kind exists for the history of Mexican gothic. This does not mean that it is impossible to construct a corpus of gothic literary and film narratives related to this national tradition. On the contrary, various articles and chapters—such as those in critical anthologies on Latin American gothic—attest to the existence of a Mexican strand. In fact, the Mexican gothic corpus has grown steadily over the past three decades.

The country's sociopolitical climate—marked by disappearances, murders, and femicides—provides fertile ground for cultural productions that depict ghosts, specters, zombies, and other monstrous figures as metaphors for victims, perpetrators, and beings oscillating between life and death.

Gothic fiction has always been characterized by such monsters and is distinguished primarily by its "thermometric quality" (Edith Wharton in Cox and Gilbert 2008: 12)—the chills and shudders it provokes in both its victims and readers. In contemporary Mexican fiction, this fear often takes on recurring forms. Though gothic fears stem from individual experiences, they also carry a significant social dimension, evolving across time and space. As such, the persecutory plots and intent to provoke discomfort in gothic literature and film reflect the most pressing collective fears of their time. While the genre continues to be recognized by its goal of instilling fear or unease, the nature of those fears changes with the context.

After Carlos Fuentes published *Aura* (1962) and other stories referencing classical gothic works—while also transculturating their tropes and characters to fit a local tradition—many subsequent authors, especially women, have drawn on gothic sources. Guadalupe Nettel's work is a prime example (Licata, Hadatty Mora, and Vanden Berghe 2023). The autofictional narrator of *The Body Where I Was Born* speaks of her preference for gothic tales—though she does not use the term explicitly, the mix of the fantastic and horror is clear: "My general predilection was still for fantasy, with an inclination toward gore and terror" (2011: 34). She expresses enthusiasm for Poe's *Extraordinary Tales* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, two major gothic texts. Nettel is far from being the only heir to this tradition: works by Amparo Dávila, Luis Mario Schneider, Homero Aridjis, Carmen Boullosa, Cristina Rivera Garza, Daniela Tarazona, Luis Jorge Boone, and Silvia Moreno-García, among others, also contain gothic elements—seen in obsessive behaviors, paranoia, persecutory states, extravagant plots, and eerie atmospheres.

This issue of *iMex* aims to help build this field of study—a Mexican gothic corpus of literary and cinematic fiction—and to explore what connects or distinguishes it from similar cultural productions. We especially welcome contributions that, possibly through case studies, reflect on the relevance of historiographic or theoretical categories used to describe gothic in Mexico; its boundaries with other genres (such as the fantastic, noir, or magical realism); and its relationships with other gothic traditions across time and space.

We welcome proposals that address topics such as:

- The relevance of the "postcolonial gothic" label: To what extent do Mexican gothic narratives construct monstrous 'others' in contrast to or as a differentiation from European models? Do they ironically use gothic tropes to problematize Mexico's place in the cultural production hierarchy, especially in relation to the U.S. and Europe?

- The concept of "negrótico" (Di Paolo and Olmedo 2015): What are the intersections between gothic and noir or neopolicial fiction in Mexico? Do they reinforce or distinguish each other?
- The boundaries between gothic and other non-mimetic literary categories like the fantastic or the uncanny.
- Mexico as a gothic space: Do violence, disappearances, and organized crime create gothic spaces in literature and film?
- The existence of a specifically female gothic: What relevance does this concept have in contemporary Mexican gothic over the past three decades? Are there specific traits in the works of female authors compared to their male counterparts?
- Conceptualizations of the term "Mexican gothic." Drawing on Gabriel Eljaiek-Rodríguez's recent work on Colombian gothic, can a similar case be made for Mexico? If so, what are its defining features?
- The ghost figure in literature and film, in the sense described by Carolyn Wolfenzon (2020), where the ghost causes fear in a more European than Mexican way.
- The possibility of a border gothic.
- Literary lineages that continue the gothic tradition across generations of Mexican writers.
- Comparisons between various gothic corpora across time and space, examining their place within literary systems in terms of recognition and value. As Botting and Townshend put it, gothic fiction is "suggestive of an underground, an underclass, an unconscious, a locus of uncomfortable exclusion" (2004: 12). The genre's current popularity may be shifting its position toward the literary mainstream.

Those interested in contributing to this special issue are invited to send an abstract of approximately 250 words (without references), along with a short bio-bibliographical note, to kristine.vandenberghe@uliege.be and n.licata@uliege.be **no later than 1 November 2025.** Notification of acceptance or rejection will be sent by **30 November 2025**. If accepted, final articles (in Word format) should be submitted to the same email addresses by **1 March 2026.**

Main Formal Guidelines for Article Preparation

- Length: 5,000 to 7,000 words
- Articles in Spanish or English
- Abstract: up to 200 words

- Short bio (profession, main research areas, recent publications): max. 10 lines
- 5 keywords not included in the article title
- References at the end

Complete guidelines can be found here: https://www.imex-revista.com/publicar-en-imex/#2

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