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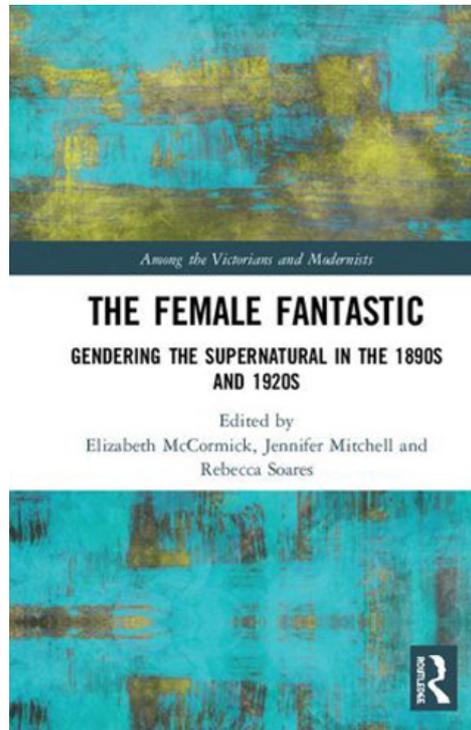
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REFERENCES

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- 1 Directed by a team of three American scholars, this book is part of Denis Denisoff's collection 'Among the Victorians and Modernists' published by Routledge. Complete with a foreword, a general introduction, a list of the twenty contributing scholars, an index, excellent topical introductions (excepted the 'introduction' to Section III), it offers a range of sometimes outstanding articles, each fully supplied with a solid critical apparatus (endnotes and substantial lists of works cited). No doubt, a reference book about the female fantastic in the English-speaking world.
- 2 The articles are aptly distributed into four topical sections: Things ('Heaps, Rubbish, Treasure, Litter, Tatters: Objects in Context'), Spaces ('Profoundly and Irresolvably Political: Fantastic Spaces', with a masterly introduction by Luke Thurston), People ('The Fantastic and the Modern Female Experience: Fantastic People'), Creatures ('Invitation to Dissidence: Fantastic Creatures').
- 3 The editorial viewpoint challenges orthodox interpretations and former theories of the fantastic by blurring the disciplinary lines as well as literary periodization in associating two pioneering angles: the fantastic in relation to women or non-binary authors on the one hand, and the parallel between the late Victorians and the Modernists, on the other hand.
- 4 Calling for our vigilance as 'active and sceptical readers', the book also challenges the canon by focusing on little-known texts, however famed their authors may have been or may be today (Daphne Du Maurier, Agatha Christie, Vernon Lee, Marie Corelli, Edith Nesbit, but also Hope Mirrlees, Margery Lawrence, Katherine Burdekin, or Clemence Housman, to name but a few).
- 5 Each author offers good overviews of other scholars' critical studies, relevant and often illuminating textual analyses based on archival sources (e.g. the MSS Notebooks of Edith Somerville, Jane Harrison's papers or Remizov's papers) and stylistic analyses, elegantly expressed and buttressed by a solid theoretical background.
- 6 A thorough critical theoretical article in its own right, the editors' substantial introduction, 'Toward a Female Fantastic', based on R. Jackson's *Literature of Subversion* and M. Bakhtin, presents us with a very welcome commented overview of now classic theorisations, from Caillois's studies to Todorov's structuralist-based categorisation, Derrida's hauntology, Baudrillard's *Simulacrum* theory or Brooke-Rose's deconstruction, as well as more recent scholarship.
- 7 From the 1890s, 'a watershed moment in women's history', to the 'missing decades' (the first wave of Feminism and Women's Writing when, between 1900 and 1920, women were 'more overtly active' in society than 'covertly writing'), these texts



challenge male-centred traditional Freudian interpretations of the uncanny as symbolic of castration fear.

- 8 In E. Bowen's 'The Shadowy Third', the 'form of fragmentary return' that confronts the main character when his 'dead wife is brought back in the shape of an object that used to cover a part of her body'<sup>1</sup> is an instance of the uncanny, but this unsettling experience opens onto fictional worlds that are much more fluid than any patriarchal-oriented binary structuring may warrant, as Céline Magot shows.
- 9 In a most welcome renewal of critical perspectives, this book rejuvenates the literary analysis of the fantastic to a variety of different types of otherness and different types of anxieties. Indeed, 'after Karl Marx and in Post Darwinian scientific communities', as DeCoux writes in her stunning introduction to Section IV, 'the multiple significations of the fantastic figure . . . are . . . fruitful tools for depicting a fractured and self-alienated model of personhood, for lamenting the necessarily repressive relationship between individual and society, and for delineating the limits of literature's liberating potential', and in fact, 'the existence of each type of otherness acts to metaphorize the others, resulting in a generative cross-pollination'. (DeCoux)<sup>2</sup>
- 10 'Cursed objects', for instance, encapsulate colonial and racial anxieties as metonyms of 'haunted imperialism' and its fear of 'reverse colonization'. As Edmundson writes, '[t]he objects may be destroyed, lives and relationships may be saved, but the trappings of gender, empire, and commodity culture will be encountered again'. Anne Jamison shares this viewpoint in her powerful study of 'the limits of the possible' in *The Silver Fox* by Edith Somerville and Martin Ross's representation of female desire in colonial Ireland. So does Mary Clai Jones, analysing Marie Corelli's *Ziskra* as 'a potent counter-narrative, chronicling the failure of empire and patriarchal relationships. . . . Corelli's decision to imbue her heroine with life-threatening capacities, thus, reverses the colonizer/colonial and male/female power dynamics by putting absolute power and control in the hands of a goddess-like Egyptian woman' (Jones). One would like to add that Corelli's portrayal of *Ziskra* and her jewellery and gemstones reminds one of Gustave Moreau, Théophile Gautier, Gustave Flaubert (*Salâmmbo*) or Charles Baudelaire, thus challenging male-dominated Symbolism and male-centred *Femme Fatale* narratives, famously analysed by Mario Praz in his *Romantic Agony*—a classic one would have expected Jamison to cite. The same could be said about Morrissey's beautiful analysis of 'Corelli's double voice . . . articulating through refracted and complex circuits the pain of an outcast soothsayer' in her 'rewriting [of] the Romantic Satan', which challenges 'the Gendered Genealogy of . . . the Devil [who] has been cast as essentially male'.<sup>3</sup>
- 11 Also noteworthy are Anne deLong's and Julia Panko's articles. The former's 'Framing the Fin-de-Siècle Female Narrative: Ghostly Portraits of the Emerging New Woman' focuses on Vernon Lee's *Oke of Okehurst*, but sadly sounds unaware of Lee's other it-narratives (esp. 'The Doll', 'A Wedding Chest' or 'Amour Dure'), Lee's *Genius Loci* essays, or important Lee scholars (Christa Zorn,<sup>4</sup> Patricia Pulham,<sup>5</sup> Catherine Maxwell, etc.). Panko's analysis of 'Uncanny Mediums: Haunted Radio, Feminine Intuition, and Agatha Christie's "Wireless"' provides an arresting analysis of the central place of the radio set and its disembodied, ghostly voices at the core of British homes, and the opposition between male experts and women clairvoyants.
- 12 Other new theoretical tracks allow approaches that take into account the Gothic as a 'conserving genre' which may sometimes verge on anti-feminism or even misogyny.

This is particularly striking when women writers, like Edith Nesbit, produce ‘male Gothic’ fiction according to Andrew Hock Soon Ng,<sup>6</sup> whose study hinges on Anne Williams’s typology:<sup>7</sup> for whom ‘the supernatural in female Gothic encourages gazing that is expansive and other-centric, as opposed to male Gothic’s representation of the phenomenon, which confines the gaze within its egocentric borders’.<sup>8</sup>

- 13 The quest for the defining traits of the feminine, female, or feminist fantastic is further questioned from the cogent perspective of gender studies and queer studies. Using Elizabeth Freeman’s notion of ‘erotohistoriography’ as a backbone, Mitchell compares Radclyffe Hall’s ‘Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself’ and Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*, examining how ‘both authors’ constructions of liminal characters within liminal chronologies very literally theorize the intersection of “historical consciousness” and corporeal sensations’ and use ‘the fantastic as a means of codifying queer desire in seemingly anachronistic or impossibly *trans*historic ways’ (Mitchell).<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Freeman’s concept of ‘chrononormativity’ and Lee Edelman’s ‘reproductive futurism’<sup>10</sup> provide a convincing theoretical frame for English’s study<sup>11</sup> of Katherine Burdekin (‘Murray Constantine’), *Proud Man* (1934). Contrary to Kraft-Ebing or Havelock Ellis<sup>12</sup> who supposed that inverts are endowed with gender traits of the opposite sex, and ‘[u]nlike the Darwinian paradigm which sees life as driven and improved by biological change and heterosexual reproduction, Burdekin . . . shifts away from the body to the soul’ to the point of somatophobia. ‘Crucially, instead of the Child and the family, Burdekin’s work invests hope in the queer figure of the sexual invert as a prophet and a revolutionary’ (English).
- 14 Women’s liberation may be expressed through stories reminiscent of folktales of animal bride and bridegroom—indeed, rewritings of the myth of Cupid and Psyche—, where heroines become aware of their secret ‘fundamental beastliness’, get transformed to the point of embracing their ‘inner wolf’, their animal partner and claiming their animal kinship.<sup>13</sup> This ‘connects intimately to late nineteenth-century discourses of evolution and later to early twentieth-century psychoanalytic ideas about the id, human sexuality, and the death drive’ (Lizzie Harris McCormick),<sup>14</sup> at a time when the idea that sexual desire was a ‘vital part of the human psyche for women as much as for men was becoming a cause championed by the growing progressive vein of male intellectual life’ (Bruley 76).<sup>15</sup> But with this new interest in a female pleasure principle, also grew women’s wish to be free to *abstain* from sexual intercourse. ‘Among the more radical fringe of professional women—educated and employed or otherwise economically independent—these issues [i.e. sexuality] would have centred around women’s right of refusal perhaps even more than engagement. In Kallas’s work, however, ‘the werewolves in the woods’, just like empowered women, are ‘a trinity of transitory natures: bestial, human, and albeit darkly divine’ (Harris McCormick).
- 15 Women’s quest for the possibility of liberation through ‘complex hybridity’ (McCormick) can be enacted in a mode akin to Magic Realism, like Clemence Housman and Aino Kallas, or in the particularly playful—indeed carnivalesque—mode of Hope Mirrlees, to whose work Jean Mills<sup>16</sup> dedicates a beautiful and complex Bakhtinian literary study, analysing *Lud-in-the-Mist* as a cross between Menippean satire (‘the journalistic genre of antiquity’ according to Bakhtin) & High Fantasy, combining the grotesque, the obscene and the fantastic with a view to pointing at ‘the ideological issues of the day’. Mirrlees’s bestiary includes a character named Nicolas Chanticleer, a

clear echo, missed by this splendid paper, to Edmond Rostand's famed theatre play and eponymous character of *Chantecler* (1910).

- 16 The most striking article fruitfully uses trauma studies and encourages 'critics to theorize the connection between . . . trauma accounts and experimental high modernist aesthetics' (Schnur).<sup>17</sup> Djuna Barnes's use of the fantastic and the fairy tale by Wendell (based on her own father), the abusive father of the Ryder children, is analysed as 'a critique of ideological indoctrination' (Schnur). 'In *Ryder* . . . storytelling and fantasy do not provide an escape from sexual trauma and abuse, but work to convince children to accept the societal parameters and rules that allow for this abuse to continue, even in the realms of fantasy' (Schnur 235). About Julie's 'playful maternity' however, Schnur seems to mistake recurrent fantasies, indeed intrusive memories of the trauma, for 'a form of experimentation' meaning that the little girl 'properly engages with and performs the Ryder ideology'. Barnes does focus on 'the risks of motherhood and the physical dangers that unregulated fertility poses to women's health and autonomy',<sup>18</sup> all the more so as maternity here is tied to constant sexual abuse of women, free love for men and polygamy.
- 17 As DeCoux writes, '[d]espite their varying levels of optimism regarding the prospect of unfettered female liberation, all offer heterodox models of femininity, and all expose the radical potential that has always existed at the root of popular, and populist, stories of fantastic and monstrous creatures'.

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## NOTES

1. Céline Magot, 'The Haunting House in E. Bowen's "The Shadowy Third".'
2. Jessica DeCoux, 'Invitation to Dissidence; Fantastic Creatures.'
3. Colleen Morissey, 'Rewriting the Romantic Satan; the Sorrows and Cynicism of Marie Corelli'.
4. *Vernon Lee: Aesthetics, History, and the Victorian Female Intellectual*, Ohio Univ. Press, 2003.
5. *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales*, Routledge, 2008.
6. Andrew Hock Soon Ng, 'The Fantastic and the Woman Question in Edith Nesbit's Male Gothic Stories'.
7. Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, U. of Chicago Press, 1995.
8. Williams quoted in Hock Soon Ng, p. 139.
9. Jennifer Mitchell, 'Fantastic Transformations; Queer Desires & Uncanny Time in Work by Radclyffe Hall and Virginia Woolf'.
10. 'the use of time to organize individual human bodies towards maximum productivity'. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Duke UP, 2004.
11. Elizabeth English, "'To find my real friends I have to travel a long way"; Queer Time Travel in Katherine Burdekin's Speculative Fiction'.
12. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 1917.
13. See Clarissa Pinkola Estès, *Women who Run with the Wolves; Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, Ballantine, 1992.
14. Lizzie Harris McCormick, 'Beauty is the Beast; Shapeshifting, Suffrage and Sexuality in Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf* and Aino Kallas's *The Wolf's Bride*'.

15. Sue Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900*. St Martin's Press, 1999. Quoted by Harris McCormick, p. 216.
  16. Jean Mills, 'Obscene, Grotesque, and Carnavalesque; Hope Mirrlees's *Lud-in-the-Mist* as Menippean Satire'.
  17. Kate Schnur, 'The Doctor Treats the Ten-Breasted Monster; Medicine, the Fantastic Body, and Ideological Abuse in Djuna Barnes's *Ryder*'.
  18. Beth Widmaier Capo, 'Can this Woman Be Saved? Birth Control and Marriage in Modern American Literature'. *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1/2, 2004, pp. 28-41. Cited by Schnur, p. 232.
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