

Call For Papers

Monstrous Bodies: Deviance, Transformation, and Belonging in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction

Editors

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This special issue invites contributions examining how contemporary Anglophone fiction (2000–2025) portrays monstrous or deviant bodies as sites of cultural anxieties, creativity, and resistance. Across works by authors such as Ian McEwan, Jeanette Winterson, Ali Smith, Julian Barnes, Zadie Smith, Guy Gunaratne, Mohsin Hamid, and Deborah Levy – along with a broader range of global Anglophone writers – questions of embodiment intersect with disability, gender, queerness, race, migration, and structural marginalisation. These texts also interrogate disembodiment and transformation through emerging technologies, digital realities, and cyborg or posthuman identities, foregrounding hybrid or augmented corporealities shaped by algorithmic, networked, or virtual environments.

Drawing on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's seminal *Monster Theory* (1996), which conceptualises monstrosity as a cultural construct that materialises collective fears and desires, this special issue explores how contemporary fiction reimagines the monstrous in response to sociopolitical, environmental, and technological change. Such shifts unsettle traditional understandings of the human, reshape forms of labour and creativity, and reconfigure relationships between bodies, identities, and power. Theoretical frameworks by Donna Haraway (1991, 2016), Lennard J. Davis (1995), Rosi Braidotti (2013, 2019), and Avtar Brah (1996) offer critical tools for examining monstrosity's intersections with displacement, diasporic experience, disability, and hybrid or fluid forms of belonging, while recent approaches in environmental humanities and multispecies studies highlight how ecological crisis and interspecies entanglements increasingly give rise to bodies that trouble the boundaries between the human, the animal, the vegetal, and the technological (Haraway 2016; Alaimo 2016).

In this light, the special issue also seeks to foreground the affective and political economies that shape contemporary figurations of the monstrous: how vulnerability, precarity, and embodied agency are negotiated through narrative forms that centre marginalised, unstable, or transformed bodies (Halberstam 1995; Kafer 2013). Narratives of trauma, memory, and repair often mobilise the monstrous to reframe histories of violence and articulate alternative modes of community, kinship, and resilience. Moreover, speculative, dystopian, and futurist imaginaries offer fertile ground for examining how “new monsters” emerge amid accelerating globalisation, technological innovation, and ecological breakdown (Haraway 2016; Alaimo 2016), inviting readers to rethink the very categories of humanity, community, and belonging.

We particularly welcome contributions that consider how Anglophone fiction responds to contemporary geopolitical tensions, mobility regimes, ecological crisis, and the emergence of these “new monsters” across the twenty-first century’s rapidly shifting cultural landscapes.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Migration, displacement, and diasporic identities
- Monstrosity, agency, and resistance
- Representations of physical and cognitive disabilities in relation to the monstrous
- Gendered and queer embodiment as resistance or marginalisation
- Posthuman and transhuman transformations: cyborgs, digital bodies, virtual identities
- Algorithmic, datafied, and AI-driven forms of monstrosity
- Medicalised bodies, contagion, and biopolitical monstrosity
- Monstrous labour, precarity, and neoliberal economies of the body
- Infrastructural, systemic, and more-than-human monstrosities
- Ecological monstrosity and environmental crisis as narratives of human failure
- Empathy, care, and the ethics of depicting deviant bodies
- Revisions and reworkings of classical monstrous archetypes

References

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Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Davis, Lennard J. *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. London: Verso, 1995.

Halberstam, Jack. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Duke University Press, 1995.

Haraway, Donna. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.” In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 149–181. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Murray, Stuart. *Disability and the Posthuman: Bodies, Technology and Cultural Futures*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.

Submission of abstracts:

Authors wishing to contribute to this issue of *Anglistica AION* are invited to send an abstract of no more than 300 words (excluding references) in MS Word format by **28 February 2026**. Abstracts should be sent to Luca Baratta (luca.baratta@unisi.it), Michela Compagnoni (michela.compagnoni@uniroma3.it), and Katarzyna Burzyńska (kasia86@amu.edu.pl) with anglistica@unior.it copied.

Important dates:

Deadline for abstracts: **28 February 2026**

Notification of acceptance: **8 March 2026**

Deadline for completed articles: **19 July 2026**