

CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue of *Gothic Studies*: “Embodiments of Horror: William Blake’s Gothic Sensibility.”

Guest Editors: Dr. Christopher Bundock (Huron College) and Elizabeth Effinger (Western).

Within the frame of the late eighteenth-century Gothic revival, this special issue of [Gothic Studies](#) explores the relationship between English poet and engraver William Blake and particularly disruptive affective intensities expressed at the level of image, text, and critical reception as well as their extension into contemporary adaptations. While a critical body of work exists on the relationship between Blake and the Gothic broadly—and in spite of an obvious fascination with a nexus of aesthetic categories such as the grotesque, perverse, and macabre—Blake’s focus on affects like physical disgust and horror, specifically, have garnered little sustained critical attention. This special issue seeks to redress this gap by opening up a dialogue between Blake and his gothic sensibility that centers on the affective, aesthetic, and philosophical implications of a physical body and sensorium that turns against itself.

Registering the contestation between introjection and expulsion, the abject – Kristeva’s term for a “massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which [...] now harries me as radically separate, loathsome” (2) – is frequently figured in Blake as a monstrous Polypus, organic life in its merely vegetative, abhorrent state. Other examples of Blake’s “body horror” appear in the body turned inside out, revealing organs “Dim & glutinous as the white Polypus,” an uncanny “Fibrous Vegetation” that seems less like animating flesh than the binding vines that tie spirit with “living fibres down into the Sea of Time & Space growing / A self-devouring monstrous Human Death” (*Los* 4.66; *Milton* 24.37, 34.25-6). Rending apart the coherence of representation to expose “what I permanently thrust aside in order to live” (Kristeva 3), Blake’s revulsion stems—perversely enough—from a willingness to peer into the abyss of origination and expose art’s always fragile constitution as an invitation for revision, transformation, and rebirth. But how precisely does this affirmative attitude toward subjective and artistic regeneration square with Blake’s tortured affect, especially when this follows from a desire to transcend the physical body, the very matrix of sensibility? If Blake embodies horror, he is also horrified by the body’s limitations. How, then, does art—particularly Blake’s own art—respond to this problem? How does he make new kinds of bodies to embody desires differently?

We are particularly interested in papers that consider the impact this “thrust[ing] aside” by and of the body has for Blake’s thought and art. What is the work of horror in Blake? What, if any, generative potential is there in the restlessness of Blake’s tortured, gothic bodies? What is the cost of Blake’s investment in horror as a privileged affect? Does Blake’s appeal to horror and the Gothic challenge or render counterfeit his humanism? How does Blake’s revisioning of the body as an intensive site of horror invite new modes of thinking about the human? How do the horrors of Blake’s material bodies (dis)figure or embody the horrors of larger discursive bodies?

While this collection follows in the spirit of recent critical projects such as *Blake 2.0* (Palgrave 2012) and *Blake, Modernity and Popular Culture* (Palgrave 2007) – important studies that foreground the continuing relevance of Blake in contemporary culture – it also distinguishes itself by interrogating the particular affinities between Blake and the embodied experiences of

revulsion, abjection, and horror. Given this topic especially, Blake's illustrations may well play a central role in some contributions. And we do hope to be able to reproduce a certain number of his visual artworks. Nevertheless, we ask that contributors use their best judgement and include images only if they come in for substantial, sustained analysis and are necessary for advancing the paper's argument.

This collection is interested in papers that explore any aspects Blake's embodied affects and affects of embodiment, and especially those dimensions wherein the body and affect clash. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Deleuze and the Affect of Terror or Horror
- Execrable Topi: Vacuum, Or-Ulro, Satan's Mills
- Horrors of abstraction
- Embodiment, disembodiment, reembodiment
- Birth, re-birth, and the labour of creation
- Printing in the Infernal Method
- The Pleasures of Pain: masochism, perversion
- Transgression and anti-economy
- Horror and Function
- The Instruments of Terror
- Revulsion's limits, borders, or ends
- Blake's images as "dark visions of torment"
- The image and Evil
- Specters, ghosts, and darkness visible
- Empiricism and the Body
- Subject, Object, Object

We invite contributions from academics, professionals, artists, and those with a scholarly interest in Blake. All relevant material will be considered. We welcome papers from multidisciplinary perspectives.

Including notes, articles should be between 4000 and 9000 words in length. Potential contributors should send **abstracts (500-750 words)** to both Dr. Christopher Bundock (cbundock@gmail.com) and Elizabeth Effinger (eeffinge@uwo.ca) by **1 October, 2013**. All submissions should be in English and adhere to the "[Guidelines on Preparing and Submitting an Article for Gothic Studies](#)"