

**JURASSIC WORLD: FALLEN KINGDOM
AS A 21ST-CENTURY GOTHIC TALE:
AN ANTISPECIESIST REVISION OF MONSTROSITY**

**JURASSIC WORLD: FALLEN KINGDOM COMO FICCIÓN
GÓTICA DEL SIGLO XXI: UNA REVISIÓN
ANTIESPECISTA DE LA MONSTRUOSIDAD**

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Abstract

This paper considers Juan Antonio Bayona's 2018 film *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* as a Gothic film which disrupts the archetypal conventions of monster films, especially in relation to the antispeciesist conception of monsters—in this case, the genetically-engineered dinosaurs which feature in the *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic World* sagas. Through an analysis of its cinematography, character construction, scenarios and plot development in the light of Gothic Studies, I will argue that this film is not just Gothic in appearance, but also in the sense that it breaks with contemporary anthropocentric conventions of normalcy, unity and species boundaries, and that it confirms the trend in filmic narratives that takes into account the monsters' perspectives in order to challenge human exceptionalism.

Keywords: *Jurassic World*, *Jurassic Park*, Gothic film, monster films, antispeciesism.

Resumen

Este artículo propone la película de Juan Antonio Bayona *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* (2018) como un film gótico que altera las convenciones arquetípicas del cine de monstruos, especialmente en lo referido a la consideración antiespecista de estas criaturas—en este caso, los dinosaurios creados mediante ingeniería genética

que protagonizan las sagas de *Jurassic Park* y *Jurassic World*. A través del análisis de su cinematografía, la construcción de los personajes y escenarios, y el desarrollo de la trama a través de los Gothic Studies, argumentaré que esta película no se encuadra dentro del género solamente por su aspecto formal, sino también en el sentido de que rompe con las convenciones antropocéntricas contemporáneas alrededor de la normatividad, unidad y los límites entre especies. Asimismo, confirma la tendencia de las narrativas filmicas que tienen en consideración la perspectiva de los monstruos con el fin de impugnar la idea del excepcionalismo humano.

Palabras clave: *Jurassic World*, *Jurassic Park*, cine gótico, cine de monstruos, antiespecismo.

1. Introduction

The attempt to define the Gothic both in its literary and filmic forms is a complex one, as the large amount of scholarship devoted to setting the contours of the genre testify. What most Gothic studies agree on, though, is its everlasting shifts and adaptations to the socio-historical context. Besides some conceptual fuzziness derived from the application of the term to different cultural realms (jumbling architecture, literature and fashion, for instance), the Gothic points to a “particularly stylised approach to depicting location, desire and action in literature and film” (Hand and McRoy 2020: 1). The evocation of dilapidated castles, gloomy ruins or eerie mansions can be traced back, on the one hand, to architectural design during the High and Late Middle Ages and, on the other hand, to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic novels set in such locations, such as Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) or Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* (1898).

At a later stage, the 20th century saw the Gothic moving beyond literature to a wider range of modes, including film, television shows, plays and musicals, computer games and music videos, as well as academic studies, with a burst of scholarly volumes devoted to this genre between the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st (*The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, for instance, was published in 2002). These various written or audio-visual forms share the conventions of Gothic fiction, including the archaic and decaying locations, the secretiveness of unresolved mysteries from the past, the tug-of-war between conservative and revolutionary forces —as in the case of the patriarchy and subversive female characters of the Female Gothic— or the blurring of opposing concepts such as life/death, natural/unnatural (or supernatural), ancient/modern, and conscious/unconscious.

For its part, the cinematic format of the Gothic has some particularities that should also be stated, especially due to the usual confusion between this genre and that of horror films. Besides narrative elements, the formal aspects of a filmic text, for example cinematography or camera angles, take a particular shape in the Gothic film. The use of shadows, settings and production design might seem straightforwardly-Gothic in flagship films of the genre such as *Dracula* (Browning 1931), *Frankenstein* (Whale 1931) or *The Haunting* (Wise 1963), but, as Xavier Aldana-Reyes argues in *Gothic Cinema* (2020), its genre specificities remain rather unclear and often unaddressed, especially when it comes to contrasting it with horror.¹

Although the distinct approaches to the Gothic take different perspectives, a common point is often established around the subversive and transformational nature of the genre, with conflicts that challenge the social order. These conflicts are often brought about by one of the Gothic's key figures: the monster. Following scholars such as Jack Halberstam (1995), Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (1996) or Margrit Shildrick (2002), this article considers monsters as representations of collective anxieties, as well as barometers of the embracement or rejection of social change. Contemporary film scholarship on monsters has analysed the intricacies of their representation in popular culture, ranging from vampires, zombies or ghosts to nonhuman animals. This article intends to contribute to this scholarship on contemporary monsters as yardsticks of cultural and socio-political discourses that soak Gothic fiction. In particular, it is concerned with nonhuman animal monsters, specifically through a case study of Juan Antonio Bayona's 2018 film *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* (henceforth: *JWFK*).

This article will analyse how the cinematic features of the Gothic film apply to *JWFK* in its cinematography, characters —especially Maisie as the Gothic heroine, but also of Blue as a nonhuman Gothic heroine counterpart— scenarios and locations, as well as the breaking of traditional boundaries. This last part will be connected to the representation of monsters as sentient beings whose drives should be taken into account, as opposed to their previous portrayal as voiceless evil creatures to be ruthlessly killed. These typical 20th-century animal horror cinema representations —in films such as *The Birds* (Hitchcock 1963), *Jaws* (Spielberg 1975), *Frogs* (McCowan 1972) or *Grizzly* (Girdler 1976)— portrayed the animal “as a (monstrous) Other to the Western subject” (Gregersdotter et al. 2015: 10). However, contemporary examples like *JWFK* incorporate post-anthropocentric perspectives which are aware of the speciesism embedded in previous representations of filmic animals (and their often fateful end), providing more complex depictions of monsters.²

In keeping with this, I will consider the ‘Gothicness’ of this film through the concept of the Gothic as a “type of artistic expression that continues to perform a

cultural function, a specifically subversive or radical one” (Aldana Reyes 2020: 15). Aldana Reyes’s opinion about contemporary Gothic is also relevant for my analysis when he says that “since the 1980s, the Gothic has been opened up and mainstreamed. [...] [I]ts images and tropes have more actively blossomed through the figure of the sympathetic monster and in other genres like animated films for children and the superhero action adventure” (2020: 27). My argument is not that *JWFK* constitutes a fully-Gothic film, since it still belongs to the science fiction genre of its predecessors and the whole saga it belongs to.³ However, if we consider the Gothic as a mode (rather than a stable genre) that extends across other genres—or an open genre that is able to intermingle with others— characterised by a particular kind of aesthetics and use of cinematic techniques as well as posing a challenge to conservative traditions, it is my intention to defend *JWFK* as belonging to the contemporary Gothic tradition. More specifically, the Ecogothic subgenre will be considered, following the idea that the Gothic is being reconfigured in this film to contest anthropocentric and speciesist views about nonhuman animals.⁴

2. Contextualisation of the Case Study

Bayona’s film is the second release in the *Jurassic World* trilogy that started with Colin Trevorrow’s *Jurassic World* (2015) and closed with Trevorrow’s *Jurassic World: Dominion* (2022). This saga is the continuation of the original *Jurassic Park* trilogy which began in 1993 with Steven Spielberg’s landmark monster film *Jurassic Park*, followed by *The Lost World* (Spielberg 1997) and *Jurassic Park III* (Johnston 2001). The original saga was based on Michael Crichton’s novels *Jurassic Park* (1990) and *The Lost World* (1995), which established a distinct kind of science fiction which blended pseudo-science—audiences had to be assured for years that the science behind the park was not scientifically accurate⁵— history and contemporary technological advances at that time (bioengineering in particular).

The first *Jurassic Park* film set the context for the subsequent productions: scientists under the sponsorship of John Hammond (Richard Attenborough) discover how to bring dinosaurs back to Earth through palaeolithic DNA found in the blood of mosquitoes kept in amber for millions of years. Hammond and his team manage to genetically design dinosaur species from T-Rexes to diplodocuses and velociraptors, and they set up an amusement park on Isla Nublar, in Costa Rica. Replicating the playing-God-scientist narrative of Frankenstein, the park security systems go awry and dinosaurs escape among general havoc and a few human deaths. The second and third films also make use of the engineered dinosaurs to address human ambition, the risks of corporate greed, and the limits of anthropocentric science.

The *Jurassic World* trilogy starts when a group of investors decides to replicate the first park and, once again, things do not go as planned since, as the first film's motto stated, "life finds a way". After the disastrous events of *Jurassic World* (2015), in *JWFK* the dinosaurs which remained on the island after the park was ravaged are now being threatened by a volcanic eruption, and there is an animal-rights movement campaigning to bring them to the mainland and save their lives. When the United States Senate decides to leave the dinosaurs on the island, Claire (Bryce Dallas Howard) is commissioned by Benjamin Lockwood (James Cromwell) and his assistant Eli Mills (Rafe Spall) to go to Isla Nublar and bring the animals back. Claire and her team—Owen (Chris Pratt), Zia (Daniella Pineda) and Franklin (Justice Smith)—manage to capture some of the dinosaurs (including Blue, the main velociraptor), but the intentions of the mercenary team hired by Mills are soon revealed: the dinosaurs are not going to be taken to a sanctuary, but to Lockwood Manor, in Northern California, where they will be auctioned to millionaires and warlords. There, we are introduced to Maisie (Isabella Sermon), Lockwood's granddaughter, who is revealed to have been cloned from her deceased mother. When Claire and Owen try to stop Mills in the manor, the dinosaurs are freed, wreaking havoc around the house. Eventually, Maisie opens the gates of the house and liberates the dinosaurs into the open, allowing them to roam around urban areas, and bringing about the context of *Jurassic World: Dominion* (Trevorrow 2022), where humans and dinosaurs need to learn to coexist.

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3. Cinematography: The Use of Shadows

Having defined and contextualised the aim, concepts and case study, the article now turns to a formal analysis of the selected film. In terms of cinematography, the use of shadows is one of the key characteristics of the Gothic film. This was influenced by German expressionism, the cinematic trend from the early 20th century that gathers the works of directors such as Fritz Lang, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, Robert Wiene, Robert Siodmak and Edgar G. Ulmer. These directors went to the US in the 1920s and 30s and exerted a big influence on Hollywood studios, including in lighting and camerawork aspects. Misha Kavka explains that German expressionism took elements from surrealistic theatrical staging, including stylistic techniques like "chiaroscuro lighting effects (that is, extreme distinction between light and dark), distorted backdrops, claustrophobic spaces, extreme camera angles, and shadows disproportionate to the objects that cast them" (2002: 215). As Kavka states, "casting shadows is one way of manipulating space, either by taking something of human dimensions and recasting it in an extended, larger-than-life form that exerts menacing control, or by using shadows to create planes

in space, so that the shadow serves as a metaphor for what lurks in another plane” (2002: 214).

Shadows, then, work in three key ways for the Gothic film. Firstly, the shadow anticipates the subject that casts it, contributing to the building of tension. Secondly, it enlarges the subject, rendering the human smaller by contrast, an effect which is also created through the use of huge spaces as scenarios where the people being chased by the menace are made to look tiny and, therefore, more vulnerable. Thirdly, the shadow is an element in between light and dark, being and not-being, real and imaginary: it has the power of turning a pile of clothes on a chair into a monster, a normal-sized animal into a dangerous beast, or a normative body into an inhuman creature. If, as Kavka puts it, the “ambiguity about the separation of existential spheres [...] is fundamental to the Gothic film” (2002: 217), shadows extend beyond their use of creating a menacing chiaroscuro atmosphere to becoming a symbolic element of this ambiguity and the liminal existence that characterises the genre itself (see figures 1 and 2 for examples of these aspects in vampire films). The use of shadows in *JWFK* by director of photography Oscar Faura is radically different from that of the previous films. The first appearance of the Indoraptor, a new kind of dinosaur obtained through mixing the DNA of the Indominous Rex (from the first film, *Jurassic World*) and the velociraptors, is in the shape of a shadow (figure 3). The body of the Indoraptor is projected onto the walls of the Lockwood mansion, creating a scene that is clearly indebted to *Nosferatu*'s chiaroscuro.

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Figure 1. *Nosferatu* (Murnau 1922)



Figure 2. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Ford Coppola 1992)

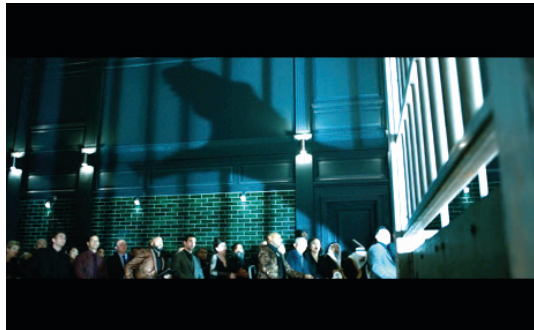


Figure 3. *JWFK* (Bayona 2018)

All in all, German expressionism was concerned with creating a nightmare atmosphere that is also a key aspect of *JWFK*, which recreates classic nightmarish tropes when the Indoraptor breaks free from its cage and approaches Maisie's bedroom. The camera follows Maisie while she locks herself in the room and then moves upwards out of the window and towards the roof of the manor, where the Indoraptor's claw chillingly grabs the top of the roof as the creature climbs the walls. A wide shot then shows the Indoraptor reign over the manor, and as the camera comes closer, it opens its jaws and roars in front of a misty moon that provides the dramatic chiaroscuro effect through which its teeth are clearly outlined against the moonlight. As Maisie tries to hide under the sheets in her bed, the Indoraptor crawls towards the window, echoing childhood nightmares of the monster lurking under (in this case on top of) the bed. The claw then appears on the window, with the monster illuminated with the cold light outside

threatening the warmly-lit safety of the home (figure 4). Next, Maisie sees the shadow of the Indoraptor projected on the wall, a signature shot in Gothic monster films (figure 5). The dinosaur manages to open the balcony window lock with its huge claw, and Maisie looks at the wide-open window, where the terrifying creature enters the room and knocks three times with its claw, echoing nightmarish home invasions. Still with a predominance of suggestiveness rather than a straightforward gruesome monstrous attack, through the use of shadows and the tulle canopy on Maisie's bed which hides part of the threatening Indoraptor, the dinosaur's claw and teeth approach Maisie in her bed (figure 6). When it is about to attack her, Owen opens the door and shoots at it, but the scene does not rely on the sole appearance of the male rescuer, since he runs out of bullets and it is Blue who saves the day. The scene is related to the construction of female heroines as described in the next section.

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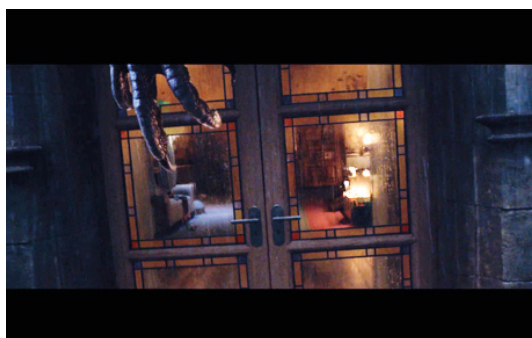


Figure 4. *JWFK* (Bayona 2018)

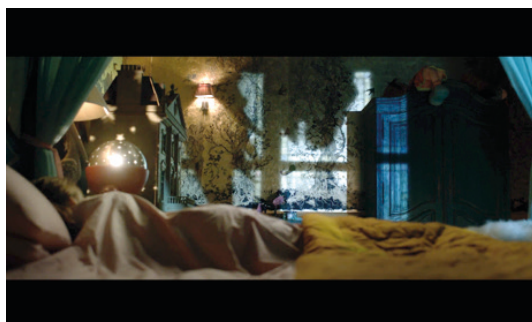


Figure 5. *JWFK* (Bayona 2018)



Figure 6. *JWFK* (Bayona 2018)

4. Characters: Gothic Heroines

Considering the second historical trend of Gothic cinema (Kavka 2002), the Female Gothic, several resemblances between *JWFK* and this subgenre can be observed. The Female Gothic trend was initiated—cinematically speaking—by Hitchcock’s 1940 filmic adaptation of Daphne de Maurier’s 1938 novel *Rebecca*.⁶ The homonymous film contains the main characteristics of the Female Gothic: a woman is haunted by another woman, who might be a rival, a Doppelgänger or a mother, often in the shape of real or paranoia-induced ghosts. The domestic space becomes a character in itself, the location where monstrosity is projected, as will be seen in the next section. Although this trend relies a lot on film noir tropes, a key difference is that, within noir, the female rival (the femme fatale) is the antagonist of the female protagonist, whereas in the Gothic the monstrous presence and the female protagonist are conflated. This identification is shown through the use of devices like reflecting surfaces: “the female Gothic relies on mirrors and portraits to indicate that the conflation of woman and monster is a matter of psychological reflection, even identification, rather than simply of symbolism” (Kavka 2002: 220). The use of reflecting surfaces (figures 7 and 8) in *JWFK* connects the film with earlier predecessors such as *Rebecca* (Hitchcock 1940), *Cat People* (Tourneur 1942) or *The Haunting* (Wise 1963).



Figure 7. *JWFK* (Bayona 2018)



Figure 8. *JWFK* (Bayona 2018)

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The scene where Maisie and the Indoraptor face each other (figure 7) has their faces superimposed, combining them. In the next, they scream opposite each other, but also side by side in the reflection (figure 8). Both scenes point to this matter of “identification, rather than simply of symbolism” between woman and monster that we understand at a deeper level after knowing that Maisie is also a clone, created from the DNA of her deceased mother. Besides, this discovery happens through the finding of an old photograph, which also constitutes a Gothic trope that reveals the hidden secrets from the past, as seen in other films such as *The Shining* (Kubrick 1980), *The Others* (Amenábar 2001) or *The Village* (Night Shyamalan 2004). Maisie thus becomes the troubled heroine of the Gothic story: she is haunted by a tragic happening in her past (her parents’ death), as well as a secret also from the past (that she has been cloned).⁷ Moreover, she is

identified several times throughout the film with the monsters —the dinosaurs— that ultimately haunt the house too.

The fact that the Gothic (human) heroine of the film is a child/pre-teenager is relevant in two ways. Although it might be argued that Maisie's age (she is supposed to be nine years old in the film) separates her from the classic Gothic heroines, most of these heroines are usually described as young women who have not reached legal adulthood —in fact, they are often under the supervision of a guardian. Besides, these heroines' most relevant characteristics, rather than a specific age, are innocence, inexperience, fragility and, in spite of that, bravery to face the threat and unveil the mystery. Where age is concerned, Female Gothic heroines are often in “the passage from girlhood to female maturity” (Milbank 1998: 54). Taking into account that Maisie is in her pre-teen years, she can be considered within the Female Gothic tradition due to her character features and development along with the narrative circumstances around her.

On another note, and in relation to the post-anthropocentric subtext of the film, Maisie is the rightful narrative descendant of Hammond's granddaughter Lex Murphy (although it must be noted that Lex does not fit into the Female Gothic, given the narrative features of *Jurassic Park*, and is rather an adventure-film heroine). During the car visit to the park in the first film, Lex states that she is a vegetarian. At the end of the film, she is the one who saves the day by managing to find the right link in the park's computer network to get the security system running again. Both facts have led Kenn Fisher to consider Lex as the film's heroine through her use of technology in order not to dominate animals, as Hammond does, but to save her family and friends. Fisher points out that, despite his intention to control the park and the dinosaurs through the computer system, Hammond does not ultimately manage to exert this control. Lex, however, “never uses computers to dominate the animals, and this quality ends up making her the hero for saving everyone still alive on the island [...]. The next generation and the generation after that could very likely become more concerned with the rights of our co-inhabitants on this small planet” (Fisher 2014: 322). Viewers of *JWEK* do not know Maisie's eating ethics, but she also embodies the post-anthropocentric heroine when she decides, at the end of the film, to set free the dinosaurs who are trapped in the dungeons (where a leaked gas is about to asphyxiate them), arguing that “they are like me”. This assertion is, on the surface, related to her also being a clone, but following the species discourses of the film (and also of the whole *Jurassic World* saga), there is a deeper meaning imbued in her statement, making reference to the ethical understanding of the dinosaurs as sentient creatures whose unnecessary suffering, like that of humans, should be avoided.

Within the adult cast, Bayona makes use of one of his preferred actresses, Geraldine Chaplin, to be the housekeeper, Iris, bringing to mind a previous haunted-house production of his, *The Orphanage* (Bayona 2007), where Chaplin played the medium Aurora. Contrasting Gothic and film noir, Kavka explains that:

the female Gothic is set in a house where a monstrous act or occupant (usually but not always female) is projected onto the monstrosity of the house itself. On the other hand, like the film noir, the female Gothic deals with the interrelated themes of investigation, paranoia, and (usually deviant) sexuality, though in place of the film noir's setting in the malevolent city the female Gothic substitutes a domestic space made uncanny. (2002: 219)

134 In Maisie's case, given that she is nine, I would argue that her deviance happens in terms of motherhood/birth rather than sexuality, but Kavka's definition still stands. The domestic space is made uncanny and Maisie has to deal with an investigation (about her mother and her own birth), paranoia (she suspects that something is wrong with her from the very beginning), and deviant birth, which is considered unnatural. Despite her short presence and limited dialogue in the film, Iris anchors the narrative even more in the Female Gothic trend: she is the British housekeeper and nanny who looks after Maisie in a mysterious way, keeping the family secret away from her. Her figure echoes that of the governess in Victorian literary fiction, as well as in Female Gothic cinema, a character divided into the archetype of the heroine—as the several adaptations of Henry James's 1898 novel *The Turn of the Screw* illustrate, including *The Innocents* (Clayton 1961) or *The Others* (Amenábar 2001)—and the villain—best exemplified by the malignant Mrs. Danvers of Hitchcock's *Rebecca*. Here, Iris constitutes a character in between (neither heroine nor villain), acting as a link between Maisie and her past, recalling the spectral presence of Maisie's mother, and contributing to the construction of the Gothic aesthetics and to Maisie's unravelling of Lockwood Manor's mysteries.

When discussing the differences between horror and the Gothic, Kavka also explains that:

what the Gothic insists on, [...] is a speaking from the 'beyond' in the form of a figure that arrives from beyond the present, beyond the grave, or beyond the rational, material world. This is in effect what demarcates or delimits the Gothic on screen, for speaking from the beyond registers the paradoxical eruption of the unspeakable, or the unrepresentable, into the scene of representation. (2002: 226)

Dinosaurs in *JWFK* come, indeed, from "beyond the present" and also from the figurative grave of their extinct species. This article has already examined the Gothic heroine Maisie, but there is another Gothic female character who breaks

yet another boundary within the genre: that of species. Blue is the velociraptor that has the most prominent role in the whole *Jurassic World* saga, and who has the closest relationship with Owen, the velociraptor trainer and animal behaviourist. Studying monster films from an antispeciesist point of view, it would be anthropocentric to believe that only a human female can embody the Gothic heroine of a post-anthropocentric film. Blue also fits the description of Gothic protagonists: she finds herself confined in a manor where she must face the male villain (Eli Mills) and his violent creature, the Indoraptor. In the end, like Maisie, she gets rid of patriarchal control and breaks free from the past state of things: an anthropocentric world that will undergo far-reaching changes when humans are forced to cohabit with dinosaurs, and which is the main setting of *Jurassic World: Dominion*.

5. Scenarios: The Gothic Manor

The house itself also fulfils the characteristics of the Gothic domestic space: Lockwood Estate is a huge, dark and gloomy old manor full of nooks, including dungeons and a secret laboratory, where the family secrets are kept (figure 9). Several scenes show the mansion at night with the moon partially covered by clouds (figure 10), which brings to mind the first appearance of houses like Manderley from *Rebecca* (figure 11).

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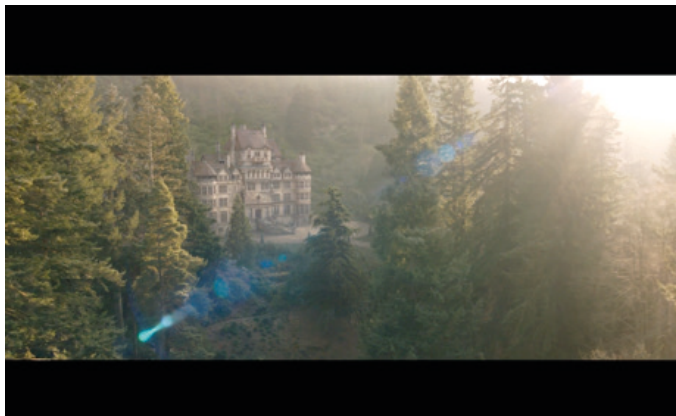


Figure 9. *JWFK* (Bayona 2018)



Figure 10. *JWFK* (Bayona 2018)



Figure 11. *Rebecca* (Hitchcock 1940)

In his analysis of the haunted house in film, Barry Curtis explains that one of the features of these houses is the flexibility of their margins and the willingness of objects not to stay in their customary place, where their shared meanings can be bestowed upon (2008: 11). Although Lockwood Estate is not truly a haunted house, in the sense that there is no curse or supernatural events inside it, the presence of resurrected dinosaurs within its walls allows the mansion to be considered within the theorisations of haunted houses through the concepts of the Freudian uncanny and what Anthony Vidler has called the “architectural uncanny” (1994: ix).⁸ This is defined by Curtis as “a structure within which familiarity and extreme anxiety come together, where ‘doubling’ is brought to a crisis through reflections, encounters and repetition, often a place where the passage of time is troubled” (2008: 12). In this sense, as was seen with the superimposed images of



Figure 12. *The Haunting* (Wise 1963)

Maisie and the dinosaur in the previous section, the house and its reflections are also reminiscent of another haunted house classic, *The Haunting* (Wise 1963), based on Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959). Wise's film takes us to Hill House (figure 12), where Eleanor Vance finds herself merged with the house on several occasions through the use of superimposed shots.

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Returning to the consideration of Lockwood Manor as being haunted, Curtis has argued for the extension of 'haunting' to elements that are not actually 'cursed' or 'bewitched', stating that "as any attempt to communicate with the past through excavation, exegesis or hermeneutics is a form of confronting ghosts, it is not surprising that 'haunting' as a metaphor has such an extensive currency, particularly since the fictions of haunting suggest that the search for origins brings with it unexpected ramifications" (2008: 13). This search applies, once again, to the *Jurassic Park* sagas and more specifically to *JWFK* (particularly due to the unexpected ramifications that this investigation brings about, such as the suggestion that Maisie is also a clone). The uncanny structure of familiarity is at play, on the one hand, through the contact that humans have had with dinosaurs in history and palaeontology manuals, children's books and films and, on the other hand, the 'real' contact with dinosaurs that the actions of Hammond and Lockwood have provided the characters with. This allows both the audiences and the characters to have a sense of familiarity with these creatures while at the same time experiencing anxiety due to the unease brought about by the bioengineering that created them, as well as the danger that these animals pose. The next section deals with this danger, and with the way in which we can analyse the *Jurassic World* saga situations from either an anthropocentric or a post-anthropocentric viewpoint.

6. Breaking Genre Tradition: Conveying the Monster's Voice

Dina Khapaeva has developed the concept of ‘Gothic Aesthetics’ to refer to a body of literary and filmic texts that share two distinctive features: “murderous monsters typically take the role of first-person narrators, occupying the place previously reserved for humans. Second, the plot and setting out of those works revolve around the representation of a nightmare” (2019: 17). Khapaeva argues that Gothic Aesthetics was a key cultural factor in the formation of what she calls ‘thanatopathia’ (from the union of the Greek terms for ‘death’ and ‘craving’), a kind of “death turn” that “reinvents death as entertainment and challenges our understanding of humanity’s role and its place in our system of values” (2019: 17). In her view, humanity has seen its moral value shrink through the commodification of violent death as entertainment.

Besides the popularity of Halloween, the fascination with serial killers, vampires, zombies and cannibals in fiction and the appetite for death-centred fashion trends (such as the use of skull patterns, skeleton decoration, or jewellery representing anatomical parts or weapons like knives), Khapaeva points out that throughout the 1970s and until the 1990s two philosophical trends established the intellectual basis for thanatopathia. These trends are French Theory —that is, theories put forward by French poststructuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jean Baudrillard— and Animal Rights Theory —advanced by Peter Singer and other authors who denounced anthropocentrism and speciesism. According to Khapaeva, both tendencies had in common the dismantling of the subject of Western philosophy, which, in turn, lead to an antihumanistic train of thought that ultimately disdained human life and whose best illustration within popular culture was the evolution of monsters toward more empathetic —and empathisable— creatures. She illustrates this with the difference between the vampiric characters of Stoker’s *Dracula* and Stephenie Meyer’s Edward Cullen or *The Vampire Diaries*’s vampiric brothers Damon and Stefan, and how deadly creatures who saw human beings as inferior became acclaimed characters whom audiences identified with —sometimes even more than with their human counterparts.

Besides other popular culture examples, such as the novel sagas *Twilight* (Meyer 2005) and *Harry Potter* (Rowling 1997) or the TV series *Hannibal* (Bryon Fuller 2013), Khapaeva also deals with the *Jurassic World* saga in her analysis of human-eating monsters in contemporary culture. In her view, *Jurassic World* is “the first that is profoundly saturated by Gothic Aesthetics to the point of drawing explicit parallels between its plot and the nightmare” (2019: 27). However, she acknowledges that it is *JWFK* where “not a single Gothic trope is left unexplored” (2019: 29). She continues:

As in the classic Gothic story, it has a Gothic castle with a secret dungeon and secret corridors, meant to disorient and confuse the viewer's perceptions; in this castle lives a young maid who is threatened by a villain and a monster. Much of Bayona's movie takes place in the neo-Gothic castle during a thunderstorm. [...] The classic nightmare trope of a 'monster under the bed' is used as one of the several tropes of nightmare hypnotics: Maisie flees from monstrous Indoraptor through the long corridors of the castle and hides in her bed to watch monstrous paw stretching out to her window lock, opening it and coming towards her bed to eat her. (Khapaeva 2019: 29)

Khapaeva's conclusion about the use of Gothic Aesthetics to enhance thanatopathia entails a negative and anxious concern about the dismantling of human rights. In her opinion, the evolution of monsters towards more empathetic characters that audiences love indicates a hazardous moment where humans are being treated like nonhuman animals (for instance, in narratives where many human characters end up being food for monsters). However, anthropocentrism and speciesism remain unquestioned in her analysis. Disdaining Animal Rights movements for being antihuman hints at her own speciesism being left undisputed and points to a willingness to maintain the species hierarchy untouched, with nonhuman animals below us being turned into commodities such as food, clothes or entertainment material. Animal Rights movements are often aligned with the theoretical approaches of Posthumanism—not Antihumanism—which is concerned with a critical inquiry into the capitalised Human subject that has not even always included all homo sapiens, but has rather grouped some people (such as women or racialised populations) with nonhuman animals and has thus oppressed them on the grounds of not belonging to the privileged category (Wolfe 2009; Braidotti 2013).

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From an antispeciesist, post-anthropocentric point of view, *JWFK*—together with the other *Jurassic World* films—brings about a change that is, indeed, influenced by Animal Rights movements and theoretical accounts coming from poststructuralism, posthumanism or ecofeminism. It is my contention that the result of these influences on screen should be read in a positive light. In our current ecological crisis situation, and bearing in mind the numbers of nonhuman animals being mistreated, tortured and killed on a daily basis in slaughterhouses, circuses, zoological parks, aquariums or private houses, producing a film (with such large audiences) where both species—humans and dinosaurs—must learn to coexist is something that should be thought of under a necessarily post-anthropocentric and ecologically-aware perspective. This outlook acknowledges that the danger lies not in bringing humans down in the species hierarchy, but rather in not doing so. In this sense, I also argue that *JWFK* is Gothic in its way of shattering previous genre traditions (namely, the representation of monsters as evil, irrational creatures that had to be defeated and killed) and providing a critical inquiry into clear hierarchical borders (human/nonhuman, natural/unnatural, or normal/monstrous). Moreover, it can also be

seen as Gothic in its way of looking at the past to unveil social problems of the present. As Steven Bruhm explains, “the central concerns of the classical Gothic are not that different from those of the contemporary Gothic: the dynamics of family, the limits of rationality and passion, the definition of statehood and citizenship, the cultural effects of technology” (2002: 259).

In relation to re-workings of the genre, Andrew Smith and William Hughes (2013) have proposed the term Ecogothic to explore the genre through the theories of ecocriticism. Sharae Deckard explains that new approaches to “greening” the Gothic explore how Ecogothic “represents cultural anxieties about the human relationship to the nonhuman world through uncanny apparitions of monstrous nature” which mediates “fears surrounding climate crisis and environmental damage” (2019: 174). Deckard vindicates the extension of the Gothic on the basis that “if Gothic often turns around a ‘return of the repressed’ that reveals buried social truths, Ecogothic turns around the uncanny manifestation of the ‘environmental unconscious’, particularly those forms of environmental violence that have been occulted” (2019: 174). Ecogothic can convey ecophobia, transmitting a sense of vengeful Nature that is positioned as an antagonist without any sort of post-anthropocentric analysis, but it can also be a source of a subversive critique “of the domination of nature in late capitalism, criticising dualist myths that separate notions of the human from nature rather than embracing humanity-in-nature, or summoning spectres of past ecological disasters in order to explore the complex causality of compound catastrophes” (2019: 174-175).

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Bearing in mind the disruption of anthropocentrism in Bayona’s film, as well as the specific addressing of Animal Rights issues, I would suggest the development of the subgenre of Vegan Gothic within Ecogothic, following the development of Vegan Studies within Critical Animal Studies, as advanced by Laura Wright (2015), in order to analyse the representation of veganism in popular culture. Vegan Gothic would thus look at works of fiction which stylistically share Gothic features (even if they also have other genres’ characteristics, especially those which have been traditionally closer to the Gothic, such as science fiction, fantasy or horror) and which can be read from an antispeciesist perspective, either because they portray vegetarian characters or because they challenge anthropocentrism, speciesism, or human exceptionalism. Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, which lies at the threshold of Gothic and science fiction, has had several vegan readings, such as Carol Adams’s (2015), who points out that the monster does not eat other creatures but rather feeds on roots and berries. This could therefore be the starting point for such a project, which I venture to say will include more and more narratives as veganism and antispeciesism spread like feminism or postcolonialism did at their moments of expansion, influencing, among others, Gothic studies.

7. Conclusion

This article has examined how Bayona's film *JWFK* fits into the tropes of the Gothic film. In terms of location, the film unites three classical Gothic scenarios: the island, the laboratory and the manor. Thematically, the film is concerned with monstrosity and the blurring of boundaries between human and nonhuman, real and unreal. The place of the monsters (the dinosaurs) is essential within the plot as revenants from the past that bring to light the harm done by people: firstly, the scientific arrogance of bringing about the de-extinction of the dinosaurs and secondly, the ecological crisis and anthropocentrism. Besides, antispeciesist theory has shown how nonhuman animals (or rather, the construction of the Animal) have become a discursive Other against which the capitalised Human builds itself, through the animalisation of those who do not fit into the patriarchal categories of the white, the citizen, or the civilised.

As explained in the section about the characters, Maisie becomes the Gothic heroine of the film, challenging the family in its broadest sense as the whole patriarchal structure which maintains othered subjects (including nonhuman animals) oppressed by the elites (represented by Hammond, Lockwood, and the range of villains featured in the sagas). Firstly, Maisie is a clone (although we end up discovering this is not so in *Jurassic World: Dominion*, but her supposed clone nature is key in this film), which is already disruptive of the nuclear family and of the female reproductive role, since she has been cloned by her grandfather. Secondly, she stands against the hierarchy of species by releasing dinosaurs into the city, stating that they are like her: they are clones, and they are also sentient creatures. Finally, regarding the blurring of boundaries, the film has at its core the breakage of the limits between human and nonhuman, natural and unnatural, real and imaginary, and normal and monstrous. The presence of natural and supernatural environments in the Gothic often points to the futility of human intervention on the grounds of Enlightened rationality, showing that "science or reason [are] no guarantee of survival" (Hand and McRoy 2020: 2). In these narratives, as happens in *JWFK*, Gothic nature "threatens notions of cultural and corporeal integrity, displacing humanity from its perceived perch at the top of the food chain and exposing us for the frail, clever and frequently hubristic animals we are" (Hand and McRoy 2020: 2). Given its challenging of ontological thresholds and its representation of this blurring of boundaries, it has been argued that the film is Gothic in its treatment of social anxieties by exploring the past through the use of the above-mentioned Gothic tropes. Bruhm states that "the Gothic has always been a barometer of the anxieties plaguing a certain culture at a particular moment in history" (2002: 260). *JWFK* is an indicator of how the ecological crisis and the concern about the relations between human and

nonhuman animals are being expressed, represented and received within Western culture.

All in all, this article has studied the Gothic aesthetics of *JWFK* and its depiction of monstrosity, highlighting its ability to generate a post-anthropocentric discourse which challenges traditional views that sustain conservative notions about the division between species. Through the reworking of monsters as creatures whose subjectivities should be considered (an idea clearly shown in the demonstrations in favour of dinosaurs' rights at the beginning of the film, as well as in the ending when Maisie liberates them), *JWFK* makes use of the Gothic in its formal aspects and in its construction of a counter-discourse that disrupts previous traditions and advances progressive views from an antispeciesist, post-anthropocentric perspective.

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1. The main difference between the Gothic and horror is usually stated to be the suggestiveness of the first —through the use of half-glimpsed shadowy images, and the prevalence of mood over obvious horrifying scenes— as opposed to the explicitness of the latter —with its quintessential graphic violence, overtly-horrifying images, torture and/or splattered blood. However, this distinction is often not so clear-cut. Films like *The Others* (Amenábar 2001), *Crimson Peak* (Del Toro 2015), or the TV series *The Haunting of Hill House* (Flanagan 2018) constitute Gothic stories in their concepts, but they make use of blood, jumpscares and graphic images in their development. For further reading on this, see Aldana-Reyes (2020).

2. In terms of discourses relating to the environment, monstrosity and animality, the first *Jurassic Park* saga (1993-2001) already provided a contrast to previous animal-monster films. While *Jurassic Park* partially followed the depiction of animal-monsters as symbols of revenge for humans, it also set the starting point for a saga that would come to represent the whole evolution of human-eating animals —in general, monsters— at the turn of the 20th century. In contrast to the monsters from the revenge-of-nature trend of the 1970s, the dinosaurs in the *Jurassic Park* (and later

Jurassic World) saga underwent an evolution which provided them with more complex subjectivities (for instance, in *The Lost World*, T-Rexes are not depicted as mere blood-thirsty predators, but also as parents concerned with the well-being of their children; and in *Jurassic Park III* velociraptors are represented as having complex communication, rationality and sympathy capabilities).

3. It might also be interesting to clarify the differences in genre that may apply to a set of films that drift among motifs related to science, monstrosity, fear, violence and threat (as is the case of *JWFK*). In the case of the *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic World* sagas, the common view is to put them under the umbrella of science fiction, since their narratives deal with unreal events that are made possible within the scientific discourse of the story. If we take Darko Suvin's (1979) definition of science fiction, for a work to be considered within this genre there must be cognitive estrangement at work (the events must be as close to reality as possible, so as to make audiences identify with the scenario they are witnessing; but there must be some alienating element that makes readers and viewers identify an estrangement, that is, a radical difference with their own world); and this must be provided by the 'novum' (a new

thing that scientifically allows the events to happen, like a time machine or genetic engineering —no matter if this is actually scientifically accurate or not).

4. It might be useful at this point to clarify the terms used in this analysis. Anthropocentrism refers to the epistemological cosmopolitanism that places the human as the centre of knowledge production and acquisition, which gives our species an advantaged point of view upon which human exceptionalism is built. Human exceptionalism or supremacy is the idea that the human species holds an intrinsically higher moral value compared to other animal species and is thus separated from the rest of the natural world through its superiority. This establishes a discriminatory value system which privileges the human species over the others, establishing a biased prejudice to the detriment of the interests of nonhuman animals. For a more detailed introduction to these concepts and the main theoretical grounds in Critical Animal Studies, see Fischer (2021) or Gruen (2012).

5. As illustrated by the edited collection *The Science of Michael Crichton: An*

Unauthorized Exploration into the Real Science Behind the Fictional Worlds of Michael Crichton (Grazier 2008), which explores the science behind not just *Jurassic Park* but also other works by Crichton, such as *The Andromeda Strain* or *Prey*; or the more recent article after the release of *Jurassic World*, “*Jurassic World: Just How Impossible Is it?*” (Parry 2015).

6. For further insight into the literary Female Gothic, see Moers (1976) or Wallace and Smith (2009).

7. In *Jurassic World: Dominion* it is revealed that Maisie is not a clone, but was born before her mother died. However, within *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*'s narrative, the identification of both Maisie and the dinosaurs as cloned creatures prevails, as well as its discursive consequences.

8. One of the fundamental aspects of the uncanny for Freud is the “animation of the inanimate” (in Curtis 2008: 50), which becomes corporeally real in the ‘resurrection’ of the extinct dinosaurs in the manor laboratory.

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