

American Gothic; or, What Melville Can Teach Us



The gothic is everywhere in popular culture today. Our novels, films, series, games, and music are saturated with uncanny phenomena intended to arouse dread and horror. Though still often associated with the supernatural (and notoriously difficult to define with precision), the true horror of the gothic lies in its transgression of established social boundaries: by revealing the terrors hidden or repressed in everyday life, it exposes past or present wrongs. The form emerges most forcefully in times of anxiety and conflict, meaning that in the current conjuncture of deep structural inequality, ecological crisis, and pandemic the genre will undoubtedly continue to flourish.

Twenty-first-century expressions of gothic horror have not been limited to mainstream cultural productions; left critics have also deployed images of monstrous terrors. Books like Chris Harman's *Zombie Capitalism* and David McNally's *Monsters of the Market*, which appeared in the aftermath of the Great Recession, portrayed the crisis as the logical result of a predatory and decaying economic system. Concurrently, the late Mark Fisher, author of the influential essay "Exiting the Vampire Castle," argued in *Capitalist Realism* that "the most Gothic description of Capital is also the most accurate. Capital is an abstract parasite, an insatiable vampire, and zombie-maker; but the living labour it converts into dead labour is ours, and the zombies it makes are us."¹

Some have even argued for a "gothic Marxism."² Although there is no gothic Marxist party or program (at least not yet), its proponents claim the gothic form is uniquely suited to help

comprehend the terrifying nature of our alienated, postmodern world. As advocates point out, Marx frequently used phantasmagorias, vampires, werewolves, and other gothic images in his exposition of the hidden workings of capital. Yet, as Fisher suggests, the horrors of capitalist society are not only inflicted from above; we are complicit in our own oppression. The gothic trope of doubling, most famously deployed by Robert Louis Stevenson in his novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), dramatizes the psychic horror of realizing that we have become monsters ourselves. The ogres that capitalism makes are not only megalomaniacal ghouls like Jeff Bezos and Peter Thiel—though they and their fellow billionaires are certainly hideous. The estrangement produced by our atomized, commodity-obsessed society makes zombies of us, naturalizing the exploitation of our labor and deadening us to the possibility of change.

The gothic is, therefore, far from inherently progressive. Moral contradiction and a dim view of human nature are elementary features of the genre, and the gothic's tendency toward indeterminacy—if not reaction—was evident from the genre's late eighteenth-century founding. The presence of the French Revolution in early gothic novels was recognized by contemporaries; among them was the Marquis de Sade, who claimed in 1800 that gothic fictions were “the necessary fruit of the revolutionary tremors felt by the whole of Europe” in the previous decade.³ It is no coincidence that the 1790s saw the novels of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis become wildly popular in England and the new United States. Yet while their villains were typically tyrannical aristocrats and corrupt clergy, these early gothic authors were far from revolutionary. The works that helped establish the genre responded primarily to middle-class anxieties, as suggested by the novels' competing representations of crazed and degenerate elites, on the one hand, and bloodthirsty plebeian mobs, on the other.

Even “Jacobin” gothic novels like William Godwin’s *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1817) were as fearful of revolutionary masses as they were of mad despots. While *Caleb Williams* attacked England’s entrenched social hierarchy, the eponymous character’s “total revolution” produces a dangerous “hurricane of passions” within.⁴ Godwin’s philosophy, moreover, rejected popular political organization in favor of gradual reform led by an enlightened few. In David McNally’s reading, *Frankenstein* is not about the excesses of Enlightenment rationality or Shelley’s familial issues (Godwin was her father; her mother, the famous feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, died soon after her birth). Rather, it is about human alienation in a world devoid of communal belonging. Yet Shelley, too, was unable to countenance radical transformation from below. “Like her father,” McNally writes, “hers are a politics of enlightened gradualism driven by publicly spirited members of the middle class intent on mediating between the rulers and the mob.”⁵

The American “dark romantics”—Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville—also demonstrate how the gothic can puncture myths and reveal that which was repressed. In contrast to writers in nineteenth-century Europe, however, the trio of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville confronted a U.S. culture dominated by a nationalistic optimism in which democracy, economic development, and westward expansion heralded not decay but progress. Even critics of American slavery and expansionism, intellectually embodied in the transcendentalists, were believers in an innate human goodness destined to be fulfilled in Young America. At a time of evangelical-dominated reform movements and a widespread belief in social and spiritual perfectionism, the dark romantics probed a grimmer side of humanity, and in the process, they challenged fundamental tenets of U.S. ideology.

Popular gothic works of today owe a major debt to the

classics. But is the early gothic of more than antiquarian interest? Like all cultural productions, nineteenth-century fiction reflects the time in which it was written. In our cynical postmodern age, we greet the notions of human perfectibility and the essential goodness of humanity with amused condescension. Even Donald Trump—a grotesque gothic monster if there ever was one—and his deluded followers believe that the greatness of the United States lies somewhere in the distant past. At the same time, as the continuing rule of authoritarians across much of the world shows, questions of democracy, equality, and justice remain as pertinent as ever. Is there a role for the gothic in forging a left cultural front today?

In his short life (he died in 1849 at the age of forty), Edgar Allan Poe pioneered a number of literary genres, including the detective story and what would become science fiction. But it is his gothic short stories for which he is best remembered. Tales like “The Black Cat,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and “The Masque of the Red Death” (the latter set in a world destroyed by a pandemic) remain terrifying—and immensely enjoyable. From the films of Alfred Hitchcock and Vincent Price to James Earl Jones’ reading of the poem “The Raven” on *The Simpsons*, Poe has remained an influential, if peculiar, figure in American culture.

The horror of individual madness and perversity, rather than the terrors of oppression in society, help explain Poe’s longevity. His emphasis on interiors and claustrophobic spaces, altered states of consciousness, and descents into madness that culminate in a shocking act of violence transcends time and place. Moreover, at a time when popular fiction was steeped in reformist moralizing, Poe disapproved of didacticism in literature. Indeed, his literary criticism, which earned him the nickname “Tomahawk Man,” was most scathingly deployed against transcendentalists, and especially

the movement's leader, Ralph Waldo Emerson. In contrast, Poe's own fiction was rooted in a deep pessimism and an acute awareness of the evil of which humans are capable. This view contributed to Poe's deeply conservative, if rarely overt, politics.

One of Poe's last stories, "Mellonta Tauta" (Greek for "things of the future"), is a science fiction-horror-satire that provides rare direct evidence of Poe's disdain for democratic rule. Dated April 1, 2848—April Fool's Day a thousand years in the future—the epistolary story's narrator is "Pundita," whose reflections are recorded while flying through the sky in a futuristic balloon. In a letter to an unknown addressee, Pundita mockingly recalls the "ancient Amriccan" experiment in self-government: "Did ever anybody hear of such an absurdity?" The notion that "all men are born free and equal" was repudiated by "the laws of *gradation* so visibly impressed upon all things both in the moral and physical universe." The only analogy that could be found for republicanism in 2848 was the case of "prairie dogs," which demonstrated that "democracy is a very admirable form of government—for dogs."⁶

Though novel in terms of genre and uniquely illustrative of his politics, "Mellonta Tauta" is not one of Poe's major works. Poe's only novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), has by contrast been the subject of much critical attention, ranking tenth on the *Guardian's* 2013 list of the one hundred best English-language novels. A sea adventure involving a stowaway protagonist, mutiny, murder, shipwreck, cannibalism, captivity, and the supernatural, *Pym* contains some of the most memorable scenes of horror in nineteenth-century literature.

The novel's horror is also heavily dependent on racist stereotypes. A leader of a mutiny aboard the *Grampus* is a Black cook notable only for his bloodthirstiness. A less one-dimensional non-white character is the Native American Dirk

Peters, one of the mutineers who ultimately saves the life of the main character, Pym. Yet Peters' humanity is attributable to his white father, while his savagery clearly emanates from his Indianness. This barbarism is reflected in Peters' appearance: less than five feet tall, his limbs are "of Herculean mould," his hands are inhumanly large, and his head is "deformed, being of immense size, with an indentation on the crown (like that on the head of most negroes), and entirely bald." Peters' mouth extends from ear to ear, with protruding teeth wholly uncovered by his lips, making for a comically grotesque gothic figure.⁷

Pym's most racist characterizations involve the indigenous inhabitants of the southern Indian Ocean island of Tsalal, where the characters land after being rescued by the *Jane Guy* of Liverpool. Though initially friendly, the "jet black" natives are in reality "the most barbarous, subtle, and blood-thirsty wretches that ever contaminated the face of the globe."⁸ Poe's representation of the islanders of Tsalal not only tapped into deep-seated white fears of racial others, but also reflected apprehensions then at the forefront of the U.S. popular imagination. *Pym* was published as sectional tensions over slavery were on the rise, and in the aftermath of a rebellion in Virginia led by the enslaved preacher Nat Turner. It also appeared at a time when tens of thousands of Native Americans were being ethnically cleansed from ancestral territories east of the Mississippi River, following Congress's narrow passage in 1830 of President Andrew Jackson's genocidal Indian Removal Act. The year *Pym* was published, 1838, saw the infamous "Trail of Tears," during which the forced removal of approximately 16,000 Cherokee to present-day Oklahoma led to the death of at least four thousand human beings.⁹

The celebrated novelist and essayist Toni Morrison once claimed that "no early American writer is more important to

the concept of African Americanism than Poe.” For Morrison, the author of *Pym*’s representations of Black people as “dead, impotent, or under complete control” function as a contrast to, and meditation on, whiteness, creating a “haunting” presence in early American literature.¹⁰ Yet Poe’s racism was one symptom of a more general view of humanity. In Poe’s world people were irrational and cruel, and no amount of Christianity, let alone democracy, could save humanity from its violent primal impulses or its capacity for self-destruction. However, this knowledge did not lead him to sympathize with those who suffered from others’ irrational hatreds. Poe disliked people in general, and held the reading public in contempt. The logical conclusion of this gothic vision is that social and political reforms are futile attempts to alter an order whose hierarchies are natural, and therefore necessary. Poe’s fiction forces us to confront our own capacity for evil. Yet his gothic is also a reactionary one, whose anti-democratic racism is still with us.

Whereas Poe’s gothic imagination probed the individual’s propensity for violence and self-destruction, that of Nathaniel Hawthorne explored the oppressiveness of human institutions. Often set in colonial Massachusetts, Hawthorne’s historical fiction was decidedly more “American” than was Poe’s. Hawthorne’s obsession with early New England stemmed largely from his family history: his great-great-great grandfather, John Hathorne, was a Puritan judge in the infamous Salem witch trials of 1692–93, during which more than two hundred colonists were accused of witchcraft; twenty, fifteen of whom were women, were executed.¹¹

Novels like *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* brought long-standing New England pieties into question. At a time when many viewed New England as the cradle of American religious liberty and the vanguard of republican

revolution, Hawthorne emphasized Massachusetts Puritans' intolerance, repression, and hypocrisy. His heroines—most famously *The Scarlet Letter's* Hester Prynne—have endeared him to some liberals, though whether Hawthorne or his fiction should be considered feminist is an open question. (In 1855 he lamented that the American reading public was given over to “a mob of scribbling women,” and that women generally write “like emasculated men, and are only to be distinguished from male authors by greater feebleness and folly.”)¹²

An illustrative example of Hawthorne's use of the gothic form to critique a triumphalist story of the U.S. founding is the short story “My Kinsman, Major Molineux.” The protagonist, a rustic New England youth named Robin, is in search of his wealthy uncle in an unnamed colonial city (obviously Boston). Of humble circumstances as the youngest son of a clergyman, Robin hopes that his wealthy kinsman will help establish the youth in the world. The narrative presents a series of characteristically detailed scenes that wear at Robin's youthful optimism—a common theme in Hawthorne's work. For some reason, whenever Robin inquires of townspeople as to his kinsman's whereabouts, he is met with contempt and mockery. In a particularly vivid passage, set in a tobacco-filled tavern populated by sailors and artisans consuming excessive amounts of alcohol, Robin observes a devilish man, whom he had spied earlier in conspiratorial conversation with some “ill-dressed associates.” When Robin asks the innkeeper if he knows of Molineux, he is threatened with being sold into servitude and is physically ejected, after which he is ridiculed by plebeian revelers.¹³

Passing a gothic church on one of the city's crooked and winding streets, a dejected and despairing Robin asks a shadowy figure if he knows where he might find his kinsman. When the man steps into the moonlight, Robin realizes it is the demonic man he has repeatedly seen in the town. The man, possessing an “infernal visage,” informs the youth that the

major will pass by in an hour. At the appointed time, Robin hears a riotous uproar approaching, and finally sees his tarred-and-feathered kinsman being carried through town by a mob, led by none other than the diabolical man. Molineux, it turns out, is a Royalist gentleman under attack from the mob in revolutionary Boston. Though ignorant of the political conflict between colonies and the mother country, Robin instinctively joins the sportive "contagion" that has been "spreading among the multitude" and laughs louder than anyone at his kinsman's humiliation.¹⁴ The story is thus a critique of the "contagion" of democracy that took root in British North America in the 1770s.

Written in late 1828 or early 1829, "My Kinsman" was also a commentary on contemporary U.S. politics. Scholar Lance Newman has persuasively argued that Hawthorne's demonic mob leader is in fact a representation of Andrew Jackson, while Molineux is John Quincy Adams, who lost the presidential election to Jackson in 1828. Describing the leader's features, Hawthorne writes that the forehead bulged "out into a double prominence, with a vale between, the nose came boldly forth in an irregular curve, and its bridge was of more than a finger's breadth, the eyebrows were deep and craggy, and the eyes glowed beneath them like fire in a cave"—a visage that, for Newman, is unmistakably Jackson's. Similarly, Molineux's dignified bearing resembles that of the genteel Adams, one of a dying aristocratic breed in the new republic.¹⁵ Read in this way, "My Kinsman" is a lament on the excesses of popular rule under demagogic direction, with Jacksonian democracy the inevitable consequence of the nation's mobbish founding.

There were many reasons to dislike Andrew Jackson, and Hawthorne was far from being the only New Englander to worry about "King Andrew" and the new menace of popular politics. Yet Hawthorne departed from other New England intellectuals in his failure to criticize American policies toward Native Americans or the institution of slavery. In fact, in 1852 he

wrote a campaign biography of the pro-slavery, expansionist presidential candidate Franklin Pierce; for his efforts, he was rewarded by his old college friend with a consulship in Liverpool. As sectional tensions escalated in the aftermath of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Hawthorne wrote to a friend that he had “not ... the slightest sympathy for the slaves; or, at least, not half as much as for the laboring whites”—which is to say in both cases, very little.¹⁶ After the outbreak of the Civil War a decade later, Hawthorne anonymously wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* that John Brown, the radical abolitionist executed in 1859 after attempting to foment a slave uprising in Virginia, was a “blood-stained fanatic.” “Nobody was ever more justly hanged,” Hawthorne wrote.¹⁷

It is fitting that the essay was published in the *Atlantic*, then as now a beacon of centrist intellectual elitism. For were Hawthorne alive, he would undoubtedly belong to the Democratic establishment, repelled by vulgar Trumpism but equally frightened by the rebirth of socialist politics. Nevertheless, Hawthorne’s gothic revealed the hypocrisy of American founding myths. While these included criticism of naive belief in the exceptionality of U.S. liberties and tolerance, they also included a deep suspicion of the very ideas of democracy and human equality.

Herman Melville, who himself wrote a poem about John Brown called “The Portent,” was enamored of (and possibly in love with) Hawthorne. His magnum opus, *Moby Dick; or, The Whale* (1851), was dedicated to the older novelist, and his essay “Hawthorne and His Mosses” demonstrates a deep admiration for “this sweet Man of Mosses.”¹⁸ Yet Melville’s fiction was as aesthetically and politically far from Hawthorne’s melancholy as it was from Poe’s misanthropy. Indeed, what Melville crafted might paradoxically be called a gothic humanism. While probing the depths of human depravity with lyricism and wit,

Melville's fiction directly confronted slavery and capitalism. Though he was equally compelled by humanity's capacity for evil, Melville sympathized with the struggles of ordinary people in a way the other dark romantics never did.

This sympathy resulted in part from personal experience. Though Melville's father came from a wealthy New York family, he filed for bankruptcy in 1830. After laboring as a clerk, salesman, farmhand, and teacher, the young Herman turned to the sea for work in 1839. A series of adventures based on his maritime experiences brought him literary fame in the late 1840s, but over the course of the 1850s Melville's writing grew increasingly dark and prolix. The novels sold poorly and were generally panned by critics—including *Moby Dick*. Between 1857's *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* and his death in 1891, a misunderstood and disillusioned Melville wrote no novels (though he did publish poetry) except for the novella *Billy Budd*, which remained unfinished at his death. Not until a revival in the 1920s would Melville enter the American literary canon.

Moby Dick, recognized only relatively recently by critics as a gothic masterpiece, was based on Melville's experience working on a whaling ship in 1841. The physically grotesque (badly scarred, one-legged) Captain Ahab, obsessed with killing the elusive white whale that took his leg, epitomizes madness in pursuit of revenge and domination. *Moby Dick* is an ambiguous monster; whether the white whale is a maliciously intelligent beast or simply a creature obeying the laws of nature is a fundamental, if unanswerable, question. Is *Moby Dick* symbolic of nature's indifference to humanity, or of the inscrutability of God's ways? That some things, in this case the nature of the whale, are unknowable is precisely what Ahab cannot tolerate: "That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him."¹⁹

While Moby Dick represents the ineffable, sperm whales in general—though vast, enigmatic, and sublime—have been reduced to mere commodities by the whaling industry. The graphic depictions of whales' death and dismemberment at the heart of the book dramatize an unquenchable human desire for profit and the subjugation of nature. Even an old, diseased, and lame whale "must die the death and be murdered, in order to light the gay bridals and other merry-makings of men, and also to illuminate the solemn churches that preach unconditional inoffensiveness by all to all."²⁰

The world of Ahab's whaler, the *Pequod*, is an atmospheric social microcosm (although one where women are absent, as in much of Melville's work): here, the authoritarian captain rules over a multiethnic maritime proletariat. The narrator, Ishmael, is an ordinary wage-working seaman. And, in contrast to the work of Poe or Hawthorne, non-white characters are portrayed as sympathetic and noble figures. A famous passage from early in the epic encapsulates Melville's gothic humanism-from-below:

If, then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall hereafter ascribe high qualities, though dark; weave round them tragic graces; if even the most mournful, perchance the most abased, among them all, shall at times lift himself to the exalted mounts; if I shall touch that workman's arm with some ethereal light; if I shall spread a rainbow over his disastrous set of sun; then against all mortal critics bear me out in it, thou just Spirit of Equality, which hast spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind! Bear me out in it, thou great democratic God!²¹

Though Melville (or Ishmael—it's often hard to tell who is speaking) takes pains to humanize harpooners, carpenters, and blacksmiths, the victory of the dark gothic vision is evident in the workers' ultimate seduction by the tyrannical Ahab. In

the end, the *Pequod's* mariners are reduced to simple "machines," always conscious that the "old man's despot eye was on them."²²

However, Melville's most trenchant social criticism can arguably be found in his short fiction. From the novella *Benito Cereno* (a fictionalized account of a 1799 rebellion of enslaved Africans on the Spanish *Bachelor's Delight*) to the proto-surrealism of "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," Melville's short works from the 1850s are among the most socially conscious fiction of the era. But it is his 1853 "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" that most innovatively indicts capitalism at a formative historical moment, and still speaks to us today.

Few characters in all of literature are more enigmatic than Bartleby. Like *Moby Dick*, Bartleby is inscrutable. Yet, far from a majestic sperm whale, Bartleby is a working-class copyist in a Wall Street lawyer's office. His gothic transgression is social, involving an abrupt refusal to work one day, when he responds to a command from his boss (the narrator) to examine a copy with the simple, "I would prefer not to." The response becomes a refrain to any and all of the increasingly bewildered boss's commands, and the notion that workers actually have "preferences" soon unwittingly infects Bartleby's coworkers—though nowhere is the idea of worker solidarity or collective action broached. Rather, Bartleby's haunting singularity, together with frequent biblical allusions to the Christlike figure betrayed by transactional Christians like the lawyer-narrator, dominate the story.

The boundary that Bartleby crosses is also spatial and temporal. Bartleby, we learn, refuses to work but also never leaves, taking up residence in the office. Bribes from the lawyer prove futile, and eventually the boss simply moves to another New York location—abandoning the ghostly young man. Eventually Bartleby is arrested as a vagrant and placed in the

Tombs, an infamous New York City jail, where his refusal extends even to the consumption of food. When the narrator visits, Bartleby greets him with cold indifference: "'I know you,' he said, without looking round—'and I want nothing to say to you.'" The lawyer's attempt to rid himself of guilt by giving money to the jailer to provide Bartleby with food fails, for the young man is soon found sleeping "with kings and counsellors."²³ The final transgressive act is the ultimate refusal—that of life itself. And though we have glimmers of Bartleby's motivation, in proper gothic fashion we are left uncertain as to who Bartleby really was.

In his 1953 study of *Moby Dick*, written while imprisoned on Ellis Island in McCarthyite America, the Trinidadian socialist C.L.R. James claimed Melville was a prophet of the twentieth century. For James, the novel's representation of the whaling industry's labor process and the lure of the megalomaniacal Ahab presaged modern bureaucracy and totalitarianism's "leader principle."²⁴ Melville's gothic thus exposed the exploitation, prejudice, and alienation endemic to modern life. And it is perhaps no accident that the Melvillian revival during which James wrote occurred in the same decades that some of the great American authors of the twentieth century—Zora Neale Hurston, William Faulkner, Richard Wright, Carson McCullers, Ralph Ellison, and Harper Lee—were writing socially critical gothic novels. In today's world of social isolation and economic and environmental catastrophe, Melville's dark vision is as relevant as ever.

But if the gothic can help expose the exploitation and alienation that oppresses us today, the question remains as to how we might move *beyond* the strictures of our grim present. An analogy with science fiction is useful here. In a recent defense of utopianism, the novelist Kim Stanley Robinson argues that science fiction operates by a kind of double

action, like the glasses one wears in 3D movies. He terms one lens of science fiction's aesthetic machinery "proleptic realism," a vision of the future that could conceivably come to pass. The other, dystopian, lens presents a metaphorical view of our present that, in its heightened representation of a nightmare world, more resembles surrealism. Today, we are inundated with the dystopian surrealist lens, while the proleptic realist imaginary is largely absent. Dystopian works, Robinson argues, are "fashionable, perhaps lazy, maybe even complacent, because one pleasure of reading them is cozying into the feeling that however bad our present moment is, it's nowhere near as bad as the ones these poor characters are suffering through."²⁵

If, like dystopian fiction, the gothic can expose contemporary evils, is there a mirror image of the genre analogous to Robinson's "proleptic realist" science fiction? Gothic stories and science fiction both grew out of romanticism, a literary reaction to Enlightenment rationalism and to a political economy based on private profit, wage labor, and mass production. Like the gothic and science fiction, there is nothing inherently radical about romanticism. There did develop, however, a romantic socialist tradition that, in criticizing the present by looking nostalgically to a pre-capitalist past, also found ways to imagine different futures. Though most famously associated with the fiction of William Morris, much left-wing fantasy and science fiction of a utopian orientation—the works of Ursula K. Le Guin, Marge Piercy, and Robinson himself come to mind—might be included in this tradition.

Left cultural critics should give more attention to the gothic's ability to defamiliarize the horrors that pervade everyday life. But we also need an alternative imaginary, a romantic socialist vision that looks to different ways of being and knowing to help us envision a more humane future. While we still need clear-sighted analysis of the world as it

is, we also need what sociologists Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre have called “critical unrealism”—a revived romantic anti-capitalism.²⁶ If the gothic continues to expose contemporary forms of oppression, a critical unrealism that imagines a new world of liberation might constitute the gothic’s own double. In addition to gothic phantasmagorias, we must have utopian fantasies. The forging of a left culture demands it.

Notes

1. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Zero Books, 2009), 21.
2. See, for example, Adam Turl, “A Thousand Lost Worlds: Notes on Gothic Marxism,” *Red Wedge*, June 4, 2015.
3. Quoted in Peter Otto, “Gothic Revolutions,” in Peter Otto, Marie Mulvey-Roberts, and Alison Milbank, *Gothic Fiction: A Guide* (Adam Matthew Publications, 2003), 11–57.
4. William Godwin, *The Adventures of Caleb Williams; or, Things as They Are* (Routledge & Co., 1853), 105.
5. David McNally, *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism* (Haymarket Books, 2012), 107.
6. Edgar Allan Poe, “Mellonta Tauta,” in *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (Penguin, 1987), 390–91.
7. Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*, in *Complete Tales and Poems*, 776.
8. Poe, *A. Gordon Pym*, 859.
9. Theda Perdue and Michael Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (Penguin, 2008).
10. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Harvard University Press, 1992), 32-3.

11. Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (Knopf, 2002).
12. Quoted in Leland S. Person, *The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 24.
13. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "My Kinsman Major Molineux," in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, Volume B, *The Nineteenth Century, 1800–1865*, Paul Lauter et al., eds., 5th ed. (Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 2248.
14. Hawthorne, "My Kinsman Major Molineux," 2255–57.
15. Lance Newman, "Nathaniel Hawthorne, Democracy, and the Mob," in *Our Common Dwelling: Henry Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and the Class Politics of Nature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 45–53.
16. Quoted in Milton Meltzer, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography* (Twenty-First Century Books, 2006), 109.
17. Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Chiefly about War Matters, by a Peaceable Man," *Atlantic*, November 23, 2011.
18. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," in *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, 2786.
19. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (Penguin, 1994), 167.
20. Melville, *Moby Dick*, 345.
21. Melville, *Moby Dick*, 123–24.
22. Melville, *Moby Dick*, 500.
23. Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street," in *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, 2648, 2650.
24. C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story*

of Herman Melville and the World We Live In (Schocken, 1985).

25. Kim Stanley Robinson, "Dystopias Now," *Commune*, November 2, 2018.

26. Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, "Figures of Romantic Anti-Capitalism," *New German Critique*, no. 32 (Spring/Summer 1984), 42–92.