

THE HYBRID (GOTHIC) CATEGORIES OF *MANIFEST DESTINY*
(VOLS. 1-6)

LAS CATEGORÍAS HÍBRIDAS (Y GÓTICAS) DE MANIFEST DESTINY
(VOLS. 1-6)

José-Manuel CORREOSO-RODENAS 

jcorreos@ucm.es

Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España

ABSTRACT: When explorers Lewis and Clark crossed the American border with the unknown in 1804, they were far from understanding what was before them. According to previous records, travel diaries, chronicles, etc., the territory beyond the limits of the young Republic was populated by natives, and by a rosary of brave pioneers. What writer Chris Dingess and artist Matthew Roberts conceived in 2001 was totally opposed to this idea. Their comic series *Manifest Destiny*, whose sixth volume was released on October 3rd, 2018, shows a reality riddle with monsters belonging to very different categories: zombie-like, vampire-like, hybrid (grotesque) forms, monstrous and anthropophagous animals, magical native sorcerers, etc.

KEYWORDS: *Manifest Destiny*; gothic graphic novel; American gothic; grotesque; history of the United States.

RESUMEN: Cuando los exploradores Lewis and Clark cruzaron la frontera americana con lo desconocido en 1804, estaban lejos de comprender o imaginar lo que se ofrecía a su vista. Según textos anteriores (crónicas, diarios, narraciones de viajes...), el territorio que se extendía más allá de los límites de los jóvenes Estados Unidos estaba poblado por nativos y por un rosario de pioneros. Lo que Chris Dingess and Mathew Roberts concibieron en 2001 estaba totalmente opuesto a esta idea. Su serie de novelas gráficas *Manifest*

Destiny, cuyo sexto volumen vio la luz el 3 de octubre de 2018, muestra una realidad llena de monstruos pertenecientes a diferentes categorías: similares a los zombis, a los vampiros, organismos híbridos y grotescos, animales monstruosos y antropófagos, hechiceros nativos, etc.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Manifest Destiny*; novela gráfica gótica; gótico estadounidense; grotesco, historia de Estados Unidos.

1. Introduction

The Call for Papers of the Conference of the International Gothic Association «Gothic Hybridities: Interdisciplinary, Multimodal and Transhistorical Approaches», held at Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester, United Kingdom) from July 31st to August 3rd, 2018, stated that «[...] the Gothic has been something of a hybrid mode, combining fact and fancy and indiscriminately borrowing from other genres and forms in the telling of its dark yet revelatory tales»¹. Much of the theory developed during the last years has contributed to the affirmation of this theory. The topics of the body, the monster, the abject, and any kind of grotesque have become a key point for the construction of what is known as «contemporary Gothic». Hybrid categories are crucial for this development, especially as theory approached the turn of the century and the present day. As David Punter (43-62) argues, the presence of the monstrous was born along with the Gothic itself, due to the relation it had with the genre and with the Law². The vague borders between human and animal, alive and dead, reality and paranoia, etc., have been widely explored by authors of many different scopes. As Sue Chaplin states it,

A key theme of Gothic literature since its inception has been the mutability and monstrosity of the body. Bodies in Gothic fiction have the disturbing capacity to appear as *disembodied*, as hovering between categories of the human and the animal [...], or as entirely and monstrously unhuman (233; emphasis in the original).

1 Available at <https://igamanchester2018.wordpress.com/topic/>

2 As also explained by Leslie J. Moran.

Catherine Spooner, one of the most prolific scholars dealing with contemporary Gothic, also assesses in this respect, expanding the «Gothic canon» even further: «There is much more to the Gothic, however, than either apocalyptic gloom or cheap thrills. Gothic texts deal with a variety of themes just as pertinent to contemporary culture as to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Gothic novels first achieved popularity» (8). What is going to be explored in this chapter falls (the hybrid or unhuman beings that populate the pages of *Manifest Destiny*) within the descriptions Chaplin and Spooner offer in the aforementioned quotations.

As *Manifest Destiny* presents the format of a series of graphic novels, it is necessary to consider some of the theoretical implications this can produce before entering the discussion of the *oeuvres*. Scholar Julia Round assesses that:

Horror and comics are old friends: the grisly genre and graphic medium have frequently conspired together in Britain and America. The British tradition of mass-produced art can be traced back to the fifteenth-century woodcuts sold in the streets that showed gruesome scenes of executions. Their prose equivalents would emerge in the nineteenth century as «Penny Dreadfuls» — fictional story papers that provided serialized and disposable pulp entertainment [...]. Subsequently, the notorious horror comics boom of the 1950s and consequent Senate investigations censored the American comic industry and medium. However, both mainstream imprints (such as DC Vertigo) and independent companies [...] have since continued to publish horrifying comics with psychological or adult themes. It therefore seem arguable that the British Gothic tradition has influenced the structuring and content of Western comics today (335).

A year before, Julia Round had also disserted on the implications of Gothic and graphic novels. In this occasion, she had proved how the different recurrent motives that are usually found in (mainly) gothic novels are perfectly suitable for the construction of comics and graphic novels' storylines:

Therefore the Gothic contains the possibility of a kind of three-dimensional structuring, where stories may be layered (either chronologically or spatially) or told from a variety of perspectives within a singular narrative (again, either diachronic or synchronic) — or a combination of both. In this way, gothic structure is also linked to the theme of veracity. Paratextual material such as footnotes or purportedly extratextual material (letters, extracts from historical

documents or manuscripts) are frequently used to raise the question of authenticity, or multiple stories contradict each other, or unreliable narrators omit the truth. Emotional affect and the self-conscious creation of subversive or sensational fiction means Gothic also holds the active reader at its center (56).

As it will be seen through the following paragraphs, *Manifest Destiny* perfectly matches the previously quoted definition.

2. *Manifest Destiny* as a gothic story

When Meriwether Lewis and William Clark crossed the American border towards the (then) unknown west of the United States in 1804, they were far from understanding what was before them. According to previous records, travel diaries, chronicles, etc., the territory beyond the limits of the young Republic was populated by natives, and by a rosary of brave pioneers. As it had happened two hundred years before concerning the exploration of the East Coast, the testimonies that dealt with the West came from many different perspectives and backgrounds. First European explorations of the area were performed by Spanish, French, British, and Russians who had claimed several portions of land for their respective empires. Up to the 18th century, those claims remained mostly on a theoretical level. The Spanish foundations in California under the rule of Friar Junípero Serra or the Russian colonization of Alaska (with the establishment of settlements like Kodiak —1792— or Sitka —1799—, among others) are good examples of this newly developed process. However, it is possible to track much earlier testimonies about the areas of the Heartland, where Lewis and Clark travelled. For instance, it is generally assumed that Francisco Vázquez de Coronado was the first European who went northwards to the Kansas-Nebraska border when looking for Cibola, an area that would be nearby journeyed by Lewis and Clark centuries later. The expedition was referred to by Coronado himself, by some of his soldiers, and by Spanish historians like Bernal Díaz del Castillo, in his *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (who also claims to have witnessed the discovery of gigantic skeletons belonging to monsters / giants)³. Again, as it happened

3 For more information about the relation of Bernal Díaz del Castillo and the Gothic, see Alemán. Benjamin Mark Allen also deals with this topic, by linking Díaz del Castillo's narrative to Jerónimo de Aguilar and Gonzalo Guerrero's captivity.

during the 16th and 17th centuries in the East Coast, the testimonies arisen in relation to these territories were a mixture of facts and fiction, in which unlikely events intertwine with those that have been proved by History and Science. As known, this process would last until a good deal of the 19th century had passed.

However, what writer Chris Dingess and artist Matthew Roberts (and several issue collaborators) conceived in 2001 was totally opposed to this original idea of land where only natives, prairies, and beasts could be expected. Their comic series *Manifest Destiny* (started in 2013), shows a reality riddle with monsters belonging to very different categories: zombie-like, vampire-like, hybrid (grotesque) forms, monstrous and anthropophagous animals, magical native sorcerers, etc. Through the utilization of the title *Manifest Destiny*, the creators are attacking the core of the American «householdness» and its idea of national identity⁴. Terrors do not only come from without, but they can also come from within, from the very idea of nation. As Oliver Sava states it:

Manifest Destiny combines the revisionist history of *Sleepy Hollow* with the ensemble-based survival horror of *The Walking Dead*, a premise that has proven immensely engaging over the past year thanks to Dingess' balance of visceral terror, emotional drama, and dark comedy. The other, absolutely essential part of the equation for this book's success is the art team of Matthew Roberts and colorist Owen Gieni, who bring a magnificent sense of scope to the story with their sprawling landscapes while still capturing all the nuances of the script in its more intimate moments⁵.

4 It is necessary to remember how Americans conceived the idea of «Manifest Destiny» during the 19th century. Widely understood, this socio-political concept would lead to an expansion of the country towards the West, completing the colonization of the continent and linking the Atlantic with the Pacific. This had several effects that were specially seen from the Presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829-1837) on, like the war with Mexico or the different relocations Native nations suffered. In regards of politics, «Manifest Destiny» also contributed to the shape of the panorama the US would have during most of the 19th century, with the rise of the Democratic Party: «Most Democrats were wholehearted supporters of expansion, whereas many Whigs (especially in the North) were opposed. Whigs welcomed most of the changes wrought by industrialization but advocated strong government policies that would guide growth and development within the country's existing boundaries; they feared (correctly) that expansion raised a contentious issue, the extension of slavery to the territories. On the other hand, many Democrats feared industrialization the Whigs welcomed... For many Democrats, the answer to the nation's social ills was to continue to follow Thomas Jefferson's vision of establishing agriculture in the new territories in order to counterbalance industrialization» (Faragher, Buhle, and Czitrom 413).

5 Available at <https://aux.avclub.com/lewis-clark-discover-american-horrors-in-the-brilliant-1798273102>

However, the implications of the historical «Manifest Destiny» with Gothic have been widely explored. As John L. O'Sullivan coined the term in 1845, the United States had a «manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence» (5). In consequence, the implication of the supernatural, understood as Providence, in the westwards expansion of the country, links the idea of national growing to the concur of the Gothic. The relation of gothic literature with the divine had been a constant in the western tradition when O'Sullivan explained his socio-political ideas. Through different literary devices, religion and everything it implies had been present in Gothic since the 18th century. Most of the authors and scholars who have explored how this idea had implications with anticlericalism or with a reaction against Catholicism. However, the presence of the idea of «religious reality» (either in the shape of God or the Devil) has also been strong. If we think of classical examples of the genre, we can appreciate how characters (usually victims and villains) are led by supernatural forces that are, implicitly or explicitly, labelled as one of the sides of religion⁶. Given this idea, the unreal creatures and scenarios the authors of *Manifest Destiny* depict are open to a great extent of imagination, as Marco Petrelli shows:

Again, the westward opening was a great thrust for colonization, encouraging another (and greater) wave of frontiersmen to settle in the newly purchased territories and providing grounds for the US's colonization of the North American continent. Apart from the immense geopolitical impact that the westward expansion had, it is necessary to consider how the Louisiana

6 Alison Rudd offers a re-evaluation of this process through the idea of liminality: «In *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (2002), Marina Warner argues that a range of narratives where metamorphosis is a defining dynamic, linked to the notion of the transformation of the self and fluidity of identity, has emerged in cultural contact zones throughout history. Warner describes these instances of cross-cultural contact as 'turning points of culture, and ... moments of clash and conflict between one intellectual hegemony and another'. From the fifteenth century onward of these metamorphic tales on the colonial imagination was one of ambivalence, oscillating between repulsion and attraction. Warner argues that the discovery of the Americas and the early ethnographic accounts of the myths and beliefs of their inhabitants were filtered for a European audience through a framework based on Ovid and his medieval interpreters, such as Dante. These fantastic tales, as has been argued, may have influenced the rise of the Gothic in the eighteenth century. The notions of metamorphosis and shape-shifting, and their relation to split or double identities runs seemingly counter to, but also alongside Judeo-Christian ideas of a 'unique, individual integrity of identity', pointing to alternative epistemologies to those of a Western world-view» (21-22).

territory, an enormous space that at the time was as much real as a palimpsest for imagination, gave the American mind a fertile ground on which to construct and install some of its most influential foundational myths. And it is precisely from here that Chris Dingess, Matthew Roberts, Tony Akins and Owen Gieni start to assemble their profound critique of the kind of self-celebrating, jingoist rhetoric still championed by the US (3).

Along the next sections, I will address a quasi-taxonomic task, exploring the different monstrous categories depicted along the pages and strips of *Manifest Destiny*, also pointing how they relate with Gothic Literature.

As a rule that can be generally applied, it can be said that the appearance of the different hybrid or monster-like forms in *Manifest Destiny* follows an *in crescendo* pattern, at least until volume V, as it will be explained later. The first volume («Flora & Fauna») is used by the authors as a medium to warn the characters of the horrors that will arise along the next issues. The first image the readers have to acknowledge of what they are going to see next is just a simple flower. Although it cannot achieve the levels of horror that the monsters on the next pages are going to reach, it is undoubtedly bizarre and potentially terrifying. The shape in which it is depicted (resembling a skull) marks the way for the path of death Lewis, Clark, and their crew are going to follow. The next figure the explorers encounter in this naïve vegetal boundary links the narration to the core the American traditions and folk culture. Even if only depicted as a figure emerging from the bushes surrounded in light and noise, this bigfoot-like body is the first real danger the explorers have to face⁷. This time, the monster will be easily killed by gunfire, but this will not be its last appearance. Indeed, volume IV will be entirely dedicated to this mythical

7 For more information about the bigfoot and its influence in North-American folk tradition see Napier. See also the relations with Díaz del Castillo's descriptions of monstrous skeletons found by Cortés's men in Mexico: «[...] y dijeron que les habían dicho sus antecesores que en los tiempos pasados que había allí entre ellos poblados hombres y mujeres muy altos de cuerpo y de grandes huesos, que porque eran muy malos y de malas maneras, que los mataron peleando con ellos, y otros que quedaban se murieron; e para qué tamaños e altos cuerpos tenían, trajeron un hueso o zancarrón de uno dellos, y era muy grueso, el altor como un hombre de razonable estatura; y aquel zancarrón era desde la rodilla hasta la cadera; yo me medí con él, y tenía tan gran altor como yo, puesto que soy de razonable cuerpo; y trajeron otros pedazos de huesos como el primero, mas estaban ya comidos y deshechos de la tierra; y todos nos espantamos de ver aquellos zancarrones, y tuvimos por cierto haber habido gigantes en esta tierra» (213).

creature, as the expedition approaches the Northwest, where it is supposed to exist. The relation this «monster» has with violence and death is enough to link its inclusion with the usage Dingess and Roberts make of the Gothic. However, it will soon be discovered that the next creature is not what they first thought, but something more related to classical mythology than to North-American one. It actually looks like a minotaur, as it is registered in Lewis's diary: «Species: ? (Human, Buffalo)» (24). As they will later discover, these creatures constitute an organized society (not the last one *Manifest Destiny* will show) that fights for its territory against foreign invaders. Continuing with the imbrication of classical and North-American mythologies, the next encounter of the men is a beautiful young woman with bright green eyes who stands naked on top of a rock. As she suddenly jumps, the crew runs to her «landing» place, making her similar to ancient Sirens. What they find is a corpse-life form on the ground, as if she had been absorbed by the earth. Fleeing a minotaur stampede, the crew hides in an apparently empty fort. Shortly after, it will be seen it is not empty at all, but populated by hybrid vegetal-human zombie-like beings that appear at night.

As the few survivors of the fort's inhabitants (at first depicted like a sect) will later explain, their companions have been attacked by a virus coming from a certain plant, showing, as a first symptom, bright green eyes, as the girl depicted pages before. As the second volume, entitled «Amphibia & Insecta», opens, Sacagawea appears fighting against a gigantic ladybug, the first monster the crew will have to face during this second stage of their journey. However, as it had happened in the previous volume, the quality and quantity of the creatures the explorers confront will follow an *in crescendo* pattern. Consequently, the next beast will be much more dangerous and bizarre than the aforementioned ladybug. As the men are going upriver, a hybrid monster crab-frog attacks the boat and makes the safety of the expeditionary peril. These two monsters (and the following to be faced) will be scientifically analyzed by Lewis, who is taking notes of every detail of the trip, with the aid of Mme. Boniface, one of the few ladies that go with the crew. More concretely, this one will be baptized as «Ranidea». Anyway, none of these beasts will cause any casualty among the members of the expedition. The reader will have to wait until page thirty-nine to see an explorer dying victim of a gargantuan mosquito, being this victim a certain corporal Shaw when he is trying to rape a young woman called Irene who goes as a helper of Mme. Boniface. The horror is not over yet. When

Irene and an unconscious Shaw are discovered, the soldiers find something even more terrifying. As they look at Shaw, something begins to emerge from his back, being it finally identified as another giant mosquito.

With this graphic reference, Dingess and Roberts link their narration to prior examples of horror and Gothic production easily identifiable by the readers, being the most recognizable example Ridley Scott's *Alien*. However, there is a previous example worthy to be mentioned. In 1977, Stephen King published a short story entitled «The Cat from Hell», where a similar scene is also depicted:

«What the Christ?» He reached out, grasped the dead man's shirt, and pulled it up.

Will Reuss looked – and screamed.

Above Halston's navel, a ragged hole had been clawed in his flesh. Looking out was the gore-streaked black-and-white face of a cat, its eyes huge and glaring.

Reuss staggered back, shrieking, hands clapped to his face. A score of crows took cawing wing from a nearby field.

The cat forced its body out and stretched in obscene languor.

Then it leaped out the open window. Reuss caught sight of it moving through the high dead grass and then it was gone.

It seemed to be in a hurry, he later told a reporter from the local paper.

As if it had unfinished business (374).

The last encounter of the volume will bring, again, North-American mythology to the reality of the expedition⁸. A monstrous creature, with a horned head, and apparently no eyes, attacks the crew, but it is easily killed. However, even if not an encounter *per se*, an interspersed narration by Sacagawea offers Lewis and Clark a clear image of what they can find on their way:

Two great hunters once chased their kill for a great distance. They came across one of these places. It was dark and evil. But these men were warriors. They had no fear, so they went closer. They found one of the small gods. It was evil and did not wish to be found. Most gods don't. One of the hunters was pulled in half. The other run back to tell the tale (109-110).

8 For a further exploration of the meaning of mythology in relation to America and the West, see Slotkin.

This narration turns Lewis's memory on, showing a conversation he had with Thomas Jefferson prior to the beginning of the expedition. During that interview, Jefferson showed Lewis a monstrous skull (in theory brought to Washington by a previous explorer of the West) that could only belong to a horned cyclops. With this ending, a Gothic explanation is added to the naturalistic and nationalistic initial purposes of the expedition.

Volume III («Chiroptera & Carniformaves») is one of the least horrifying one so far (at least in terms of monstrosity), since only two beasts are displayed, and one of them is finally understood more like a victim than like a monster. However, a long-living mystery from the first two volumes is finally solved here. As the crew leaves the river in which the previous volume had taken place, a strange blue talking bird attacks them. However, this bird will be later seen as part of an intelligent society composed entirely by blue birds (the second «monster society» after the minotaurs of the first volume). These animals have even conformed a parliament to decide what to do against their main enemy. This enemy, the actual monster of the volume, inhabits a vegetal arch that lies near their meeting place. At this point, the reader may remember similar arches that have appeared both in the first volume and in Sacagawea's interspersed narration in the second. According to what the birds tell the explorers, and to what they later discover, these arches are the source for the different evils they are finding along their way, and the prairie ahead of them has plenty of them. In this case, the arch is home to the zombie-like monster that torments the birds. As an act of honor, this monster is attacked and killed by Collins, a member of the expedition. However, horror is not over for the birds, since they are massacred by the crew during the thanksgiving banquet to avoid witnesses of the expedition, attacking *Manifest Destiny*, once again, the core of the United States's ideological foundations.

On the other hand, volumes IV («Sasquatch») and V («Mnemophobia & Chronophobia») constitute a digression within the main narration, since both of them deal with topics related either to the previous volumes or to a previous stage of the journey. First, volume IV goes back to some topics already explored in volumes I and II. The first of these references appears soon after the storyline is begun, and it depicts a giant centipede. However, this insect does not attack Lewis and Clark's crew, but a previous expedition that had travelled the same path back in 1801, as will be explained later. The second (and probably main) reference to volume I shows the Sasquatch, a big-foot-like cyclops

who also interferes with this mentioned previous expedition, similar to those beasts that had attacked the crew at the beginning of the series. This is also narrowly linked to the ending of volume II, in which, as mentioned, Lewis is shown a monstrous skull before the expedition is arranged. What needs to be understood about this volume is, however, the fact that it narrates a voyage that had taken place in 1801, so years before Lewis and Clark departed. Indeed, most of the volume is narrated by (or extracted from notes written by) an unknown explorer who, supposedly, had travelled westwards, lost all his men, found the Sasquatch, lost his mind, and returned to Washington to tell Jefferson what he had seen, and to die. The most interesting thing about this unnamed expedition is the inclusion of a new character called Arturo Maldonado, a lieutenant of Pánfilo de Narváez.

However, his name makes the reader think more of Coronado who, as above explained, explored areas near these. A possible explanation for the inclusion of a soldier of Narváez in the West would be the Cabeza de Vaca expedition, one of the most Gothic examples of the Spanish exploration and conquest of North-America. Indeed Cabeza de Vaca's *Naufragios* exposes many of the elements that American Gothic will later include⁹. This Maldonado will be, after his first appearance and throughout volumes IV and V, a companion to the explorers, symbolizing the dangers that the West hides, but also the madness the crew is going into, as proved in volume V.

Finally, volume V is a review of all the phenomena that have already been explored in the first three volumes of the series. After the crew has sheltered in a fort, a dense fog surrounds them. Soon after, strange images begin to appear, and several monsters attack them. However, the main characteristic about these monsters is that they had already been faced in previous stages of the journey: the vegetal man, the Ranidea, the blue birds, etc. Until the moment the fog is discovered to be the cause for the visions the men are suffering, several confrontations between them take place. Nevertheless, probably the most interesting scenes of the volume are included a few pages after the opening of the issue. They explain Sacagawea's training how to be a hunter when she was a kid. Independently of the violent training she has to suffer,

9 For more information on the Gothic implications of *Naufragios* see, for instance, Correoso Rodenas (*La literatura gótica*).

the scenes are relevant because she has to fight against a horned monster that seems to be a hybrid form halfway between wolf and deer, a creature that will appear again among the fog.

The fact is that she knows how to do it, so she can be the only hope for the members of the expedition to survive, as it happened. And Maldonado is visible in the key moments of the volume, too.

As Volume VI opens, the reader discovers the crew in the fort of the previous volume, which they have chosen as their winter headquarters. Only Lewis is apart from the rest of the men, since he is contemplating and surveilling an invisible arch (similar to those seen in previous volumes) that has apparently abducted two expeditioners. Probably, the principal characteristic of this volume is the lack of supernatural horror, since all the conflict is provoked by men and fanaticism¹⁰. A new key element is introduced: religion, which had been absent in the previous moments of the journey. So, the authors of the series continue with their task of questioning the foundations of the American Nation, in this case attacking beliefs and moral. Pryor will be the representative of this trend, acting as a preacher, and the leader of the rebellion against Lewis and Clark that eventually takes control of the fort and expels them.

Along with this religious fear, more terrors are first depicted in this volume, with the particularity that they are not physical terrors as in the previous issues, but more participating of the psychological terror. Then, the authors have again gone back to the core of the American Gothic, characterized by interiorizing the external terrors European Gothic had first unleashed, a Gothic that, in words of Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy: «[...] allows each individual reader to discover the quality and intensity of pleasure most useful at the particular moment of this reader's life» (30)¹¹. Some of these fears are for instance, the sacrifice to which the son of Sacagawea is subject, planned in order to pacify the devils of the prairie, or the introduction of Hardy¹², finally

10 However, Maldonado will still appear, supporting the different sides when the possibility of the coup arises, and even tempting Lewis in the shape of a voluptuous woman.

11 American Gothic has received a wide international scholarly attention. Due to this reason, it is impossible to summarize all the ideas about the genre here, specially bearing in mind the main objective of this chapter. However, the reader can go to numerous works on the issue. Among them, we can highlight Crow's and Lloyd-Smith's studies.

12 Interestingly enough, the pages in which the character of Hardy, found in the fort in volume V, is described are written in French, with an epilogue showing English translations. Then,

murdered by Irene to avoid his sexual attempts towards her. Along with religion, the main characteristics of the American Gothic are already displayed in *Manifest Destiny*, both summarizing and announcing what American Literature will become, with examples like Nathaniel Hawthorne and his concept of history, Edgar Allan Poe and his terrors coming from the soul instead of Germany, Henry James and the ambiguity of his governess, Edith Wharton and her to-be-felt ghosts, Flannery O'Connor and her Christ-Haunted South, Stephen King and his kids facing demons, etc¹³. What Dingess and Roberts explore in their graphic novels is an evaluation of how both literature and history need to be seen as the two faces of the same coin.

Literature, as a reflection of the context in which it is created, contributes to show historical facts and events from a different perspective. In the particular case of the United States, the different authors mentioned above are just particular examples of this idea. *Manifest Destiny*, although produced in a much more recent time, both absorbs the long tradition of American Literature and Gothic and serves to announce that itinerary at the beginning of the 19th century.

3. Conclusions

In conclusion, *Manifest Destiny*, besides questioning the national and ideological foundations of the United States, also makes an interesting contribution to the development of the Gothic graphic novel, since it explores a respectable amount of references to both literary Gothic and folk Gothic traditions. By doing this, the authors have enlarged the scope of American Gothic fiction, internationalizing it and approaching it to distant and different cultures.

Even if the storyline is now not as strong as it used to be in the previous volumes, the quasi-taxonomic classifications of animals, monsters, and hybrids that Dingess and Roberts propose is still interesting. The Pacific is near,

minorities are introduced in the storyline and, as it happens with the natives that take Sacagawea's husband as a hostage, are also a source of fear.

13 Regarding the importance of these and more authors, check both Rigal Aragón's and Correoso Rodenas' («The Haunting of the Spanish Empire») studies.

and the expedition is close to succeed. However, the horrors they will have to face from now on are far more terrifying than those of the monsters they had to confront, for they are now coming from within them, both individually and as a group. Probably, the best example of this is the fog that surrounds the members of the expedition displaying before them the terrors most feared by each of them. Strength will not be enough for the rest of the journey; sanity will be the most valuable resource for the next volumes and, according to what has already been displayed, its provision is not guaranteed. At the beginning of this article, both Chaplin's and Spooner's ideas of the monstrous and of how the body is related to the evolution of the different facets of the Gothic have been exposed. After evaluating the first six volumes of *Manifest Destiny*, we can also conclude that the understanding offered by the scholarship towards the Gothic have also been magnificently explored by Dingess and Roberts through the inclusion of elements like those hybrid beings, or the confrontation of the characters with themselves. *Manifest Destiny*, both as an example of contemporary popular literature and of a representation of the classical period of the Gothic, needs to be considered as, at least, an interesting depiction of how the Gothic, American history, and popular culture collide, and how each feeds the other. The body (or the bodies), as we have seen since the earliest examples of texts concerning North America, will play a key role in this process.

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