'The Face of Evil': Gothic Biofiction and Figures of Enduring Terror in a Post-9/11 World
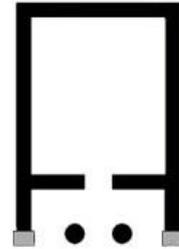
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'The Face of Evil': Gothic Biofiction and Figures of Enduring Terror in a Post-9/11 World

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The literary mode of the Gothic has always sustained a tension between appearances and depths, hinting at the darkness repressed or hidden below the narrative's surface. This friction is located particularly in the sur-*faces* of the Gothic protagonist whose physical appearance is traditionally invested with evil intent but whose inner emotional landscape is unsettlingly familiar. From the faces of terrified onlookers watching the Twin Towers burn to the images of the fifty-two "most wanted" Iraqi political and military leaders printed on a deck of cards distributed to American and Coalition forces in Iraq, the human countenance has figured and remained as a powerful symbol of terror and revenge during the era of the War on Terror. Some faces became narratives that evinced heroism and patriotism and propelled the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom, such as 'The Portraits of Grief' series in the *New York Times*, which featured a photograph and obituary for over 1900 victims over a period of three months. Yet other faces became nightmarish in their capacity to evoke anxiety and terror; the video of Daniel Pearl's weary countenance in the moments before his murder by Pakistani militants is juxtaposed with the faces of the dead his captors use to prove the horror inflicted by Western powers upon civilian populations in Muslim nations.

There are two faces, however, that continue to perform a particularly powerful effect upon the Western imagination as symbols of the nightmares that were initiated and produced by the War on Terror. The face of Mohammed Atta, the alleged pilot of the hijacked Flight 11 that destroyed the North Tower of the World Trade Centre, became the image that demonstrated America's vulnerability, the historic fear of invasion from within. The old anxieties regarding race, military superiority and Manifest Destiny aroused by the Egyptian architectural student propelled the United States and its coalition of willing allies to mount Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, a blitzkrieg that saw Kabul and Kandahar 'fall' within just eight weeks. Replayed endlessly in the Western media, Atta's face became singularly responsible for the nearly three thousand deaths on September the 11th, 2001, and the impassive expression on his Florida driving licence was proof, if it was needed, of his evil nature.

As a figure of terror in fiction, Atta was avoided until Martin Amis's short story of 2006 'The Last Days of Muhammad Atta,' a narrative that imagined the actions and thoughts of the hijacker in the days prior to the September 11 attacks. In 2007, Don DeLillo's attempt to imagine the hijackers is realised through the character of Hammad, in his novel *Falling Man*. Hammad is presented through tropes of physicality, such as his vulnerability to the cold winters of Germany and his sexual desires that are satiated through masturbation; however, DeLillo refrains from confronting the face of Hammad. Instead, the terrorist-in-training is 'invisible to [Americans] and they were becoming invisible to him.'[1] Amis's depiction of Atta complied

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[1] Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 2007), p. 171.

with the Manichean rhetoric of good and evil that marked the language of the Bush Administration and the military at the commencement of Operation Enduring Freedom, where freedom (or control) was to be gained by invasion and democracy (or revenge) achieved by violence.

Yet it was an American soldier, Private Lynndie England, who became the face of the Abu Ghraib torture scandal that became undeniable proof of America's failed military operations in Iraq and its own capacity for evil. Judith Thompson's 2007 play *The Palace of the End* presents England as a figure of terror whose complicity in the cruel and dehumanising regime of Abu Ghraib situates her as America's own "face of evil". This paper will argue for Amis's physical depiction of Atta and Thompson's characterisation of England to be understood as illustrative examples of a genre that has emerged out of the chaos of the War on Terror and its insistence on appearances, Gothic biofiction. These narratives reveal the shared spaces—and faces—where plot and history repeatedly meet to cast light on the face of the other as human; like ourselves, they are perpetrators and victims of the West's darkly democratic, Janus-faced operations in the East that refuse to be temporally constrained.

Gothic Biofiction

I propose a new subgenre, Gothic biofiction, to organise those narratives which aim to imagine the inner lives and actions of figures of terror in a post-9/11 world, both those in the Western and Arab Muslim worlds. Further, I aim to demonstrate how the mode of the Gothic and the genre of biofiction have become useful frames for reading the terrorist as an inescapable fear that is always on the margins of the post-9/11 literary landscape. Michael Lackey, in his useful definition of biofiction as 'literature that names its protagonist after an actual biographical figure,'[2] also recognises the tension within the genre between the past and the present and between 'biography (representation) and fiction (creation)'.[3] Similarly, David Punter has remarked of the friction inherent within the modern Gothic mode to foreground the past within the present *as* present. Gothic biofiction does not merely imagine the story of a *past* figure of terror but, as Punter has noted, tries to 'assert the possibility of a life that is not haunted as it situates itself resolutely in a present' by attempting to illuminate and humanise a past that precedes, but is intimately connected to, the terror event.[4] When Punter identifies the characters and voices of the Gothic through its manner of speaking to us of 'phantoms (and) spectres,'[5] he locates the Gothic turn most accurately through his reading of the mode as peopled by characters who 'incessantly speak of bodily harm and the wound.'[6] When the lives and actions of the terrorists are presented in fiction as a preparation for the terror that is in waiting and the wounds to come—both the corporeal and psychic wounds of the victims and the United States itself—Gothic biofiction emerges as an available strategy to attempt an understanding of not just *how* America was hurt—for this is the focus of much of the domestic fiction written in the years immediately after 9/11—but *why* the nation was wounded and the impulse to wound in turn. In this way, Gothic biofiction disturbs the layers of representation created by media slant

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[2] Michael Lackey, 'Locating and Defining the Bio in Biofiction', *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, 31:1 (2016), 3-10 (p. 3).

[3] ibid., p. 6.

[4] David Punter, *A Companion to the Gothic* (Malden MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), p. ix.

[5] ibid.

[6] David Punter, *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), p. 2.

and government rhetoric to illuminate the accumulative history of oppression by the United States against cultural and military enemies.

The genre of Gothic biofiction acts as the most available lens through which to reveal the ideological connections between dominant voices and those marginalised individuals who inhabit the past and present in a Gothicised state of abjection, yet also exert a very powerful presence in a society's closely concealed centre. The genre can illuminate concealed anxieties and repressed unease within national and social discourses regarding patriotism, gender and sexuality and while this effect is also a fundamental characteristic of the Gothic, Gothic biofiction can develop more incisive relationships through its focus on actual, not fictional, individuals who are reframed as dangerously flawed heroes or vulnerable villains. The genre's conventions include a preoccupation with appearances and memories, forms of monomania, the trope of the antihero, an idiosyncratic syntactic structure and an emphasis on retelling the personal past as a prologue to the political present through alternating or unconventional narrative voices. Furthermore, Gothic biofiction recognises both the "otherness" of the terrorist and their ineluctable place in a historical event through an ambivalence that is evident in the adoption of both first and third person narration. Emmanuel Levinas has commented upon '[t]he incomprehensible nature of the presence of the Other'[7] that manifests as the inability of the Western viewer to interpret 'the face, which is not of the world'.[8] The face of the terrorist is structured as any face, but it is the 'unforeseeableness' of the terrorist's visage that problematises their relationship to the viewer as it is both familiar and uncanny.[9] The genre ultimately reveals the futility of repressing an acknowledgment of sameness, what Punter terms 'the unadmitted,' through its emphasis on giving the terrorist a human face—or giving a familiar countenance the face of terror—that troubles our confidence in appearances.[10]

"No mistaking that face": Envisaging the Terrorist

After the image of the second plane hitting the South Tower of the World Trade Centre, the most haunting image to emerge in the days after the September 11 attacks was the Florida driver's license photo of Mohammed Atta, the leader of the terrorist cell responsible for the attacks. Atta's impassive countenance, repeatedly referred to in the Western media as 'the face of evil,' came to represent the specific fear for the American nation resurrected by the attacks regarding invasion of the homeland from within—it was a government-issued licence, after all—and the East and Islam more broadly.[11] Additionally, the psychological effect of the

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[7] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), p. 195.

[8] ibid., p. 198.

[9] ibid., p. 199.

[10] David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day—Volume 1: The Gothic Tradition, 2nd edition* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 18.

[11] This cliché was repeated many times over the course of the days and months following the identification of Atta as the leader of the cell. Terry McDermott labelled Atta's face 'the face of evil incarnate' ('A Perfect Soldier,' *Los Angeles Times*, 27 January, 2002. <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/jan/27/news/mn-25005> [accessed 9 August 2016]) while Evan Thomas, writing for *Newsweek*, used the phrase as well as characterising Atta as 'pure evil' ('The Day That Changed America,' *Newsweek*, 30 December, 2001. <http://newsweek.com/day-changed-america-148319> [accessed 28 August 2016]). Thomas coupled evil with an allusion to the supernatural, as did Jane Corbin in her feature article for the *Guardian,* 'A premonition of evil,' when she wrote that a former WTC worker had 'a premonition that something wicked was on the way' that September morning ('A premonition of evil', *Guardian*, 5 July, 2002. <https://theguardian.com/world/2002/jul/05/gender.uk> [accessed 9 August 2016]). Writing for the *Atlantic*

photograph is born from the timeframe within which it appeared; Fred Botting argues that when the present is experienced as transient and haunted, both by victims and the figures of terror, 'its phantoms are not only figures of memory, guilt or indebtedness that return from the past, they are figures […] for the present's dislocation in time, space and consciousness'.[12] Consequently, Atta's face is a ghostly insinuation into a present that he is both separate from and responsible for, and as the "transient" day of 9/11 has passed—though it will forever be present in its annual commemoration—Atta's face will continue to haunt all future narratives that are produced about or because of this very precise date. The image Simon Cottee called the 'terrifying mugshot' of Atta's face also became the subject of horror tales recounted by individuals who had interacted with him on the day of the attacks and the months prior.[13] A ticket agent for American Airlines who checked in Atta and his fellow attacker, Abdul Aziz Alomari, at Portland International Jetport in Maine recalled the face 'sent chills through [him]' and claimed there was 'more life in that picture than there [was] in flesh and blood.'[14] During an FBI interview some days after the attacks, the same individual was asked to identify Atta amongst a series of images; 'I went right to Atta,' the man stated, 'like the skull on a bottle. There's no mistaking that face.'[15]

The media, too, engaged in this associative impulse; in his reconstruction of United Flight 93, *Among the Heroes*, Jere Longman connected intent with appearance through the hijacker, Ziad Jarrah:

> If there was any retrospect giveaway in Jarrah's face, it was in his halted smile, neither a smirk nor a grin of graciousness or delight, but a resolve on unforeseen circumstance. It resembled the pasty-murderer look that Lee Harvey-Oswald had in his pursed lips of history altered.[16]

Bridget M. Marshall, in her study of the trope of physical disfigurement of the literary Gothic villain, terms this identification as a 'kind of face-to-soul correspondence'.[17] However, in a twenty-first-century environment of terror, it is also evidence of the insidious effect of the practice of racial profiling that became law after the September 11 attacks and an effect that can be traced in the fictional account of Atta's last days in Martin Amis's 2006 short story.

The power of the face of the dead terrorist to unnerve lies additionally in its uncanniness. The face is before us but no longer here; it is disembodied, yet the image, too, is inseparable from

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magazine a decade later, Jeffrey Goldberg still maintained that '[w]hat [America] saw on the morning of September 11, 2001 was evil made manifest.' ('The Real Meaning of 9/11', *Atlantic*, 29 August, 2011. <http://theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/08/the-real-meaning-of-9-11/244120/> [accessed 14 August 2016].

[12] Fred Botting, *Gothic 2nd edition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 154.

[13] Simon Cottee, 'Terrorism with a Human Face,' *Atlantic*, 8 March, 2015. <http://theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/03/terrorism-with-a-human-face/387163/> [accessed 14 August 2016].

[14] David Hench, 'Ticket Agent Haunted by Brush With 9/11 Hijackers,' *Portland Press Herald*, 6 March, 2005. <http://pressherald.mainetoday.com/news/local/050306terror.shtml> [accessed 14 August 2016].

[15] ibid.

[16] Jere Longman, *Among the Heroes: United Flight 93 and the Passengers and Crew Who Fought Back* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), p. 84.

[17] Bridget M. Marshall, 'The Face of Evil: Phrenology, Physiognomy, and the Gothic Villain,' *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 6: 2 (2000), 161-172 (p. 166).

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the faces of those victims of its actions. The terrorist's face possesses a phantasmagoric quality which blurs the temporal parameter of the photograph and is in violent contrast with its enduring power to terrorise. Botting identifies the truly terrifying effect of the photograph that depicts the countenance of the dead in a comparison between the classical portrayal of the human face, portraiture, and the modern daguerreotype. It is the photograph, Botting argues, that produces 'uncanny effects in bringing the dead to life, until, that is, the picture is revealed to be of a living rather than dead relative.'[18] Atta's image became emblematic of the uncanny tension between reality and imagination, seeing and believing, when his father questioned the veracity of the photograph in the days after the attacks.[19] Mohammed al-Amir Atta claimed the passport that was found two blocks away from Ground Zero was stolen, that his son was not a terrorist, and that he was still alive, *somewhere*.

The photograph of Atta also functions as an illustration of the power of the Gothic to conceal and reveal the quality Botting further attributes to daguerreotypes—their potential to confuse 'the uncertain boundaries between material and ghostly planes of existence.'[20] Indeed, the insistence that Atta's face revealed his intentions is classically Gothic as it recalls the narrative power the daguerreotype held for the nineteenth century—the presence of the past in the present. In her study of the birth and rise of the cultural role of the daguerreotype, Elizabeth McCarthy recognises '[t]he importance of vision as an aid to knowledge and personal safety [a]s a fundamental aspect of the Gothic.'[21] McCarthy traces the deployment of the photographic image in nineteenth-century Gothic writing alongside the popular 'science' of phrenology, concluding that the increasingly sophisticated and accurate science of image reproduction developed 'the ardent belief in the vision's ability to detect and capture the face of evil.'[22] Consequently, when President Bush stated in his Address to the Nation on the night of the terrorist attacks that '[t]oday our Nation saw evil'[23] and, in later speeches, when this claim developed into an ability to identify and defeat 'the evil ones who […] think in ways that we can't possibly think in America—so destructive, such a low regard for human life', he revealed how the image can be appropriated to affirm historical and dominant values and hegemonise cultural notions of good and evil, knowledge and misjudgement.[24] Bush's reliance upon the Kantian notion of radical evil, a concept Terry Eagleton defines in his study of evil as 'willing wickedness for wickedness's sake,' further illustrates the Manichaean rhetoric that was adopted by his Administration from the very day of the attacks.[25] Its simple imagery of an amorphous

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[18] Botting, p. 109.

[19] Neil MacFarquhar, 'A Nation Challenged: Disavowal; Father Denies 'Gentle Son' Could Hijack Any Jetliner,' *International New York Times*, 19 September, 2001. <http://nytimes.com/2001/09/19/world/a-nation-challenged-disavowal-father-denies-gentle-son-could-hijack-any-jetliner.html%3E?_r=0> [accessed 19 August 2016].

[20] Botting, p. 167.

[21] Elizabeth McCarthy, 'Gothic Visuality in the Nineteenth Century,' in *The Gothic World*, ed. by Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 341-353, (p.350).

[22] ibid.

[23] President George W. Bush, 'Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks,' *The American Presidency Project*, 11 September, 2001. <http://presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=58057> [accessed 29 July 2016].

[24] President George W. Bush, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People', *The White House*, 20 September, 2001. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> [accessed 4 August 2016].

[25] Terry Eagleton, *On Evil* (New Haven, NY and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 95.

and morally abject force situates the American enterprise that saw the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq as divinely ordained. Bush's phrase, too, raises the spectre of a faceless horde that must be vanquished, not individuals who should be brought to account in a diplomatic or legal process. Like Oscar Wilde's character Dorian Gray, who is 'loathsome of visage,' Atta comes to represent specific anxieties in post-9/11 Western society: the postmodern scepticism about appearances, the omnipresence of the figure of terror and our fear that we may not recognise evil when we see it or, conversely, that it looks eerily familiar.[26]

Martin Amis's 'The Last Days of Muhammad Atta'

The preface to Martin Amis's story 'The Last Days of Muhammad Atta' is an excerpt from the *9/11 Commission Report*: 'No physical, documentary, or analytical evidence provides a convincing explanation of why [Muhammad] Atta and [Abdulaziz al-] Omari drove to Portland, Maine, from Boston on the morning of September 10, only to return to Logan on Flight 5930 on the morning of September 11.'[27] The excerpt immediately constructs Atta as a ghostly figure who disappears and appears without detection, simultaneously above and below the line of sight and supports a reading of the 9/11 terrorists that has become a trope in a number of fictional texts.[28] Georgiana Banita has explored this characterisation through the figure of Osama Bin Laden and identified the trope as 'terrorist as poltergeist.'[29] When the behaviours attributed to poltergeists are considered—the desire for physical disturbance and, significantly, the belief that these spirits haunt a particular individual rather than a location—Atta becomes that ghost from the past, returned to haunt and disturb the infidel. The placement of the excerpt makes clear Amis's purpose for writing the story: to imagine what occurred in the twenty-four hours prior to Atta boarding Flight 11 and the first sentence of the narrative confirms this project—'On September 11, 2001, he opened his eyes at 4 a.m., in Portland, Maine; and Muhammad Atta's last day began.'[30] Here, Amis is engaged in what Banita usefully metaphorises as 'shadow boxing […] the struggle of a possessed person to ban the spirit they are possessed by [but] a struggle that damages the self more than it banishes the parasitic spirit.'[31] The author's attempt to wrest back every second of this 'last day' from Atta is an effort to control the narrative that, as Amis admitted himself in June of 2002, had been 'fully commandeered' by the terrorists; it is an act of sovereignty that seeks to delegitimise and

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[26] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin English Library, 2012), p. 224.

[27] National Commission of Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), p. 451.

[28] See A.K. Dewdney, 'Ghost Riders in the Sky: The Alternative Scenario,' *ResearchGate*, 30 June, 2002. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237281786_Ghost_Riders_in_the_Sky_The_Alternative_Scenario> [accessed 4 August 2016] and Alex Berensen, *The Ghost Agent* (New York: Arrow Books, 2008).

[29] Georgiana Banita, 'Shadow of the Colossus: The Spectral Lives of 9/11', in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York and London: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), pp. 94-105, p. 99.

[30] Martin Amis, 'The Last Days of Muhammad Atta', in *The Second Plane—September 11: 2001-2007* (London: Vintage, 2008), pp. 95-124, p. 95. Hereafter referred to in text as (*A*, page number).

[31] Banita, p.100.

terminate Atta's narrative while relegating it forever to the past.[32] As Margaret Scanlan has noted of the relations of power between the terrorist and the terrorised, '[l]osing control […] mean[s] playing into the terrorists' hands.'[33] Amis's task mirrors the immediate response of American intelligence agencies to the attacks of September 11—to establish, as precisely as possible, the movements of the nineteen attackers prior to the day in order to develop knowledge that might somehow reveal connections to a hidden hand.

Yet Amis's title states a larger project: to imagine the 'last days' of the terrorist. Here, there is confusion and inaccuracy from the very beginning of the story that points to an indeterminacy and inability to locate Atta within a timeframe that is empirically calculable by hours and days. As the preface from the *9/11 Commission* Report states, there is 'no explanation' for why Atta was in Portland or exactly what his purpose was in the city.[34] Existing outside of time because this "last day" is a day of eternal death, both finite and timeless in its resolution, Atta is Maria Beville's figure of the Gothic 'hauntological character;' the reader knows he is dead, yet we follow the spectral movements of a dead man who, in the peculiar structural composition of the story, is conscious of his own death in the narrative's climax.[35] Beville employs the example of the characters in Parts 1 and 2 of T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* to define the hauntological character. She argues these figures 'are present and exist […] but they are effectively 'dead'. […]. They occupy a sort of liminal, purgatorial existence and the modern reality on whose borders they linger is comparable to Dante's mythological hell.'[36] This 'purgatorial' fate is further secured by Amis in the structure of the narrative through the first and last lines working as mirrors to each other. In response to the absence raised in the excerpt from the *9/11 Commission* at the beginning of the story, Amis employs the device of a visit by Atta to a dying imam in Portland, who hands him a vial of liquid that Atta is told will exonerate him from what the imam pseudonymises as the '"enormity", the atrocious crime […] of the self-felony': suicide (*A*, 115). Instead, the liquid holds mystical qualities that restore life. Damning Atta as a figure of cowardice and to eternal suffering, a 'misery of recurrence' where he will feel 'his flesh fried' forever, Amis simultaneously keeps him alive as a figure that embodies the Bush Administration's moral binarism of American heroes and Eastern villains (*A*, 113). However, Atta works to undermine this oppositional thinking in the narrative by problematising Amis's attempts to minimise him; what Eagleton refers to as the 'obscene enjoyment of annihilating the Other' becomes a futile demonstration of 'authority over the only antagonist—death—that cannot be vanquished even in principle.'[37]

The opening scene of the story establishes a careful chronology of events, much like the scrupulously constructed 9/11 timelines of the CIA and FBI.[38] Waking in the Repose Inn, a

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[32] Martin Amis, 'The Second Plane,' in *The Second Plane*, pp. 3-10, p.12.

[33] Margaret Scanlan, *Plotting Terror: Novelists and Terrorists in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), p. 12.

[34] National Commission of Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, p. 451.

[35] Maria Beville, *Gothic-Postmodernism: Voicing the Terrors of Postmodernity* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), p. 31.

[36] ibid.

[37] Eagleton, p. 100.

[38] See 'Working Draft Chronology of Events for Hijackers and Associates', a 148 page document compiled by the FBI that claims to be a 'chronology of events for hijackers and associates' (*FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation*, 5 December, 2003. <https://vault.fbi.gov/9-11%20Commission%20Report/9-11-chronology-part-

heavy-handed use of irony by Amis, then watching time pass by looking at his wristwatch repetitively, then counting his journey down in the hotel elevator floor by floor, Atta presents as a grim reaper figure, confirming his place in Gothic genealogy as the stalker abroad or, like Stoker's monster, the stalker *aboard*, and waiting for the time to come when he can execute his plan. The setting of the Repose Inn is presented with a focus on the superficial—it is 'cheap' and 'dented'—in order to establish it as a fitting start to the final day for the character Amis refuses to attribute with a personal or political validity (*A,* 95). As Atta begins to shave, cutting himself and 'releasing an apparently endless supply of blood,' Amis presents the hijacker as naturally possessing the most repulsive appearance (*A*, 99). Indeed, Atta's face is repellent even to him and the face of evil trope Amis resurrects becomes evident through the character's belief that 'the detestation of everything, was being sculpted on it, from within' (*A*, 97). Amis's description of Atta's face—'the disgusted lineaments of the face […] the frank animus of his underbite'—uncritically repeats the tenets of nineteenth century phrenology which relied upon surfaces to evince the connection between one's appearance and moral character (*A*, 97). The nineteenth century Gothic villain, constructed through his disgusting appearance, externalises his moral dissolution, like a physical canvas of his soul, but he is also a mirror to the society which demonises him. Atta's own body's rejection of its physical obligations mark him, too, as Kristeva's abject body, that individual 'whose intimate side is suffering and horror [his] public feature.'[39] Atta is nauseous, constipated and prone to excessive biliousness, doomed to a body that holds, as Kristeva has noted, '[b]eing as ill-being.'[40] These bodily ailments are presented as 'sequela,' the consequence of an existing pathogen—a putrescent soul—in the body (*A*, 97). Amis feminises Atta's body in a further act of abjection through his comparison of the terrorist's constipated bowels to a 'four month pregnancy' (*A*, 97). Falling in the shower, tearing a fingernail and a savage migraine are all discomforts that Amis wills upon the already dead body of Atta. Here, the physical suffering of Atta illustrates the author's desire to force upon him a death by a thousand cuts, the Chinese *língchí,* which was a form of torture and execution that had three distinct aims—to publically humiliate, to produce a slow and lingering death and a punishment *after* death.[41] In other words, an enduring terror campaign without end.

As an instance of Rumsfeldean rhetoric, the story's conclusion is both a "known-known" and an "unknown-known". The reader is reasonably confident, due to the intelligence gathered by American counterterrorism agencies, that Atta died as Flight 11 hit the North Tower, but the nature of his dying is impossible to comprehend. Amis's final act of punishment in the narrative is to adopt a first person narrative voice to force Atta to realise 'how gravely he had underestimated' the sanctity and abiding strength of life. Before the annihilation of the passengers, whom Amis compares with the faceless and atomised 'wall shadows' made by the

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01-of-02/view> [accessed 30 July 2016]. The CIA issued a 61 page report titled '11 September: The Plot and the Plotters' on June 1, 2003 that was declassified on April 25, 2012 (*The National Security Archive*. <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/368989-2003-06-01-11-september-the-plot-and-the.html> [accessed 27 November 2015].

[39] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 140.

[40] ibid.

[41] See Song-Chuan Chen, 'Strangled by the Chinese and Kept "Alive" by the British: Two Infamous Executions and the Discourse of Chinese Legal Despotism,' in *A Global History of Execution and the Criminal Corpse*, ed. Richard Ward (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 199-219, p. 213.

victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in an analogy that echoes the cataclysmic 'Ground Zero' rhetoric of the Bush Administration, Atta 'laugh[s] for the first time since childhood' and feels 'right and good'; he has, in a sense, come alive (*A*, 122-4). Yet the impact of the plane is presented only through Atta's physical discomfort, which is amplified through Amis's device of character omniscience as Atta experiences the 'panic attack in every nerve, a riot of the atoms' that consciousness of death supposedly causes (*A*, 123). The rhetoric of revenge and perpetual punishment that characterised presidential addresses and White House press releases in the hours after the attacks is mirrored in Amis's final sentence:

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> On September 11, 2001, he opened his eyes at 4 a.m., in Portland, Maine; and Muhammad
> Atta's last day began.[42]

This beginning of a tale within a tale and revenant raising, with the return to the face of Atta, marks Amis's story as a classic Gothic narrative; he remains that enduring spectre who will inhabit an eternal purgatory, revealing Amis' and the Bush Administration's shared desire to inflict a punishment that, like the War on Terror itself, according to President Bush, 'will not end.'[43] Yet, the narrative functions, too, as an exemplar of Gothic biofiction due to its ultimate failure to terminate the terrifying effect of Atta's appearance upon the present and the future.

Judith Thompson's *The Palace of the End*

Judith Thompson's 2007 play *The Palace of the End* is structured by three monologues delivered by real—both living and dead—individuals whose lives were changed by their experiences of terror and war. The title of the play refers to the English translation for the name given to Saddam Hussein's torture chambers housed in one of the royal palaces in Baghdad. The monologue delivered by Private Lynndie England, titled "My Pyramids"—a reference to the uncanny image of Iraqi detainees in Abu Ghraib prison forced to construct a human pyramid—promotes the idea that the War on Terror itself, but particularly Operation Iraqi Freedom, was founded on fantastical notions of omniscience, justice and restitution by imagining England's responses to her role in torture, her emphasis on the normality of her appearance and, most memorably, the act of holding a naked detainee by a leash. England's lack of contrition for her participation in multiple acts of terror allow her to be read as a classical Gothic villain, while the setting of much of England's memories—the decaying prison of Abu Ghraib—is a defining Gothic convention that operates as a mise-en-scène for themes of incarceration, secrecy and decay. As a work of fiction that imagines the inner world of a living figure of terror, "My Pyramids" is an example of Gothic biofiction both because of its terrifying, living narrator and its insistence that England was not, as Deputy Secretary of

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[42] *A*, p.124. This is the same line that begins the story. Here, Amis structures the end of the story as the *beginning,* to create his "revenge" on Atta by making him live through, after death, this final day for eternity.

[43] Bush, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People'.

Defence, Paul Wolfowitz, claimed, one of 'a few bad apples'[44] who broke protocol, but rather the embodiment of those whose sins cannot remain hidden in the past and irrefutable evidence that the various forms of terror wielded by the United States were not aberrational but standard operating procedure.[45]

Thompson's use of capitalisation situates the monologue as a stylistic example of Gothic biofiction. Further, it achieves the effect of both emphasising and diminishing her assigned role as the public face of the Abu Ghraib scandal by registering England's anger about her treatment by the media, her government and the online world. Like Mohammed Atta, England's appearance became 'evidence' of her monstrosity and a particular emphasis was placed on her face by the Western media. Writing for *Wired*, Kim Zetter argued that England's 'face became the symbol in 2004 for everything that went wrong with the Iraq War';[46] in 2005, Phillip Stone from *Dateline* declared her face was 'burned into the minds of millions',[47] while Maki Becker of the *New York Daily News* infantilised her as 'the pixie-faced poster child of America's prison abuse scandal.'[48] Thompson characterises England as being similarly preoccupied with her own appearance as she responds to vitriolic posts on social media at the beginning of the monologue that focus on her face. Castigating herself for searching for her name online—'Don't do it… do not google yourself girl'—Thompson foregrounds England's capacity for violent intimidation through her homophobic responses to posts that label her as physically unattractive by capitalising her retaliation 'I am NOT ugly'.[49] Michael C. Frank and Eva Gruber have identified what they regard as 'America's culture of narcissism' which manifests in 'a wilful ignorance towards global political developments' but this self-absorption is also evident in the various platforms of Western media that encourage a reading of one's place, evidenced through one's face (think Facebook), in society as unique and significant.[50] A destructive vanity that is fostered by the immediate access to the Gothic setting of a shadowy online world marks England as both a perpetual victim of her status as monster and simultaneously desirous of it.

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[44] Paul Wolfowitz in Joseph Russomano, *Tortured Logic: A Verbatim Critique of the George W. Bush Presidency* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2001), p. 269.

[45] This phrase is both the title of Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris' account of the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib (Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008)) and a quotation by England herself. When asked by the German newspaper *Stern* whether she understood the outrage that followed the release of the Abu Ghraib photographs that depicted torture, England responded '[T]hat's like standard procedure there' (Michael Streck and Jan-Christoph Wiechmann, 'Rumsfeld Knew,' *Stern*, 17 March, 2008. <http://stern.de/politik/ausland/lynndie-england--rumsfeld-knew--3086946.html> [accessed 30 August 2016]).

[46] Kim Zetter, 'Convicted Abu Ghraib Guard Lynndie England Blames Media for Controversy,' *Wired*, 19 March, 2008. <https://wired.com/2008/03/convicted-abu-g/> [accessed 15 August 2016].

[47] Phillip Stone, 'Behind the Abu Ghraib photos,' *Dateline NBC*, 2 October, 2005. <http://nbcnews.com/id/9532670/ns/dateline_nbc/t/behind-abu-ghraib-photos/> [accessed 14 August 2016].

[48] Maki Becker, 'G.I. in Torture Case Hires Legal Top Gun,' *New York Daily News*, 9 May, 2004. <http://nydailynews.com/archives/news/g-torture-case-hires-legal-top-gun-article-1.656901> [accessed 22 August 2016].

[49] Judith Thompson, *Palace of the End* (London: Oberon Books, 2010), pp. 8-9. Hereafter referred to in text as (*T*, page number).

[50] Michael C. Frank and Eva Gruber, 'Literature and Terrorism: Introduction', in *Literature and Terrorism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Michael C. Frank and Eva Gruber (Amsterdam and New York, NY: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2012), p. 18.

Italicisation is also used by Thompson to emphasise physical appearance as a marker of worth; when England recounts a childhood experience of bullying a girl, she remembers '[n]ow *she* was ugly, so nobody liked her' (*T*, 17). This girl functions as a mirror to England's own treatment by the media and the American government and reveals how the Gothic preoccupation with the outward form that links one's appearance with the fate they are doomed to live out is at work in the narrative. Further, the mirror is an associative trope of the Gothic villain who is unable or unwilling to recognise that the reflection, as Susanne Becker has noted of the Gothic trope, is their own 'monstrous state.'[51] Markus Rietzenstein also recognises this trope in terrorist fiction, apparent in the figure of terror's ignorance of, or refusal to accept, irrefutable evidence that challenges their own world view, which is idiosyncratic and contorted.[52] England's determination that she is not grotesque, establishing herself in opposition to connotations of undesirability and transgression, and her conferral of this quality upon another female, reveals her complex place in the Western construction of the female soldier. Dustin Harp and Sara Struckman's study of the repressive gender and military ideologies that were exposed following the Abu Ghraib scandal examines the contradictory roles female soldiers must perform. The authors argue that 'a conceptual crisis occurs' when women are seen in a military context; they must be both compassionate and merciless, fighters but also in need of salvation themselves in order to support the masculinist rationale of waging war in the first place.[53]

When Bruce Hoffman's definition of terrorism as 'violence—or, equally important, the threat of violence—used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim' is applied to the actions of England, who engaged in systematic and illegal violence against Iraqi civilians and possessed the 'fundamental "subnational" characteristic[s]' of being female and from a low socio-economic background, England is incomprehensible yet also an intimate.[54] In order to destabilise contemporary representations of the physically abhorrent figure of terror functioning in a non-sanctioned manner, Thompson establishes the Gothic foundations of the play through its insistence on the banality of appearances and what lies behind a face that represents the repugnant manifestations of American military culture and Bush-era government rhetoric. If, as Francis Blessington has argued, a convention of the terrorist fiction narrative is that the protagonist 'represents the world as it is' but 'is ignorant of the world at large,' Thompson's England is, indeed, the face of terror.[55]

The monologue references three acts of cruelty that work together to form a portrait of the Western terrorist of Thompson's play as depraved from childhood and a figure that is representative of America's own barely contained malignancy. This reading of England is one

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[51] Susanne Becker, *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fiction* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 61.
[52] See Markus Reitzenstein, 'The Good Terrorist: Doris Lessing's Narrative Strategies in Presenting Terrorist Psychology', *et al- Critical Theory Online 3: Terror(ism) and Aesthetics* (2014). <http://etal.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/10/reitzenstein-the-good-terrorist.pdf> [accessed 14 August 2016].
[53] Dustin Harp and Sara Struckman, 'The Articulation of Lynndie England to Abu Ghraib: Gender ideologies, War, and the Construction of Reality', *Journal of Magazine and New Media Research* 11:2 (2010), 1-23, (p.5).
[54] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism: Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 2-3, 32.
[55] Francis Blessington, 'Politics and the Terrorist Novel', *The Sewanee Review* 116:1 (2008), 116-124, (p. 118).

of two dominant interpretations of the soldier that emerged following the Abu Ghraib scandal. As an irreconcilable violator of American cultural and military values whose actions and, indeed, even citizenship had to be disavowed, she became the enemy within whose actions were anomalous and alien. Her recount of bullying a girl from her hometown as a child is chilling in its sequencing of degenerate behaviour and foreshadows the treatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib. The girl is forced to undress, bark like a dog, perform fellatio and find her way home without the prosthetic leg which has been destroyed by England and her fellow bullies. England's epiphany in the 'moment that [she] realised [the girl] would do anything we said' suggests a lesson about the effects of power and impotence learned at an early age (*T*, 17). A further incident of childhood depravity is recalled by the soldier when she remembers accepting a dare to jump on a cat. The sensation of the cat's 'so soft' body is analogised to 'the rakee's neck' she held by a leash in the prison, illuminating the connection she makes between violence, sensuality and physical surfaces (*T*, 22). Thompson may have based this anecdote on an incident told to Errol Morris by Private Specialist Sabrina Harman for his account of the Abu Ghraib scandal, *Standard Operating Procedure*. Harman, 'a happy-go-lucky person' according to a fellow soldier, mummified a dead cat found at Abu Ghraib, removed its head from its body and staged 'more than ninety photographs and two short videos' of it in various scenarios.[56] The macabre posing and distribution of the images of the dead animal, remembered by England in an interview as 'so funny,'[57] demonstrates further acts of sadism practised by another woman in the prison. Yet it was England who became the face upon which the American government and much of the Western media inscribed their denials and disgust because she occupied a liminal state in American society itself—poor, white, female, undereducated and uncontrollable—that cannot be acknowledged or assimilated.

The second and more prosaic reading of England presents her as a simple West Virginian girl—not woman—who was unjustly punished for her willingness to obey orders from her government and the violent and treacherous Charles Graner, England's lover and superior officer at Abu Ghraib. This interpretation of England's character relies upon the conventional dangers of life for women in Gothic narratives, but also what Carol Mason terms 'the hillbilly defence.'[58] Mason argues England was subjected to a historical discourse that promotes a contradictory and hybridised figure in American society whose rural isolation and presumed simplicity is a state of innocence that America both desires and fears. England's youthful appearance and interest in traditional rural pursuits such as hunting contribute to the positive construction of the rural white as occupying a spatial and temporal plane that is beyond the reach of the ills of modern life. However, the always already present inverse of this stereotype is an inherent 'deviance, sadism and primitivism that…fl[ies] in the face of modern progress.'[59] As a national trope, England as hillbilly becomes the body through which America's own savagery in Iraq is absorbed but she becomes, consequently, terrifying as the face of the myth

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[56] Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), pp. 75-76.

[57] Tara McKelvey, 'A Soldier's Tale: Lynndie England', *marieclaire*, 18 May, 2009. <http://marieclaire.com/politics/news/a170/lynndie-england-1/> [accessed 23 August 2016].

[58] Carol Mason, 'The Hillbilly Defense: Culturally Mediating U.S. Terror at Home and Abroad,' *NWSA Journal* 17:3 (2005), 39-63, (p.39).

[59] Mason, p. 43.

of white supremacy. England's power to reveal the history of brutality upon which white authority in the United States rests establishes her as the Gothic vigilante who threatens the fragility of the veil between civilisation and chaos to enact revenge. Through her belief that '[v]anquishing evil was what I was born to do,' England embodies the American belief in Manifest Destiny as a mission that birthed what Eugenia DeLamotte labels 'white terrors created by white terror of (non-white) Others' (*T*, 12).[60] Further, America's epithet as 'The Great Satan'[61] is made human through England's assumption of the most terrible of the Devil's powers as she recalls her motivation behind the treatment of the Abu Ghraib detainees: 'I thought of the Twin Towers and all them people running and I thought I'm takin your soul first. I'm takin your soul down […] 'til you ain't even human. And then I'mona take you down further' (*T*, 19). Here, England becomes the taker and giver of life—the Gothic villain that pursues the innocent *because* they are innocent. As the protagonist of a Gothic biofiction narrative that foreshadows *continuing* horrors that threaten to become increasingly incomprehensible, England is the menacing possibility of terror without end; the face of the past and the future.

Lynndie England's patriotism and obedience to the military hierarchy position her outwardly as the ideal patriot and soldier; in Thompson's play, she is a strident advocate of the American occupation of Iraq and its use of enhanced interrogation techniques against potential terrorists. She asserts that the use of coercive techniques was 'SERIOUS-INTELLIGENCE-WORK,' repeating the myth propounded by the Bush Administration, and Dick Cheney specifically, that torture was applied by 'lawful, skilful, and entirely honourable' individuals and 'was the right thing to do' (*T*, 12).[62] Like Cheney, who reaffirmed his commitment to the practices at Abu Ghraib by declaring in 2008 that he would 'do exactly the same thing' again, England's final reflection in her monologue about the scandal—'I did GOOD for my country and I said NO to the enemy' (*T*, 23)—repeats the lie of legitimacy that shaped American discourse about Abu Ghraib and the invasion of Iraq as a valid security necessity.[63] Yet England represents an excess of liberty through the freedom both she and her fellow soldiers were afforded in their interpretation of military memorandums that listed permissible techniques to be used on detainees. Deployed to Iraq as a clerk processing incoming prisoners at Abu Ghraib, the soldier exceeded her role to wield terror in the name of the United States. Further, as a representative figure of terror, England's dutiful service had to be denounced as unrecognisable as the actions of an American soldier. She becomes, then, a hauntological figure returning from the past as a symbol of previous atrocities to destabilise the fictional narratives of American integrity in

[60] Eugenia DeLamotte, 'White Terror, Black Dreams: Gothic Constructions of Race in the Nineteenth Century,' in *The Gothic Other: Racial and Social Constructions in the Literary Imagination*, edited by Ruth Bienstock Anolik and Douglas L. Howard (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2004), 17-31, p.28.
[61] William O. Beeman's study of the rhetorical mirroring of Iran and the United States as evil traces the use of this phrase to the Iranian Hostage Crisis of 1979-81, when the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini demonised America as 'The Great Satan' for its illegitimate presence in the Middle East and its support of Israel, 'The Little Satan' (William O. Beeman, *The "Great Satan" Versus the "Mad Mullahs": How the United States and Iran Demonise Each Other* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 5.
[62] Russomano, p. 270.
[63] Richard Cheney, 'Meet the Press Transcript,' *NBN News*, 14 December, 2014. <http://nbcnews.com/meet-%20the-press/meet-press-transcript-december-14-2014-n268181>. [accessed 14 August 2016].

modern conflicts, such as Vietnam or in Latin American nations, and proves the ideological and bureaucratic continuity between past and present terrors.

The Gothic trope of secrecy, enacted through past sins and subterranean spaces, disguises and hidden texts, becomes a powerful tool in Gothic biofiction to allow a point of entry below official rhetoric through the protagonist's private knowledge of what is to come and their role as the betrayer of secret knowledge that is, ultimately, guarded in vain. Thompson's England is both indiscreet and wary. She shares sexually explicit details about her relationship with Private Charles Graner but is astute enough to understand there are secrets which should not be allowed to surface. England recalls the 'jodies', or military cadence calls, drilled into her during military training which aim to dehumanise the enemy (*T*, 10). Martin Smith, a retired American Marine, contends that the training process for American service men and women has not been 'truthfully acknowledged' as a regime that inculcates racist and misogynistic attitudes and encourages barbarism as normal.[64] England sings a particular jodie with fondness, but the cadence she is taught is from another war—'Flyin low and feelin mean. Find a family by the stream. Pick 'em and hear 'em scream. Napalm sticks to kids'—and is not meant to be civilian knowledge, a secret England betrays (*T*, 10). This cadence, resurrected from the Vietnam War, demonstrates the barbarism intrinsic in the American military psyche towards enemy civilian populations and a complex and perpetual connection to this doomed conflict. The spectre of Vietnam reveals that the past has never gone away—only the faces have changed—but continues to haunt by unveiling present-day truths of defeat and illegitimacy. Further, these chants are testament to the horrors of indoctrinating hatred of difference and the dangers of following orders mindlessly—the same behaviours attributed to the Islamist enemy. England's recognition that 'we ain't supposed to say that one no more but we do, 'cause, well, it's tradition' uncovers a heritage of monstrosity that continues without shame yet operates in secret, just beneath a façade of democracy (*T*, 10).

As the bearer of secrets, Thompson's England is America's 'ticking time bomb,'a phrase President George Bush used in 2002 to describe Iraq to the United Nations and thus justify invasion.[65] The metaphor of the time bomb, with its connotations of unpredictability and carnage, operates in the monologue as a warning of the incendiary secrets that England threatens to disclose, even though their existence is a "known-known", just repressed. While the American private embodies that 'crisis of understanding' Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet regards as a constituent part of the Gothic impulse, England's self-awareness is premised upon her embodiment of 'America's secret that got shouted out to the world' (*T*, 13).[66] It was a male soldier, Joe Darby, who was praised for being the 'whistleblower' of Abu Ghraib, while

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[64] Smith's attack on the training culture in the United States military uses several facial metaphors. He argues that the revelations of human rights abuses and war crimes perpetrated during Operation Iraqi Freedom has 'ripped the mask of democracy nation-building off…revealing the true face of U.S. imperialism.' A Gothic style and the Gothic trope of surfaces and hidden depths is also utilised in Smith's article when he likens the Abu Ghraib scandal to 'just the tip of the iceberg in the U.S. occupation's horror show' (Sergeant Martin Smith USMC, 'Military Training and Atrocities,' *Counterpunch*, 5 August, 2006. <http://counterpunch.org/2006/08/05/military-training-and-atrocities/> [accessed 30 July 2016]).

[65] Clarke Rountree, *George W. Bush: A Biography* (Santa Barbara, Denver and Oxford: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2011), p. 132.

[66] Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet, *War Gothic in Literature and Culture* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 45.

England operated as the symbol of disorder, violence and impunity that was secret, but standard operating procedure. The acknowledged existence of unreleased images by both the Bush and Obama Administrations reflects the power both governments invest in appearances. While the world waits on the release of further photographic evidence of torture at Abu Ghraib, Lynndie England maintains knowledge of unspeakable atrocities that situate her as the Gothic anti-heroine who will be destroyed for this intelligence. This 'tiny little thing,'[67] as a lawyer defending another of the Abu Ghraib soldiers labelled England, stated in a 2005 *Dateline* interview that she knew 'worse things were happening [in Abu Ghraib]' that exceeded the horrors of the released images.[68] Similarly, Thompson's protagonist reveals '[w]e did a hell of a lot worse than what you seen…What YOU seen is tiddlywinks' (*T*, 18). While England does not confess to what else occurred, the withholding of information contributes to the ambiguity of her character; she is that female figure in Gothic fiction Anne Williams characterises as the holder of 'monstrous domestic secrets,' yet also the living victim of their revelation.[69]

There is little humanity in Thompson's portrayal of England. An emerging horror of the self—Kristeva's abject—begins to surface towards the end of England's monologue as a long silence follows her self-vindicating outburst and while England's expedient rejection by the American military, government and many American citizens might elicit some sympathy for the character, her confession of a plan to flee to Canada to marry 'a nice French Canadian guy, a Pierre' fosters further rejection of a woman who continues to make sense of the world only through external and visible markers. England continues to be judged by her appearance; indeed, a recent exposé on 'Dieselgate,' the scandal to hit the German car manufacturer Volkswagen in 2015 following revelations of the global deception of customers, used England and the iconic photograph of her holding the detainee in Abu Ghraib by a leash to emphasise the magnitude of Volkswagen's systemic dishonesty and undermine its claims that a few 'rogue engineers' were to blame for the fraud (*T*, 23).[70]

Ultimately, England's fate is ensured through President Barack Obama's decision not to indict George Bush, Donald Rumsfeld or Dick Cheney for war crimes and his determination to keep the cache of unreleased Abu Ghraib photographs, images that may be further proof of the dark heart of American military culture, hidden from public view. As the terror that was wrought upon the United States by the hijacking and destruction of four planes on September 11, 2001 resurrected what Donald Ringnalda has described as 'the American obsession with triumphing

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[67] Julie Scelfo, 'She Was Following Orders,' *Newsweek*, 10 May, 2004. <http://newsweek.com/she-was-following-orders-128119>. [accessed 16 August 2016]. Jarrett Kobek's 2011 novel *Atta* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2011) contrasts notions of magnitude and insignificance through the characterisation of Atta as a 'little thing' (p. 93) by his father. Atta's potential is diminished by his father's nickname for his son, an error that Kobek suggests lies at the heart of our desire to believe what we see, while an act of repression simultaneously occurs to bury the knowledge that nothing can be taken at "face value".

[68] The *Dateline* interview is a powerful reinforcement of England's countenance as narrative in the American media. Phillip Stone frames his questions to the servicewoman using metaphors of surface and depth. He asks 'How do you think America sees you?' and encourages England to 'explain the scenes behind the images' ('Behind the Abu Ghraib photos').

[69] Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 10.

[70] See Cory Doctorow, 'Volkswagen CEO: Dieselgate caused by Lynndie England "rogue engineers"; execs blameless,' *Boingboing*, 9 October, 2015. < http://boingboing.net/2015/10/09/volkswagen-ceo-say-dieselgate.html> [accessed 12 January 2016].

over chaos and the "other"', the ensuing War on Terror and the military campaigns waged in its name created multiple spaces—and faces—for the Coalition of the Willing to repeat acts of terror that will, in the tradition of the Gothic, continue to be employed, concealed and revealed in even darker future conflicts and fictions.[71]

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[71] Donald Ringnalda, *Fighting and Writing the Vietnam War* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1994), p.29.

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