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For Ben Fisher, with gratitude for over twenty years of friendship.
  – William Hughes

For Gothic readers and scholars, present and future.
  – David Punter

For my students.
  – Andrew Smith
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Superficially, an encyclopedia on the Gothic seems like a conceptual oxymoron. It is not fortuitous that the heyday of the encyclopedia was the Enlightenment, a period that has been commonly regarded as the backdrop against which the apparently anti-Enlightenment Gothic emerged. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was first published between 1768 and 1771, and was in part a reaction to Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* (published between 1751 and 1772). The Enlightenment desire to systematize (so manifestly exemplified in the form of the encyclopedia) has conventionally been regarded as the very tendency that the Gothic works against. The Gothic pursues a seemingly messier version of what it means to be a person than that articulated in early natural philosophies and suggests that the world is a more complex place than Enlightenment science would have us believe. However, this is, of course, a simplification. The Gothic represents an attempt not to destroy coherence but to provide an alternative context within which meaning is discussed. The Gothic is thus founded on a model idea of debate and interrogation and functions as a form of radical skepticism that, paradoxically, seems to echo the Enlightenment emphasis on interrogation and testing as a way of getting at some semblance of the truth. This radical skepticism is perhaps most clearly, and famously, captured in Michel Foucault’s account of his laughter on reading Jorge Luis Borges’ description of a possibly fictitious Chinese encyclopedia that includes an eccentric taxonomy of the animal kingdom in which it is claimed that:

Animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies. (Foucault 1982: xv)

Foucault’s analysis of the points of contact between language, money, and natural history in *The Order of Things* (1970) has its roots in an analysis of a renaissance discourse of science that would underpin a later Enlightenment context. Foucault recalls:

That passage from Borges kept me laughing a long time, though not without a certain uneasiness that I found hard to shake off. Perhaps because there arose in its wake the suspicion that there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the *incongruous*, the linking together of things that are inappropriate. (Foucault 1982: xvii)

While this stands as an initial concern for Foucault about the links that he wishes to forge, it also stands as an implicit critique of the notion of the encyclopedia, which
may, through its very inclusivity, lack any obvious underlying principle of organization. The question that Foucault poses is, “On what ‘table’, according to what grid of identities, similitudes, analogies, have we become accustomed to sort out so many different and similar things?” (Foucault 1982: xix). We touch on Foucault here because these issues arguably underpin any encyclopedic project, even one of a seemingly quite specialized kind as this. The organizing principles behind this volume are clearly grounded in an understanding of what “Gothic” means, and yet such a meaning is prone to critical shift even while its terrain of texts, authors, and media forms seems ever to expand and redefine what such an organizing term as “Gothic” might mean. The form of the encyclopedia, while expressive of an Enlightenment model of certainty, is also a highly provisional form and it is this very provisionality that Borges was addressing that both amused and unsettled Foucault.

The reference to the Chinese encyclopedia is to be found in Borges’ essay “The Analytical Language of John Wilkins” (1942), which focuses on the omission of John Wilkins (1614–72) from the fourteenth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1929). Wilkins was a scientist, clergyman, and proposer of a possible universal language, as well as one of the founders of the Royal Society (1660) (and therefore the kind of figure who was also associated with his own “order of things”). The 1929 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* represented a change in structure for the publication, as for the first time it engaged more than fifty associate editors (rather than relying on one controlling editor) with responsibility to commission work in their areas of expertise as the encyclopedia attempted a wider engagement with what was regarded as a rapidly changing modern world. Borges does not evidence surprise at Wilkins’ omission, given that the twenty-line entry in earlier editions contained baldly biographical information. Borges’ sense of grievance over the omission seems to have stemmed not only from the fact that Wilkins was an important scientific (and natural) theologian of his day but also from Wilkins’ involvement in the very processes of taxonomy that underpin the notion of the encyclopedia. Borges noted that Wilkins “divided the universe into forty categories or classes, which were then subdivided into differences, and subdivided in turn into species” (Borges 1999: 230); however, the attempt fails because within this patterning “the classes and species that compose it are contradictory and vague” (Borges 1999: 231–2). This is because Wilkins’ attempt to define the universe through his taxonomy is doomed to fail as “there is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and speculative. The reason for this is quite simple: we do not know what the universe is” (Borges 1999: 231). This is a problem of (admittedly secular) definition that has conceptual points of contact with how scholarship on the Gothic has evolved and the attempts made to define it. Foucault’s reflections on Borges and Borges’ reflections on Wilkins form a helpful starting point for how we might systematize the changing nature of the Gothic into the seemingly epistemologically firm structure of an encyclopedia. A brief history of Gothic criticism illustrates how a changing critical context has underpinned Gothic studies (which is a comparatively recent area for critical enquiry within the academy).

Early studies of the Gothic include Dorothy Scarborough’s *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917), Edith Birkhead’s *The Tale of Terror* (1921), and Eino Railo’s *Haunted Castle* (1927). Such studies sketched the major themes of the form and in Railo’s case argued for the Gothic as a major tributary within Romanticism, a view
later elaborated by Mario Praz in *The Romantic Agony* (1933). These early evaluations of the form also represent an attempt to set historically the parameters of the Gothic— with Montague Summers’ *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (1938) leading the way. This early cycle of criticism might seem to have come to an end with the publication of Devendra P. Varma’s *The Gothic Flame* (1957). The modern cycle of criticism took its place within a changing academy and through new applications of theory, which ensured that how we think about the Gothic was subject to some significant critical debate. Two psychoanalytically orientated studies from 1981 helped to widen a conceptual understanding of the type of work undertaken in the Gothic: Christine Brooke-Rose’s *The Rhetoric of the Unreal* and Rosemary Jackson’s *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. These followed the publication of David Punter’s ground-breaking *The Literature of Terror* in 1980 and these texts were joined in 1982 by Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, which helped scholars to rethink the theoretical approaches to what we now understand as constituting the “Gothic.” It is the continuing interest in theory that has revitalized the Gothic as the claims of historicist critics and the respective engagements of feminism, postcolonialism, and theories of the postmodern all played their part in helping to shape an understanding of the form. Indeed, it is possible to claim that with so many, often competing, theories of the Gothic, the danger is that what the form constitutes is close to replicating Borges’ view of an undefined universe, because with so many critical positions it is possible to feel that we no longer know what “Gothic” is any more. However, this apparent impasse is really another way of acknowledging that the ongoing debate around Gothic studies has deepened and enriched our approaches and understanding of the form. One important focus has been through the conferences run by the International Gothic Association (founded in 1991), which for over twenty years has brought scholars together from around the world to discuss both the new and the old ways in which we think about the Gothic and the points of contact between them. The Association’s journal, *Gothic Studies*, has also led the way in pioneering research into the Gothic since its inception in 1999, and represents a development of the impetus given to Gothic studies in the 1980s.

During a period in which publishing in Gothic studies has flourished, it is now both possible and desirable to attempt an encyclopedic overview of the topic. In 2004, Mary Ellen Snodgrass’ *Encyclopedia of Gothic Literature* attempted just that but, while it provides an invaluable snapshot of the field of the Gothic, it does not include the diverse range of subjects and national contexts discussed in this volume. While the current volume is arranged in an A–Z format, there are a number of issues addressed that create an inner narrative around periods, places, people, and media.

The idea of periodizing the Gothic may seem simple enough; however, what we choose to include as Gothic within any particular period is not static. In part this is due to the types of change in critical attitude outlined above. However, this is also in part conditioned by access to certain texts that once would have been difficult to obtain. Early Gothic collections held in the Sadleir-Black archive at the University of Virginia and the Corvey collection of eighteenth-century literature have helped to deepen an understanding of the Gothic culture of that time. The Zittaw and Udolpho presses have also played an important part in making available texts that were once only to be found in archives. In addition, research on chapbooks and the republication
of a selection of bluebooks have widened our understanding of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century literary culture by forming an engagement with working-class reading habits. Indeed, how we now think about the Victorian Gothic has been influenced by consideration of a pulp, working-class tradition including texts such as Malcolm Rymer’s *Varney the Vampire* (1847) and other popular forms such as sensation fiction (which reflects and refracts an earlier eighteenth-century Gothic tradition) that can be read alongside other, arguably more subtle, Gothic influences in, for example, *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Wuthering Heights* (1847), as well as in conjunction with contemporaneous poetry and dramatic adaptations. This is, perhaps, simply to acknowledge that our understanding of the Gothic is now a much more complex and sophisticated one than that explored in the early part of the twentieth century, as we now have recourse to more primary material and have developed theoretical approaches that enable us to bring together diverse Gothic forms and ideas about them. It is also the case that we would now make distinctions within periods so that, as in the present volume, the Gothic of the fin de siècle is accorded its own space as due acknowledgment of the difference between it and the Gothic of the mid-nineteenth century. Also, how we periodize has more widely been subject to question within the academy as we now think in terms of a long nineteenth century that extends from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. The complexities of this periodization are also reflected here in how twentieth-century Gothic has been divided between a period from 1900 to 1950 and a period from 1950 to the present day, which in turn bears testimony to the changing media that the Gothic came to inhabit in the period from radio in the early twentieth century to television in the post-World War II era. Which is, of course, another way of illustrating how the Gothic enters the home (as it once might have done through late-eighteenth-century reading practices, in contrast to public dramatic performances, or more latterly the cinema). Identifying periods and what to include is thus a shifting terrain, which these entries acknowledge while providing a comprehensive exploration of them.

How to locate the Gothic in geographical terms is now also a much more complex and rich area for investigation than it was even ten years ago. The Global Gothic initiative organized at Stirling University (and supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council) gave considerable impetus to thinking about transnational Gothic connections and emphasized how we now need to consider the global reach of the Gothic. To this end, the current volume includes a range of entries that reflect on the diverse cultures of the Gothic throughout mainland Europe (including entries on Dutch, French, German, and Scandinavian Gothic). However, the volume also looks out to a global range of the Gothic with references to the respective Gothic cultures of Japan, other parts of Asia, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The volume also examines internal divisions within nations so that while there is an entry on American Gothic there are also specific entries on Southern Gothic and New England Gothic. The diverse entities that constitute the United Kingdom are also acknowledged through entries on Irish, Scottish, and Welsh Gothic. Such a broad geographical range does not only bear testimony to the numerous places in which the Gothic appears; it is also a consequence of wider academic discussions relating to postcolonialism. The exploration of the Gothic in its global and local manifestations will provide, we hope, a useful starting point for a discussion between Gothic commonality and Gothic difference.
As the terrain of the Gothic has been effectively redrawn by developments in scholarship and the republication of what were once difficult texts to obtain, so this has also shaped whom we now consider as representative Gothic authors. While there is an identifiable Gothic canon of authors, this has been significantly widened in part by the new representative figures of the transnational Gothic outlined above. Also, more recent postmodern Gothic writings have raised questions about the status and function of the Gothic when self-conscious moments of intertextual play suggest writing that is not so much Gothic as either hybrid or about the Gothic. In addition, there are writers, such as Rudyard Kipling and Joyce Carol Oates, to give diverse examples, who have made an important contribution to the Gothic but who are clearly not writers who are resolutely Gothic in the same way as Ann Radcliffe and Stephen King. Nevertheless, there are often themes across an author’s oeuvre that come together in interesting formulations of the Gothic (as in, for example, Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006)) and that provide a critical illumination of their earlier writings. Also, a new emphasis on earlier writers, such as Francis Latham and William Henry Ireland (both represented here), help to complicate our sense of the Gothic within any given period.

Gothic diversity is not just represented in historical, national, and authorial terms; it is also most clearly (certainly during the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries) indicated by the wide range of media that the Gothic has now come to inhabit. While our sense of what constitutes Gothic in the eighteenth century centers on novels, short stories, poems, and plays (and increasingly on working-class forms such as chapbooks and bluebooks), the Gothic over the past twenty years is characterized by new forms such as graphic novels, music, videogames, specialist magazines, and the Goth subculture. Twentieth-century Gothic came to inhabit the technology of modernity, as early in the century it migrated from the page and the stage to radio, film, and television. The striking feature of the Gothic is its resilience and capacity to adapt to a changing world – perhaps because the Gothic’s capacity to produce radical critique is historically (and nationally) portable (even if in more conservative terms this could also be seen as the consequence of a sustained market investment in a popular form).

The four principal issues outlined above – periods, places, people, and media – do not, however, constitute the model through which this encyclopedia is organized but represent some of the themes that are addressed and are used here to highlight how, in Borgesian terms, the very growth in the Gothic has increasingly posed a problem for definition. The encyclopedia is structured in the only intelligible way that it can be – as an A–Z list of entries that encompass forms, periods, authors, places, and themes. These entries are of variable length, with period entries, for example, at five thousand words; these are intended to give a comprehensive overview of both major and sometimes overlooked texts, themes, and issues that constitute our understanding of specific Gothic histories. Other entries are around either one thousand, two thousand, or three thousand words, depending on the complexity of the theme or the extensive spectrum of an author’s output. All of the entries include a list of Further Reading, which acts as a helpful guide to how to develop the proposed ideas in greater depth. The entries also incorporate cross-references to other entries that help to establish, if implicitly, a way of reading that encourages building on the ideas explored within a specific entry. All of the entries have been written by specialists in their areas and provide state-of-the-art overviews of their topics. The volume consists of over two hundred entries and
we are grateful to the contributors in helping us to assemble such a critically vibrant account of the Gothic. We are also indebted to Ben Thatcher at Blackwell for his support and advice at crucial times in the editorial process. The genesis of the project, appropriately enough, was the International Gothic Association’s conference in 2007, hosted by the University of Provence (Aix-en-Provence), at which we were able to recruit many of the contributors and so launch the project within that international context.

This volume, while making claims to being appropriately definitive for the present moment, is not, in keeping with the rapidly changing nature of the Gothic and scholarship on it, going to be the last word on the topic. The online version of the encyclopedia will enable us to keep pace with developments and we welcome suggestions for further entries that reflect such changes. Such an interaction with our readers will ensure that the encyclopedia continues to be up to date, and relevant and appropriate for the changes that the future will inevitably bring to this vibrant and ever-evolving genre.

William Hughes
David Punter
Andrew Smith

REFERENCES

Abjection
ELISABETH BRONFEN

As an adjective, “abject” qualifies contemptible actions (such as cowardice), wretched emotional states (such as grief or poverty), and self-abasing attitudes (such as apologies). Derived from the Latin past participle of *abicere*, the word has come into use within Gothic studies primarily to discuss processes by which something or someone belonging to the domain of the degrading, miserable, or extremely submissive is cast off. Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror* (1982) first introduced abjection as a critical term. Picking up on the anthropological study of initiation rites discussed by Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger* (1966), Kristeva addresses the acts of separation necessary for setting up and preserving social identity. Her debt to Sigmund Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1913), in turn, consists of drawing attention to the psychic implications of such processes of differentiation, even though foregrounding that abjection involves both collective and individual identity formations. Pointedly, Kristeva refigures the murder of the father, so seminal to Freud’s notion of the Oedipus scenario, by foregrounding instead the manner in which psychosocial identity is determined as much by an act of separation from the maternal body. While, according to Freud, mythic narratives bring back the murdered primordial father in the shape of an awe-inspiring agency of guilt, the repressed figure of maternal authority returns either as an embodiment of the Holy Mary’s sublime femininity or as a monstrous body of procreation, out to devour us and transform us into the site for further grotesque breeding. By drawing attention to the manner in which a cultural fear regarding the uncontrollability of feminine reproduction has consistently served as a source of horror, abjection has proven a particularly resonant term for a study of Gothic culture.

The abject is not to be thought of as a static concept, pertaining to something monstrous or unclean per se. Instead, it speaks to a threshold situation, both horrifying and fascinating. It involves a tripartite process in the course of which forces that threaten stable identities come again to be contained. For one, abjection entails an exclusion of that which blurs the boundary between self and other, so that, by virtue of this separation, subject positions can again be clearly drawn. At the same time, it is also understood as a symptom drawing on a cultural fear of the feminine reproductive force, rendering the maternal body monstrous so that it can be cast off. Finally, abjection also involves the way in which a body that must be abjected — for the alleged health of the individual or the community — is declared to be alien and can thus, in good conscience, be expelled. It is useful to recall: only once Frankenstein’s Creature is declared to be a
monstrous body does it indeed become a stray who will return to haunt the world of its creator with ruthless vengeance. In the process of abjection, two attitudes thus come to be conjoined. One the one hand, the bodies to be abjected are declared horrific; on the other, the act of abjection is itself monstrous precisely because it targets a figure that, by undermining clear boundaries, must be cast off. In other words, only because those foreign bodies that are to be abjected are encoded as being a horrific threat to the self or the community can we overlook the fact that the agents of abjection, working under the auspices of a regeneration of stable identity borders, are equally violent.

A resonant representation of abjection as a process by which the individual and society come ceaselessly to redraw the boundaries between them (even while being forced to recognize the fragility of this enterprise) can be found in *Alien*³ (David Fincher, 1992). At the beginning of the film, Captain Ripley wakes up to discover that the queen Alien, whom she thought she had successfully vanquished in the previous episode, cannot fully be cast away. The monstrous adversary has impregnated her so that she is herself now carrying a baby Alien inside her body. Typically of the ambivalence contained in the concept of abjection, Ripley finds herself on both sides of the battle. Even though she acts under the auspices of a symbolic system that designates those foreign to it to be abjectable, she is herself a liminal figure, positioned between the Aliens and the inhabitants of Earth. Indeed, the *Alien* trilogy is premised on a key aporia built into the concept of abjection. The pure and the impure can never be neatly severed because dangerous foreign bodies that trouble neat identity categories are written into the very fabric of all stable notions of identity. The paternal scientist, who clandestinely wants to import members of this alien culture so that his research might benefit the war industry, is ironically on the side of the monstrous mother, whose reproductive facilities he seeks to appropriate. Indeed, the abject Alien mother, albeit unwittingly, blurs the boundary between a masculine war industry and feminine monstrous creation only to disclose their mutual implication. By resiliently giving battle to this monstrous progenitrix, although doing so against the covert intentions of her boss, Captain Ripley, in turn, herself uncovers the blurring between the very terms that set up the process of abjection. In the decisive moment we see her rising to the spaceship’s deck, in one arm the phallic rifle she has put together and in the other the little girl for whom she fondly cares. Over her warrior body, paternal war machinery again comes to be crossed with maternal love, rendering visible how the act of abjection and its object can never be neatly separated.

Such inability to distinguish between subject and object explains why abjection should not, according to Kristeva (1982), be thought of in terms of narcissism, and why it entails a different libidinal economy than that of love. While abjection may result in a transference of affective energies, it involves an object whose status is unclear, too close to be assimilated into an object of desire. Instead, declared to be a radically excluded object, the abject body continues to challenge the authority that called for it to be cast off. Positioned on the edge of a reality that, were it to be fully acknowledged, would be utterly destructive, the abject, as Kristeva notes, “takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away.” Abjection, she adds, is “an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, a new significance” (1982: 15). This dual move is perhaps rendered nowhere as clearly in Gothic texts as in the fascinating horror a corpse inspires. To assert individual and collective survival entails casting off death by drawing its force to the body of a deceased that can then be symbolically expelled
with the help of codified burial rituals. Yet, implicitly inscribed in such renewal is an acknowledgment of what threatens individual and collective self-assertion. Abjection thrives on troubling the line that demarcates life from death because, while the life of the subject (as that of the community) is dependent on its ability to cast off death, life is also measured by the fact that it is constantly threatened by death.

Equally seminal for Gothic culture is the manner in which abjection finds an articulation in two forms of psychic transformation, namely the bodily symptom and sublimation. The former, Kristeva suggests, could be seen as a “non-assimilable alien, a monster,” which “the listening devices of the unconscious do not hear, for its strayed subject is huddled outside the paths of desire.” Monstrous bodies can fruitfully be seen as symptoms of an anxiety regarding the fragility of identity boundaries because they embody a blurring between human and inhuman rather than representing in symbolic language the anxiety such destabilization of categories entails. Sublimation, in turn, is “nothing else than the possibility of naming the pre-nominal, the pre-objectal, which are in fact only a trans-nominal, a trans-objectal.” On the thematic level, Gothic texts celebrate symptoms of abjection in their depiction of vampires, which undo the border between life and death, as well as their interest in the double, who troubles the notion of a cohesive self (see doubles; vampire fiction). As aesthetic representations, however, Gothic texts have recourse to poetic language and thus also belong to sublimation. Kristeva suggests: “In the symptom, the abject permeates me, I become abject. Through sublimation, I keep it under control. The abject is edged with the sublime” (1982: 11).

In performing the unnameable that makes up the ground and vanishing point of all symbolic language, aesthetic texts allow us to have our cake of horror and eat it. By virtue of the affective force of the aesthetic text we can identify with an experience of abjection, yet we do so by proxy. The laws of narrative closure also mark a reinsertion of control and with it a redrawing of the boundary between affective identification with and self-conscious distancing from the experience of abjection the fictional text evokes. As a performance of the fragility upon which individual and collective identity is based, abjection is sustained by a counter-directional move. Even while the abject confronts us with fascinating if troubling situations where psychic stability threatens to dissolve and we risk falling back under the sway of a stifling all-encompassing maternal power, it calls for a combat that inevitably culminates in rejection. The final battle in Aliens has Ripley on the ship’s deck both touching and fighting off the mother Alien, coming ever closer in her embrace until she is able to jettison her ferocious enemy into the bottomless darkness of the sky.

Gothic texts that celebrate abjection as much play with a breakdown of identity boundaries as they play to the authority of redrawing these, even if in full knowledge of the fragility such recuperation entails. The fascinating power of horror that Gothic sensibility taps into is one that insists on revealing the mutual implication of the monstrosity aligned with the maternal and the strict law of ejection connected with paternal symbolic laws. In the Alien trilogy, Ripley may be fighting in the name of a paternally structured war industry but she is drawn by the maternal excess that has already contaminated her, sustaining her fascination with the abject body she is in the process of casting off. In a similar manner, the position of the audience of Gothic texts is equally liminal. Kristeva notes, “the writer, fascinated by the abject, imagines its logic, projects himself into it, introjects it, and as a consequence perverts language – style and content.” Particularly Gothic writing, one might say, thrives on what she calls a “crossing over of the dichotomous categories of Pure and Impure, Prohibition and Sin, Morality and Immorality” (1982: 16). Regarding their fascination with abjection, Gothic texts perform an impossible catharsis. Acknowledging that sublimation will inevitably revert back to
symptoms of abjection, they warn us that the cycle of abjection as a dialectic of confrontation and combat is endless precisely because the pure and the dangerous feed on and perpetuate each other. Gothic texts call upon us to stay attuned to the unnameable force that undercuts our sense of stable identity, inside and outside, foreign and familiar.

SEE ALSO: Blood; Doubles; Liminality; Monstrosity; Psychoanalysis; Vampire Fiction.

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Abyss, The

JUSTIN D. EDWARDS

In “This Abyss,” a song by The Gothic Archies, the haunting voice of Stephin Merritt drones the lyrics, “This abyss, this lightless void / This abyss, of world destroyed . . . / This abyss, of night unbound / This abyss, without a sound.” Drawing on a fashionable Goth aesthetic (see goth), this song attempts to convey a symbolic and psychological state of darkness through the spatial terms of an abyss, an endless chasm. “This abyss, of black increased / This abyss, without surcease,” the song continues, gesturing toward the literary definition of the term: a bottomless or unfathomed depth or gulf, a bottomless pit. The *OED* also defines the abyss as having the figurative meaning of a catastrophic situation seen as likely to occur, or the term can be used to refer to intellectual, ethical, or moral depths.

The trope of the abyss has been diffused throughout the Gothic novel. The abyss became a literary feature to convey anxiety and depict remote and sublime landscapes in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century novels. This is not to say that the literary trope of the abyss has remained constant; it has been consistently reinterpreted, recreated, and rearranged. In Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian* (1797), for instance, the abyss conveys the Gothic aspects of the setting and reflects the psychological distress of the characters (see radcliffe, ann). When the distraught Ellena is journeying through the wilderness to the monastery, she ascends “the cliffs of a mountain” and, on the brink of a precipice, she sees water “fretting and foaming” as it “fell with thundering strength to the abyss.” As she continues along the dangerous path, the narrator struggles to find the words to describe her treacherous journey:

The road, therefore, was carried high among the cliffs . . . and seemed as if suspended in air; while the gloom and vastness of the precipices, which towered above and sunk below it, together with the amazing force and uproar of the falling waters, combined to render the pass more terrific than the pencil could describe, or language can express.

Attempting to articulate the sublime – the bottomless chasm, the abyss – the narrator describes Ellena’s “dreadful pleasure . . . heightened with awe,” as she contemplates the great chasm: “The transition was as the passage through the vale of death to the bliss of eternity” (Radcliffe 1998: 63–4).

The abyss, as this scene suggests, inspires anxiety, terror, and awe. For the character experiences an ominous and irresistible force associated with the immense power and inexpressibility of the sublime (see sublime, THE). In this, the abyss is a source of imminent danger, reflecting the possibility of being headed toward destruction. Characters are, moreover, often attracted to and repulsed from the abyss, embodying an ambiguity that is central to the Gothic. For the abyss compels us to destruction – it is a reminder of death – and yet it also draws one toward it, attracting one to peer down into the darkness.
The trope of the abyss is present throughout the American Gothic, often figuratively conveying a threatening physical and psychological wilderness. In a crucial moment in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1798) (see Brown, Charles Brockden), for instance, the main character, Clara, describes a “dark dream” about her brother Theodore: he tempts her to the edge of an abyss, enticing her toward her own destruction:

I at length imagined myself walking, in the evening twilight, to my brother’s habitation. A pit, methought, had been dug in the path I had taken, of which I was not aware. As I carelessly pursued my walk, I thought I saw my brother, standing at some distance before me, beckoning and calling me to make haste. He stood on the opposite edge of the gulf. I mended my pace and one step more would have plunged me into this abyss, had not someone from behind caught suddenly my arm. (Brown 1994: 57–8)

Here, the abyss is linked to sexual transgression and incest (see incest). For in this dream, Theodore tempts Clara into an abyss, beckoning her over the chasm. Sexual desire and the abyss are clearly linked throughout the text, illustrating Clara’s ambivalence concerning her brother: she loves him dearly, but fears his sexuality. Theodore’s desire for his sister, symbolically presented in his beckoning, outstretched hand, entices and terrifies Clara. She cannot resist him, she is compelled to go forward, but she is also repulsed by his incestuous, “unspeakable” desire.

The Gothic trope of the abyss is, then, sometimes used to represent transgression. In this, it gestures toward a terrible void of life or the symbolic fall into an indulgent passion or ruthless acts – physical or sexual violence – whereby an unethical world lays waste to potential victims. This aspect of the trope is present in the Gothic writing of Edgar Allan Poe (see Poe, Edgar Allan). In “The Imp of the Perverse” (1845), for instance, Poe’s narrator describes a spirit that tempts him toward transgression and self-destruction. He explains how this force – this imp – leads him to murder a man so he will inherit his estate. Reflecting on his crimes, the narrator states:

We stand upon the brink of a precipice. We peer into the abyss – we grow sick and dizzy. Our first impulse is to shrink from the danger. Unaccountably we remain . . . And because our reason violently deters us from the brink, therefore, do we the more impetuously approach it. There is no passion in nature so demoniacally impatient, as that of him, who shuddering upon the edge of a precipice, thus meditates a plunge. To indulge for a moment, in any attempt at thought, is to be inevitably lost; for reflection but urges us to forbear, and therefore it is, I say, that we cannot. If there be no friendly arm to check us, or if we fail in a sudden effort to prostrate ourselves backward from the abyss, we plunge, and are destroyed.

Knowing he will never be caught, the narrator questions if he is capable of confession. He then fearfully runs through the streets and reveals his secret; he is quickly tried and sentenced to death.

SEE ALSO: Brown, Charles Brockden; Goth; Incest; Poe, Edgar Allan; Radcliffe, Ann; Sublime, The.

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FURTHER READING
Adultery
ANDREW SCAHILL

Though often believed to be derived from the word “adult” as a practice of those who have attained chronological maturity, the term “adultery” is actually a combination of the Latin ad (toward) and alter (other). Taken together, adultery literally means “to make other,” a fitting etymology for the place of adultery within the Gothic, a genre so fundamentally concerned with sexuality, corruption, transformation, and otherness. Within literature as a whole, adultery serves to illustrate the conflict between desire/libido and law/civilization, or, more broadly, the personal and the public. Gothic narratives involving adulterous liaisons extend these themes and materialize patriarchal anxieties around issues of power, surveillance, and an ambivalent polarity of pleasure/terror at the display of female sexuality (see sex).

Treatment of adultery in the Gothic tends to be highly gendered, with male adultery forming the basis of the Byronic hero’s dark and mysterious secret: an abandoned wife, an illicit love affair, or an illegitimate child, for instance. Female adultery tends to be more suspected than actual (with the notable exception of The Scarlet Letter). However, this belief in marital indiscretion leads many beleaguered, spiteful husbands in the Gothic to accuse, abuse, and even murder their wives over suspicion of adultery. Where comedic genres have long employed cuckoldry as a site of farcical humor, the Gothic centralizes male paranoia (sometimes with an explicit critique of the fragility of the male ego) as an irrational abhorrence that transforms rational men into Hyde-like monstrosities.

Perhaps the ur-text of adulterous secrecy in the Gothic is Charlotte Brontë’s novel Jane Eyre, published in 1847. In the novel, the eponymous Gothic heroine falls in love and becomes engaged to her mysterious employer, Mr. Rochester. Jane discovers, however, that Rochester already has a wife, Bertha – a mad woman whom he locks away in the attic. Jane abandons Rochester rather than consummate an adulterous affair, only to be reunited with him at the close of the novel after his wife commits suicide. Jean Rhys would reclaim the figure of Bertha in her feminist novel Wide Sargasso Sea (1966), in which Bertha’s madness is caused by Rochester’s rejection of her West Indian heritage.

Flight from adultery also serves as the basis for Louisa May Alcott’s suspense novel A Long Fatal Love Chase (1868), which she wrote two years before her sentimental favorite Little Women. In A Long Fatal Love Chase, Alcott’s Gothic heroine Rosamond is seduced and deceived by the aptly named Phillip Tempest, who already has a wife and child. After leaving him, Tempest begins a sadistic chase of Rosamond across Europe that ends tragically in both of their deaths.

The Scarlet Letter, written by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1850, is another central text in the Gothic’s treatment of adultery. Infidelity takes a more central place in this novel, set in a seventeenth-century Puritan village, as Hester Prynne is forced to wear an embroidered letter “A” to signify her sin. Her husband, the aptly named Roger Chillingsworth, torments both Prynne and her secret paramour, the minister Arthur Dimmesdale, eventually leading to the minister’s death. The offspring of Hester and Dimmesdale’s affair, Pearl, functions as an embodied extension of the scarlet letter, with Prynne even swathing the child in scarlet clothing with gold embroidery. Described as “impish” and at times “demonic” in the text, Pearl stands as a constant reminder of Hester’s sin and possesses the same mix of Romantic innocence and Victorian emptiness that would characterize the Gothic child in Henry James, and later Stephen King. The Scarlet Letter, however, also suggests the possibility of redemption from sin, as Hester’s sin is eventually forgotten or forgiven, and her scarlet letter is taken to mean “able” rather than “adulterer” by the townspeople (see hawthorne, nathaniel).

In American literature, African American authors used the conventions of the Gothic to narrativize the actual lived horrors of chattel
slavery and physical and sexual subjugation under white rule. Teresa Goddu notes in *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (1997) that African American authors such as Fredrick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs used the Gothic mode to “haunt back” and reveal the horrors of slavery. In Harriet Jacobs’ narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), young slave girl Linda Brent must fend off the sexual advances of her master, Dr. Flint, and endure the wrath of Mrs. Flint, who punishes the girl for a perceived affair. As Jacobs illustrates, it is the horror of slavery that transforms proper women into vengeful monsters (see *slavery and the gothic*). More broadly, adulterous miscegenation (consensual and not) forms the basis of many a tragic secret within the genre as a whole, as the wealthy white slave owner must hide away his mixed-race children and the “tragic mulatto” character lives in constant fear of discovery. In *The Bondwoman’s Narrative* (believed to have been written between 1853 and 1861), for instance, Hannah Crafts employs the tropes of the female Gothic as a mulatto woman, passing for white, is pursued and blackmailed by the aptly named Mr. Trappe, who threatens to reveal her secret (see *female gothic*). It should be noted that scholars such as Catherine Keyser have argued that Crafts was heavily influenced by Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* in writing *The Bondwoman’s Narrative*. Indeed, questions of true parental lineage and racial purity haunt much of American literature, particularly in the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Southern Gothic writers such as William Faulkner and Flannery O’Connor (see *southern gothic*).

In cinema, adultery frequently serves as a basis for the potboiler mystery and film noir genres; notable examples include *The Letter* (1940), *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Mildred Pierce* (1945), and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946). In these films, it is common for the married “femme fatale,” or deadly woman, to lure the weak-willed everyman into an increasingly labyrinthine plot to perform a heist or murder the seductress’ husband. Contemporary examples extend film noir’s correlation between female sexuality, loss of self-control, and death: notable examples include *Fatal Attraction* (1987), *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* (1992), and *Obsessed* (2009). Further, films such as *Poison Ivy* (1992) and *Crush* (1993) take a Lolita-esque turn, as their female seductresses are emotionally disturbed young girls (see *film*). These films function as neoconservative cautionary tales to married men to remain within the bounds of matrimony and family, and equate female sexuality with overwrought hedonism and madness.

**SEE ALSO:** Female Gothic; Film; Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Sex; Slavery and the Gothic; Southern Gothic.

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**FURTHER READING**


**African American Gothic**

**CAROL MARGARET DAVISON**

Although the Gothic has been overlooked or downplayed by critics of African American
literature, and resisted by some of its writers wary of the genre’s tendency to dematerialize the horrors of African American experience, it has nonetheless pervaded that canon from the early slave narratives through to contemporary writing. Although no sustained examination exists of African American investments in the Gothic to date, certain observations have been made. The Gothic’s popular use of the “sins of the fathers” theme that engages with grievous historical transgressions and un speakable trauma makes it an exceptionally suitable mode for taking up African American issues and debates. Deploying Gothic strategies has also enabled African American writers to contest the rationalist discourses that undergird racist ideology and to dialogue with the white American literary tradition that, according to Leslie Fiedler, is “bewilderingly and embarrassingly [...] gothic” (1960: 9) in its exposure of the hidden “blackness” of the American soul, especially in relation to that nation’s two “special guilts” – “the slaughter of the Indians” and “the abominations of the slave trade” (Fiedler 1960: 130).

Toni Morrison theorizes the white American Gothic fascination with historical transgressions as an effort to inoculate the nation against repeating them. In such antebellum literary classics as Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), and Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick; Or, The Whale* (1851), the Gothic has been brought to bear, in provocative and insightful ways, on the vexed question of race relations in America. In both Gothic and non-Gothic works, however, African Americans and Native Americans have been represented as abject Gothic Others. Joseph Holt Ingraham’s *Lafitte* (1836) and Henry Clay Lewis’ “A Struggle for Life” (1843), for example, feature bestialized, homicidal, and physically distorted black men who ultimately die violent, ritualistic deaths. These works also evidence the noteworthy nineteenth-century phenomenon whereby race-focused studies and debates – medical, scientific, political, and otherwise – adopted and adapted established Gothic rhetoric and motifs that subsequently spilled over into cultural productions.

African American Gothic, like its white American counterpart, is preoccupied with slavery and its formidable and multifaceted legacy, especially the issue of race relations. The works of both groups attest to the veracity of Richard Wright’s statement that “in the oppression of the Negro a shadow [lies] athwart our national life dense and heavy” (1964: xxxiv). While admiring and marshaling the Gothic’s tremendous evocative powers, however, African American authors tend to desupernaturalize that form and resist its Romantic effects. Their strategy of naturalizing the Gothic, according to critics, underscores its traumatic, terror-filled reality experienced by African Americans within a racist society. In his prefacing essay to *Native Son* (1940), Richard Wright claims that African American reality is so rife with horrors that no Hawthorne or Poe is required to invent new ones (1964: xxxiv). Literary critic Theodore L. Gross paraphrases Wright several decades later in his statement that “the nightmare world of Poe or Hawthorne has become the Monday morning of the Negro author” (1971: 184).

Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), a harrowing female slave narrative, is usually identified as marking the inception of the African American Gothic tradition. Like other accounts of its kind, *Incidents* draws on the female Gothic popularized by Britain’s Ann Radcliffe and forges parallels between African American female slaves and white women confined to the British domestic sphere. Several critics have noted that the female Gothic and the female slave narrative similarly expose the terror, sexual politics, and various dark, repressed, and often unconscious truths about patriarchy, but they have especially underscored the latter form’s resistance to Romantic conventions. Such exposure and resistance are evident in the recently discovered *The Bondwoman’s Narrative* by Hannah Crafts. Edited by African American scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and published in 2002, this
fictionalized, Dickensian-style slave narrative dating from the 1850s exhibits an astonishing knowledge of contemporary sentimental and Gothic fiction and may be the first novel written by an African American woman. Its Gothic conventions include an original crime, a series of haunted houses, the theme of confinement, a persecuted woman, and a figurative vampire oppressor in the form of a blackmailing lawyer named Mr. Trappe.

Twentieth-century African American Gothic has been most recognizable as a regional form and often resists containment in literary productions. As works by such masters as William Faulkner and Flannery O’Connor illustrate, the South often functions as the repository for America’s irrational impulses. W. E. B. Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a provocative and poetic sociological commentary on African American reality in the post-Reconstructionist South, consistently presents race relations through a Gothic lens. According to Du Bois, “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line” (1968: 13). Forty years after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, the “Nation has not yet found peace from its sins”: “the swarthy spectre [of slavery] sits in its accustomed seat at the Nation’s feast” (1968: 6). Thus does Du Bois reiterate, in more Gothic terms, Frances E. W. Harper’s observation in her (1892) novel *Iola Leroy* that while “Slavery [...] is dead, [...] the spirit which animated it still lives” (1987: 217).

Du Bois yokes this compelling concept of an un-dead slavery to the notion that the sins of the fathers persist in the form of an economic slavery as “the shadow-hand of the master’s grand-nephew or cousin or creditor stretches out of the gray distance to collect the rack-rent remorselessly” (1968: 117). Du Bois’ portrait of a purgatorial, benighted region handcuffed to history is strikingly Gothic in nature, as is the multivalent and prominent symbol of the veil that taps the joint themes of biblical Apocalypse/Revelation. The veil of race that shadows Du Bois’ baby son and all African Americans in *Souls* serves as a barrier that grotesquely obscures their proper and full recognition within the broader, white-dominated American society.

Perhaps the most significant Gothic-inflected concept wielded by Du Bois is that of “double consciousness,” a paradoxical curse/gift that affects all African Americans who experience the singular and intense sensation of “two-ness, – [being] an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (1968: 3). Subsequent authors of African American Gothic, among other writers, explore and adapt Du Bois’ concept of double consciousness, which involves the plaguing “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (1968: 3). Some connect it to the traditional Gothic concept of the repressed, often transgressive figure of the “double” or “shadow self” (see doubles).

In many of its Gothic motifs and atmospherics, Jean Toomer’s *Cane* (1923), a much celebrated production of the Harlem Renaissance, takes a page out of Du Bois’ *Souls*. Gothic tropes punctuate several of the key vignettes in this avant-garde novel that poetically chronicles African American experience in the post-Reconstruction era. Set in a quintessential Southern town with a cotton factory and cane fields, “Blood Burning Moon,” for example, recounts an ill-fated love triangle involving a black woman and two antagonistic suitors, one white (Bob Stone, son of the former plantation owner), the other black (Tom Burwell, a cane fieldworker). Marked by a sensitivity and attentiveness to the complexities of consciousness on both sides of the racial divide, “Blood Burning Moon” concludes with the white man dead and the black man brutally lynched by an irate white mob, his final articulation of agony channeling a multitude of ghostly brethren. Toomer cannily uses the Gothic to elevate this and other haunting sequences in *Cane* into a cosmic struggle underpinned by historic forces to which he suggests the characters are irrevocably bound.
In keeping with the tradition of the slave narrative, twentieth-century African American Gothic has been used primarily to articulate profound social horrors, in the process reconfiguring the popular American Gothic recipe wherein the myth of the national dream is disrupted by the nightmares of history. In Charles W. Chesnutt’s portrait of southern society in *The Conjure Woman* (1899), the Gothic is shown to inhere not in Uncle Julius’ supernatural conjure tales about antebellum plantation life but in their oblique, coded commentary on racism and the arrogant and dehumanizing world of the slave masters that, due to its pressures and resulting distress, drives slaves to conjuring for relief. A unique fusion of naturalism and the Gothic occurs in various mid-twentieth century novels that serves to underscore the brutal and degrading nature of African American social reality born of the pathology known as American racism. Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) and Ann Petry’s *The Street* (1946), for example, conjure up Gothic atmospherics and a *Frankenstein*-based dynamic to convey how their respective protagonists – one male (Bigger Thomas), the other female (Lutie Johnson) – are ultimately and grotesquely transformed into homicidal outcasts. While Bigger experiences an increasing sense of imprisonment and entrapment in his social environment, Lutie experiences a sense of live burial in the face of the novel’s eponymous street, which she inhabits in Harlem, and the dreaded prospect of homelessness.

The mid-twentieth century also witnessed the migration of the American race question to the silver screen, particularly in the production of social problem films dealing with the joint topics of the tragic mulatto/mulatta and racial passing wherein light-skinned African American characters attempt to pass as white. In stark contradistinction to works by such Harlem Renaissance writers as James Weldon Johnson, Nella Larsen, and Jessie Fauset that often celebrate racial ambiguity, antimiscegenation films like Elia Kazan’s *Pinky* (1949) and Alfred Werker’s *Lost Boundaries* (1949) employ horror-film motifs, atmospherics, and techniques such as the ideas of a repressed family history and a secret, monstrous/hybrid identity to expose ideological tensions relating to racial issues, including anxieties about racial “purity.” Especially in the sequences tapping their protagonists’ race-related fears, blackness is presented as a terrifying spectral force. In *Lost Boundaries*, for example, Howard, the son of a black family that has passed for many years as white, experiences a nightmare in which he watches horrified as each of his family members is transformed into an identifiably black person.

Recent examples of African American Gothic suggest that women writers seem particularly adept with this form, often successfully combining the female Gothic with the political Gothic, which exposes and exorcises crimes and repressions fostered by American institutions and ideologies. Gloria Naylor’s *Linden Hills* (1985), for example, is a sinister, politically loaded novel set in a Dante-esque black suburban community. In this compelling yet disturbing tale of a mortician with a deadly secret, a truly Gothic figure who blurs the traditional female Gothic boundary between husband and prison-master, Naylor indicts the repressive, self-loathing propensities of middle-class African American society.

Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison could lay claim to being the most accomplished African American Gothic writer of her generation. *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison’s first published work, brilliantly explores the dark side of W. E. B. Du Bois’ signature concept of “double consciousness” through the grotesque and tragic story of Pecola Breedlove, a pubescent African American girl oppressed – physically, mentally, and emotionally – by what are depicted as grotesque gender and race ideals upheld by white America. All of Morrison’s novels possess a significant Gothic component but *Beloved* (1987) has been singled out as her Gothic masterpiece. In its chilling declaration that “Not a house in the country ain’t packed to its rafters with some dead Negro’s grief” (Morrison 2004: 5), *Beloved* offers up a
singular revision of the powerful and popular haunted-house tradition in American Gothic. This more modest descendant of the classic Gothic’s haunted, contested castle furnishes the setting for the invasion of pasts upon presents. The house known as 123 becomes the site where a horrifying act of infanticide by a slave mother and the crimes of a nation’s fathers who sanctioned the “peculiar institution” and the Fugitive Slave Bill are jointly explored and, following a community-based ritual exorcism, symbolically laid to rest.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Doubles; Race; Slavery and the Gothic: Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING


Aickman, Robert

NICK FREEMAN

Robert Aickman (1914–81), the grandson of the Victorian Gothic novelist Richard Marsh (see Marsh, Richard), described his fiction as “strange stories.” In eight collections, from his collaboration with Elizabeth Jane Howard, We Are For The Dark (1951), to the posthumous Night Voices (1985), he became an influential presence in postwar British Gothic, linking the subtle ambiguities of Walter de la Mare or Elizabeth Bowen with later writers such as Ramsey Campbell (see Campbell, Ramsey) and M. John Harrison. While he could make striking use of “traditional” tropes – vampirism in “Pages from a Young Girl’s Diary” (1973), ghostly visitors in “The Waiting Room” (Dark Entries, 1964) – Aickman preferred to mix psychological acuity (shown to good effect
in many of his first-person narrators), with keen sociological observation and a strong sense of the melancholy and elegiac, notably in “The Stains” (1980), written during his lengthy struggle with cancer.

As the anthologist responsible for the first eight volumes of Fontana’s Great Ghost Stories (1964–72), Aickman argued that the ghost story, “an art form of altogether exceptional delicacy and subtlety,” drew upon “the unconscious mind in the manner of poetry” and needed “neither logic nor moral” (Aickman 1966: 7). His selections tended to favor those works which shared the qualities of his own, hence the inclusion of Bowen’s “The Demon Lover” (1945), and Oliver Onions’ “The Beckoning Fair One” (1911) alongside his “The Trains” (We Are For The Dark) and “The Cicerones” (Sub Rosa, 1968). Aickman’s protagonists are often subtly complicit in the violation of themselves, and haunted as much by their own experiences and desires as by external phantoms; his ghosts are, as John Clute observes, “a manifestation, a psychic portrait, of their failure to understand their own lives” (Clute 1997: 12). The virginal narrator of “The Swords” (Cold Hand in Mine, 1975) is a case in point. The nervous young salesman chances upon a ramshackle fairground where he watches a sideshow in which audience members thrust swords into a woman. When she emerges from her ordeal miraculously unharmed, the narrator becomes drawn into a sordid relationship with the fairground manager, who offers him a private meeting with the woman, one bizarre and disturbing in equal measure. In no sense a traditional ghost story (see ghost stories despite its inclusion in the fifth Fontana collection (1969), “The Swords” is at once a meditation on sexuality and male violence, a reflection of Aickman’s lifelong interest in theatrical performance, and a thoroughly unsettling account of a horrific experience.

Aickman was keen to distinguish between “the mere horror story” on the one hand and the rationalized “scientific extravaganza” on the other (Aickman 1966: 7). He knew the “ghost hunter” Harry Price, spending a night in Borley Rectory with him in 1943, but he was unconvinced by Price’s rationalist outlook, and his own fiction preferred more oblique engagements with the inexplicable, illogical, and grotesque. Stories such as “The View” (1951), a Jungian-inflected meditation on aging and sexual difference, or “The Wine-Dark Sea” (Powers of Darkness, 1966), in which the influence of Robert Graves shapes a feminist fable concerning exiled female divinity and the denunciation of “progress,” teeter on the brink of allegory, while “Into the Wood” (1968), set in a sanatorium in a Swedish forest, also invites its cast of insomniac social exiles to be read in symbolic terms. Peter Straub comments that it is, in part, “an extended metaphor for the separation, even estrangement, between the artist and the conventional world” (Straub 1988: 10), but like Aickman’s other explorations of alterity, it resists schematic equivalences.

D. H. Lawrence maintained that fiction needs “an apparent formlessness, definite form is mechanical.” “We need more easy transition from mood to mood,” he continued, for “a good deal of the meaning of life and of art lies in the apparently dull spaces, the pauses, the unimportant passages” (Lawrence 1967: 289). Aickman’s stories apply a similar credo, forsaking the restrictions of plot to offer richly atmospheric accounts of a reality fraying at the edges. His leisurely and primarily realist style which, as Phil Baker says, “disregard[s] conventions of narrative economy and force” (quoted in Crawford 2003: 1), is perfectly suited to depicting events resistant to rational analysis, and privileges suggestion, allusion, and indeterminacy over clear explanations. In “The Hospice” (1975), a stranded traveler seeks sanctuary at an apparently welcoming private care home, only to notice that the ankle of one of his fellow diners has been manacled to a radiator. “The Inner Room” (1968) begins with a young girl playing with a dolls’ house; it ends with the now-grown up girl visiting the living dolls in a dark wood reminiscent of Dante’s. “The Same Dog” (1975) mingles déjà vu with
the Jungian doctrine of eternal recurrence, spicing the whole with an undercurrent of sexual symbolism. In “Ringing the Changes,” first published in Cynthia Asquith’s Third Ghost Book (1955) and perhaps Aickman’s most anthologized story, a honeymoon couple stay at an inn on the Suffolk coast and encounter the ghosts of drowned villagers when the village bells chime midnight; again, the story forsakes “mere horror” to probe the psychological complexity of the couple’s relationship. “A Roman Question” (1964) involves a bizarre ritual in a Birmingham boarding house that may (or may not) call up the spirit of a man posted “missing” in World War II, while “The Houses of the Russians” (1968), set in 1930s Finland, dramatizes an experience that may be a haunting or a time-slip. “Never Visit Venice” (1968) is a wry nod to Thomas Mann which finishes with its jaded protagonist heading out onto the lagoon in a gondola he shares with a cowled skeleton, and “The Unsettled Dust” (1968) is the inhabitants of a Bedfordshire stately home succumbing to the emotional sclerosis seen in Katherine Mansfield’s “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” (1922). As these outlines suggest, Aickman was an ingenious and restless experimenter whose fifty or so stories maintain a remarkably consistent standard.

SEE ALSO: Campbell, Ramsey; Ghost stories; Marsh, Richard.

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Ainsworth, William Harrison
STEPHEN CARVER

William Harrison Ainsworth (1805–82) was a journalist, novelist, and poet. A Victorian with a Romantic soul, his historical novels had a violent, sexy mise-en-scène that transplanted the codes of the eighteenth-century Gothic into an English setting (see Victorian Gothic). His most significant publications fall between Rookwood (1834) and The Lancashire Witches (1848). Although Ainsworth was a member of the early-Victorian literary elite, his reputation was mortally wounded by controversy, and his melodramatic style was often criticized and satirized by his peers.

The son of a Manchester solicitor, Ainsworth was contributing to magazines from the age of sixteen. He befriended Charles Lamb through the London Magazine and moved to London to study law in 1824. He was one of the original “Fraserians,” and counted among his friends J. G. Lockhart, Henry Colburn, Leigh Hunt, Bulwer Lytton, Mary Shelley, John Macrone, John Forster, George Cruikshank, Thackeray, and Dickens. His co-authorship of the Gothic novel Sir John Chiverton (1826) brought him to the attention of his hero Sir Walter Scott (although Scott’s journals refer to Ainsworth as an “imitator”), but it was Rookwood that made his name (Carver 2003: 102).

Rookwood was one of the most successful novels of the nineteenth century. It alchemically blends different genres, Ainsworth later explaining that:

I resolved to attempt a story in the bygone style of Mrs. Radcliffe . . . substituting an old English squire, an old English manorial residence, and an old English highwayman, for the Italian marchese, the castle, and the brigand of the great mistress of Romance. (Ainsworth 1881: I, 3)

Striking gold, Ainsworth made the Georgian highwayman Dick Turpin a central character, inventing the “Ride to York” legend that endures
to this day (Ainsworth 1881: I, IV). Ainsworth also superseded Maturin and brought the Gothic to the mainland (see Maturin, Charles Robert). *Rookwood* represents a bridge between the eighteenth-century Gothic and the contemporary urban nightmares of the penny dreadful and the literary novel, being stylistically and historically liminal, somewhere between Romantic and Victorian (see *penny dreadfuls; romanticism*).

A craze for criminal romance ensued, and Ainsworth returned to the Newgate Calendars in 1839, serializing *Jack Sheppard* in *Bentley’s Miscellany*, which ran concurrently with *Oliver Twist*. As both stories were set in the London underworld and illustrated by Cruikshank, critical comparisons were common, much to Dickens’ annoyance (see Dickens, Charles). An editorial moral panic, the “Newgate controversy,” followed, originally led by the *Examiner, Punch*, and the *Athenaeum*, centering around the Newgate novels of Lytton, Ainsworth, and Dickens, and their potential to corrupt young, working-class males. When the valet François Courvoisier murdered his master, Lord William Russell, allegedly after reading *Jack Sheppard*, the charge against Ainsworth seemed incontrovertible and his status as a good Victorian and a serious literary novelist never recovered. Dickens publicly and privately distanced himself from his friend, Thackeray criticized and lampooned, and Poe savaged Ainsworth in *Graham’s Magazine*, later sending him up in “The Balloon-Hoax” (1844).

Down but not out, Ainsworth took over the editorship of *Bentley’s Miscellany* from Dickens in 1839, and began two historical romances, *Guy Fawkes* and *The Tower of London*, transferring his Gothic sensibilities from the underworld to the kings and queens of England. A stream of popular romances followed; forty years on Ainsworth was still turning national landmarks into sublime spaces, and populating them with ill omens, fated monarchs, paupers of noble birth, star-crossed lovers, Gothic villains, hot gypsies, and plenty of ghosts. His last major work, however, was *The Lancashire Witches*.

*The Lancashire Witches* is the only of Ainsworth’s forty-three novels to have remained consistently in print, often shelved alongside Dennis Wheatley and Montague Summers (both of whom it undoubtedly influenced). In their role of Gothic Other to patriarchal versions of femininity, Ainsworth’s powerful Faustian protagonists know, like Eve, that they have a much better chance with Satan than with God. Although the primary plot offers a more moral interpretation, the possibility that it is good to be bad remains forever teasing and present. At times the author appears on the threshold of more serious comment on persecution but chooses, instead, magic realism. The narrative therefore works according to the logic of a fairy tale, which is really where witches belong, and much of the story takes place in an enchanted wood. This anachronistic synergy of history, folktale, romance, and melodrama is the last English novel that can truly be said to belong to the original Gothic tradition.

Ainsworth subsequently dropped from the literary mainstream, although the “Lancashire Novelist” was honored at a Lord Mayor’s banquet in Manchester in 1881 as “an expression of the high esteem in which he is held by his Fellow townsmen and of his services to Literature.” An accompanying article in *Punch* affectionately described him as “the greatest axe-and-neck-romancer of our time” (Carver 2003: 389, 402). Ainsworth died a few weeks later.

Although rejected by his contemporaries as a hack, and still often critically overlooked, Ainsworth contributed significantly to the development of the literary novel after Scott, and to the new urban Gothic of Dickens, Reynolds, and Stevenson (see Reynolds, G. W. M. (George William Macarthur); Stevenson, Robert Louis; *urban gothic*). His approach to history, while flying in the face of Lukácsian theory, can still be seen in popular narratives such as *Rome, Titanic*, and *The Tudors*.

SEE ALSO: Dickens, Charles; Maturin, Charles Robert; *penny dreadfuls; Poe, Edgar Allan*;
American Gothic
CHARLES L. CROW

The United States and the Gothic have common origins in the turmoil of European thought in the late eighteenth century. The cusp of the Enlightenment and Romanticism produced early English Gothic novels, the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution. Deeply entwined with American thought from the beginning, the Gothic has produced a dark twin of the national narrative, a critique of the story the United States has been trying to tell about itself. It has offered a voice to the repressed and oppressed, to those left out or pushed into the shadows. The Gothic is a literature of borderlands, suited to a country defined by its frontier. It also has patrolled other shifting and unstable boundaries, and provides an index of American fears, anxieties, and self-doubt.

The sources of American Gothic go back much further, before the Revolution, to early colonial experience. When Puritans looked from the deck of the Mayflower upon the inhospitable coast of New England, they saw a wilderness filled with wild animals, savages, and devils. The story they told about themselves in this wild land, and that their leader William Bradford wrote in his history Of Plymouth Plantation (1651), was based on the Book of Exodus. The experience of these English Christians paralleled that of the Israelites, fleeing the Egyptians and seeking their Promised Land. Like them, the Puritans would have their faith tested in the wilderness. Such a test was experienced by Mary Rowlandson, wife of a minister, whose account (1682) of being captured by Indians during the uprising known as King Phillip’s War was the first best-selling work of the English experience in New England. Narratives of Indian captivity, an innovation at the beginning of American literature in English, often containing proto-Gothic graphic descriptions of violence and the suffering of the captive, would remain a popular form for the next two hundred years. Eventually, Native American voices would begin to complicate this story.

In the New England master narrative, carried forward by later-seventeenth-century Puritan intellectuals such as Cotton Mather, the success of the colonists was resisted by Satan and his allies. In this nearly Manichean vision, Satan ruled the wilderness and continually attempted to infiltrate the settlements and create a secret cadre of his followers. Thus, when a few girls began to exhibit strange hysterical symptoms in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, investigation into suspected witchcraft was begun, and a special court was appointed.
Accusations and indictments multiplied, and ultimately nineteen men and women were hanged and one man pressed to death with heavy stones (see witchcraft).

The Salem witch scare was traumatic for New England, and its implications for its narrative of place were debated even while the trials were in progress. The witchcraft outbreak was proof of New England’s success, argued Cotton Mather (1692), since the righteousness of its people enraged Satan and motivated his jealous attacks against its communities. Yet, others doubted Mather’s assurances and suspected that a great injustice had been done, implicating not only the Puritan leadership but also the community, which had somehow allowed itself to be brought to a collective mania in which fear and suspicion subverted reason and law. The legacy of Salem witchcraft would continue, not only in the writings of the town’s most famous son, Nathaniel Hawthorne, but also in the popular imagination of the nation. Washington Irving’s Ichabod Crane retells witch stories from Cotton Mather to frighten his listeners, and himself, in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1820). Americans still evoke Salem when they speak of an atmosphere of suspicion and persecution as a “witch hunt,” and modern writers as different as Arthur Miller and H. P. Lovecraft have evoked the old witch days (see Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips)).

If the Salem witchcraft disrupted New England’s narrative, other aspects of the American experience before the Revolution also had the power to shock and frighten. Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur’s Letters from an American Farmer were written to answer the question “what is an American?” and celebrate the emerging society of the middle colonies as the most perfect in the world. Yet his optimism gave way to horror in South Carolina when he encountered a dying slave hung in an iron cage, his eyes pecked out by birds. Crèvecoeur, “suddenly arrested by the power of affright and terror” (1782: 164), bitterly concluded that “we certainly are not that class of beings which we vainly think ourselves to be” (1782: 159). In this encounter with slavery in its most monstrous form, a true Gothic moment, Crèvecoeur exposed the irreconcilability of America’s original sin with its dream of perfection and innocence.

Thus, by the time the English colonies earned independence – despite Hawthorne’s later, and probably ironic, assertion in the preface to The Marble Faun that America had “no dark and gloomy wrong” (1930: 590) – there was ample material for Gothic literature.

The first great American Gothic novelist, Charles Brockden Brown, originated most of the interrelated Gothic subjects that would be explored by his successors: madness, the terror of the wilderness, disease, political corruption, self-deception, and race. As for many American writers, Brown’s view of the world as essentially ambiguous and deceptive led him to experiment with unreliable narrators and conflicting points of view. Brown’s characters, as well as his readers, are often unable to distinguish truth from illusion or dream. The eponymous Wieland (1798) goes insane when deceived by ventriloquism and slaughters his family. The protagonist of the story “Somnambulism” (1805) may (or may not) have run through the forest while asleep and murdered his beloved while dreaming that he was trying to protect her. Edgar Huntly (again eponymous; 1799), in a pattern that would endure in American literature, is horrified by his emerging love of violence during a night of flight and combat in the woods (see Brown, Charles Brockden).

In Arthur Mervyn (1799), Brown introduced the metropolis (Philadelphia) as a Gothic subject, symbolically linking its corruption to an epidemic of yellow fever. Brown’s younger contemporary, George Lippard, would continue the city Gothic in The Quaker City: Or, The Monks of Monk Hall (1844), the most popular American novel of its era, and the most sexually explicit. The hall of the title is a vast, rambling structure, like the novel itself, a playground of both the city’s elite and its criminal class. Presiding over this foul den is a one-eyed monster called “Devil Bug,” who, in
his sadism, energy, and obscene humor, anticipates by some two hundred years the character of Al Swearengen in the television series Deadwood (2004–6).

The cultural explosion called the “American Renaissance” (roughly from 1836, when Emerson’s Nature was published, to the Civil War) was the late flowering of American Romanticism, and can be divided between Emerson and his followers, and Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville – the “dark Romantics,” whom we would now label Gothic writers. James Fenimore Cooper also included Gothic elements in his work, as in his Leatherstocking wilderness series, and introduced seafaring as an American subject, which would be extended by both Poe and Melville.

The American Romantics, like their European counterparts, shared a vision of natural facts as symbols of spiritual facts, so that the world could be read as a text unfolding secrets about ultimate truths. The ways in which they read this text differed radically. Emerson saw nature as in essence good, and, in an inversion of the Puritan narrative, described the woods (in Nature) as a wholesome place where reason and faith were restored. The dark Romantics, in contrast, found “the power of blackness” (Melville’s words in “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” 1850 (1943: 192)) a profound reality, and in the woods, as Hawthorne demonstrated in “Young Goodman Brown” (1835), faith could still be lost. Poe’s poetry might acknowledge a realm of perfect beauty and truth (as in “Israfel,” 1831), but his work is usually located in the sublunar world we inhabit, a place of mortality and decay. While Emerson’s world was sunlit and morally clear, that of the dark Romantics was fractured, multilayered, and ambiguous. Developing techniques of ambiguous narration pioneered by Charles Brockden Brown and John Neal, Poe’s first-person narrators are often self-deluding psychopaths. For all of the dark Romantics, pursuit of perfection or ultimate truth, or perfect revenge, leads to destruction or madness. Thus, we meet such deluded enthusiasts as Poe’s self-justifying murderers, Hawthorne’s artists and scientists, and Melville’s Captain Ahab and Pierre (see Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Melville, Herman; Poe, Edgar Allan).

During the middle years of the nineteenth century, one of the country’s greatest writers, as we now know, was a woman living a cloistered and eccentric life in Amherst, Massachusetts. Emily Dickinson published little during her lifetime, and well into the twentieth century her writings were available only in altered versions that obscured her startling originality. Dickinson, like the dark Romantics and unlike Emerson, found the gap between human spirit and nature unbridgeable. She possessed a true Gothic imagination, exploring the haunted regions of the mind and confronting the reality of death and dying, even in one startling poem assuming the point of view of a dying person. She wrote of the ways society enforces its definitions of normalcy and of madness, anticipating later writers such as Gilman and Plath. Dickinson is both a late writer of the Romantic tradition and an early example of the exploration of small and private lives, especially in small and rural communities, that would characterize the age of realism after the Civil War.

It is only an apparent paradox that the years following the war were a period of major Gothic literature in the United States. Realism’s investigations into ordinary life often will uncover uncanny secrets. Moreover, writers of realistic fiction in this period, such as M. E. W. Freeman and realism’s champion, W. D. Howells, were accomplished writers of ghostly tales. Recent scholarship has stressed the compatibility of the ghost story with the feminist concerns of writers of women’s regional realism, a long list that would include Alice Brown, Alice Carey, Freeman, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Noailles Murfee, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, among others. The tradition would also include, at least peripherally, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Madeline Yale Wynne, and continue into the twentieth with the ghostly tales of Gertrude Atherton, Ellen Glasgow, and Edith Wharton.

The great master of Gothic fiction in the last half of the century was the architect and
theorician of realism Henry James. In *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), a novella that has generated a longer critical discussion than any other American work, James created an ambiguous disruption of the narrative of innocent childhood that was being created by the Victorian era (see *James, Henry*).

James and other realists lived in a time when Western culture, and America especially, was trying to reassert the rationality of the Enlightenment, to join science and “common sense” to a doctrine of social and moral progress. And yet it had not quite stopped believing in ghosts, even among scientists, as testified by the Society for Psychical Research, of which James’ brother William was an important member (see *psychical investigation*). Everyone in this era seems to have attended at least one séance, in part because of the many bereavements of the Civil War (see *spiritualism*).

In the postbellum South, another narrative was being forged and disrupted. Writers of the “plantation school” produced a sentimental view of the life of the period before the war, and especially of its slave-owning aristocracy. The reaction against this moonlight and mint-julep dream was a major impetus of American literature of this period. Realism always has an antisentimental bias, and some of the most distinctive achievements of this period, such as Mark Twain’s exploration of the “Matter of Hannibal,” exhibit a creative tension between nostalgia and a savage debunking of the mythic South. Coming from widely differing backgrounds and with various agendas, Southern writers such as George Washington Cable, Grace King, Kate Chopin, Charles Chesnutt, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson produced realistic snapshots of Southern life, and often these realistic pictures veered into the Gothic, exposing the buried secrets of families, especially the families in the big plantation houses of the old South, which, if they survived into the postwar era, were often shabby shells inhabited by ghostly survivors of diminished families. The secrets of the old families became a staple of Southern Gothic, and very often involved the hidden genealogies of the mixed-race people who, in the literature of the plantation school, were usually invisible (see *southern gothic*).

The African American writers who emerged in the period, such as Charles Chesnutt and Alice Dunbar-Nelson, were of exactly this background, descendants of enslaved women and of white men who did not acknowledge their mulatto children. The secrets of white families were their inheritance and literary material, as were the escaped slave narratives and the folktales and music that coded the chronicles of black captivity. Realism and the Gothic are both in the roots of African American literature. Chesnutt wrote in the mode of Gothic realism in stories such as “The Sheriff’s Children” (1899), where the uncanny grows steadily until the revelation of a black prisoner’s identity as the son of the popular sheriff, a reversal that radically revises the previously upbeat tone of the story, which, in Chesnutt, is associated with white self-deception. He uses the black American tradition of magic in *The Conjure Woman* (1899), a cycle of frame stories employing Black English. Several of these stories contain suppressed genealogies: secrets of parentage that the black characters of the stories understand but that the reader must struggle to unlock. Similarly, in Alice Dunbar-Nelson’s “Sister Josepha” (1899), the key fact of the title character’s racial heritage is never stated, and can only be inferred from what is not quite said in an overheard conversation (see *african american gothic*).

In the last years of the nineteenth century, the relationship of scientific thought to literature was given new insistence in the literary movement known as naturalism. With its insistence on the powerlessness of the individual when confronted with a universe of force, and its willingness to confront taboo subjects such as sexuality, addiction, and disease, naturalism easily blended with the Gothic. Stephen Crane’s “The Monster” (1899) is a good example of the Gothic–naturalism hybrid, depicting, in the hysterical response of a community to a black man whose face has been burned away, society’s construction of the monstrous from its
own prejudices and fears. Frank Norris’ naturalistic werewolf story, *Vandover and the Brute* (1914), employs the forbidden subject of venereal disease, though the book was not published during Norris’ brief lifetime (see *werewolves*). The Gothic–naturalism hybrid was common in the early twentieth century, as in Edith Wharton’s *Ethan Frome* (1911) and *Summer* (1917), and would provide one of the strands woven into early modernism.

In apparent (and only apparent) contraction of literary naturalism, American writers at the end of the nineteenth century also continued to refine the tradition of the weird tale developed by Poe. The weird tale produces a powerful uncanny effect through a plot reversal or twist, and often uses the supernatural, though this may be revealed to be the result of delusion or dream. Lafcadio Hearn was a practitioner of the weird tale, as was Ambrose Bierce, who in turn influenced Robert W. Chambers and, in the twentieth century, H. P. Lovecraft.

Entering a new century, American Gothic writers and their audiences shared many of the same subjects that had been developed in earlier generations. New England and the South, the two regions with the greatest burdens of history, continued as reservoirs of material. Though the frontier had disappeared and wilderness was dwindling, wild country existed in remote areas, and could be remembered as it had been, as a site for frightening journeys and encounters. The city remained as a subject, joined by the new phenomenon of the suburb. Race continued as a central issue, though increasingly articulated by members of long-silenced minority groups. To these subjects would be joined the European import of the vampire, which would grow in importance through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. While traditional print media would continue as dominant and prestigious forms, new media would emerge to compete and interact with them: radio, television, graphic novels, and, especially, cinema. In the late twentieth century, certain patterns of the Gothic would be appropriated into a growing and often disturbing pattern of youth culture.

The South, still haunted by its past, produced some of the finest works of American literature, and American Gothic, of the twentieth century. Pre-eminently, William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha saga depicted decline, degeneration, and racial guilt in his representative Southern county. His fiction, including *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *Sanctuary* (1931), *Light in August* (1932), and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), the story cycle *Go Down Moses* (1942), and “A Rose for Emily” (1930), among others, all show a land cursed by the sin of slavery and the class structure based upon it. Faulkner created typically Gothic ambiguity through technical innovations in point of view (thus the four narrative voices of *The Sound and the Fury*) and modernist fracturing of chronology.

Faulkner was the dominant voice of a region that produced many writers of Gothic in the twentieth century: Truman Capote, Carson McCullers, Flannery O’Connor, Walker Percy, Eudora Welty, and Tennessee Williams, and, more recently, John Dufresne, Peter Matthiessen, Cormac McCarthy (in his early works), and Donna Tartt, among others. While many of these writers produced sympathetic African American characters, it was left to black authors to make the obvious point (anticipated by Chesnutt earlier) that the real haunted houses of the South were the cabins of the slaves, not the mansions of the masters. Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) is one of the great Gothic works of the second half of the century, and it brings to a summation much of the American dialog of race that preceded it (see *faulkner*, *william*; *southern gothic*).

Another narrative awaiting its revision was that of the Native Americans, whom white writers had envisioned too often as savages and demons. Indian voices had at times emerged, and by the early twentieth century writers such as Alexander Posey were beginning to draw upon their own oral traditions in stories they spun. Following N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* (1969), there were many Indian voices, including Leslie Silko, Gerald Vizenor,
and Louise Erdrich. Erdrich’s continuing series of novels about interrelated families in Minnesota and North Dakota, beginning with *Love Medicine* (1984), rivals Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha cycle for complexity and for the genealogical challenge it presents readers, and often blends Gothic techniques with Ojibway folklore.

New England in the early twentieth century, like the South, was a region in long decline, its population shrinking and its landscape dotted with abandoned farms. Edwin Arlington Robinson, who was a contemporary of naturalists such as Crane and Norris, wrote poetry about the lives of New Englanders defeated by loneliness and time. Thus, his poem “The Mill” (1920), a virtual Gothic–naturalist novel in twenty-four lines, records the suicide of a miller and his wife, whose artisanal livelihood has been destroyed by industrialization. Edith Wharton, though dividing most of her life between New York City, the Hudson River Valley, and France, wrote novellas and stories set in New England. A cycle of ghost stories, set most often in New England’s bitter winter, pays homage through its characters’ names and its imagery to Nathaniel Hawthorne. H. P. Lovecraft also draws on Hawthorne and the Matter of Salem as well as Poe and other sources in creating his “Cthulhu Mythos,” in which New England is subject to a monstrous demonic plot, as described in a mysterious book, *The Necronomicon*. Lovecraft’s considerable achievement has become something of a cult, and influenced later writers such as Stephen King. Shirley Jackson wrote both supernatural Gothic in *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and in the Gothic–naturalist tradition in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962). Her celebrated short story “The Lottery” (1948) draws obliquely on the Matter of Salem, and can be read, like Arthur Miller’s play about Salem witchcraft, *The Crucible* (1953), as a comment on the anticommunist scapegoating of the 1940s and 1950s. Jackson’s conceit of an ancient cult underlying the culture of a New England village, anticipated in some of Wharton’s stories, is developed further by Thomas Tryon in *Harvest Home* (1973). The hugely popular and prolific Stephen King, in many ways the successor of Lovecraft, sets most of his fiction in New England (see *Jackson, Shirley; King, Stephen; Lovecraft, H. P.* (Howard Phillips); *New England Gothic; Wharton, Edith*).

As true wilderness has nearly disappeared in the United States, Americans view the wild land and its rough frontier interface with civilization with varying proportions of fear, wonder, and nostalgia. Pockets of empty country can still be imagined as sites of terror, as in James Dickey’s *Deliverance* (1970), a journey of adventure turned to nightmare. The lost frontier in the nineteenth century is revisited with profound Gothic effect in Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian* (1985) and in the recent television series *Deadwood*. McCarthy’s judge and Al Swearingen from *Deadwood* are among the most compelling of recent Gothic villains (see *McCarty, Cormac*).

As wilderness was paved over with subdivisions and shopping malls, suburbia became the norm of American life. The largest American generation, the baby boomers, grew up there. Celebrated in television programs such as *Leave it to Beaver* (1957–63) and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952–66), the idealization of suburbia was a narrative waiting to be disrupted by the Gothic. We see this counter-narrative in the *Poltergeist* movies (1982–8) as well as countless films featuring babysitters as the distressed Gothic maiden, or, reversed, as the stalker of innocent children (the distant kin of James’ Miles and Flora), as well as television programs such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003). Suburbia is also one of the favorite settings for the major Gothic writer Joyce Carol Oates. Her novel *Zombie* (1995), to choose one example from her vast output, is a narrative from the point of view of a suburban serial murderer (see *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003); *Oates, Joyce Carol*).

Increasingly throughout the twentieth century, the narratives that Americans absorbed came from movies and electronic media. For decades Americans entertained and frightened
themselves with radio dramas that included Orson Welles’ Mercury Theater dramatization of *The War of the Worlds*, which panicked much of the nation one night in 1938, and weekly programs with titles such as *The Shadow*, *The Whistler*, and *Inner Sanctum* that delightfully frightened generations of school children. The most important new narrative medium of the twentieth century, clearly, was film, which has influenced the way we all think and dream and now exists in creative symbiosis with traditional novels, graphic novels, television, and, recently, videogames. The noir tradition of film, coming out of German expressionism, has produced a long interaction between crime fiction, science fiction, and movies that has produced a number of movies that can be classed as Gothic, including, in recent years, *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974), *Sling Blade* (Billy Bob Thornton, 1996), and *Lone Star* (John Sayles, 1996) and, still more recently, *Winter’s Bone* (Debra Granik, 2010) (see film; radio; television).

The interaction between movies and fiction was essential to the vampire plague of the late twentieth century, an infestation that continues in our own time. Vampires constitute an immensely complex subject, as objects of fear and desire, and as coding for various issues of gender, race, disease, and political paranoia (see vampire fiction). As a specifically American phenomenon, there had been a distinct New England vampire tradition, probably deriving from the region’s long history of tuberculosis. Edith Wharton draws on this tradition in some of her New England Gothic stories. But the later irritation of vampires was propelled by the British Hammer Studio movies and by the equivalent Hollywood films. Seen first by Americans at local theaters and then by their children on black-and-white televisions in suburban living rooms, these films filled the creative nightmares of boys and girls who would grow up to write of monsters and vampires in the later years of the century (see hammer house).

Vampires in America usually fall into two camps: the descendants of Dracula and the products of civilization-ending plague. Vampires have flourished in the Gothic regions of New England and the South in the popular novels of Anne Rice and Stephen King (in *‘Salem’s Lot*, 1975), who both build on the conventions established by Bram Stoker: vampires are an ancient race who can reproduce by infecting human victims. This pattern, with variations, is also followed by Poppy Z. Brite and, recently, Elizabeth Kostova. Another camp grafts the vampire story to the tradition of postapocalypse narrative, a tradition begun in the United States by Jack London in his still underappreciated *The Scarlet Plague* (1912), whose title suggests a link backward to Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death” (1842) and extended by George Steward in *Earth Abides* (1949) and continued by Cormac McCarthy in *The Road* (2006). In this tradition, only a few humans survive a nuclear war or devastating plague. The vampire variant imagines a virus that turns most humans into vampires. This premise was developed by Richard Matheson in *I Am Legend* (1954) and recently by Justin Cronin in *The Passage* (2010), the first novel of a projected trilogy (see brite, poppy z.; matheson, richard; vampire fiction).

The Gothic, in various permutations (drawn from graphic novels, adolescent fiction, and music), has become absorbed into American youth culture – understandably, considering the Gothic’s position as a literature of the outsider and the repressed. Adolescents have their own narratives to disrupt. Herded into high schools that relentlessly sort boys and girls according to standards of attractiveness, athletic success, and the elusive quality of “coolness,” the losers or those resistant to this mandatory contest are often drawn to fantasies of escape, power, or vindication. Stephen King’s first novel, *Carrie* (1974; filmed by Brian De Palma in 1976), captures both the environment and a lonely girl’s response perfectly. The vampire has been a particularly attractive figure for adolescents in recent years, since the vampire offers sexual potency, glamour, and power. Stephenie Meyer’s wildly popular *Twilight* series of novels (2005–8) and their film
adaptations satisfy this adolescent need, and suggest that the Gothic will remain in the national consciousness far into the present century.

SEE ALSO: African American Gothic; Bierce, Ambrose; Brite, Poppy Z.; Brown, Charles Brockden; Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997–2003); Comics and Graphic Novels; Degeneration; Faulkner, William; Female Gothic; Film; Hammer House; Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Jackson, Shirley; James, Henry; King, Stephen; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Masks, Veils, and Disguises; Matheson, Richard; McCarthy, Cormac; Melville, Herman; New England Gothic; Oates, Joyce Carol; Poe, Edgar Allan; Psychical Investigation; Radio; Rice, Anne; Slavery and the Gothic; Southern Gothic; Spirituality; Suburban Gothic; Television; Urban Gothic; Vampire Fiction; Werewolves; Wharton, Edith; Witchcraft.

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FURTHER READING


Amityville Horror, The

CONNIE LIPPERT

On the night of November 13, 1974, 112 Ocean Avenue, Long Island, New York—a Dutch colonial property named “High Hopes”—became the scene of a grisly mass murder. Ronald Joseph “Butch” DeFeo Jr., then twenty-three years old, was convicted of killing his parents and four siblings, who had all been shot in the back with a high-powered rifle while they were sleeping in their beds. Butch, who had claimed to have discovered the bodies of his slain family members upon his return to the house, was initially brought in as a witness by the police. DeFeo’s story, which involved suspicions about a mob-related execution of his family, initiated by a man called Louis Falini, was made somewhat believable by the sheer professionalism with which the murders were conducted, and the fact that it was regarded as unlikely that one perpetrator had killed all six victims. Soon, however, DeFeo’s status changed from being a witness in protective custody to being a suspect. Empty cartridge boxes fitting the murder weapon had been found in his room and DeFeo changed his statement slightly, now
claiming that he had indeed been home – albeit held at gunpoint – when his family was executed (see family).

DeFeo soon became entangled in contradictions and inconsistencies in his rapidly crumbling story and eventually confessed to the murders. He later claimed that the police investigators had used violence to force his confession, and – while there might well have been some truth to that – his claim set in motion a long chain of changing statements and accusations that soon discredited anything DeFeo said. A forensic report (never officially acknowledged) indicating that Dawn DeFeo, Butch’s younger sister, had had gunpowder residue on her nightdress indicated that she must have fired a gun at least once before she died. This prompted DeFeo to change his story yet again, now incriminating his sister. Another – and perhaps the most controversial and notorious of his statements – consisted of a long shot for an insanity plea. DeFeo now reported that he had heard voices urging him to commit the murders. He was declared sane and fit to stand trial, regardless of his allusions to demonic possession, but this particular tale gave birth to what was to become the “Amityville Horror.”

Roughly a year after the Amityville murders were committed – on December 23, 1975 – George and Kathleen Lutz, together with their three children, Chris, Dannie, and Melissa “Missy” Lutz, moved into 112 Ocean Avenue. Their twenty-eight-day-long stay in the house and subsequent flight from it became one of the most controverted stories, or – depending on one’s opinion – one of the best-documented cases of haunting, in recent US history. Sceptics claim that the Lutzes, together with DeFeo’s attorney William Weber, came up with the story of supernatural occurrences in order to make money and exploit the house’s sordid history (see the supernatural). Others believe that Jay Anson’s book The Amityville Horror (1977) was truly an account of what had happened at 112 Ocean Avenue, pieced together from tape recordings the Lutzes had made shortly after having fled the place. George Lutz, who later admitted to the events described in the novel not being entirely accurate, has given numerous interviews, has helped to create websites about the occurrences, and has appeared on various television shows, answering questions about the myth that is Amityville. Although he has repeatedly had to defend himself and his family against allegations of pursuing commercial goals, Lutz has always maintained that he and Kathleen decided to go public with their experiences in order to help others with similar supernatural problems. The myriad lawsuits and fights about money that followed the publication of the story did not, however, act in the Lutzes’ favor.

The events – as related and popularized by Anson’s book and adapted by the subsequent movie – that supposedly drove the Lutzes out of their home began with their move into 112 Ocean Avenue only a few months after their marriage. They had been informed about the DeFeo murders by the realtor before making their decision and resolved that the house’s past was not going to be a problem for them. Nevertheless, a friend extracted a promise from George to get the house blessed before moving in. Father Ralph Pecararo agreed to undertake the task, and, upon its completion, enquired about the use the family intended to make of one of the rooms on the second floor. Hearing that it was to become a sewing room for Kathy, he acted relieved and explained that, although he had had a bad feeling about that particular room, it would be alright as long as nobody slept in it.

The first few days of the Lutzes’ stay in “High Hopes” passed in a relatively unspectacular manner, with the exception of mysterious cold spots all over the house, the family dog, Harry, acting a bit out of sorts, and George being unable to get warm anywhere in the building. Missy began talking to an imaginary friend who went by the name of Jodie. After a few more days in the house it became apparent that the whole family had undergone subtle changes in character and behavior. The parents were irritable, the boys were arguing more than usual, and Missy kept talking to her invisible friend, Jodie, who turned out to be a pig of
variable size who claimed to be an angel. In addition, the minor unexplained occurrences that had plagued the family from day one became more frequent and distinguishable in their manifestations. Mysterious odors, sounds, and touches as well as strange compulsions became a fixed aspect of their lives. George, for instance, would awake shortly after three o’clock each morning – supposedly the time of the DeFeo murders – with the inexplicable urge to check on the boathouse. These events became increasingly worse and soon included phenomena such as levitation, physical changes in Kathy, damage to the house, and a gelatinous substance appearing on various walls and surfaces. Eventually these events came to a disturbing climax and the whole family fled the house in terror, leaving behind all their belongings.

After the Lutzes left, various psychic investigators (see PSYCHICAL INVESTIGATION) examined 112 Ocean Avenue, some of them concluding that there was an evil presence residing in the house that made it practically uninhabitable. It therefore seems strange that a string of new owners, the first being Barbara and Jim Cromarty, reported the house to be absolutely free of extraordinary occurrences of any sort, apart from the hordes of curious onlookers. Initially unaware of the book and movie, and thus of the situation they would be getting themselves into, the Cromartys ended up having to change the house’s address and appearance. After them, various other inhabitants of “High Hopes” had nothing unusual to report. Furthermore, every documented aspect of the supernatural events that had supposedly occurred in the house was being put under vicious scrutiny by skeptics aiming to debunk the Amityville Horror, and consequently whole books were written on how easy this task ultimately was (e.g., Stephen Kaplan’s The Amityville Horror Conspiracy, 1995).

As a result of Ronald DeFeo Jr.’s contradictory and constantly evolving versions of what really happened on that night in 1974, the murders will probably remain a mystery. The string of books and movies that followed the initial publications have put layer upon layer of claims and allegations on top of the existing entanglement of fact and fiction. With Kathy and George Lutz both having passed away and with recent continuations of the Amityville franchise having increasingly watered their story down, the iconic glare of the house’s front windows depicted on numerous book and DVD covers seems to be all that remains. Thus, the real Amityville horror – the DeFeo murders – will eternally be overshadowed by the “true story” of an American haunting.

SEE ALSO: Family; Psychical Investigation; Supernatural, The.

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FURTHER READING

Angel (1999–2004)
CAROLINE RUDDELL

Angel is an American fantasy-based television series created by Joss Whedon. The series is a “spin-off” of the popular Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and ran from 1999 to 2004, totaling five seasons (see BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER (1997–2003); VAMPIRE FICTION). Angel is steeped in the Gothic in several ways: first, the series focuses on the supernatural in the form of vampires and demons; second, it makes use of the macabre and the conventions of horror (as well as those of film noir and the detective
story); and third, its representation of the city of Los Angeles as labyrinthine in nature notes a distinctly Gothic aesthetic (see film; urban gothic). In a more localized way, the long empty corridors, cracked walls, and peeling wallpaper of the dilapidated hotel that forms the base for the central characters’ business of private investigation, can be seen as a stand-in for the more traditional Gothic castle or house.

The eponymous protagonist, Angel, is a vampire who has been cursed by Gypsies and therefore has a soul. He has a sense of guilt over his former actions as the evil vampire Angelus, and since acquiring his soul attempts to make up for his past deeds by “helping the helpless” in Los Angeles. Angel is initially a private investigator specializing in cases that involve the supernatural, which is how he attempts to help as many people as possible with problems that the usual law enforcement agencies cannot cope with. The series therefore deals with particularly Gothic themes of the supernatural and the macabre, and is further embedded in a Gothic sensibility through its preoccupation with Angel’s troubled and split identity as both monster (vampire) and hero of the series. As Stacey Abbott notes, Angel is a figure of tragedy and despondency, haunted by his past as a vengeful and malicious killer (Abbott 2005: 1).

As Angel is a private investigator in earlier seasons the series draws on the conventions of the detective story, which Nevitt and Smith (2003) suggest has its origins in the Gothic tradition of the nineteenth century. The series also draws on certain film noir conventions, largely in the characterization of Angel in terms of troubled masculinity. Angel leaves Sunnydale, and his doomed relationship with Buffy, as he feels he cannot give Buffy a fulfilling life; in Buffy the Vampire Slayer he temporarily loses his soul after having sex with Buffy and becomes villainous for a time thereafter. Angel is therefore unable to achieve true happiness by having a mature sexual relationship with Buffy; if he does, his soul will be lost once more. He is also uncertain of his place in the human world and seeks to find redemption, and potentially acceptance, in a society that is largely unaware of his existence as a vampire.

As a series that embraces hybrid generic tendencies, Angel also draws on horror; as a vampire Angel has a fractured identity, both monster and human (see doubles). In a Gothic tradition the monstrous here is polarized with Angel’s more vulnerable human identity that is subject to both his internal struggle with his dark desires and the constant onslaught of demonic activity in Los Angeles, which he strives to defeat episodically.

Visually, there is a movement toward a more realist aesthetic in the series, toward the gritty urban and away from the fantasy world of Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Upstone 2005: 102). The series is shot, particularly early on, using certain noir conventions such as lighting styles: dark shadows permeate the series, suggestive of the demon underworld infiltrating the sunny Californian environment within which the series is set, yet largely negates. Much of the focus is often on the darker side of Los Angeles, the shadow to the glossier Hollywood. As Benjamin Jacob notes, characters provide commentary on the problematic temperament of the city continually throughout the series (Jacob 2005: 75).

As is the case with many Gothic texts, the monstrous is positioned as a means to interrogate contemporary anxieties and issues; in Angel the macabre existence of the demon population can be read as a metaphor for the horror of contemporary urban living and the often unseen terrors of falling foul of the Hollywood machine. For example, out-of-work actresses are the targeted prey of one particularly malicious vampire in the episode “City O” in Season One, and in a wider sense there are many shots of poorly lit, rain-drenched alleys illustrating that not all in Los Angeles is reminiscent of the bright lights of Hollywood.

Later in the series Angel takes over as the head of Wolfram and Hart, a law firm that is renowned as the seat of all that is evil in the series. While Angel’s aim is to improve the firm from within, a variety of monstrous figures
associated with Wolfram and Hart can be read as the evil nature of large-scale corporate business. Here, Gothic monstrosity is mapped onto corruption often associated with such business practice, and is firmly located in the problematic urban environment of advanced capitalism.

SEE ALSO: Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997–2003); Doubles; Film; Urban Gothic; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING


Anglo-Caribbean Gothic
CAROL MARGARET DAVISON

Since the eighteenth century, traditional Gothic tropes and conventions have been brought to bear on anxieties relating to colonial and imperial encounters and realities (see IMPERIAL GOTHIC), both pleasurable and traumatic, and their far-reaching legacies. In the Anglo-Caribbean Gothic, these include various aspects of race relations (economic, ethical, sexual, political) (see RACE), the slave/plantation system (see SLAVERY AND THE GOTHIC), and little-understood African cultural practices retained in the Caribbean. A compelling and significant interfacing developed well into the nineteenth century that saw the radicalization of the Gothic alongside the Gothicization of racial discourse: while racialized characters and race questions were increasingly popular Gothic ingredients, race-focused studies and debates – medical, scientific, political, and otherwise – adopted and adapted established Gothic rhetoric and motifs.

Cataclysmic and controversial historical events also contributed to the figuration of the West Indies as a site of terror. These included numerous slave uprisings (e.g., Tacky’s Rebellion, Jamaica, April–September 1760) and especially the Haitian Revolution of the 1790s, which culminated in widespread violence, mutilation, rape, and death. Gothic motifs also punctuate the historical accounts of these events, whose leaders, notably both male and female, were often shamanistic practitioners of Obeah and voodoo (or vaudou) – African medico-religious systems (sometimes syncretized with Western Christian religious belief systems) that fuelled slave resistance. Nanny, the Obeah leader of the Jamaican Maroons, was reported to have defied British weaponry
and an enslaved Obeah woman named Cubah led the resistance forces during Tacky’s Rebellion, the most noteworthy slave revolt prior to the Haitian Revolution. Tacky’s Rebellion also purportedly involved an Obeah-based ceremony whereby the blood of numerous butchered white overseers was mixed with rum and grave dirt and imbibed by the rebels. The Haitian rebellion was similarly ignited by a voodoo ceremony. Despite efforts to delegitimize voodoo by chronicling its adherents’ ostensible acts of child sacrifice and cannibalism, and to demystify Obeah in historical accounts, fascination with their ability to rally and empower slaves nonetheless prevailed. The gravity of British concerns about Obeah is evidenced in the fact that prohibitive legislation followed the suppression of Tacky’s Rebellion. An act was passed in the Jamaican Assembly in December of 1760 that made the practice of Obeah punishable by death. Notably, despite attempts to portray the Caribbean as a site of terror, British colonial authority was upheld by way of various forms of spectacular terror, including mutilation, corporal punishment, and executions performed on the bodies (both dead and alive) of rebel and runaway slaves.

In the pages of Anglo-Caribbean Gothic literature, Obeah is figured as a conduit for revolutionary passion and violence and serves as an equivalent to various magical sciences practiced by secret society adherents in traditional British Gothic fiction (see secret societies). Likewise, Obeah, whose practitioners were said to be able to raise the dead, galvanized traditional Gothic fears associated with superstitious, pre-Enlightenment belief systems. By way of various cultural productions, particularly the theater, Obeah became a familiar icon of terror to Britons just prior to the abolition of the slave trade. Matthew G. Lewis, one of the early British Gothic masters, employed the Gothic to recount tales of Obeah poisonings and the vengeful acts of fugitive slaves in his posthumously published Journal of a West India Proprietor, 1815–17 (1834) (see Lewis, Matthew). In that work, Lewis assumes an ambivalent standpoint with regard to Obeah, a term he intriguingly employs as a verb in one instance in association with a dreaded runaway slave. While representing blacks as extremely superstitious, Lewis both undermines and supports the authenticity of Obeah, and underscores the cultural relativity of belief systems by comparing black Obeah to what he provocatively calls “white Obeah” (Christianity). Lewis’ fictional portraits of blacks run the gamut of stereotypes. In his 1797 play The Castle Spectre, Hassan is a noble, deep-feeling character whose enslavement and loss of family and wife unman and embitter him, rendering him a vengeful misanthropist. Lewis’ The Isle of Devils (a poem composed in 1816 during his last voyage to Jamaica), however, features a more Gothic creature in the figure of a supernatural, ebony demon who violates and impregnates a betrothed Portuguese virgin named Irza after she spies his beautiful, paradisal-looking island from onboard a vessel and is shipwrecked on it. In a final fit of agony as he watches her depart, he destroys himself and their child.

In her representation of Jamaica and Kingston’s famous Blue Mountains as alien landscapes inhabited by deadly wildlife and insects and the dreaded haunt of rebel slaves, British author Charlotte Smith magnifies the terrors experienced by her besieged white heroine in The Story of Henrietta one of five tales that comprise her Letters of a Solitary Wanderer (1800). The joint specters of miscegenation and sexual violation book-end the narrative. The engaged Henrietta travels to Jamaica to visit her father and discovers numerous racially mixed siblings and is apprised of her father’s intention to marry her off to one Mr. Sawkins, a man of inferior rank to whom he has mysteriously endowed his estate. Her epistolary narrative recounts her terrors, which culminate in an encounter with a threatening Obeah woman and her attempted rape by Amponah, a black slave she has known since childhood who secures her liberation from Sawkins only to assert his rights over his own body and hers. Smith’s antislavery tract is ambivalent about the subject of slave emancipation and uses it to
underscore, albeit contentiously, the extent of women’s oppression. Marriage, Smith suggests, is “the most dreadful of all slavery” (1800–2: II 77).

Obeah-related fears are paramount in Cynric Williams’ two-volume Gothic novel Hamel, the Obeah Man (1827), which is haunted by the specter of “Hayti” and racial insurrection, a threat to Britain’s economic dominance in the West Indies in the eighteenth century. Originally published anonymously, Hamel is, in part, a work of antiabolitionist propaganda that recounts the story of a white preacher named Roland who wields what the author suggests is the white Obeah of missionaries and abolitionists as he leads a slave rebellion based on French Revolutionary principles. Roland’s desires for the daughter of a local planter, however, lead to his grotesque descent into violence and desperation. Hamel, the titular character, is an articulate black Obeah man initially caught up by Roland’s message who later denounces revolutionary freedom. The novel concludes with Hamel’s squashing of the rebellion he had organized and his retreat to the mythical African homeland of Guinea, the exposure of Roland’s villainy, and the prophecy that slaves are not ready for autonomous government. Despite the novel’s conclusion, Hamel’s eloquent critique of the slave system resonates.

As in the African American literary tradition, Gothic tropes and conventions are employed in Anglo-Caribbean abolitionist novels and slave narratives. The History of Mary Prince (1831), the first account of a slave woman’s life ever published in Britain, which helped to galvanize the antislavery movement, relates the brutality and terror of the slave system, whose victims pass their lives, as Prince’s life experiences in Bermuda and Antigua illustrate, in continual fear. As the planter society represented the worst excesses of decadence and civil and national transgression, it is also frequently portrayed through a Gothic lens by Caribbean authors. In Herbert G. de Lisser’s classic early Jamaican novel The White Witch of Rosehall (1929), the small aristocracy of plantation owners is described as living in “a world of the narrowest mental and moral horizons” (2007: 192). In this ideologically complicated novel about an uprising during the final days of Jamaican slavery, de Lisser, a Jamaican journalist and writer, recounts a consummate Gothic tale involving disinheritance, Obeah, the threat of miscegenation, alcohol addiction, moral degeneration, and a femme fatale in the form of plantation mistress Annie Palmer. Focusing on the three-week working visit of Robert Rutherford, heir to a Barbadian sugar estate, this cautionary tale about the evils of colonialism problematically employs Palmer as emblematic of that system. Portrayed as the novel’s greatest terror, the Obeah-wielding Palmer is possibly of mixed blood and a native of Haiti, “the very stronghold of devil-craft” (de Lisser 2007: 129) in the Caribbean. The novel culminates with her brutal murder during a slave revolt, an event designed as a purgation ritual that is unsettlingly misogynistic (see misogyny). A High Wind in Jamaica, a Gothic-inflected loss-of-innocence story also published in 1929, and written by a British author (Richard Hughes), also portrays that Caribbean island as the site of sexuality and violence. For this reason, several critics have argued that this is not a children’s book. The initial description of Jamaica as “a kind of paradise for English children” (Hughes 1957: 5) is slowly and strategically stripped away by Hughes, who exposes some dark underlying realities about that country’s brutal colonial history.

The Anglo-Caribbean Gothic’s dialogue with the British Gothic tradition has been especially pre-eminent in the twentieth century. Perhaps due both to their canonical status and the narrative role (albeit marginal) played by the Caribbean in their pages, Victorian Gothic classics (see victorian gothic) such as Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847) and Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights (1847) have frequently been revised in Anglo-Caribbean Gothic works wherein the Caribbean moves from the narrative periphery to the center. Jean Rhys’ Wide Sargasso Sea (1966), for example,
furnishes a compelling prequel to *Jane Eyre* in the form of Bertha Rochester’s pre-Thornfield life history as Antoinette Cosway in Jamaica. Narrated from the perspective of the young Antoinette, who is essentially raised by a black female servant, Rhys’ novel engages, with an eye to the intersections of class, race, and gender, with various complex questions relating to identity, hybridity, and politics.

V. S. Naipaul’s *Guerillas* (1975) also rewrites both *Jane Eyre* and the violent, triangulated relationship of Catherine, Heathcliff, and Edgar Linton in *Wuthering Heights* in an unidentified Caribbean country facing potential revolution. Through the figures of Roche, a former South African activist who has experienced imprisonment and torture; the radical Jimmy Ahmed, a wannabe hero and Caribbean Heathcliff; and Jane, Roche’s English girlfriend and Jimmy’s lover, Naipaul positions the novel’s colonial and postcolonial realities as mirrors – worlds irreparably damaged by colonial exploitation.

*Guerillas* culminates in a meaningless, useless revolt involving the brutal and senseless murder of its female protagonist. Jamaica Kincaid’s *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996), likewise rewrites *Wuthering Heights* in its focus on the figure of Xuela, a female Heathcliff, who is haunted by her tragic motherlessness and the complex, grotesque, and brutal legacies of imperialism, especially the collusion between colonizer and colonized. These Brontë-related revisions have also occasionally been carried over into the cinematic domain. Jacques Tourneur’s *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943) incorporates such Gothic elements as a mysterious estate, voodoo, and a zombie (see *zombies*) – a figure various critics have characterized as a Caribbean equivalent of Frankenstein’s monster – into a loose adaptation of *Jane Eyre* in the West Indies. The island’s political history recedes into the background in favor of a more titillating focus – namely, the dangerously erotic bodies of blacks and women, which are notably united during a compelling voodoo ritual wherein a black voodoo master assumes the role of a vampiric seducer.

Zombies, reanimated dead people who thrive on human flesh and brains and are generally controlled by a voodoo sorcerer, became staple cinematic figures alongside other monsters from the 1930s onward. *White Zombie* (1932), directed by Victor Halperin, is a dark romance set during the American occupation of Haiti (1915–34), a political arrangement figured as a new imperialism involving a revived slavery. A wealthy, love-obsessed plantation owner who craves sexual control of Madeline, a visiting American woman engaged to be married to a white bank clerk stationed in the country, turns for assistance to a voodoo master (played by Bela Lugosi) who owns a sugar-cane mill run entirely by zombie slaves. The film’s zombie motif possesses multiple meanings, serving as a dark mirror of both the American occupation and colonial slave-based history, and signifying women’s zombification within marital and domestic situations.

More contemporary works of Anglo-Caribbean fiction include Elizabeth Nunez’s *Bruised Hibiscus* (2003) and *Prospero’s Daughter* (2006). Set in Nunez’s birthplace of Trinidad, the former is a tale of passion, repressed secrets, and homicide that focuses on two women from different racial and class backgrounds. Nunez astutely extends the motif of slavery to include worldviews and ideals in this work, which may be classified as female and/or feminist Gothic. *Prospero’s Daughter* is a dark romance focusing on a colonial encounter involving a doctor, his daughter, and a Caribbean leper colony that rewrites Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) (see *Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft*) and is especially attentive to imperial power dynamics.

SEE ALSO: Female Gothic; Imperial Gothic; Lewis, Matthew; Misogyny; Race; Secret Societies; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Slavery and the Gothic; Victorian Gothic; Zombies.

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Critical consideration of anti-Semitism in Gothic literature in recent decades developed out of scholarship examining the Gothic's engagement with religious/theological issues. Several exemplary essays focus on the figure of the Jew in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) and other Victorian fin-de-siècle texts, and Davison (2004) presents a comprehensive overview of anti-Semitism in British Gothic literature and the terror fuelled by the “Jewish Question,” issues and resolutions relating to the Jews, primarily in Europe, who long occupied an unequal legal and civil status to non-Jews. Several scholars have cogently argued that the atmospheric terror and rhetoric of Gothic literature is theological at its core, and that these works are essentially veiled cautionary-style sermons. The critical commonplace, largely uncontested, is that British Gothic literature is marked by a prevalent anti-Catholicism. In an attempt to assert the hegemony of Anglicanism/Protestantism, Catholicism, Britain’s former national religion, is generally represented as corrupt, obscurantist, deviant, and grounded in superstition. In stark contrast, fanatical Protestant sects have been identified.

**Anti-Semitism**

**CAROL MARGARET DAVISON**


**FURTHER READING**


as the principal target in American and Scottish Gothic literature (see American Gothic; Scottish Gothic). Despite this key difference, both traditions were established by Protestants/Anglicans who, in the views of numerous critics, displaced their fears about their own nature, condition, and fate onto various Others.

Representations of Jews and Judaism in British Gothic literature in a fashion warranting the label “anti-Semitic” date from the 1790s onwards, sometimes function in a coded fashion, and have been explicated on the grounds of three major issues: aesthetic/poetic, religious/spiritual, and political/ideological. In the first instance, they serve as compelling and exotic properties capable of a romantic treatment highly appealing to readers; in the second, they tap long-standing anxieties about Christian Britain’s religious inheritance and the body/self/soul after death; and in the third, they serve as abject Others in the Gothic’s figurative contests, return of the repressed episodes, and exclusionary purification rituals, who help to create, consolidate, and even contest an ideal British Protestant/Anglican national identity that is conceptualized as a union of Reason and Religion. Notably, religious belief was increasingly a matter of private judgment during the Enlightenment, which took place in Britain within, rather than against, Protestantism.

Just as Gothic literature’s preoccupation with Catholicism was, in part, tethered to such sociohistoric events as the establishment of Anglicanism in 1534 and the Catholic Emancipation campaign that ran from the 1770s through to the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, anti-Semitism in the Gothic is grounded in historical phenomena and developments. These include the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290 through to the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753 and subsequent concerns about Anglo-Jewish conversion and assimilation commencing at the end of the eighteenth century when the attempts of British missionaries to convert the Jews had reached a fever pitch. Out of this history was derived a complex semiotics that was readily imported into British Gothic literature. The long-standing representation of the Jew as devil in the worldview of medieval Christian Europe, a cornerstone of religious anti-Semitism, was pressed into service in the Gothic genre in the eighteenth century and adapted in the wake of racial anti-Semitism, which conceptualized Jewishness as an incontrovertible racial identity. Most of the taboos at the core of the Gothic – such as incest, fratricide, miscegenation, and castration – involve blood in either a literal or a figurative sense (as in the concept of blood-money, or familial or “racial” blood-ties), and had long been associated with the Jew, the primary anti-Christian Other in the European worldview who was regarded as spiritually and economically perverse and socially disruptive. The Blood Libel – sensationalist blood-related allegations of ritual murder and human sacrifice that demonized Jews and Judaism – condensed these various anti-Christian associations. Jews were accused of such crimes as desecrating the Host and of murdering non-Jews, usually children, to obtain their blood for use in the Passover Seder and rituals to prolong life.

The Blood Libel, with its emergent vampire motif, was further reinforced by the Jewish engagement with moneylending, an enterprise for which Jews were maligned as social parasites (see Vampire Fiction). This adapted libel was readily brought to bear in British Gothic literature on questions of national belonging and identity, sociopolitical propensities, and the Enlightenment’s emancipatory project. In that venue, the Jew, who was regarded as a member of an ancient, exclusive, and uncanny – because “undead” – faith that remained intact in the modern world, raised various ancient and modern specters (see Uncanny, The). The established association between Jews and medical and scientific pursuits became even more threatening during the Enlightenment/French Revolution when such engagements were connected to politically progressive ideas and conspiratorial secret societies. Numerous nonfiction treatises written by respectable clerics and professionals, and the German
terror-novel, or *Schauerroman*, promoted the idea that secret societies and secret sciences were conspiracy-driven, politically subversive forces operating in Europe in the 1790s (see *European Gothic*; *German Gothic*).

Notably, British Gothic works representing Jews and Judaism are usually set during the sinister operation of the Spanish Inquisition that, as many readers were unaware, remained intact until 1834. Anxieties relating to the French Revolution and Terror were displaced onto this institution in the pages of Gothic literature. While the Inquisition’s titular object was the salvation of souls and the realization of the religious unity of Spain, its true motive was an antipathy for progressive ideas and intense resentment of the social, political, and economic successes of the Marranos, Jews who had been forcibly converted to Christianity just a century earlier. In their depiction of treacherous (crypto-)Jews and the Spanish Inquisition during a period when British narratives of conversion and conversionist societies were advocating Jewish assimilation, Gothic novelists obliquely expressed their own deep-seated concerns about the prospects of Jewish religious conversion and Jewish secular assimilation in Britain. Thus, in keeping with the prevalent representation of the Spanish Inquisition in British literature until the nineteenth century as an anti-Protestant tribunal with rare mention of its principal Jewish and Moslem victims, British Gothic literature treating the same subjects was consistently anti-Catholic but not pro-Jewish.

The transnational figure of the Wandering Jew, whose legend was first disseminated after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain during the Inquisition, emblematizes the Jewish Question in many works of Gothic literature, his ambivalent role as anti-Protestant tribunal with rare mention of its principal Jewish and Moslem victims, British Gothic literature treating the same subjects was consistently anti-Catholic but not pro-Jewish.

The Wandering Jew makes his memorable cameo debut in Matthew Lewis’ graphic porn-Gothic novel *The Monk* (1795) where he assumes an ambivalent role (see *Lewis, Matthew*). Although he forms part of a lengthy subplot wherein superstitious beliefs are legitimated and rationalism is challenged, this millenarian figure also helps to promote a moral Reformation that, albeit indirectly, affirms Protestantism’s place as Britain’s ruling religion. In this Gothic allegory about Protestantism’s religious paternity, Roman Catholicism is trounced as a Mammonistic pagan cult headed up by power-hungry deviants like the protagonist Ambrosio who readily succumbs to sexual temptation and rapidly develops into a homicidal rapist (see *Cults*). An element overlooked by most critics is that a Jewish merchant is actually identified, in adherence to
medieval stereotypes, as assisting the devil in plotting Ambrosio’s entrapment. Likewise, although the Wandering Jew’s conversion testifies to Christian salvation and mercy, he is rendered in his full supernatural aspect: he embodies fury, despair, and malevolence, and horrifies his viewers with the blood-red cross inscribed on his forehead.

Although set during the Religious Wars, William Godwin’s *St. Leon* (1799) takes the secular world as its focus (see Godwin, William). In this cautionary tale about the potential excesses of capitalism, Godwin’s eponymous protagonist is, effectively, a Wandering crypto-Jew, an unchecked individualist/scientist who, vampire-like, threatens both his family and the nation. Godwin’s anti-Semitism is blatant in his portrait of St. Leon, a figurative Wandering Jew, who is emblematic of the modern age that is likewise figured as “Jewish” in its worship of “craft, dissimulation, corruption, and commerce” (Godwin 2006: 74). In its preoccupation with Christian religious paternity, Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) follows in the tradition of Lewis’ *The Monk* (see Maturin, Charles Robert). Roman Catholics and Jews are positioned on a par, both being equally engaged in what are described as “work[s] of blood” (Maturin 1992: 255, 391). The novel’s eponymous hero, Melmoth, may be, as one critic describes him, a kind of Wandering Jew combined with Byronic vampire (Praz 1965: 76), but his two explicitly identified Jewish doubles – Solomon and Adonijah – evoke the greatest dread: Solomon conjures up an Oedipal castration nightmare as a knife-wielding circumcision crypto-Jewish father who threatens to physically Judaize his son, while the elderly patriarch Adonijah seems horrifyingly undead in his subterranean apartment furnished with skulls and parchment scrolls inscribed with human blood. Maturin’s putative target may be the brutality, idolatry, and avarice of the Catholic Church, but his Jewish characters are graphically memorable, wolish scapegoats who remain irredeemably accused for their betrayal and murder of Christ.

Bram Stoker’s *Count Dracula* marks the apogee in the development of the vampiric Wandering Jew in British Gothic literature (see Stoker, Bram). *Dracula* (1897) serves as the Gothic masterpiece that initiated the scholarly examination of anti-Semitism in the Gothic, an ironic fact given that Count Dracula is nowhere explicitly identified as Jewish. His haunt in the medieval Carfax estate that smells of “ole Jerusalem,” coupled with his literalization of the Blood Libel, however, serve as the most prominent indicators of his religious identity. This crypto-Jew taps deep-seated fears about assimilated Jews who are no longer readily identifiable or face social/legal restrictions in British society, and renders manifest fin-de-siècle anxieties about various issues, including syphilis, homosexuality, proto-feminism, the advent of monopoly capitalism, and national/imperial decline. “Jewishness” functioned as the umbrella signifier, both in Stoker’s *Dracula* and in scholarly works of his day like Max Nordau’s antimodernism polemic *Degeneration* (1895), under which the diverse fears of national degeneration stood united (see Degeneration). Contemporary pseudoscientific studies had traced the inception of syphilis to the Jewish community, psychopathologized the Wandering Jew as a peripatetic neurotic, and deemed Jews prone to mental illness.

In the form of the mesmerizing Wandering Jew, an international, mammonistic, magician-scientist, and accused criminal whose coreligionists had long been denounced as colonizers for progress, Britain actually projected its own demonic self-image as an increasingly imperialist, scientifically industrial, and aggressively missionary nation. Dracula’s reverse imperialist invasion targeting British women’s bodies reveals the novel’s true national fears (see Imperial Gothic). His ritual murder at novel’s end by the crusading Anglo-American brotherhood renders Transylvania safe for tourism and Britain free of a Jewishness portrayed as sexually deviant and infectious.

Vampiric Jews – crypto and otherwise – assumed an even greater terror in their
migration to celluloid. In some instances, their Jewishness is thinly veiled. In his role as the Count in Tod Browning’s 1931 film *Dracula*, Hungarian actor Bela Lugosi wears a medallion that strongly resembles a Star of David (see *Lugosi, Bela*). The vampiric Wandering Jew assumed the starring role in 1940 in two Nazi propaganda films produced to incite violence and prepare Germans for the Final Solution. While Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, billed Veit Harlan’s *Jud Süss* as a realistic historic portrait, Fritz Hippler’s venomous cinematic work *The Eternal Jew* (1940) was described by at least one critic as a documentary. Both expressed Nazi Germany’s völkisch ideology and its principal fear of assimilated Crypto-Jews.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Blood; Cults; Degeneration; European Gothic; Fin-de-Siècle Gothic; German Gothic; Godwin, William; Imperial Gothic; Jewish Gothic; Lewis, Matthew; Lugosi, Bela; Maturin, Charles Robert; Romanticism; Scottish Gothic; Shelley, Percy Bysshe; Stoker, Bram; Uncanny, The; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING


Apparition

MACKENZIE BARTLETT

An apparition is a sudden visual manifestation of an ethereal and transient figure, most often someone who is deceased, but also sometimes
a living person, an animal, or an inanimate object. The term is frequently used synonymously with “ghost,” “spirit,” and “phantom,” and has been studied in terms of hallucination (by psychologists), telepathy (by spiritualists), and divine providence (by theologians) (see spiritualism). Apparitional encounters are highly individualistic and subjective; as Voltaire notes in his definition of the term, “The phantom exists to him who has the perception of it” (Voltaire 1824: 2, 232).

In literature, apparitions predate what is traditionally identified as Gothic fiction. The vision – whether of angels, demons, or saints – occurs frequently in the Bible, a text which “teems and bristles with accounts of it from beginning to end,” as Florence Marryat points out in her nineteenth-century defense of spiritualism (Marryat 1891: 16). Apparitions also populate the plays of Shakespeare, such as the pivotal scene in Hamlet when the dead king reveals his murder to his son, and in Macbeth, when the ghost of Banquo haunts the title character to remind him of his terrible deeds. In the mid-eighteenth century apparitions became married to Gothic fiction, where they performed a variety of functions: as heralds of ancient prophesies (the ghost of Alfonso in Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto), cursed subjects of undying love (the Bleeding Nun in Lewis’ The Monk; Catherine Earnshaw’s ghost in Brontë’s Wuthering Heights), symbols of the psychological distress or the secret desires of the protagonist (Miss Jessel and Peter Quint in James’ The Turn of the Screw; the woman in the wallpaper in Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper”; the unnamed visitor in Stevenson’s “Markheim”), haunting reminders of crime and tyranny (the cat in Poe’s “The Black Cat”; the two young girls in King’s The Shining; the title character of Toni Morrison’s Beloved), omens of death (the specters on the ghost ship in Coleridge’s The Rime of the Ancient Mariner; the inverted head of the Porroh man in Wells’ “Pollock and the Porroh Man”), and eerie portents of things to come (the Ghost of Christmas Future in Dickens’ A Christmas Carol; the shadows in the trees in Blackwood’s “The Willows”) (see Blackwood, Algernon; Dickens, Charles; James, Henry; King, Stephen; Lewis, Matthew; Poe, Edgar Allan; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Walpole, Horace; Wells, H. G. (Herbert George)).

The ghost story, sometimes characterized as a subgenre of Gothic literature, was a ubiquitous feature of periodical publications in the nineteenth century, and many of the most popular authors of the period – including Elizabeth Gaskell, Rhoda Broughton, Rudyard Kipling, Richard Marsh, and M. R. James – produced apparitional tales (see James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); Kipling, Rudyard; Marsh, Richard).

In modern literary and cultural history scholarship, apparitions are often read in terms of Freud’s theory of the return of the repressed, or more broadly as manifestations of “a spectral self – a subjectivity that was conflicted, hemispheric and liable to hallucinations at any given moment,” as Shane McCorristine has recently argued (McCorristine 2010: 3). The narrator of H. P. Lovecraft’s short story “The Unnamable” voices the difficulty of articulating this haunted relationship between the self and apparition: “Molded by the dead brain of a hybrid nightmare, would not such a vaporous terror constitute in all loathsome truth the exquisitely, the shriekingly unnamable?” (Lovecraft 1996: 162). Apparitions possessing this “unnamable” quality therefore invite the experience of the uncanny by exposing the psyche to that which haunts it: death, the past, the unconscious self.

Though they have remained a common literary trope, apparitions have not been confined to the realm of fiction. Beginning in the early eighteenth century, “true” tales of ghost sightings arose partly in response to the materialist philosophies of the Enlightenment, offering a metaphysical counterargument to demonstrate the existence of the human soul. One important early model for apparition narratives was Daniel Defoe’s “A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs Veal” (1706), which records the experiences of a woman who claimed to have been visited by the ghost of her
friend. There has been some debate, however, over whether Defoe actually wrote “Mrs Veal” (Starr 2003). As with many reports of ghost sightings that followed his essay, Defoe sets out to provide an authoritative record even as his embellished journalistic style also underscores his acute awareness of the marketability of his subject. In a period of scientific rationalism and religious skepticism, such spiritualist documents engaged in epistemological debates about the nature of death and the afterlife while simultaneously capitalizing on the public fascination with apparitions in literature, creating a link between supposedly empirical first-hand accounts of ghost sightings and fictionalized tales of the spirit world.

In Britain, apparitions became more commodified with the arrival of spiritualism as an organized movement in 1852, four years after the Fox sisters made a sensation in America with their reported ability to communicate with the dead. Soon séances were being conducted across the country in darkened rooms where ghosts would make their presence known through table rappings, disembodied voices, the playing of musical instruments, or through direct physical contact with audience members. However, in the 1870s, spiritualists developed an intensified interest in visual phenomena like second sight, spirit photography, and clairvoyance, and this created new pressure on mediums to generate a more spectacular form of spirit conjuring: namely, the full-form materialization of apparitions. The first such materialization in Britain occurred in 1873 when Florence Cook produced her “familiar” – the young ghost Katie King – at a séance, an achievement that made her one of the most famous mediums in the country (Owen 1989: 42–9). William Crookes and others enthusiastically employed various scientific methods to lend legitimacy to these materializations; however, many mediums (including Cook) were later humiliatingly debunked by their critics. Fueling public skepticism about spiritualism at the end of the nineteenth century, also, were the relentless parodies of spirit-conjurers published in satirical magazines like Punch and The Idler, as well as a host of new psychological theories that characterized apparitions as products of hallucinations, mental disorders, or “the débris of dreams,” as James Sully suggested in 1881 (Sully 1881: 184). Though members of the Society for Psychical Research faithfully compiled reports on apparitions in studies like Phantasms of the Living (Gurney et al. 1886), by 1920 Lewis Spence could declare in the Encyclopaedia of the Occult that “at the present time apparitions are generally, though by no means universally, referred to hallucination” (Spence 2006: 32).

Nevertheless, apparitions continued to resonate in the twentieth century, bolstered in part by the devastation of the two world wars, but also by the popularity of spiritualist treatises such as Arthur Conan Doyle’s The History of Spiritualism (1926). Indeed, the fact that apparitions have remained a staple of Gothic fiction, horror movies, and television to the present day suggests that we have not ceased to be thrilled by the dread specter of our histories, our fictions, and our selves.

SEE ALSO: Blackwood, Algernon; Dickens, Charles; James, Henry; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); King, Stephen; Kipling, Rudyard; Lewis, Matthew; Marsh, Richard; Poe, Edgar Allan; Spiritualism; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Walpole, Horace; Wells, H. G. (Herbert George).

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“Gothic” is the unfortunate epithet given to an architectural style, properly called “Pointed,” which evolved in Europe (starting in France) from the latter part of the twelfth until the sixteenth century, and continued in certain geographical areas well into the eighteenth century (see architecture, gothic revival). Its geographical extent, from Ireland and Scandinavia to the Mediterranean and the Levant, and its longevity, made it a style (or series of styles, for it evolved in different ways in different countries and over time) that was enormously successful throughout Latin Christendom. As its correct name suggests, it is the architecture of the pointed arch, pointed rib vaults, piers with clusters of shafts, deep buttresses (some of the flying type), elaborate window tracery, pinnacles, spires and spirelets, crenellations, and a pronounced vertical emphasis. The term “Gothic” was originally pejorative, an invention of those who perceived Pointed architecture as barbarous and northern, and associated with those Germanic tribes that had invaded Italy and sacked Rome.

One of the problems with the semicircular arch, which was a characteristic of the Romanesque style, was that when compartments of a building, square or rectangular in plan, were covered with stone vaults with ribs, the diagonals (of wider span than the arches over the sides of the square or rectangle compartment), if semicircular, necessitated the narrower arches being raised on stilts to keep the tops of the arches aligned: the alternative was to place segmental arches over the diagonals and semicircular arches over the narrower spans. However, if the arches, instead of being semicircular, stilted, or segmental, were pointed, the apex of each point could be at similar heights, and a more elegant solution found to the problem of vaulting: the apex of each pointed arch, therefore, functioned rather like a hinge.

The pointed form, it has been suggested, was observed in Islamic architecture during the Crusades, and we know the pointed arch was used for Islamic buildings in the tenth and eleventh centuries, long before it appeared in Western Europe. However, interlacing arcades are found in Romanesque architecture, where semicircular arches overlap, and the result is not only a series of interlacing semicircular arches, but the formation of a series of pointed arches, so simple geometry may have played its part in suggesting the Pointed style. There has been much debate about where pointed rib vaults first appeared: they had been used in Burgundy, Lombardy, and Durham, but several candidates have been proposed, and innovation seems to have traveled remarkably quickly from place to place. Compared with columnar and trabeated architecture (as with Ancient Egyptian and Greek architecture), Gothic was arcuated, giving an impression of dynamic thrust and counterthrust. Half arches and half-barrel vaults had been used as buttresses in Romanesque architecture, so certain principles we associate with Gothic were already being exploited by earlier architects. Fully developed Gothic was a remarkably coherent system of arched forms in which forces were expressed and resisted, and nonstructural walls were subdivided with tracery to form huge glazed windows.

First Pointed (known as Early English in the British Isles) was a style used from the end of the twelfth century until the end of the
thirteenth, although most of its characteristics were present in the lower part of the east end of the Abbey-Church of St-Denis, near Paris (circa 1135–44), where something like fully fledged Gothic evolved. Windows were first of all vertical holes in walls with pointed tops (lancets), but later contained tracery of the plate type, then got larger, divided into lights by means of geometrical bar tracery: they also included circular windows of the wheel type. Added verticality was achieved by means of detached colonnettes or shafts of black or grey marble secured to piers at vertical intervals by stone bands. Common ornaments were nail-heads and the larger dog-tooth pyramidal type. Outward thrusts of vaults had to be counteracted by means of deep buttresses which divided façades into bays, and were capped by gablets or pinnacles. Roofs were steeply pitched. Once First Pointed evolved with geometrical tracery it became known as Middle Pointed. The next phase was Second Pointed (also known as Decorated) work of the fourteenth century, which saw an ever-increasing invention in bar tracery of the Curvilinear, Flowing, and Reticulated types, where the possibilities of the ogee form were fully exploited in canopies, tracery, niches, and so on, culminating in the Flamboyant (flame-like) style from around 1375 on the Continent. The mouchette or dagger forms of lights in traceries windows, and the net-like patterns of the bars were characteristic of the style. The wheel window was transformed into the elaborate marigold or rose window, or into even more fanciful patterns of tracery. Second Pointed had diaper-work often covering whole wall surfaces, profuse crockets on pinnacles and canopies, and naturalistic floral and foliate ornament (e.g., the leaves of the Chapter House of Southwell Minster, Nottinghamshire). Nail-head and dog-tooth were superseded by ballflower and fleuron enrichment. Vaults acquired intermediate or lierne ribs, enabling much more complex patterns (some star-shaped) than those of the First Pointed style to be created on ceilings. Second Pointed continued on the Continent, where lace-like patterns of tracery evolved, and churches of great height were erected with highly complex vaulting, notably in Germany and Bohemia, especially during the last phase, where Flamboyant forms were widely used. This style, however, was short-lived in England, and began to be superseded by so-called Perpendicular (or Third Pointed or Rectilinear) from around 1332, although the two styles overlapped for some time.

Perpendicular was a great English invention, and was unknown elsewhere (though widely copied during the Gothic Revival): its key characteristics were mullions extending to the soffits of window-arches; extensive use of the bowtell molding; developed employment of the double ogee; rolls, bells, and cushionions over octagonal molding; four-centered arches with flattened upper arcs; square-framed arches with cusped blind spandrels; panel-like effects of panels carried over wall surfaces and in tracery (where the traceries are often ornamented with miniature battlements, and each panel has an arched top, often cusped); arches with flatter tops of the four-centered type; and vaults which evolved from the lierne type into the fan vaults which reached their most sophisticated realizations at King’s College Chapel, Cambridge, and the Lady Chapel of Westminster Abbey (1503–19). Roofs got flatter and disappeared behind crenellations. Windows became huge, and sometimes filled entire walls between buttresses. Perpendicular was the longest-lived of all the Gothic styles in England, surviving for more than three centuries (the fan-vaulted hall staircase at Christ Church, Oxford, is circa 1640), and was the first of them to be revived in the eighteenth century.

The Gothic styles enjoyed a widespread and scholarly revival in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and led to a remarkable development of materials, craftsmanship, and inventiveness in design as well as an enormous program of restoration of medieval buildings without which many great works of architecture would not have survived. In particular, the rediscovery of medieval color (which permeated the architecture) transformed our
understanding of interiors, and informed nineteenth-century inventiveness and richness of décor.

SEE ALSO: Architecture, Gothic Revival.

FURTHER READING


Architecture, Gothic Revival

JAMES STEVENS CURL

The Gothic (more correctly Pointed) style of architecture continued in use long after the medieval period, especially in areas where there was readily available freestone. It should be remembered that Classicism was not indigenous in Northern Europe, and had to be learned. The crucial event in substituting Classical architecture for Gothic was the Great Fire of London in 1666, after which the monopoly of the Worshipful Company of Masons was undermined, because many artisans not associated with that company had to be employed. These artisans worked under Christopher Wren’s direction using the architectural language of Classicism from Europe, not the ancient language of the Pointed style, which, however, was kept alive outside London by masons working on repairs to churches or on new ecclesiastical buildings. Gothic certainly survived as a living tradition well into the eighteenth century: Gothic began to pass into history when masons lost ground to architects, architects pushed the Classical style, and when architects consciously worked in the Gothic style the results bore little resemblance to real medieval buildings. When the Gothic Revival proper got under way, the language had to be relearned by both architects and artisans, largely through painstaking scholarship such as that of Thomas Rickman (1776–1841), whose book of 1817 attempted to discriminate between the styles of English medieval architecture, and Matthew Holbeche Bloxam (1805–88), whose *Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture* of 1829 was a remarkable achievement for such a young man.

Good examples of seventeenth-century Gothic include Front Quad, Oriel College (1620–42), Front Quad, University College (1657–66, probably designed by Richard Maude), and the Great Staircase, Christ Church College (circa 1640, by one Smith, an “artificer” of London), all in Oxford; the Hall, Trinity College (1604–5, designed by Ralph Symons of Westminster), the Library, St. John’s College, Cambridge (1623–4, probably designed by Henry Man), and the Chapel, Peterhouse (consecrated 1632), all in Cambridge; the Cathedral Church of St. Columb, Londonderry, Ireland (consecrated 1633, by William Parratt of London); the Church of St. Saviour, Foremark, Derbyshire (consecrated 1662); the Chapel of St. Peter, Steane Park, Farthingoe, Northamptonshire (1620); and the south transept (circa 1600–7), nave (1662–4, by John Orum), and west tower (1677–8) of the Church of St. Andrew and St. Mary, Condover, Shropshire.
There are many such examples of a surviving Gothic tradition in England, and in some cases Gothic was consciously employed for political reasons: a good example is the Church of Holy Trinity, Staunton Harold, Leicestershire (1653–65, erected by Sir Thomas Shirley, Bt 1629–56 as a protest against the Puritanism of the Commonwealth). As late as 1730–3, the central tower of the Church of Holy Cross, Sherston, Wiltshire, was built to the designs of Thomas Sumson (circa 1672–1744).

That living tradition of building in Gothic was transformed when architects produced designs in the Gothic style. The most important early example is the Church of St. Mary Aldermary in the City of London (1679–82), which is entirely Third Pointed or Perpendicular in style, a choice probably dictated by the reuse of substantial medieval remains after the Great Fire. It was supervised by Wren’s office, the mason being Edward Strong Senior (1652–1724), who became a Freeman of The Masons’ Company in 1680. Another significant seventeenth-century work in Gothic Revival is the Church of St. Mary, Warwick, rebuilt (1698–1704) to designs by Sir William Wilson (1641–1710) by Francis (1672–1738) and William (1661–1724) Smith after the Great Fire of Warwick in 1694. The earliest Georgian examples of the Gothic Revival were All Souls’ College, Oxford (1716–35) and the two western towers (1734) of the Collegiate Church of St. Peter, Westminster (usually known as Westminster Abbey), designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661–1736). These were followed by the Gothic Temple, Stowe, Buckinghamshire (1741–4) by James Gibbs (1682–1754); the influential work by Sanderson Miller (1716–80), including the Gothic Tower, Edgehill (1745–7), embellishments at Radway Grange (1745–6), both in Warwickshire, and the sham castle “ruins” at Hagley, Worcestershire (1747–8); and Arbury Hall, Warwickshire (circa 1750–90), built by Sir Roger Newdigate, Bt (1719–1806), with Sanderson Miller, Henry Keene (1726–76), and Henry Couchman (1738–1803) as consultants and executive draughtsmen. It was Arbury Hall, with Horace Walpole’s (1717–97) Strawberry Hill, Twickenham (from the 1750s), and publications such as Batty Langley’s (1696–1751) Ancient Architecture Restored and Improved... (1741–2, reissued as Gothic Architecture in 1747) that helped to make Georgian (sometimes called “Sham,” “Carpenter’s,” or even “Cardboard”) Gothick fashionable, even though Langley’s sources drew on inventions like those of William Kent (circa 1685–1748), whose designs were probably used for Shobdon Church, Herefordshire, realized possibly by Henry Flitcroft (1697–1769), and there was virtually nothing of real Gothic in his book. The designs for Gothic garden buildings by Thomas Wright (1711–86) also seem to have had influence: examples at Tollymore Park, County Down, were built, but they do not look medieval, and are thin, insubstantial, but amusing garden follies. Medieval architecture was associated with the “Gothick” novels of people like Walpole, “Monk” Lewis (1775–1818), and others, and the “Graveyard Poets” Robert Blair (1699–1746), Thomas Gray (1716–71), and Edward Young (1683–1765): this literary background helped to make Gothic fashionable.

The conscious movement to revive Gothic began in the second half of the eighteenth century and developed throughout the nineteenth: it was, arguably, the most influential artistic phenomenon ever to spring from England, and from it grew the Domestic Revival, the Arts-and-Crafts and Aesthetic Movements, and many more developments in art and architecture. What might be termed the archeological phase of the Revival in which real medieval buildings provided the precedents for design was triggered partly by the French Wars which made the customary Grand Tour impossible, and led to a study of native historical architecture (much of which, of course, was Gothic) as part of a general revival of national pride. The most important recorders of medieval buildings and details were John Britton (1771–1857), Augustus Charles Pugin (1769–1832), and, of course, Bloxam and Rickman, but there were others, including Robert William Billings (1813–74), whose publications helped
to make Gothic familiar. Of huge importance were the books published and written by John Henry Parker (1806–84): not only did he bring out the works of numerous ecclesiologists, but his own *Glossary of Terms* (1836) and *Introduction to the Study of Gothic Architecture* (1849) were enormously influential. The religious revival that was prompted by fear of the French Revolution and its aftermath was also closely associated with the revival of Gothic, which began to take on associations with tradition, order, and nationhood, and the very considerable programs of restoration of medieval buildings throughout Europe (especially in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) were prompted partly by nationalism and partly as a reaction against the spirit of Neo-Classicism that had uncomfortable associations with the Revolutionaries. All this led to the production of beautifully illustrated books, accurate surveys of real medieval work, and archeological scholarship, increasing confidence so that experience gained in restoration work informed new designs in the Gothic style. The Cambridge Camden Society and the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture helped the evolution of ecclesiology, and led to the formation of the Ecclesiological Society which promoted studies not only of artifacts and architecture, but traditional religion.

With the writings of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–52), starting with *Contrasts* (1836), Gothic became a moral crusade, and the only style fit for a Christian nation. After the burning (1834) of the Palace of Westminster (an event that caused Pugin to rejoice), Gothic came of age, for the terms of the architectural competition for its replacement specified that either Elizabethan or the Gothic style should be used, and the marvelous new Palace designed by Charles Barry (1795–1860) with details and furnishings largely by Pugin was built by the Thames at Westminster (completed 1860).

At first the Revival was manifest in numerous buildings in the Perpendicular style (the last style of genuine medieval Gothic in England), but its associations with the Tudors and its supposed “decadence” led designers backward in time to Second Pointed of the early fourteenth century, epitomized in Pugin’s masterpiece, the Roman Catholic Church of St. Giles, Cheadle, Staffordshire (1841–6): glowing with color, and beautifully furnished, it showed how rich a Revival church could actually be. There followed numerous Gothic architects influenced by Pugin, of whom the most prolific were George Gilbert “Great” Scott (1811–78), who was to be knighted for his Albert Memorial, London (1852–72), a richly colored shrine in the Italian Gothic style; William Butterfield (1814–1900), whose All Saints, Margaret Street, London (1849–59) demonstrated the possibilities offered by hard brick, glazed tiles, and materials calculated to add color as well as stand up to the filthy atmosphere of towns; George Edmund Street (1824–81), whose churches, such as All Saints, Boyne Hill, Maidenhead, Berkshire (1854–65), often incorporated polychromy that was structural, and whose accomplished synthesis of Burgundian First Pointed with Italian and English Gothic at the Royal Courts of Justice, The Strand, London (1866–81) was one of the last great monuments of the Gothic Revival; and John Loughborough Pearson (1817–97), whose robust early French First Pointed at St. Peter’s, Vauxhall (1859–65) was one of the most successful buildings influenced by a growing interest in Continental Gothic. The Revival, therefore, went “backwards” from Perpendicular, to English Second Pointed, then to Continental First Pointed, and, influenced by Street and John Ruskin (1819–1900), to Italian exemplars, before it turned forward (chronologically) again to English types.

Among the most inventive Gothic architects the figure of William Burges (1827–81) looms large: one of the least restrained of Gothic Revivalists, he was responsible for three ecclesiastical masterpieces – Christ the Consolet, Skelton-on-Ure (1870–6), St. Mary, Aldford-cum-Studley (1870–8), both in Yorkshire, and the Cathedral of St. Finbar, Cork, Ireland (1863–1904) – all of which were of the
“muscular” type of Gothic, influenced by tough Continental (especially Burgundian) exemplars, but no slavish copies. Burges also designed from 1866 inventive and colorful alterations at Cardiff Castle, carried out wonderful works at Castell Coch, Glamorgan (1872–91), and built his own Tower House, Kensington (1875–81), with all the furnishings also designed by him.

With the works of George Frederick Bodley (1827–1907), the Revival took on a new delicacy, turning away from Continental sources and giving the buildings a much more English appearance, even introducing Perpendicular touches, as in the Church of St. John the Baptist, Tue Brook, Liverpool (1868–71), the color-scheme of which was brilliantly restored in the 1970s by Stephen Ernest Dykes Bower (1903–94). From 1869 to 1898 Bodley was in partnership with Thomas Garner (1839–1906), and their first great church drew on the planning of buildings such as the Dominican Church in Ghent, Belgium: this was St. Augustine, Bolton Road, Pendlebury, South Lancashire (1870–4), which, with its huge interior space, unbroken by any chancel arch, pointed the way forward to an architecture suitable for Anglican worship. Bodley and Garner’s exquisite Holy Angels, Hoar Cross, Staffordshire (1872–6), is, apart from the tower, entirely English Second Pointed. Although there had been “Rogue Goths” such as Enoch Bassett Keeling (1837–86), whose works included the debauched, eccentric, and outrageous Strand Musick Hall (1864, demolished 1903), thereby incurring the wrath of purists as too full of “Go”), the main thrust of the Revival from the time of Bodley’s first works began to be toward a revival and development of English Gothic, and a new refinement wholly at odds with the clashing and frantically restless architecture of the “Rogues.”

“Great” Scott was responsible for many restorations, some more sensitive than others, but he was also successful with larger secular buildings, including the magnificent Midland Grand Hotel in front of St. Pancras Station, London (1865–74), which mixes English and French First Pointed, Flemish motifs, and bits of Venetian Gothic, all piled together in a tour-de-force of polychrome eclecticism treated with immense assurance. Similar in style is his Kelham Hall, Nottinghamshire (1858–61). His work at Lichfield Cathedral, Staffordshire, is perhaps his best in terms of sensitive restoration, and very convincing, while the superb chancel-screen he designed for the same building (1859–63), made by Francis Alexander Skidmore (1816–96) of Coventry, reached the heights of Victorian design and craftsmanship.

George Gilbert “Middle” Scott (1839–97) was much influenced by Bodley and, with Garner, John Thomas Micklethwaite (1843–1906), and John Dando Sedding (1838–91), was responsible for altering the thrust of English ecclesiastical design from the 1870s by turning to English and late Gothic precedents instead of the thirteenth-century and Continental models that earlier had been de rigueur. Scott championed Perpendicular, and his masterpiece was the church, school, and vicarage of St. Agnes, Kennington Park, London (1874–91, now destroyed), designed for the English liturgy and Anglo-Catholic ritual, although his exquisite little St. Mary Magdalene, East Moors, Yorkshire (1879–82), should be mentioned. Temple Lushington Moore (1856–1920), a pupil of “Middle” Scott, supervised the erection of the last-mentioned building, and also worked at St. Agnes, but he himself was responsible for some very fine designs, including the sumptuous screen in St. Swithin’s Church, Littleham, near Bideford, Devon (1891–3), and the churches of St. Mary, Sledmere, and St. Botolph, Carlton-in-Cleveland (1895–7), both in Yorkshire. Moore’s Pusey House, Oxford (1911–14) is one of his best buildings.

There were other distinguished architects of the later Gothic Revival whose work has been ignored or underrated (partly through the not always benign influence of Nikolaus Bernhard Leon Pevsner, 1902–83). Giles Gilbert Scott’s (1880–1960) glorious Liverpool Anglican Cathedral (1903–80) is beginning to be recognized as the marvel it is, a sublime monument
with breathtaking internal volumes quite unlike any other work of the Gothic Revival, and the building as a whole is a scenic prodigy, a testament to the originality and inventiveness of its architect, working in a great tradition. Most of the design drawings for the last parts of the cathedral to be built were by Roger Arthur Philip Pinckney (1900–90).

One of the most gifted pupils of Bodley and Garner, John Ninian Comper (1864–1960), designed some great works, including St. Cyprian’s, Clarence Gate, London (from 1902), and his masterpiece, St. Mary’s, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire (1904–31), in which English late Gothic was a major inspiration. Dykes Bower designed distinguished additions for the cathedral at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, from 1956, work on which continued under The Gothic Design Practice, headed by his former assistant, Warwick Pethers (born 1959), culminating in the mighty crossing-tower, an indisputably fine essay in late English Gothic, owing something to “Bell Harry” at Canterbury, and completed in the early years of the twenty-first century. Dykes Bower completed (1979) the chapel at Lancing College, Sussex, originally designed by Richard Cromwell Carpenter (1812–55): it has the largest rose-window to be built in England since the medieval examples in the transepts of Westminster Abbey (for which Dykes Bower was Surveyor to the Fabric for 22 years from 1951). More recently there have been signs of a revival of Gothic of the pre-ecclesiological type, notably with the Gothic Villa at Regent’s Park (1988) by John Quinlan Terry (born 1937).

The importance of the Revival proper was that first of all it freed architects from the tyranny of symmetry, enabling fenestration to be placed where it was needed, for example, and not forced into a preconceived pattern. Plans, too, could be asymmetrical, designed for convenience, what Pugin called “fitness for purpose.” It also encouraged the use of materials that could be washed down, more suited to the dirty atmosphere of cities than absorbent stone, and colored materials allowed the evolution of structural polychromy. Scott’s use of iron for staircases at the Midland Grand Hotel and at Kelham Hall was very advanced, and indeed an architecture of iron and glass for new building types was invented from scratch. Demands made by architects encouraged a revival of craftsmanship and invention of materials that were truly staggering, and the arts of making stained-glass windows, encaustic tiles, and elaborate metalwork were all caused to flourish.

In due course, the Gothic Revival led to the Domestic Revival, when architects discovered in vernacular buildings much to admire and emulate, and the enormous advances in both knowledge and craftsmanship gave birth to the Arts-and-Crafts and Aesthetic Movements. There is also no doubt that aspects of Gothic Revival design were also transformed into the sinuosity of what became Art Nouveau, and that the Revival, which reached its apogee in the late-Victorian period, was of immeasurable importance in a great many ways.

SEE ALSO: Architecture, Gothic; Walpole, Horace.

FURTHER READING
Asian Gothic

KATARZYNA ANCUTA

While Asia is a somewhat familiar territory for Gothic, Asian Gothic appears to be a category in the making, or a label in search of content. A potential contributor has to face two major issues to begin with. One significant difficulty is to agree upon what exactly is meant by “Asia” in Asian Gothic. If we define Asia by its geographical boundaries, we are immediately confronted with the virtually impossible task of drawing parallels between radically different cultures, for one tends to forget that Asia stretches through the vast territory of Russia and ex-Soviet republics, down to the Middle East and then through the Indian subcontinent toward the Far East of China and Japan (see Japanese Gothic). There exists also a more convenient and culturally coherent Asia based on definitions of Eastern philosophies and religions derived from various forms and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, which once again can prove misleading, as it omits a significant Islamic population that has been present in the area for generations, as well as Asian Christians. Needless to say, there is yet another Asia, popularized by influential critical texts which focus on selected economically attractive regions, postcolonial literary heritage, and visual texts from countries with well-established cinematographies, which successfully narrows the continent down to India, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and an occasional mention of South-East Asia, as represented by either Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, or Vietnam (but rarely by all at the same time).

The second obstacle that Asian Gothic studies have to overcome is the fact that the linguistic term “Gothic” is not native to Asian cultures and it has, therefore, rarely been used for classificatory purposes within the local literary, cinematic, or cultural criticism, apart from, perhaps, referring to literary texts from the former British colonies and the Goth-influenced popular visual culture of Japan. In the remaining cases, the search for Asian Gothic tends to take us into three very broadly delineated directions: an exploration of the written and oral lore connected with the supernatural; a re-examination of the classic literary and cinematic works against the existing critical Gothic paradigm; and a recategorization of contemporary popular texts (film, animation, music, fashion, lifestyles, and so on) as “Gothic,” leading to the appropriation of the term by various Asian cultures. Bearing in mind the vastness of material to cover, all three areas are still in great need of research and this short entry taking the countries of East, South-East, and South Asia as a starting point should by no means be treated as complete.

Regardless of the current religious and philosophical systems, the links with the older animistic beliefs are still strong in many Asian cultures, which accounts for the existence of a very complex network of spirits, ghosts, lesser and greater deities, and other supernatural beings, whose presence exerts almost tangible influence over the region. Fortune telling, astrology, spiritual healing, exorcisms, black magic, or mediumistic practices are all forms of common everyday encounters with the spiritual forces believed present in the universe. Supernaturally themed magazines, paperback novels, and comic books fill up a significant section of any Asian bookstore, demonstrating a steady demand for texts of this kind. The
same can be said about film, video, and TV drama from the region, from big screen movies to cheap straight-to-DVD productions that frequently feature ghost-related narratives. While some of the stories hark back to earlier written and oral accounts of supernatural encounters, others are invented on a day-to-day basis to fit the demands of the spirit-hungry audience willing to accommodate the supernatural within the contemporary world of Asian megacities, corporate banking, and information technologies.

A great majority of Asian spirits had existed in the imagination and belief of people long before they found their way onto the pages of literary works and in front of the cameras. While some of these spirits, particularly those representing the forms taken by the dead in the afterlife, are easier to deal with, since they can be seen as resembling the ghosts familiar to Gothic, others appear more problematic to classify, for their form and purpose may evoke different responses from the critics than from the local populations, who still firmly believe in their existence. For how is one to deal with ghosts, such as phi krasue (Thailand) or penanggalang/manananggal (Malaysia) – depicted graphically as a shimmering floating head with entrails that separates itself from the body to feed on filth? How are we to categorize toyol/tuyul (Malaysia, Indonesia), kuman tong (Thailand), or xiaoguǐ (Taiwan, Singapore) – protective baby ghosts obtained from grilling human fetuses and keeping them locked in a jar? What are we to make of jiang shi/kyonshi (China) – animated corpses popularly known as the hopping vampires and frequently portrayed as clad in uniforms of the Qing dynasty officials? What are we to do with mischievous foxes, such as the Chinese huli jing, Korean kumiho, or Japanese kitsune, plotting to steal human souls to become human themselves, or with the Japanese tsukumogami – a group of yōkai monsters consisting of everyday household objects that received a soul on their hundredth birthday?

In the rational West, where ghosts have long come to represent the repressed, it is relatively easy to speak of them in terms of Gothic metaphors. For many Asian cultures, the supernatural remains too real to allow for any metaphorization. This is not the end of the problems. Glennis Byron argues that local varieties of Gothic are frequently identified in the context of examining the production of cultural identities, seeing that they involve differentiating between sameness and monstrosity (Byron 2007: 33). This, however, requires monsters to be seen as fundamentally different, evoking fear and rejection, and this is not always the case in Asia. While it is possible to view at least some Asian monstrosities as embodying particular fears of a given culture, for example, the fear of premature death in childbirth, as represented by powerful female spirits like kuntilanak or pontianak (Malaysia), or phi tai thang klom (Thailand), Asian Gothic must also account for the fact that, on a par with fear, in Asia ghosts and spirits evoke reverence and this mode of relationship with the supernatural remains relatively unexplored in Gothic. Asian “monsters” cannot remain fundamentally different from the living, for many of them (particularly ancestral spirits) have been conceived of to represent the living and the linkage between generations past and present.

Regardless of that, Asian spirits have frequently been simplified for the Western audience in an attempt to mold them to the familiar forms of vampires, ghouls, or zombies, resulting in imposing upon them a set of false expectations concerning their attributes, aims, and behaviors. The Filipino aswang, Malaysian langsuir and pontianak, Thai krasue, and Chinese jiang shi have all been described as a local variety of vampires, despite their obvious uniqueness and lack of consistent blood-drinking habits; even the kinnaree – an angelic half-female half-bird Himmapan creature – has not escaped an occasional vampiric comparison (see vampire fiction). Ironically, it seems that the Anglo-American Other seems reluctant to acknowledge the existence of different forms of otherness, opting for the safer, tamer, blood-drinking, brain-eating, friendly
Gothic monster variety instead. If the Orient is already a monstrous territory for Gothic, the acknowledgment of the existence of Oriental monstrosities incompatible with the Western conception of the supernatural is bound to complicate that relationship even more.

In contrast to the overabundance of oral accounts of the supernatural, a relatively easy entry into the disorganized world of Asian spirits leads through literature. Out of many Asian cultures, China and Japan seem to be exceptional here in that there do exist early written tales of the supernatural in both Chinese and Japanese. In his Asian Horror Encyclopedia (2001), Laurence C. Bush dates written accounts of ghosts in China to the seventh century BCE and mentions large collections of supernatural tales written in the fourth and fifth century CE (Bush 2001: 56). These stories, known as zhiguai, literally translated as “accounts of the strange,” written in the period of Six Dynasties (220–589 BCE), according to Robert F. Campany were meant to represent “creative models both of and for proper relations between the living and the dead” (Campany 1991: 16) and prepare their readers for a change in attitude regarding the principle of filial piety by extending it to include not just one’s own ancestors but all the souls of the dead (Campany 1991: 18–19). Initially crude in style, Chinese supernatural stories evolved into a full-blown literary form during the Tang dynasty period (618–907 CE), when a new genre, known as chuangqi (or the tale of the marvelous) was born. By far the most influential collection of such tales remains Liaozhai, written by Pu Songling in the seventeenth century and comprising 431 “strange tales,” many of which continue to inspire writers and filmmakers, perhaps the most famous film adaptation to date being Ching Siu-Tung’s A Chinese Ghost Story (1987).

Pu Songling’s tales remain among the most read Chinese ghost stories in the West chiefly thanks to the fact that, unlike many others, they were translated into English. Linguistic inadequacy is bound to remain the thorn in the side of Asian Gothic scholars, for mastering all the most important Asian languages for the sake of research is a formidable task, if not altogether impossible. Needless to say, Gothic re-examinations of Asian literatures depend heavily on second-hand expertise, the existing translations, and texts originally written in English, and are therefore destined to be rather perfunctory and incomplete. Even if, as Andrew Hock Soon Ng asserts, “transgressing taboos, complicity with evil, the dread of life, violence, and the return of the repressed . . . are not specific to any culture or people” (Ng 2007: 1), we cannot forget that much of the critical discussion of Gothic to date has been focused on language, and without access to language(s) the study of Asian Gothic runs the risk of superficiality. It is therefore understandable that much of Asian Gothic is discussed in terms of postcolonial Gothic, as represented by linguistic and stylistic textual hybrids resulting from the negotiation of identities and viewpoints (see postcolonial gothic). And even if we agree with David Punter that to engage with postcolonial writing we need to confront the postcolonial with the literary (Punter 2000: 10), at the end of the day, “the literary” very often remains limited to the texts written or translated into English.

Needless to say, we hear significantly more of Indian, Malaysian, or Singaporean Gothic than Thai, Vietnamese, or Filipino ones, precisely because much of the English language literature from the former British colonies stems from either following or questioning English literary models, Gothic included. This is certainly the case with Singaporean fiction, characterized, according to Tamara S. Wagner, by “the haunting presence of literary legacies” and “colonial importations” (Wagner 2007: 46), something that can undoubtedly ring true also when addressing Indian or Malaysian writing in English. The Gothic tropes of trauma, loss, privation, silence, melancholy, violence, otherness, the imaginary, abjection, guilt, and shame (among many others) have been identified in the texts of many Indian authors whose works form the core of most textbooks on postcolonial writings, some more
prominent figures being Rabindranath Tagore, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Kiran Desai, R. K. Narayan, Bharati Mukherjee, and Arundhati Roy. Malaysian writers, such as Tunku Halim and K. S. Maniam, and Singaporean authors, such as Damien Sin, Russell Lee, and Catherine Lim, whose stories engage with local narratives of the supernatural while remaining faithful to the literary models introduced during Britain’s colonial presence, have also been subjects of similar Gothically minded analyses.

One interesting alternative to the postcolonial Gothic paradigm, suggested by Byron, is “global Gothic,” addressing the emergence of new Gothic forms, where “the effects of globalization upon cultural production have also led to the literature and film of different countries feeding off each other to produce new cross-cultural monstrosities” (Byron 2007: 33), with a view to identifying the common ground for all Gothic texts across cultures, discovering the way these texts influence one another, and assessing their cultural specificity (Byron 2007: 33). Global Gothic allows us to bring under examination authors as diverse as Pramoedya Ananta Toer (Indonesia), Nick Joaquin (the Philippines), or Chart Korbjitti (Thailand), whose writings abound in Gothic depictions of mechanisms of marginalization, the primitive, economic and political oppression; as well as S. P. Somtow – toying with the Gothic form to exorcise a concept of “Thainess” as a particularly grotesque cultural identity. At the same time, the globalization of Gothic is primarily evident in the sphere of the visual: in cinema and television, art and photography, comic books and graphic novels, or fashion, where local aesthetics and narrative techniques meet with foreign forms of production and technology, frequently involving the flow of international capital and labor, and striving to meet the demands of the global market.

Although the critical response to Asian cinema is still relatively marginal, this does not change the fact that major Asian film industries are as old as cinema itself. And just as elsewhere, horror remains one of the staple film genres in Asia. Currently, Asian horror films rank among the most popular horror productions worldwide, their success with non-Asian audiences initiated by the sudden boom of J-horror after the worldwide release of Hideo Nakata’s Ringu (1998). Beyond doubt, Japanese and Korean horror films remain the most successful and influential Asian horror films today. A great majority of these films are tales of the supernatural focusing on the figure of a vengeful spirit, frequently a woman or a child, which seems to be a valid categorization for many Asian horror movies in general.

At the risk of gross overgeneralization, major Asian horror productions can be classified into a number of types, depending on local thematic and structural preferences. And so Japanese horror movies tend to be technologically oriented, transferring supernatural disturbances into the digitalized setting of computers, satellites, virtual reality, and mobile phone technology: JuOn (Shimizu 2003), Kairo (Kurosawa 2001), One Missed Call (Minke 2003). The central figure of fear can be seen as the impingement of chaos on the otherwise highly ordered Japanese way of life. At the other extreme, we find Japanese body horror, beginning with the stories of bodily transformation, like Tetsuo (Tsukamoto 1989) and culminating in sadistically inclined gore movies of the Guinea Pig series type (1985–9). In contrast with J-horror productions that are frequently filmed in basic video and digital formats and may appear somewhat rough and experimental, Korean horror films usually astound with the richness of the visuals. The great majority of Korean horror films are classic ghost stories retold in modern urban settings: A Tale of Two Sisters (Ji-woon Kim 2003), Into the Mirror (Seong-ho Kim); frequently inspired by folklore and European fairy tales: Cinderella (Mande Bong 2006), The Red Shoes (Yong-gyoon Kim 2005), Hansel and Gretel (Pil-seong Lim 2007). Like other Korean productions, K-horror is often overtly political, bringing up the question of national traumas – the Korean War, Korea’s past and present relationship with Japan and the United States, hopes and dangers
of reunification: R-Point (Soo-chang Kong 2004), Epitaph (Beom-sik Jeong 2007). Korean horror films are also perhaps the only ones in Asia that consistently feature serial killer plots: Tell Me Something (Yoon-hyeon Jang 1999), Say Yes (Seong-hong Kim 2001); also introducing female psychotic criminals, as in Black House (Tae-ra Sin 2007), since usually in Asian movies killing is seen as motivated by personal revenge, spiritual possession, or black magic.

Hong Kong horror remains faithful to the Chinese ghost story tradition telling stories of supernatural romance: Rouge (Stanley Kwan 1988), Tiramisu (Dante Lam 2002), Painted Skin (Gordon Chan 2008); or taking a light-hearted approach to the supernatural through martial arts comedy: Mr. Vampire (Ricky Lau 1985), The Twins Effect (Dante Lam, Donnie Yen 2003). Film plots involving cannibalism are also common: The Untold Story (Herman Yau 1993), Ebola Syndrome (Herman Yau 1996), Dumplings (Fruit Chan 2004). Ghosts are frequently depicted as seeking a replacement and inducing suicides, as in Ghost Office (Kuk Kok-Leung, Law Wing-Cheong, Andy Ng 2001), and their appearance is an excuse for a supernatural showdown with a local Taoist exorcist: Troublesome Night series (1997–2003), The Park (Andrew Lau). In Taiwan, a local contribution includes tales of xiaoguai, or fetus ghosts: The Heirloom (Leste Chen 2005). Singaporean horror offerings tend to stress the cultural connection of Singapore to the Chinese horror lore, for example through celebrating rituals such as the Hungry Ghost month: The Maid (Kelvin Tong 2005), Where Got Ghost? (Jack Neo, Boris Boo 2009). Mainland Chinese horror films focus on the notion of ghostly love, as in Matrimony (Hua-Tao Teng 2007); but also, as a result of years of political repression, explain the supernatural in terms of human action: Ghosts (Liu Xiaoguang 2002), Seven Nights (Zhang Qian 2005); or mental disease: Help (Zhang Qi 2008), Suffocation (Zhang Bingjian 2005).

Most South-East Asian films tend to incorporate local figures of fear. Indonesian films introduce the witch-like leak, or spirits, such as the kuntilanak and pocong; in Malaysia horror tends to be dominated by the pontianak, while in the Philippines we find creatures such as the aswang. Thai horror films tell stories of the vengeful phii tai hong, the violently dead: Shutter (Wongpoom, Pisanthanakun 2004), The Victim (Arayangkoon 2006), The House (Arayangkoon 2007); and black magic, in Long Khong (The Ronin Team 2005; and resort to a whole variety of local monstrilities for an additional comical effect: Body Jumper (Chateme 2001), Krasue Valentine (Sippapak 2006). Most of the films carry an explicit message of karmic retribution: The Mother (Thongdee 2003), Coming Soon (Sukdapisit 2008), Alone (Wongpoom, Pisanthanakun 2007). The Indian film industry has its own share of horror movies, whose plots predictably involve black magic, Phoonk (Varma 2008); vengeful spirits, Bhoot (Varma 2003), Darling (Varma 2007), 13B (Kumar 2009); haunted mansions, 1920 (Bhatt 2008); reincarnation, Mahal (Ramsay 1989). They may include occasional songs and dances.

There is no doubt that a penchant for the macabre, grotesque, excess, violence, or the erotic, characteristic of much Asian art, film, and literature makes it possible to speak of Asian Gothic as a legitimate category. At the same time, in order not to turn the “Gothicizing” of Asian cultures into yet another episode of colonialization, we should revisit some of the Western-centered concepts and terminology of Gothic and approach the vibrant multiplicity of Asian Goths on their own terms.

SEE ALSO: Japanese Gothic; Postcolonial Gothic; Vampire Fiction.

REFERENCES


Asylums
DIANE MASON

In early Gothic novels such as Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), imprisonment in gloomy dungeons or impenetrable family piles is a pervasive fate that befalls many an embattled heroine (see Radcliffe, Ann). In *Udolpho*, Emily St. Aubert is struck with “melancholy awe” at the “gothic greatness” of the stronghold where she is to be held and is overcome with “terrors” as to the dangers that lurk within at the hands of the evil Montoni (Radcliffe 2001: 216, 217). Here, the young, virginal woman is not only confined but also in imminent peril of her virtue, if not her life, through enforced marriage or, by implication, the sexual machinations and threat of physical violence posed by a villainous male captor.

In later, nineteenth-century Gothic novels, notably Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1859–60), the dungeon is superseded by the asylum as a locus of anxiety, redolent with the potential for malign incarceration and maltreatment (see Collins, Wilkie). As Roy Porter asserts, “Asylum abuse proved an endemic disorder” and “scandals throughout the nineteenth century leave no doubt that confinement of those protesting sanity or malicious imprisonment remained common” (Porter 1997: 504). A woman could be confined on the recommendation of a husband or other male relative(s) so long as they could get the support of two doctors to confirm that the woman in question was mentally (or morally) unsound. In these cases the (supposedly mad) woman could readily fall “[victim] of a doctor’s prejudice about what kind of behaviour constituted sanity” (Appignanesi 2008: 96).

The true case of Mary Huestis Pengilly, a sixty-two-year-old widow committed to the Provincial Lunatic Asylum of Saint John, Massachusetts in 1883, on the recommendation of her sons, is a particular example of the way a woman’s conduct could be perceived as transgressive. In her 1885 work *Diary Written in the Provincial Lunatic Asylum*, Pengilly recalls the circumstances of her committal. She was living “alone” and “engaged in writing a book on the laws of health,” eventually becoming “so absorbed” in her writing that she “forgot to eat” for eight days (Pengilly 1885: 9). At this point she heard angels’ voices counseling her to “fast and pray” – a probable consequence of nutritional deprivation rather than an indicator of mental derangement; but her sons, supported by Dr. Steeves at the asylum, thought her “insane” and she was duly committed (Pengilly 1885: 7, 2). Although Pengilly’s sons’ actions may have been motivated by good rather than ill intent, they were still swift to conclude that she was mad rather than malnourished. There is an undeniable moral ambiguity in this form of female imprisonment, as authoritarian, cheating, or abusive fathers,
husbands, and heirs could claim that they had had the, supposedly maniacal, wife, daughter, or female relative confined for her own good/safety. In the eyes of wider society, ignorant of any ulterior motives, their actions could appear to be entirely paternal, dutiful, or supportive, with the woman’s welfare at heart, until such time, if ever, that their evil designs were exposed.

Once put away in the asylum, the woman could be largely forgotten about. She could find herself subject to force-feeding if the poor, institutional fare was not to her taste and to vicious restraint if her behavior was deemed unacceptably excitable. Pengilly recalls a youthful fellow patient bound in “leather handcuffs” fastened so tightly that they made her hands swell “purple with blood” (Pengilly 1885: 9). The same young woman was secured to a chair with a “canvas belt” so taut that, according to Pengilly, “it would have stopped my breath” (Pengilly 1885: 9). This harsh treatment was meted out because the girl tore off her dress and wailed grievously when she was not permitted to leave the asylum after a visit from her father.

Further, less violent but nonetheless tangible, threats to a maliciously incarcerated woman’s health could come from the imposition of experimental therapeutic regimes and/or the process of systematic habituation to treat her nonexistent manias or delusions. The idea that the mind could be trained, or habituated, to replace unhelpful thoughts or behaviors through the consistent reinforcement and repetition of more acceptable ones, popularly theorized as “unconscious cerebration” by the British physiologist William Carpenter (1813–85), was, as William Hughes asserts, “central to the management of the mentally ill in British public and private asylums from the mid-nineteenth century” (Hughes 2007: 137). In nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, depictions of this predominant therapeutic regimen for the governance of the mentally ill are unerringly problematic, pregnant with the possibility of deliberate, as well as accidental or misinformed, misuse by the unscrupulous practitioner.

Leaving aside the travails of the viciously confined female, one of the most vivid fictional examples of the way the Carpentarian system was open to intentional subversion in the name of medical experimentation can be found in Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) (see stoker, bram). In Stoker’s novel, it is a male patient, R. M. Renfield, who affords Dr. John Seward “a wonderfully interesting study” (Stoker 2007: 160). From the outset, Seward assesses Renfield to be “dangerous,” even “homicidal,” on account of the latter’s “zoophagous” appetite, motivated by a “strange belief” that “by consuming a multitude of live things [...] one might indefinitely prolong life” (Stoker 2007: 102, 144, 114, 278). Given the apparent severity of Renfield’s affliction, one might expect Seward to employ Carpenter’s principals in order to break his patient’s mental fixation, and its congruent and progressive physical manifestation of feasting on flies, spiders, and birds. Indeed, Seward explicitly cites Carpenter’s model of “unconscious cerebration!” in his diary entry for “8 July” (Stoker 2007: 112–13). Paradoxically, though, Seward elects to use his knowledge to “keep” his “pet lunatic” to “the point of his madness,” something that, in the normal run of events, he would “avoid with the patients as I would the mouth of hell” (Stoker 2007: 102, 277, 102). The practitioner’s treatment of Renfield is not only unethical but also potentially injurious given the man’s “morbidly excitable” condition (Stoker 2007: 102).

Seward’s reference to his patient as a “pet lunatic” further suggests that he regards Renfield as little more than a laboratory animal to be tested to breaking point in the furtherance of medical research. This is reinforced inasmuch as Seward specifically alludes to “Burdon-Sanderson’s physiology” and “Ferrier’s brain knowledge” as he reflects on his work with Renfield (Stoker 2007: 115). The English physician Sir John Burdon-Sanderson (1828–1905) and the Scottish practitioner James Ferrier (1843–1928) both used vivisection in the course of their research and were instrumental in bringing the practice to public attention. Ferrier was even prosecuted in 1881
under the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1876 though later acquitted. Notably, “The British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection” was “founded in 1898,” the year after Dracula was published, and the issue remains controversial to this day (Lansbury 1985: 9). The suggestion of medical experimentation on mentally ill human subjects in Dracula adds a further layer of unease as to the outrages that could potentially await the vulnerable patient behind closed asylum doors.

Returning here to the malignly incarcerated woman, in his novel The Woman in White, Wilkie Collins focuses on the dangers that could attend the misinformed application of therapeutic habituation rather than its deliberate misuse. In the words of Lisa Appignanesi, Collins “graphically evokes the difficulty of an individual establishing a ‘sane’ identity once medical and social forces have combined to put the suspicion of insanity into play” (Appignanesi 2008: 98). In Collins’ work, Laura, Lady Glyde, is maliciously committed to an asylum by her husband, Lord Percival Glyde, in the guise of her half-sister, Anne Catherick, who had previously escaped from the institution. During Laura’s incarceration she is held “under restraint; her identity with Anne Catherick [is] systematically asserted” and “her sanity” is “practically denied” (Collins 1998: 436). Laura is not only at risk of the systematized destruction of her own identity but also of the imposition of another’s identity upon her.

The patient was effectively stripped of her/his rights as an individual by dint of his/her psychological condition and subsumed within the homogenous label of “lunatic.” The distressed inmate might remonstrate with any visitors that they had been wronged but the medical staff could assure the concerned caller that the accusations were merely the deluded ramblings of an idiot. Reflecting on her time in the asylum, Mary Huestis Pengilly recalls that, “no matter . . . how earnestly” she “plead[ed]” her sanity to her son, Lewis, he always “believe[d] Dr. Steeves in preference to [her]” (Pengilly 1885: 4). This was a potentially far more sinister – and legitimized – form of “imprisonment” than the dungeon, posing both a physical and psychological threat to the wellbeing of, effectively, sane female inmates. A sane woman subjected to a prolonged period of psychological pressure could crack under the strain and become habituated to her insane role/identity.

Collins’ plot motif of malign imprisonment and switched identities continues to exert a fascination for the reader and has more recently been adapted, revised, and given a postmodern twist by Sarah Waters in her Victorian Gothic pastiche Fingersmith (2002) (see contemporary gothic). In Waters’ novel, Sue Trinder, one of a company of thieves run by sinister baby-farmer Mrs. Sucksby, is enlisted as part of an audacious plot to snare the fortune of an allegedly “half-simple” young heiress, Maud Lilly (Waters 2002: 27). In her role as Lilly’s maid, it is Trinder’s job to encourage her mistress to marry Gentleman, a cultured but vicious male associate of Mrs. Sucksby’s. After the wedding, Sue is further required to “keep [Maud] simple” as Gentleman has arranged to have his wife put away in “a madhouse” (Waters 2002: 27). Despite being, as she assumes, in full knowledge of Maud’s proposed “fate,” Sue finds herself drawn to her mistress as if she “love[d] her” (Waters 2002: 96, 136). The two routinely share a bed (Maud has troubling dreams) and, eventually, mistress and maid commence a clandestine sexual relationship (see lesbian gothic). Unbeknown to Sue, though, Maud is herself in on the plot (which is far more complex than Sue imagines) and the mistress systematically grooms her maid so that Sue can be committed to the asylum in her place. When she is led away by Dr. Graves and Dr. Christie, and sees “the M, and the L” on the bag at her feet, Sue realizes that she is the one who has been set up (Waters 2002: 174). Although Sue protests that “My name ain’t Maud,” a regime of brutal habituation is enforced to convince her otherwise (Waters 2002: 409).

Waters’ richly intertextual novel, although inspired by the classics of Victorian sensation fiction (see sensation fiction), is a thor-
oughly contemporary work that constantly obscures the binaries of innocence and corruption and predator and prey. Identities are constantly in a state of flux and the characters fluidly transgress the bounds of class and even sexual orientation. The inclusion of explicit lesbian sex scenes – a form of sexuality Queen Victoria “could not imagine” – both foregrounds the relationship between Maud and Sue and playfully interrogates nineteenth-century medical notions associating female sexuality with reproduction (White 1999: 237). The fecundity of Maud and Sue’s eventual union is to be measured not by the birth of strong children but rather in the generation of pornographic texts – a literature of hedonism and excess – by which they “get [their] living” (Waters 2002: 546). The centrality of these female characters is reflected in Fingersmith’s narrative structure. The overlapping dual narrative is focalized in the first person by Sue and Maud rather than constructed from a conglomeration of largely male-generated documents like The Woman in White. Unlike Laura Glyde, whose story of captivity and treatment in the asylum is entombed in the narrative of Walter Hartright, Sue recalls the harsh institutional regime, torturous therapeutic methods, and casual sadism of the doctors and nurses in harrowing and intimate detail.

In conclusion, to return briefly to Mary Huestis Pengilly’s true account of asylum life, Pengilly’s residency in the Provincial Lunatic Asylum of Saint John was relatively short and she was eventually discharged in April 1884. Fittingly, though, there is more than an element of the Gothic in her perception of herself and her fellow inmates as “poor prisoners” and her rendering of the institution itself, in her writing after her release, as “this castle on the hill” (Pengilly 1885: 3, 10). Momentarily here, the boundaries separating an authentic medical establishment and the fictional horrors of Udolpho become tantalizingly blurred.

SEE ALSO: Collins, Wilkie; Contemporary Gothic; Lesbian Gothic; Radcliffe, Ann; Sensation Fiction; Stoker, Bram.

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FURTHER READING

Atwood, Margaret
ELLEN MCWILLIAMS

The Gothic dimensions of the work of Margaret Atwood (1939–) are most visible in her interrogation of fictions of femininity, in her treatment of the figure of the woman writer, and in the recurring interest in the
possibilities of dual or multiple identities in her writing (see doubles). In her early novel *Lady Oracle* (1976), a Gothic parody in the tradition of Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, the main character, Joan Foster, writes Gothic romances for the popular fiction market but also imagines herself as the heroine of her own life. Atwood responds to the sacrificial virgin of seminal Gothic texts such as Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* and Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* by charting her protagonist’s quest for agency and self-determination through a maze of Gothic conventions (see lewis, matthew; walpole, horace). Sections of Joan’s Gothic romances are interpolated into the main body of the novel and serve as all-important ancillary texts to the story of her coming of age in Canada and her later escape to Europe (see canadian gothic). Joan Foster is a typical Atwoodian protagonist in that she leads more than one literary life; as well as writing popular romances (published under a pseudonym), she is also the author of an acclaimed collection of poetry that shares its name with the title of Atwood’s novel and is marketed as literary Gothic by her publishers. The numerous strands of Joan’s Gothic writing overlap and interact with the plot of Joan’s life; for example, the men in her life are imagined as villains or as rescuer figures at different points in the text. In determining to take control of the fictions that have come to impinge upon her life story, in the final pages of the novel she abandons the fantasy of Gothic Romance for science fiction. While *Lady Oracle* is perhaps Atwood’s most striking engagement with the Gothic, a number of her short fiction works, in particular the title story of her collection *Bluebeard’s Egg* (1983), are explicit in reworking fairytales and folktales with a distinctly Gothic aspect to them (see folklore). In these shorter works, as in her novels, Atwood’s revision of Gothic motifs is driven by a feminist interest in unraveling the original texts and generating new meanings from them that force a reconsideration of the roles historically assigned to women in the Gothic tradition.

Ghosts and hauntings also have their place in Atwood’s later fiction. The main character of *The Robber Bride* (1993), Zenia, like Joan Foster in *Lady Oracle*, takes her own death in a bid to escape the past but returns as a ghostly figure to haunt the women that she cheated in her former life (see apparition). Zenia is a shapeshifter, able to alter the story of her life to win over and, more often than not, dupe her audience. This interest in storytelling and deception recurs in *Alias Grace* (1996), in which Atwood returns to the scene of colonial Canada, to the story of the “celebrated murderess” Grace Marks, and reanimates a tale of female malevolence that has troubled Canadian literature since the nineteenth century. She alters Susanna Moodie’s account of Marks in her memoir *Life in the Clearings Versus the Bush* (1853) but preserves Grace’s mystery in scenes that draw on Victorian practices of hypnotism and mesmerism (see hypnotism). Atwood’s collection of poetry, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), takes up this concern with literary hauntings and can be read as a response to her formidable forebear. The poems in this collection are ventriloquized in the voice of Moodie and she emerges as a troubled figure who, in her more unsettled moments, sees the New World of Canada as hostile and marauding.

If the wilderness in Atwood’s work is at times found to have a dark, supernatural aspect to it, then the short story “Death by Landscape,” from the collection *Wilderness Tips* (1991), is one of the most vivid explorations of the uncanniness of the wilderness. The death by landscape of the title relates to the mysterious disappearance of a young girl in the Canadian bush. This interest in the uncanny in Canadian literature and culture and in the menacing potential of the Canadian wilderness extends to Atwood’s critical work. Her collection *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* is, in part, an exploration of the grotesque and the monstrous in Canadian culture. Other hauntings can be observed in Atwood’s work, from the ghostly image encountered in a lake by the main character of
Surfacing (1972) through to the lingering presence of Laura Chase in The Blind Assassin (2000). Laura Chase provides a cover for the real author of The Blind Assassin (the novel within the novel), Iris Chase Griffen, and becomes a cult figure to her more devoted readers. The twinning that occurs in The Blind Assassin is also echoed in Atwood’s critical writing, particularly in her examination of interdependent literary selves in her study of the author through history, Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing (2002).

In her reworking of Gothic scripts, Atwood reanimates Gothic motifs and histories but does so in a way that is distinctly underwritten by her interests as a Canadian woman writer. The Gothic is key to the feminist and postcolonial subtexts of her work and to her conception of engaging with literary tradition as an ongoing process of “negotiating with the dead.”

SEE ALSO: Apparition; Canadian Gothic; Doubles; Folklore; Hypnotism; Lewis, Matthew; Walpole, Horace.

FURTHER READING


Australian Gothic
KEN GELDER

The Gothic came to Australia as an imported literary genre that quickly adapted to local conditions. Early colonial explorers evoked the foundational tropes of the Gothic as they made their way into the Australian interior, so that the desert and the bush could seem – in an explorer’s gloomier moments – as ancient and godforsaken as any ruined castle. As Roslyn Haynes has suggested, colonial explorers could slide from an exhilarating sense of the interior as an endless wide-open space to an often overwhelming feeling of “enclosure and entrapment” expressed in Gothic terms (Haynes 1999: 77). The explorer’s psychological condition found its reflection in the landscape, especially when the early optimism of the exploration began to wane. In his 1908 book, The Explorers of Australia and Their Life-Work, the popular colonial adventure writer Ernest Favenc wrote about the early Surveyor-General John Oxley (1785?–1828) along exactly these lines:

He appears to have formed the idea that the interior tract he was approaching was nothing more than a dead and stagnant marsh – a huge, dreary swamp, within whose bounds the inland rivers lost their individuality and merged into a lifeless morass. A more melancholy picture could not be imagined, and with such an awesome thought constantly haunting his mind there is no wonder that he became morbid, and that the dominant tone of his journal ... is so hopelessly pessimistic. (Favenc 2006: 16)

Melancholy and morbidity came to define aspects of the colonial Australian sensibility, underwriting a counternarrative to the optimism and ideals of discovery, expansion, and nation-building. The theme of the explorer who never returns – like the German explorer Ludwig Leichhardt’s expedition, which disappeared in 1848 – soon became prevalent across a range of Australian fiction and poetry, from J. F. Hogan’s The Lost Explorer (1890) and Ernest Favenc’s Secret of the Australian Desert (1895) to Francis Webb’s Leichhardt in Theatre (1952) and Patrick White’s novel, Voss (1957). “The very emptiness of the desert,” Haynes writes, “led the explorers to people it with ghosts” (Haynes 1999: 82).

There are certainly plenty of examples of the spectralization of the desert – and the bush – by explorers given over to a melancholy or morbid frame of mind (see spectrality). The Adelaide-born best-selling novelist Guy
Boothby had himself traveled across Australia, publishing his experiences in *On the Wallaby* (1894). His story, “With Three Phantoms,” from his collection *Bushigrams* (1897), tells of an exhausted explorer who appears like an “apparition” from the desert, and has just enough life left in him to tell his tale in a remote town in northern Queensland one “infernal” Christmas Eve. Going in search of the Leichhardt expedition, he loses his companions one by one, and then encounters ghostly horsemen who lead him out of the desert to his eventual death when his tale is finished. This “spectral explorer” tale presents the opening up of Australia’s interior not as a triumph of nation-building, but as a shattering experience involving the loss of faith and reason. As an early instance of the Australian Gothic it provides a counternarrative to the colonial project, as if nation-building must always be shadowed by the losses it incurs.

Colonial Australian Gothic fiction and poetry often intervenes directly in the process of nation-building and settlement in Australia. Stories such as Rosa Campbell Praed’s “The Bunyip” (1891) and Hume Nisbet’s “The Haunted Station” (1894) – which echoes Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” in its apocalyptic ending (see Poe, Edgar Allan) – turn settlement and home-making in Australia into a kind of traumatic event, producing terrifying spectral outcomes. Even as it was being settled, the Australian interior was imagined as a place of abandoned homesteads and obscured burial sites, as we can see in the Gothic mystery and detection stories of Mary Fortune from the 1860s to the 1890s, or in the Australian-born colonial poet Henry Kendall’s “The Hut by the Black Swamp” (1868), a Gothic eulogy to an abandoned homestead that turns the potential triumph of settlement into its dark opposite, colonial violence and desolation. Kendall and his contemporary Charles Harpur – the son of convict parents – were Australia’s two most important colonial poets, heavily influenced by Wordsworth and the Romantics. But nature, for them, is animated in a different way, potentially more ominous, even lethal. In Harpur’s best-known long poem, “The Creek of the Four Graves” (1845), five white settlers – colonial entrepreneurs full of promise – venture inland in search of “new streams and wider pastures.” But as four of them sleep, “painted Savages” burst into the campsite, full of “dread inherited hate and deadly enmity” (Harpur 1984: 161). The fifth explorer, Egremont, watches in horror as his friends are massacred, and then he flees for his life, able later on to tell his story to a public eager for stories about “the wild old times.” The poem is both a sensationalist rendering of colonial anxiety, and – even as it chronicles the failure of colonial promise – a melancholy way of claiming the landscape in the name of colonialism, the “four long grassy mounds” of the dead explorers memorializing the act of settlement.

A bleaker sort of colonial Gothic narrative can tend to treat settler death as a matter of banal routine, however. The anonymity of the dead in the Australian interior is perhaps most strikingly rendered in one of Henry Lawson’s best-known stories, “The Bush Undertaker” (1892), a Christmas tale that centers around a solitary figure who recognizes and then dutifully buries a corpse in “the grand Australian bush – the nurse and tutor of eccentric minds, the home of the weird, and much that is different from things in other lands” (Lawson 2007: 146). The “weirdness” of the Australian bush becomes a commonplace evocation for the Australian Gothic, a way of expressing the landscape’s capacity for generating darker colonial sensibilities among settlers, like melancholy, anxiety, and dread. An often-cited comment by the London-born novelist Marcus Clarke, a key figure in Australia’s colonial literary history, strikingly illustrates this point. In 1876, Clarke wrote the preface to a new edition of a book of poetry by Adam Lindsay Gordon, a colonial writer, adventurer, and renowned horseman whose increasing debts had driven him to suicide six years earlier. He pays tribute to Gordon’s “manly admiration for healthy living,” as if the poet was once an ideal colonial Australian type, masculine and full of promise.
But the registering of Gordon’s suicide turns the preface into an act of mourning that somehow shifts in time to a moment before the promise of colonialism can even begin to be realized. Clarke drew on Edgar Allan Poe to acknowledge Gordon’s dismal condition and then transferred that sensibility – what he famously called “Weird Melancholy” – onto an imaginary precolonial Australian landscape to produce an escalating sequence of Gothic-horror images:

The Australian mountain forests are funereal, secret, stern. Their solitude is desolation. They seem to stifle, in their black gorges, a story of sullen despair. No tender sentiment is nourished in their shade. . . . The sun suddenly sinks, and the mopokes burst out into horrible peals of semi-human laughter. The natives aver that, when night comes, from out of the bottomless depth of some lagoon the Bunyip rises, and, in form like monstrous sea-calf, drags his loathsome length from out the ooze. From a corner of the silent forest rises a dismal chant, and around the fire dance natives painted like skeletons. All is fear – inspiring and gloomy. (Clarke 1976: 645–6)

This lurid passage sees the Australian bush, Aborigines, and an image of monstrous birth – through that uniquely Australian mythical figure of the Bunyip emerging from the “ooze” – all yoked together under the exaggerated sign of the Gothic. Gordon’s suicide is the trigger that produces this bizarre slippage, enabling Clarke to slide from the colonial project of settlement and nation-building to a nightmare of presettlement as if colonialism had never happened.

The colonial imagining of an ancient precolonial past is perhaps an example of what Tom Griffiths has called the “antiquarian imagination” in Australia (Griffiths, 1996). A number of Gothic Lemurian fantasies were published around the end of the nineteenth century, including Favenc’s The Secret of the Australian Desert (1896), George Firth Scott’s The Last Lemurian (1898), and Praed’s Fugitive Anne (1902), all of which involve the discovery of a lost, ancient race in the Australian interior. But other colonial Gothic writing turned to more recent past events. Marcus Clarke’s Gothic convict melodrama, His Natural Life (1874), recounted the convict experience of Port Arthur and Van Diemen’s Land through its hero, Richard Devine, unjustly transported to Australia to suffer all the brutalities of penal life in the early colonies. By the time Clarke wrote his novel, Van Diemen’s Land had changed its name to Tasmania (in 1856) and the prisons at Port Arthur had begun to fall into disrepair. But the old penal colony continued to cast its shadow as one of Australia’s genuine Gothic ruins. For John Frow in his essay “In the Penal Colony” (1999), Port Arthur is not just a reminder of an otherwise submerged history, it is nothing less than a Gothic point of origin for Australia itself: “its ruined traces bearing ambiguous witness to a whole system of punishment, involuntary exile, and unfree labour which has come to represent the foundational moment of the Australian nation.” Frow also writes about the mass murderer, Martin Bryant, who on April 28, 1996 shot and killed 35 people at Port Arthur – which by this time had become a popular tourist destination. For Frow, this terrible event returns Tasmanians to their earlier colonial moment of repression, a point he inevitably expresses through Gothic tropes:

Nobody uses Bryant’s name, but his denied presence is everywhere. Nobody knows the forms which will lay the ghost. Nobody knows what kind of monument will insert this story into the other story for which this site is known, into that other past which is barely available for understanding. (Frow 1999)

The “Tasmanian Gothic” has been a flourishing genre in literature and film, often turning back to the horrors of convict life on the island: for example, in Michael Rowland’s film about Van Diemen’s Land’s most notorious convict-cannibal, The Last Confession of Alexander Pearce (2008) (see FILM). The genre has also dealt with the killings of Aboriginal men and
women on the island, as in the writer Mudrooroo’s hallucinatory Master of the Ghost Dreaming series of novels which begins in 1991. Aboriginal writers and artists have responded to their colonial, and postcolonial, predicaments in a way that we can perhaps identity as “Indigenous Gothic.” Tracey Moffatt’s films are a good example: Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy (1989) looks at an Aboriginal woman who lives out her confinement, nursing her dying white mother in an isolated homestead amid a series of vividly baroque, traumatic recollections, while BeDevil (1993) consists of three ghost stories built around locations haunted by different kinds of spirits (see ghost stories). The Australian Gothic continues to build itself around haunted sites, spectral places that testify to some sort of traumatic loss or disappearance. Peter Weir’s Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975) is often taken as Australia’s first modern Gothic film, telling the story of the disappearance of three girls and their teacher in Victorian bushland on St. Valentine’s Day, 1900. But the best known examples of Australian Gothic cinema are George Miller’s Mad Max films, beginning in 1979, which return to the Australian interior, this time as a place criss-crossed with straight, endless roads and inhabited by lawless gangs of bikers, carjackers, and petrolheads who constantly battle with the police. The remote Australian road lends itself to Gothic representation, as Ross Gibson has noted in his study of a “Horror Stretch” of road in northern Queensland, where he links a series of murders in the 1970s there to “the bloody past of Australia’s colonial frontier” and concludes, “history lives as a presence in the landscape” (Gibson 2002: 50).

Colonial traumas do indeed live on in the Australian Gothic, as we see in John Hillcoat and Nick Cave’s film, The Proposition (2006), a stark portrayal of the brutality of colonial justice and law-breaking. Melbourne-born Cave is globally recognized as a singer-songwriter who has helped to shape and embody a contemporary Goth identity. But he is also tied to the colonial Australian Gothic: evoking the dark tradition of convict narratives in his song “Mercy Seat,” for example, or through his role as a prisoner in the film Ghosts of the Civil Dead (1988). Cave’s work has turned to America and Europe for its influences and its audiences, but like many other practitioners of the Australian Gothic, he has returned time and time again to influential tropes and themes already established during the colonial period.

SEE ALSO: Film; Ghost Stories; Poe, Edgar Allan; Spectrality.

REFERENCES


Clive Barker (1952–) is a British-born novelist, playwright, scriptwriter, visual artist, and director, prolific in the fields of horror and dark fantasy. He came to prominence in the 1980s as a writer of short stories (collected in the best-selling *Books of Blood* 1–6) and director of the film *Hellraiser* (1988), which became an international hit, thus winning Barker a place among the world’s leading creators of contemporary horror. Many of Barker’s stories and novels are now considered cult and have been adapted into films, comic books, and computer games. Announced as the “future of horror” by Stephen King, Barker has developed a unique style, capturing the sexual aspect of the supernatural, while at the same time constructing coherent systems of complex mythologies.

Barker was born on October 5, 1952 in Liverpool where he grew up and where he based the setting of his third novel *Weaveworld* (1987), capturing the autumnal and aquatic atmosphere of the city. When he was twenty-one, he gave up his studies at Liverpool University and moved to London. He formed a fringe theater group called the *Dog Company* in which he was a playwright, actor, and director. His plays, imbued with fantasy, erotica, and horror – the main themes of his subsequent stories and novels – were later published in two collections entitled *Incarnations* and *Forms of Heaven*. In the 1980s Barker also became known as an illustrator inspired by theater, adult fantasy art, and “schlocky” films. Visual arts remain the core of his creative work, ranging from illustrations, covers, paintings, and drawings to computer game graphics.

While working in the theater, Barker was writing short stories, although at first without much hope of publication. However, the first publisher who read them asked for more, and thus in 1984 Barker made his debut with the *Books of Blood* – a collection of contemporary short stories, often involving ordinary people suddenly confronted with horror and mystery. The first three parts were not very well received by the British critics, yet they won him many fans in the United States. Two years later, he published another three volumes, thus making up an impressive six-volume collection of his best-selling short stories that launched an extraordinary career. At around the same time he also published the Faustian novel *The Damnation Game* (1985) and *The Hellbound Heart* (1986).

1987 was a breakthrough year for Barker. Displeased by the earlier film adaptations of his stories (*Underworld* and *Rawhead Rex*, both directed by George Pavlou), he decided to take matters into his own hands with *Hellraiser* (1987), based on his novella *The Hellbound Heart*. It was with this extremely successful film
that Clive Barker the film director left his indelible mark on the history of horror cinema (see *film*). After the success of his film, Barker returned to writing. The three novels written between 1987 and 1989 – *Weaveworld*, *Cabal*, and *The Great and Secret Show* – brought out the best of his style and established him as one of the most eminent writers of fantasy horror.

Barker’s involvement in film-making finds its reflection in his founding of the Seraphim Films studio whose greatest success was the famous *Candyman* (1992) – another adaptation of a Barker story. He also participated in the production of many other films, including *The Plague* (2006) and *Dread* (2009).

Barker’s most notable books of the last decade of the millennium include *Imajica* (1991) which he names as his favorite, and *The Thief of Always* (1992) advertised as “a book for the younger audience.” He also published *Everville*, which was a sequel to *The Great and Secret Show; Sacrament*, his most realist novel, revolving around the theme of extinction; and *Galilee* (1998), a story of two powerful dynasties. The 1990s also saw the publication of two collections of his illustrations and two collections of his plays.

Barker moved into the new millennium with a new project reflecting the spirit of the time – a computer game called *Undying*, a horror-themed first-person shooter for which he was consulted in terms of plot and background story, and also provided the voice of one of the characters (see *games*). Since then he has also provided the premise of the story line for two other games, *Jericho* and *Nightbreed*, the latter issued as an action game as well as an interactive film.

Barker’s artistic versatility finds a perfect reflection in his grand project known as *Abatar*. A series of huge oneiric pictures that he started painting in the mid-1990s initiated the creation of a whole new fantasy world when Barker began to think of them as illustrations for his “Books of Hours” – a collection of twenty-five stories taking place in a uniquely created universe called Abatar. Set on a giant archipelago of islands, each perpetually set on a particular time of the day or night, the tales describe the emotional reality of every island, hour by hour, including the mysterious Odom’s Spire marked by the extra, mystical twenty-fifth hour. The story, growing with every new picture, includes five volumes; the first three were published between 2002 and 2010.

The uniqueness of Barker’s style is directly linked to his outstanding visual imagination. His writing, sometimes described as “postmodern splatter prose,” is so deeply imbued with artistic imagery that it seems like just another kind of iconography. He makes no distinction between certain kinds of artistic creativity (exemplified, for instance, by the works of Goya, Blake, and Bosch) and certain kinds of literary style that could be marked as “visionary.”

Barker subverts the traditional hallmarks of horror, thus inscribing himself in the trend of the redefinition of the genre so visible in the 1980s. Whereas traditional horror, under the banner of Stephen King (see *King, Stephen*), used monstrosity (see *monstrosity*) as a transgressive element that had to be expelled from the traditional suburban environment (see *suburban gothic*) for bourgeois values to be restored and reinforced, the new horror subverts the standards and unsettles the audience. Barker’s penchant for defamiliarization and paradoxes became a perfect medium for expressing the ongoing crisis of identity through the images of bodily transformations and reprojections of the self.

SEE ALSO: Film; Games; King, Stephen; Monstrosity; Suburban Gothic.

FURTHER READING


Baudelaire, Charles

MATTHEW GIBSON

Charles Baudelaire (1821–67) was the seminal French poet of the nineteenth century. His interests and techniques inspired both the Symbolist and Decadent movements in the epochs subsequent to his death. He was also an art critic who praised Romantic and Orientalist art in preference to the classical. Although his lyrical ends and belief in the otherworldly mean that it is difficult to define Baudelaire as Gothic writer per se, he nevertheless took much influence from Gothic authors such as Hoffmann and also inspired writers of the fantastic genre such as Lautréamont. In a Gothic sense he is most celebrated for his use of macabre imagery, his Swedenborgianism, his love of terror and horror as rejuvenating forces in urban culture, and his Orientalism (see European Gothic). Above all, however, he is renowned for translating most of Poe’s work into French and introducing the American writer to the French public; a seminal achievement given the vast influence Poe’s work was to exert on both Gothic and detective fiction in France (see Poe, Edgar Allan).

Baudelaire was the son of a senior civil servant and was sent away to boarding school in Lyon at an early age after his father’s death. He returned to Paris as a young man and managed to establish himself as an art critic and dandy in 1840s Paris by using a large patrimony, which he quickly managed to squander. Here he also came under the influence and patronage of Théophile Gautier, whose Orientalist works, such as “Une Pipe d’opium” (1838) and “Le Club des Hachichins” (1846), were of immense importance to Baudelaire’s tastes and to his development as a writer who eschewed the importance of Christian morality and bourgeois respectability, although his love of the Orient was also inspired by a journey to Calcutta undertaken in 1841 and 1842. Indeed, Baudelaire, like Gautier, was a member of the real Club des Hachichins based in Paris’ Île St. Louis, and like Gautier wrote about his hashish-induced experiences there, honoring the club’s oriental origins (the Islamic caste of the Assassins) in his work Les Paradis artificiels (1860). Oriental imagery fills many of his poems, such as “La Vie antérieure” (My Former Life) and “Le Flacon” (The Perfume Flask).

Baudelaire’s great work, Les Fleurs du mal (1857), and single collected volume of poetry, was revolutionary for its time, and was in some instances considered shocking due to its sexual content. While its poems were conventional in terms of prosody (rarely breaking from established meters in the alexandrine), it was highly original in terms of ideas and content, celebrating evil alongside good as a revitalizing force for modernity. Baudelaire believed that fear of evil was preferable to “spleen” (or ennui), and considered the imagination as a vital stimulant that could turn the dullness of life into moments of horror and terror, as exemplified by his use of macabre imagery in the poem “La Cloche fêlée” (The Cracked Bell). In this verse the speaker describes how he cures his boredom...
by allowing the chiming of the bell to prompt him to see his soul’s voice as the groaning of a forgotten, wounded man beneath a heap of corpses: an articulation of despair more emotionally charged than, and thus preferable to, the tedium felt before. Indeed, Baudelaire frequently uses macabre or “frénétique” imagery in unusual places for satirical or startling effect; for example, in love poems such as “Je t’adore à l’égal de la voûte nocturne” (I Adore You as Much as the Nocturnal Vault), in which he tells the beloved (his Creole lover Jeanne Duval, or “Black Venus”) that he intends to “avance à l’ataque, et je grimpe aux assaults / Comme après un cadavre un choeur de vermisseaux” (go on the attack and climb in assault / As does a swarm of maggots after a carcass), and thus subverts the reader’s expectation about the attitude of the lover to the object of his love. Such techniques were probably influenced by the style of the Irish writer Charles Maturin, whose work was very popular in France at this time and to whom Baudelaire frequently refers in his art criticism (Lanone 2002: 74) (see Maturin, Charles Robert). In one poem (“Le Vampire”), Baudelaire uses the familiar Gothic vampire motif of a blood sucker to represent the beloved, but again subverts this trope by suggesting that the victim, once delivered from his suffering, would simply resuscitate the vampire through his kisses. Thus, having introduced Gothic imagery Baudelaire subverts its conventional use, and in doing so indicates, as Richter writes, “the paradoxical and unbearable reality” of the poet’s life (2001: 291).

Erich Auerbach (1973) noticed how Baudelaire achieved his emotional effects by mixing the “base” with the “sublime,” or rather humdrum imagery with metaphors and rhetorical structures usually associated with more exalted states and styles. In doing so, Baudelaire desacralized older forms and notions in order to express the extreme emotional states of modernity rather than the spiritual notions of reality that filled the work of earlier Romantic writers. Hence, in the poem “Spleen,” Baudelaire uses classical forms of apostrophe and abstractions, but also refers to the sky as an oppressive “couvercle” (lid) and sees the embittered soul as collapsing before Dread rather than God. Others, however, have noticed that Baudelaire was particularly gifted at suggesting moods in his poetry through the selection of carefully chosen everyday objects rather than through direct self-expression. In Les Fleurs du mal, this technique is particularly exemplified by the section called “Tableaux Parisiens,” which describes very objectively the miseries of urban life while still evoking moods through imagery. Such techniques were to exert a major and direct influence on Symbolist poets such as Mallarmé, and also on T. S. Eliot, who shows much Baudelairean influence in the typist scene of part three of “The Waste Land.”

Like Honoré de Balzac, whom he knew, Baudelaire was a great believer in Swedenborg’s theory of correspondences, although he did not subscribe to the full theological theory that underpins it. In Swedenborg’s ontology, there are spiritual correspondences between objects on earth and spiritual objects in heaven: a view “proven” in the thirteen volumes of Swedenborg’s Arcana Coelestia. Baudelaire uses this concept in the sonnet “Correspondances,” for example, which details how different sensations such as colors and sounds actually correspond to each other through unseen connections, and how these synesthetic and organic wholes, once understood, correspond further to an alternative reality: what Auerbach called Baudelaire’s “absolute Somewhere Else” (1973: 216). This means that Baudelaire was trying to connect not with a theological spiritualism but with a kind of improved sensual reality that he frequently posited as having existed at some previous time.

Baudelaire’s use of synesthesia, which is not an aspect of Swedenborg’s theory, indicates the importance to his work of Hoffmann, who was one of the first to suggest the idea of a synesthetic universe, in tales such as “Ritter Gluck” (1814) and the “Kreisleriana” (1813), from which Baudelaire quoted at length in his long piece of art criticism “Salon de 1846,” in which
he illustrated the idea (Baudelaire 1992: 85–6) (see Hoffmann, E. T. A.). Hoffmann was very popular in France during Baudelaire’s youth due to the publicizing of his work by writers such as Charles Nodier (see Nodier, Charles) and J. J. Ampère, and Baudelaire expressed a respect for Hoffmann in various essays. Both writers shared an interest in the effects of alcohol and opiates upon creativity and both expressed the desire of returning to an ideal, paradisiacal state. In Baudelaire’s poetry this corresponded to a celebration of both primitivism and a premodern society, in which the relations between men and women had not been corrupted by modern life, as witnessed by poems such as “J’aime le souvenir de ces époques nues” (“I Love the Memory of These Undressed Eras”). It may have been Hoffmann’s inspiration that led Baudelaire to include imagery from the mineral world and the idea of eyes mirroring each other in various of his poems (including “Parfum exotique” (“Exotic Perfume”)), and he certainly based his articulations of drug-induced reverie in Les Paradis artificiels on Hoffmann’s descriptions of fantasy.

Baudelaire was also noted in his life for his engagement with another Gothic writer, Edgar Allan Poe, whose works he translated into French – a feat that was to have major repercussions in French culture, beyond the bohemian salons that Baudelaire himself frequented and in the writings of popular authors such as Paul Féval and Alexandre Dumas fils. Debate still surrounds the extent to which Poe was a seminal influence on Baudelaire’s own writing. While his interest in cats as semimagical creatures and his portrayal of extreme human anxieties was clearly affected by the American writer, opinion now tends to understand Hoffmann as the Gothic author to have exerted the most significant influence on the aesthetic of Baudelaire’s work, since, despite his delight in the somnambulistic states enjoyed by Poe’s dissipated characters, Baudelaire’s taste and styles were largely formed by the time he began to translate Poe’s stories (1849).

In addition to simply translating and publishing Poe’s short stories, Baudelaire also translated his “Philosophy of Composition” (as “Genèse d’un Poème”), which comprises the poem “The Raven” and an essay describing how every detail of the poem’s genesis, however labored, was part of the realization of a predetermined pattern. Baudelaire was clearly impressed by the correspondence between the Unitarian Poe’s fatalistic description of poetic labor and his own views on labor being a necessary and natural exercise on the part of the artist to unravel previously unacknowledged creative sources. In keeping with his primitivism, Baudelaire could not support the unnatural in art, and championed the work of Delacroix over that of Ingres. For Baudelaire, Delacroix expressed nature by allowing his imagination – itself an effect of nature – to obey an inner compulsion and improve upon base nature by communicating extreme emotions through color and line, while Ingres imposed false, neoclassical, concentric forms on the natural world (Galand 1969: 44). However, Baudelaire also noted in “Salon de 1846” that Delacroix’s compositions were careful constructions resulting from deliberation and labor, just as were Ingres’ “inferior” works.

It was the ability to incorporate this inspired element of literary composition within a Calvinist philosophy of industriousness that encouraged Walter Benjamin to recharacterize Baudelaire as the poet of high capitalism: a poet who developed an aesthetic in which he justified his role in society through a cult of labor. This is of course ironic, since Baudelaire was seeking to expose the vicissitudes of contemporary industrial Paris, not comply with them. Another feature of Baudelaire that Benjamin remarked on was his promotion of the “flâneur” in poems such as “A une passante,” which represent the socially disengaged relationships of the city dweller who forms fleeting and yet intense relations with other passers-by in a crowd. Benjamin sees varying prototypes for this peculiar type of spectral character in short stories by Hoffmann and Poe.
The concept has been used subsequently in both postmodernism theory and in modern portrayals of the urban vampire, such as in the novels of Anne Rice (see Rice, Anne). Above all, Baudelaire was instrumental in showing the hypocrisy of urban life and the misery of capitalism. He resorted to the macabre and Gothic sensibility not to create fantastic literature but rather to illustrate the emotional extremes of modernity, the psychological rejuvenation involved in the aesthetics of horror and terror, and the necessity of evil’s presence to overcome the sterility of “spleen.” He died in 1867, his health prematurely ruined by years of both self-abuse and callous abuse by others.

SEE ALSO: European Gothic; Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); Maturin, Charles Robert; Nodier, Charles; Poe, Edgar Allan; Rice, Anne.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING

Beckford, William

MAX FINCHER

Glamorous, reclusive, queer, social outsider, collector, and fantasist are just some descriptions of William Beckford. Beckford (1760–1844) is remembered for his eccentric personality as much as for his writing and contribution to neo-Gothic architecture (see Architecture, Gothic). Dubbed “England’s wealthiest son,” the son of a Lord Mayor of London and sugar plantation owner in the West Indies, Beckford was brought up in the luxurious isolation of his father’s neo-Palladian mansion, Fonthill Splendens in Wiltshire. Here he was taught Arabic, Persian, French, and Greek, learned to draw and paint under Alexander Cozens, and wrote fantasy stories like “The Vision.”

Beckford’s novel Vathek takes the Gothic novel in new directions. The novel was originally written in French by Beckford, and his translator, the Reverend Samuel Henry, published an English translation without Beckford’s permission in 1786. A year later in Paris, Beckford published his own original version of the novel, complete with extensive notes on Oriental customs. In Vathek, Beckford infuses the elements of the fantastical, the perverse, and the demonic. Beckford’s novel is a hybrid; a unique work, part-Oriental fantasy and part autobiography. In true Gothic spirit, Vathek defies the realms of the rational, normative moral values and embraces the grotesque and the monstrous. The eponymous character, Vathek, is a tyrannical Middle-Eastern caliph who lives in the Palace of the Five Senses. Anticipating Victor Frankenstein (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft), Vathek possesses an insatiable curiosity, a thirst for knowledge and
power that ultimately leads him to damnation in the halls of Eblis (the Islamic Satan). Receiving the gift of a magical sword from a mysterious Indian traveler, the Giaour, an agent sent by Eblis, Vathek, with the help of his mother Carathis, agrees to sacrifice fifty young boys to the Giaour who promises him “the talismans that control the world” (Beckford 2001: 64). Vathek embarks on a journey across the desert to Ishtakar, meeting the Princess Nouronihar and her effeminate cousin, Gulchenrouz, while camping out at a magical oasis. Nouronihar becomes his lover and accomplice and thus begins his descent and fall from grace.

The influence of Vathek upon later Gothic writers and Romantic artists is evident. Vathek establishes the character of the tyrannical hero-villain and introduces the demonic in the shape-shifting Indian/Giaour. The hero is proud, cruel, terrifying, and consumed by greed, ambition, and power, and his demonic quest anticipates many later Faustian pacts. Beckford’s blend of Orientalist and Gothic fiction sets a trend for writers like Charlotte Dacre, and in his depiction of forbidden or transgressive sexualities like incest, he anticipates an interest in this topic by later Romantic poets. Carathis, Vathek’s mother and the first real evil woman in Gothic fiction, is a sadistic witch who flies about on a camel, and whose desperation to see Vathek achieve his ambitions is touched with sexual overtones.

In 1785, Beckford left England to live in Portugal after it was insinuated in the London newspapers that, despite being married with two children, he had had a sexual relationship with his cousin, William Courtenay, the ninth Earl of Devon, at Powderham Castle. It is more than probable that Beckford was bisexual. The characterization of the effeminate Gulchenrouz in Vathek is generally agreed to be a semibiographical portrait of Courtenay. For the next ten years, Beckford lived in Europe where he kept a journal of his travels in Portugal, Spain, and Italy. Beckford’s biography, as a persecuted social outsider who found comfort in the company of the European nobility, appealed to Lord Byron. “The Giaour” (1814), was especially influenced by the dramatic scene of Vathek feeding the handsome sons of his most distinguished citizens to the hungry Giaour. Vathek’s sacrifice of young male beauty can be read as a metaphor for the economics of queer desire in Beckford and Byron’s era, for a trade in handsome young men to noblemen (see queer gothic).

Importantly, Beckford’s novel also features the Sublime in depicting a terrifying landscape that reflects the neurotic behavior and internal consciences of its characters (see sublime, the; terror). When Vathek and Nouronihar approach the portals to the ruins of Ishtakar, which Beckford based on the ancient ruined city of Persepolis, they are filled with awe and terror. Beckford’s descriptions of the infinite halls of Eblis filled with lost souls rushing about with burning heart might be compared to the apocalyptic visions of the Romantic painter John Martin. Vathek’s vision of hell is, after Milton, one of the earliest sympathetic depictions of Satan that came to be a preoccupying theme for many Romantic poets and painters.

In between the fall of the Bastill and the rise of Napoleon, Beckford returned periodically to England in the 1790s, and published two further novels, the sardonic Modern Novel Writing (1796), a satire on the sentimental novel that attacks the social conventions of high society, and the Gothic novel Azemia (1797). Azemia deserves further critical attention than it has received to date. Beckford is often only remembered for Vathek, but Azemia, subtitled “Another Blue-beard,” shows the influence of Ann Radcliffe and is a horror story set in eighteenth-century England, in Lincolnshire rather than Italy. Beckford’s other contribution to the Gothic is in the realm of architecture, rebuilding Fonthill, his childhood home, as an enormous neo-Gothic abbey in the Wiltshire countryside where he became a recluse. In 1825, a bolt of lightning struck the three hundred foot tower, causing it to collapse, with life imitating Gothic art. Beckford moved to nearby Bath where he built the Lansdowne tower, and died in 1844.
Undoubtedly, *Vathek* and the *Episodes of Vathek*, the four grotesque unpublished tales that supplement the novel, move the Gothic into the realm of exploring transgressive sexuality one step removed into an Eastern, Oriental setting. A powerfully imaginative example of Gothic and Orientalism, the novel continues to both please and disturb the modern reader.

SEE ALSO: Architecture, Gothic; Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Incest; Queer Gothic; Radcliffe, Ann; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Sublime, The; Terror.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Benson, E. F.  
(Edward Frederic)

NICK FREEMAN

Edward Frederic Benson (1867–1940) belonged to a remarkable literary family. His brothers Arthur (A. C.) and Hugh (R. H.) were novelists, poets, and writers of ghost stories (see *Ghost Stories*), and his father, Edward White Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1877 to 1896, told Henry James the anecdote that became “The Turn of the Screw” (1898) (see *James, Henry*). Benson himself was a highly successful society novelist, but alongside the frivolity of his “Mapp and Lucia” comedies, a mood which extended to the entertaining satire on spiritualism “The Psychical Mallards” (1921) (see *Spiritualism*), he published several collections of Gothic tales beginning with *The Room in the Tower* (1912). Neatly plotted and written in characteristically breezy style, these grim vignettes, which he termed “spook stories,” a term coined by a gently derisive Edmund Gosse, were at once commercially motivated and psychologically revealing, particularly in their repeated expression of a misogyny verging upon gynophobia (see *Misogyny*).

Benson attended M. R. James’ first readings at Cambridge in the early 1890s (see *James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes)*), but his own tales are a world away from the donnish antiquarian fantasies of the older writer. They may not always be brutish, but they are nasty and short. In *Final Edition* (1940), Benson explained that “by a selection of disturbing details it is not very difficult to induce in the reader an uneasy frame of mind which, carefully worked up, paves the way for terror,” adding that “the narrator, I think, must succeed in frightening himself before he can hope to frighten his readers” (Benson 1988: 258). Whether or not Benson actually believed in ghosts, he had, as Jack Adrian says, “a knack of making [them] – or at least the reasons for their existence in the first place – perfectly credible” (Adrian 1988: 19). His stories frequently involve middle-class men, often bachelors or unhappily married, whose lives are disrupted by malign forces over which they have no control. Beneath a polite and educated social veneer, Benson’s world is one of mystery, violence, and darkness. His most consistent collections, *The Room in the Tower* and *Visible and Invisible* (1923), feature a remarkable diversity of phantoms,
vampires, returning pagan gods and, in the latter’s “Negotium Perambulans,” a giant supernatural slug that “seemed to have no head, but on the front of it was an orifice of puckered skin which opened and shut and slavered at the edges” (Benson 1992: 238). These nightmarish manifestations—a similar slug-like menace appears in “The Thing in the Hall” (1912)—often imply that, as Adrian says, Benson “actively detested” women (Adrian 1988: 16), and story after story portrays evil feminine entities or else inflicts horrible suffering on female characters. In “Mrs. Amworth” (Visible and Invisible), the vampire (see Vampire Fiction) is a jovial middle-aged woman who preys on adolescent boys in between tending her garden and enjoying evenings of piquet and cigars with the elderly residents of a Sussex village. The narrator of “The Room in the Tower” is menaced in his bedroom by the bloodthirsty spirit of its former inhabitant, Julia Stone, “dressed in some close-clinging white garment, spotted and stained with mould” (Benson 1992: 10). Adrian draws attention to “And the Dead Spake –” (Visible and Invisible) in which the obsessive scientist, Sir James Horton, attempts to reanimate Mrs. Gabriel, his recently deceased housekeeper, by inserting a gramophone needle wired to a battery, into her brain. Set in 1914, the story shows Benson’s wider knowledge of Gothic fiction in modernizing Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein through a discussion of transplant surgery (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft), and revisiting the suburban horrors of Arthur Machen’s “The Inmost Light” (1894) (see Machen, Arthur). It also showcases his ability to utilize modern settings and preoccupations. Horton first tries his “brain-gramophone” on grey matter extracted from a dead soldier and transmits ghostly singing of “Tipperary,” but when Mrs. Gabriel is killed in a fall that fractures her skull, he seizes an opportunity to experiment at greater length. The housekeeper makes a posthumous confession of her husband’s murder before Horton’s blasphemous meddling with the afterlife is punished with electrocution by his own apparatus. Benson mixes his cocktail with cynical legerdemain, but the horror of the tale cannot wholly disguise the recurrent concern with eschatology that looms almost as large in his fiction as his misogyny does.

Benson’s spiritual allegiances are unclear. Arthur was a devout Anglican, Hugh converted to Catholicism, becoming a priest and prolific writer on religious matters, but “Fred” was, his biographer complains, “enigmatic, mysterious, a fleeting ungraspable presence who leaves the merest impression of himself” (Masters 1991: 2). Adrian argues persuasively that it is in the “spook stories” that Benson wrote most revealingly about his metaphysical anxieties, protected as he was by the reading public’s reluctance to see beyond the trappings of genre and read Gothic fiction as a mode of spiritual enquiry. In his view, Benson’s horror writing allowed “an escape into, as it were, reality” (Adrian, 1998: 48), making it possible for him to explore troubling ideas without sacrificing the debonair worldliness that was an essential aspect of his self-projection. In “The Man Who Went Too Far,” first published in 1904 and collected in The Room in the Tower, the artist Frank Halton worships the reborn Pan in order “to get all joy first-hand and unadulterated” (Benson 1992: 111), but the god’s meaning is more complex than is often the case in Edwardian fiction, being “an ingredient in a profound, if unclear, spiritual awakening...a longing that hovers, forever unattainable, beyond the limits of reality” (Freeman 2005: 30). The story ends with Halton’s death, seemingly trampled by the god’s hooves, yet his final encounter with Pan remains richly ambiguous.

SEE ALSO: Ghost Stories; James, Henry; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); Machen, Arthur; Misogyny; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Spiritualism; Vampire Fiction.

REFERENCES
Ambrose Bierce (1842–1913) was a soldier in the American Civil War and fought in every major battle of the Western Theater until Kennesaw Mountain (June 27, 1864), where he was severely wounded. Commended for bravery on several occasions, Bierce advanced from private to the rank of brevet major. He was proud of his military career, but the war’s mindless slaughter left him cynical toward noble causes and abstract virtues. Like nearly all Gothic writers, he was skeptical of progress, that cornerstone of the American national narrative (see American Gothic).

The Battle of Chickamauga (September 19–20, 1863) not only provided the setting and title of one of Bierce’s best stories but also seems to have formed an imaginative template for much of his fiction. Chickamauga was fought in a broken, wooded landscape where it was impossible to follow the unfolding events. A misperception – a report of a gap in the Union lines where there was none – led to a disastrous order that opened the door for charging rebel infantry. Many of Bierce’s stories are built on such events: misperceptions, choices based on false information, ironic coincidences leading to outrageous but inevitable results. And many of Bierce’s tales – like much Gothic literature and like the conclusion of Chickamauga – are set in a confused, wooded nightscape.

Bierce’s stories (he dismissed the novel as a “short story padded”) are conventionally divided into horror stories, war stories, and tall tales. The distinction seldom holds in practice, since his view of war was essentially Gothic, and sometimes ghosts appear in his war stories (e.g., “Three and One Are One” (1908)). Moreover, the hoax, a literary form he mastered in the American West, often infiltrates his other fiction.

Bierce’s “The Suitable Surroundings” (1891) is a metafictional piece about supernatural tales, and a good introduction to his Gothic techniques. In this story, an author insists, in an argument with an acquaintance, that even a sane, rational, skeptical person could be terrified by a ghostly tale read in the right environment, such as a reportedly haunted cabin, at midnight, in the woods. The bet accepted, the skeptic is taken to such a place, given a manuscript to read, and of course dies, frightened to death at the appointed hour. The death instrument, the ghostly tale, is in fact a suicide note, in which the author promises to return to haunt the reader. But, as is usual in Bierce’s work, conclusions follow not the characters’ plans but ironic coincidence. The author is not dead; neighbors have prevented his suicide attempt. The reader saw not the ghost of the author but the white face of a frightened lost boy peering in the window. In a final twist, the deadly manuscript, which has been only partially summarized for us, is burnt, so that we never learn the reason for the author’s decision to kill himself.

Bierce wrote dozens of workmanlike horror stories, manipulating standard elements such as the traveler stranded in a haunted house or a man alone with a corpse. He would worry such formulas repeatedly until transcending them with a superior tale, almost always involving a bold experiment in point of view. Most famously, in “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” (1891), the escape of the protagonist from execution is revealed to be an instant’s
fantasy in the brain of a dying man. The story has elements of the hoax, since the reader must overlook improbable details to accept that Peyton Farquhar has escaped the hangman’s noose. In “Chickamauga” (1891), Bierce follows the perceptions of a deaf child through the horror of that battle, which his innocence and his handicap render incomprehensible to him.

Other experiments offer multiple, usually contradictory, points of view. “The Moonlit Road” (1907) is narrated in turn by the son of a murdered woman, her husband, and the murdered woman herself, testifying through a medium. Though many Americans and Europeans in this era sought the wisdom of spirits through séances, the ghost here proves as unreliable as the other characters, and is even unaware that her husband was her murderer. The moonlit scene in which the ghost of the wife confronts her guilty husband, causing him to run mad, is another instance of the ironic misunderstandings that permeate Bierce’s fiction.

Similarly, in “The Death of Halpin Frayser” (1893), one of Bierce’s finest stories, two realistic, daylight narratives frame a dream sequence in which Frayser takes a “road less traveled” (words that may have lingered in the memory of Robert Frost) into an evil dark wood, where he encounters the murderous zombie-like corpse of his mother, who strangles him. The story is psychologically complex in an Oedipal way, filled with Bierce’s ironies and coincidences, and leaving the reader with alternative readings, supernatural and rational. Either Frayser is killed by his mother’s corpse or he is dreaming this while actually being strangled by a madman. There are objections to either reading, suggesting elements of hoax.

Bierce’s reputation for technical achievement rests on tales such as “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” “Chickamauga,” “The Moonlit Road,” and “The Death of Halpin Frayser.” However, an atypical Orientalist story, “An Inhabitant of Carcosa” (1887), may be his most influential. The posthumous narrator of this dreamy piece discovers that he is a ghost, and that the ruins around him are all that remain of his once-rich city. Names and other elements of the story are used by Robert W. Chambers in his “King in Yellow” cycle, and from Chambers they passed into the mythic world of H. P. Lovecraft (see lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips)).

The most notorious aspect of Bierce’s life and work is symbolized by the question mark following the date of his death. Recent scholars have suggested that his apparent disappearance into Mexico during its revolution was Bierce’s last hoax, and that he may have committed suicide (as he had several times forecast) somewhere in the American southwest.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips).

REFERENCE

FURTHER READING

Blackwood, Algernon
WILLIAM HUGHES

A prolific writer of short fiction as well as an adept novelist, Algernon Henry Blackwood (1869–1951) was shaped as an author by a pious childhood in Europe, by adventurous adolescent experience in Canada and the United States, and through persistent study of the transcendent mysticism of the East. He is a complex figure in both literary and philosophical senses, being simultaneously a residual Victorian, well-versed in the ghost-story and short-fiction traditions of that century, and a contemporary Georgian, knowingly and painstakingly engaged in transferring those
conventions to the new media of radio and television. A solitary traveler with practical wilderness and wartime experience, Blackwood was also an individual speculator in metaphysics and a participant in the collective institutions of twentieth-century occultism, being a sometime member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the associate of contemporary mystics such as Pyotr Demianovich Ouspenskii (1848–1947) and George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866–1949). Blackwood’s life and inclinations thus appear to embody both philosophical contradiction and the potential for conflicts of interest. That said, his writings integrate these seemingly divergent matters of the practical and the abstract, the East and the West, with both success and compulsion and, indeed, at times also with a degree of humor.

Algernon Blackwood was born into a Protestant family with historical connections to both Scotland and Ireland, and numbered among his ancestors a British vice admiral and a groom of the Privy Chamber. His father, Sir (Stevenson) Arthur Blackwood (1832–3), had been decorated for gallantry during the Crimean War of 1853–6 and was appointed Secretary of the Post Office in 1880. Arthur Blackwood, though something of a dandy in his youth, was converted to a sincere form of Christianity at some period during the 1850s and thereafter espoused evangelical and Reformation principles, as well as strict temperance in the consumption of alcoholic beverages. His five children – two sons and three daughters – were raised in this tradition, Algernon himself being sent to a number of English private schools and eventually a Moravian establishment in the Black Forest. Though the family was domiciled in the Kentish hinterland of London, Arthur Blackwood maintained substantial social, religious, and business connections with Europe and Canada, and it was these that contributed to Algernon’s aborted attempt to train in agriculture at Edinburgh University between 1888 and 1889, as a prelude to farming in Canada. Despite his not obtaining a degree, Blackwood emigrated to the Dominion in 1889, where he worked initially in insurance and then as a feature writer for the Methodist Magazine.

Blackwood’s eclectic interests are amply demonstrated in his autobiography, Episides Before Thirty (1923), where he records how he travelled to Canada with “in the order of their importance – a fiddle, the Bhagavad Gita, Shelley, Sartor Resartus, Berkeley’s Dialogues, Patanjali’s Yoga Aphorisms, de Quincey’s Confessions and – a unique ignorance of life” (Blackwood 1923: 6). Later, in the fifth chapter of Episodes Before Thirty, Blackwood was to admit that his evangelical upbringing had prevented him from reading a novel before 1886 (the first he was to read was Massollam, by Laurence Oliphant), and that he had covertly obtained works castigated by the Christian writers and by speakers favored by his father. These included such works as “Magic Black and White” by Dr. Franz Hartmann; The Perfect Way, by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland; Esoteric Buddhism, by A. P. Sinnett; Voice of the Silence, by Blavatsky; The Bhagavad Gita from the Upanishads; and Emma Hardinge Britten’s History of American Spiritualism” (Blackwood 1923: 31). Blackwood openly acknowledged his conversion to Buddhism in Canada, though it is clear that he was not a dogmatic follower of any one school of thought. His later interests, stimulated by extensive travel in the Canadian wilderness, were to embrace the mythology of the indigenous First Nation, and his return to England in 1899 was to recall to him both the rich fictional tradition of the nineteenth century and those demotic, ancient folktales that arguably enforce the only lingering link between the Pagan and Christian histories of Europe.

The author’s tenure at the Methodist Magazine was relatively short, and was succeeded by a financially unsuccessful partnership in the dairying industry near Toronto. With another partner, an expatriate Englishman, Blackwood – despite his family’s temperance – subsequently bought a Toronto hotel and bar, which failed within six months. Poverty drove the author and his latter associate to live on an Ontario island before the two travelled to New
York, where Blackwood became a reporter for the popular press. It was at this time, though, that Blackwood arguably developed a preference for the wilderness, sleeping rough and alone in the woods around Lake Ontario and, while there, musing upon spiritualism, reincarnation, and ultimately a form of pantheism in which nature, in its various forms, takes on a sentience aware of, and sometimes hostile to, intrusive humanity.

Blackwood’s return to Europe in 1899 was to expose him to the fashionable occultism of the English capital. Blackwood was by then a confirmed Theosophist, and his association with W. B. Yeats led to his initiation into the Golden Dawn in 1890. The Eastern influences upon Theosophy doubtless colored much of the occult speculation of the period, and Blackwood balanced these with studies in Hebrew arcana and the Western magical tradition. While becoming once more involved in business – this time in the nascent dried-milk industry – he maintained some elements of his adventurous life, travelling some 2400 miles down the Danube by canoe in 1900, and travelling to Egypt in 1912. Encouraged both by personal associates and by a publisher, Blackwood began to publish his short fiction from 1906. His writing career was disrupted somewhat by the Great War but continued, with considerable mutation of genre, subject matter, and medium, until the declining years of his life. Blackwood was to return to Europe during the 1914–18 war, in which he was engaged in espionage for the British in Switzerland. He travelled widely once more following the cessation of hostilities, and, though his writing career was centered upon British publishing houses, he embodied the trace of his sojourns in the Canadian wilderness, the Danube, Egypt, and, indeed, the Moravian school, in his short fictions particularly. A vigorous regime of hiking and skiing maintained the author’s health for many years, and the decline of his animal vitality came as late as 1951, the year of his death from cerebral thrombosis and arteriosclerosis.

Blackwood’s fiction, whether at short-story or novel length, reflects this extraordinary variety of personal experience and eclectic study. His first published collection, *The Empty House and Other Ghost Stories* (1906), is a virtual synecdoche of the author’s preceding years, its components being played out in specter-smitten private dwellings and lodging houses, in the southern English woodlands and upon a Canadian island, and in the urban hostility of New York. *The Listener* (1907) is likewise a collection in the ghost-story tradition: notable within this latter is “The Willows,” a wilderness narrative that draws directly upon Blackwood’s travels in the Danube.

The author’s third collection of short fictions, *John Silence* (1908), is a landmark work in many respects. Dr. John Silence, the “Physician Extraordinary” who links the volume’s short narratives, is arguably the perfection of a figure seen in nascent form in the inept Dr. Hesselius of Le Fanu’s *In A Glass Darkly* (1872) and with more definition in Stoker’s Professor Van Helsing. An adept of conventional medicine and common sense as well as an experienced occultist, Silence investigates uncanny intrusions by the psychic world into the mundane present using casework methods that recall the systematic practice of the Society for Psychical Research. The collection is initiated with an apparent domestic haunting in London, which is explained as a case of enhanced vision precipitated through drug ingestion, an occasion that ought to draw comparison with Le Fanu’s “Green Tea.” Other locations deployed in *John Silence* include a Nordic wilderness island and a French village. Blackwood’s titular physician-cum-psychic investigator is almost certainly an influential ancestor of William Hope Hodgson’s Carnacki the Ghost Finder, in the 1913 collection of the same name, and of Dion Fortune’s Dr. Taverner in the 1926 collection *The Secrets of Dr. Taverner*.

Blackwood continued to produce and publish – and, later, to adapt for radio also – short stories premised upon actual or apparent hauntings. He was, though, a writer concerned with the natural world, and, if his commitment thereto does not amount to proto-environmentalism, it is at least concerned with
the inevitable integration of the human into nature. If this is literal in some cases – “The Sea Fit,” for example, which charts the sudden and dramatic transformation of a raging sailor into a wave of the sea – in other cases it is more subtle. The forests and woodlands are here crucial, and, if works such as “The Man whom the Trees Loved” and “The Willows” have been exemplified in Gothic, attention might also be drawn to the Pagan content of “The Touch of Pan” and the Native American mythos explored in “The Wendigo.” Blackwood’s short stories are frequently anthologized, and this rather disturbs the contexts presented by their original presentation: the nature thematic of Pan’s Garden (1912), for example, deserves to be maintained in its original incarnation.

Blackwood’s longer fiction has received considerably less attention than his ghost stories, even though it is arguably as eclectic as these. It embraces supernatural narrative, speculative science, children’s fiction, and – surprisingly to some readers of his work – A Prisoner in Fairyland (1913), which he was to dramatize (with Violet Pearn, and featuring music by Sir Edward Elgar) two years later as The Starlight Express. His Dudley and Gilderoy: A Nonsense (1929) is, likewise, a comic work premised upon the adventures of a cat and a parrot. Many of his longer works deal with, if not the disruptive succession of adulthood upon childhood, then the loss of innocence, which may be represented through a child-like (or, in some cases, “natural”) state of mind. Among these, The Education of Uncle Paul (1909) is a study in lost childhood, intimately related to A Prisoner in Fairyland. Jimbo (1909), likewise, has implications for the adult perception of childhood. Also worthy of consideration under the same heading are The Extra Day (1915) and The Bright Messenger (1921).

Further full-length fiction by Blackwood includes The Human Chord (1910), a novel of aural experimentation, set in Wales. Again, this narrative draws upon lost childhood innocence, though its mystical promise is one of possible integration into the greater psychical universe. The Centaur (1911) is a novel of contemporary travel. Psychically, it depicts a fusion of natures in the spiritual tradition of classical Greece, a transformation inflected in this case by both a Celtic consciousness and the pervading presence of nature. The Wave: An Egyptian Aftermath (1916) is concerned with a more conventional vision of reincarnation, one depicted here against a contemporary love story. Julius LeVallon (1916) is, likewise, an exercise in reincarnation.

Blackwood is a writer more often cited in passing than studied at length in Gothic criticism, a surprising situation for an author so prolific and so timely in his work. The recent scholarship of Mike Ashley in particular has brought to a wider audience an author whose works were first given proper critical acknowledgment by way of the pioneering Gothic criticism of David Punter. The recent reprinting of many of Blackwood’s novels, and the ongoing popularity of his ghost stories, should ensure that the author receives due acknowledgment in a contemporary world that arguably shares many of his professed beliefs regarding the relationship between humanity and the natural environment.

SEE ALSO: Canadian Gothic; Environment; Ghost Stories; Hodgson, William Hope; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Psychical Investigation; Village Gothic.

REFERENCE

FURTHER READING
Blood

WILLIAM HUGHES

As Michel Foucault adroitly observed in *La Volonté de savoir* (1976; translated 1978), blood has historically functioned as “*a reality with a symbolic function*” (Foucault 1984: 147; original emphasis). It is a central device in the cultural deployment of power, for, in mobilizing the cohesiveness of the familial, racial, and nationalistic lineages and allegiances customarily transmitted through sanguine imagery, it literalizes the metaphorical through the physiological, making a loss of blood into a diminution of essence or a compromise in identity. As Foucault suggests, in the order of signs, blood is an exclusive as well as an inclusive signifier of identity, for one may “have a certain blood” or “be of the same blood,” and the *right* (rather than, as Foucault terms it, “the ability”) to shed blood imposes an apparently unquestionable ascendency over others of the same – or of different – bloods (Foucault 1984: 147). Those who may cause blood to flow, be they gods, potentates, or surgeons, hold the variant identities that fracture the species-unity of humanity pooled within their ensanguined hands. Nations as well as individuals, under this analogy, may hemorrhage, the circulation of the body politic abjecting those races, creeds, or individuals deemed dangerous to the perceived greater good. In the cause of better health, blood may be made to flow or substance may be lost – though this controlled loss may still be at the price of localized lassitude or exhaustion, a conventional physiological consequence of exsanguination.

If the sanguine fluid speaks of power, though, it simultaneously proclaims the inherent weakness of mortal humanity. Blood is, by its very nature, a vulnerable – if not a fragile – fluid, and this vulnerability is increased as it exits the integrity of the individual circulation by way of sexual reproduction, wounds and lesions, or interventional medical practice. As Foucault parenthetically observes, blood is “easily spilled, subject to drying up, too readily mixed, capable of being quickly corrupted” (Foucault 1984: 147). All of these alterations in the vitality or consistency of blood convey corresponding changes in the individual, racial, or nationalistic body. Spilled or lost blood weakens; desiccated blood proclaims extinction; mixed blood undermines purity and distinct identity; corrupted blood emblematizes, disturbingly, how another sanguine-encoded identity might function as a poison within the circulation of a nation, just as alcohol or narcotics subtly undermine the efficiency of the individual body. These are the codifications of eugenics and ultimately of racism, also, and, if Foucault was sufficiently confident to proclaim in the mid-1970s that such things were by then germane only to an eclipsed “society of blood,” the “society of ‘sex’” that had supposedly succeeded it failed to dissipate totally the potency of the blood metaphor.

This continuation of the puissance of blood as an enduring emblem of identity and power is maintained in part by contemporary culture’s obsession with the sexuality of earlier society. Here, the assumptions of cultural criticism run parallel to those of psychoanalysis, given that both maintain that, when blood is spoken about in fictional and nonfictional discourse, some other significant substance is being obliquely evoked. Canons of taste suggest that one cannot talk openly about semen in particular other than through the regulated linguistic activity associated with restrictive discourses such as medicine or theology. Thus, in consciously regulated speech, blood becomes a permissible, public alternative to semen: to be of the same familial blood means to be generated through genetically identical sperm, and racial “bloods” – Anglo-Saxon Blood, Nordic Blood – are nothing more than an expression of exogamy.
This apparent coyness, though, has its parallel in the subconscious, where blood is also a surrogate for seminal fluid, and blood-letting (however achieved) for the sexual act (Jones 1931: 119). With creative writing conventionally accorded a subversive status analogous to the unguarded expressions associated with dreams and parapraxes, narratives of blood function psychoanalytically as exposures of repressed sexuality. In the Gothic, inevitably, such tantalizing exposures are frequently associated with occult vampirism, though the perverse pleasures a mortal may experience by participating in sadomasochistic blood-play, murder, or cannibalism have become increasingly apparent in recent fiction (Brite 1996: 42, 62–3, 158–9). If the allure of blood stylishly shed, protractedly drawn, or lovingly consumed is perversely erotic – the vampire in fiction often behaving in a seductive manner that recalls the incubus and succubus (Jones 1931: 125) – then it is forbidden also, being associated as it is with extramarital sexuality and, in some cases, incest too (Jones 1931: 127).

The religious monopoly over the meanings associated with blood that preceded modernity’s medicalization of the sanguine fluid reserved that substance for divinity: the Old Testament prohibition of the consumption of blood (Leviticus 7, 26–7), and its functional presence in menstruation, rendered it both awesomely mystical and yet fearful too. To touch blood is somehow to become – for a time at least – imbued with the qualities of that substance, and to be rendered, in consequence, temporarily as untouchable and as dangerous as the sanguine fluid itself (see Leviticus 15, 24). As Freud intimated throughout Totem and Taboo (1913) in particular, those who make contact with the forbidden contract its energies also, and become imbued with the horror both of the substance itself and of the act of discharging it. To become taboo as a consequence of such contact is to be simultaneously sacred and unclean, to be both powerful and yet subject to power (Freud 1991: 71, 75). The being that loses blood, whether it be a menstruating woman or a sacrificial animal, is likewise also a part of the blood-determined community, and yet liable to be excluded from it because of the importance of its sanguine status (Freud 1991: 76, 197). The issue of blood, like its presence within the body, may exclude the individual from her own community, and its taboo nature may likewise render a natural cycle conventionally unclean, even to those who involuntarily but necessarily participate in its mysteries.

Gothic is a form of writing that subverts repression in both the cultural and psychoanalytical senses of that term. Within the genre, therefore, representations of blood, whether literal or metaphorical, arguably embody both the cultural and the psychoanalytical functions of the fluid, and in doing so express the complexity of sanguine relations. Such relations are simultaneously sacred and secular, literal and metaphorical, bound up with both the transgressor and the physical or cultural entity whose bloody integrity is compromised. On the one hand, the genre has been preoccupied from its earliest days with lineages and legitimacy, blood dependencies whose centrality is only matched in Gothic by the genre’s abiding concern with incest – itself a mingling of close bloods that may debilitate both family and species. The religiously taboo nature of incest, though, combines with legalistic prohibition, and so punishment in the form of psychological guilt, self-immolation, or external persecution will surely follow the transgressor, given the frequently conservative nature of Gothic morality. Such is the fate of Lewis’ Ambrosio in The Monk (1796), and it is that of Byron’s Manfred (1816–17). The conscious symbolisms of blood are, likewise, heavily stressed, particularly in Victorian Gothic. If Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) is perhaps the most intensive – and obvious – example of this inscription of racial qualities into domestic and invading bloods, it is equally a novel that embodies the sacerdotal, physiological, and legalistic associations of the fluid. If the promiscuous consumption of blood makes the Victorian vampire both religiously taboo and culturally undesirable, then the successor of that being in the
twentieth- and twenty-first centuries is surely the homosexual male, occult or otherwise, whose erotic preference for semen is liable to be linked to blood in the age of AIDS, and whose presence may still be regarded as dangerous to the bodies and morals of his culture. Despite Foucault’s assertions to the contrary, blood continues to remain instrumental in both the mechanisms of power and the deployment of individual and cultural identity.

SEE ALSO: Abjection; Incest; Medicine and the Gothic; Psychoanalysis; Queer Gothic; Stoker, Bram; Vampire Fiction.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Bluebooks

FRANZ J. POTTER

One of the most disreputable if not intriguing offsprings of the Gothic novel is the bluebook.

Though considered by some critics to be not only low-quality Gothic fiction but also a corrupted sideshow of sensational excesses and horrific content, the Gothic bluebook (occasionally referred to as “chapbook” or “shilling shocker”) thrived for nearly twenty-five years at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Publishers often plagiarized or abridged well-known Gothic novels into simple, short tales of terror and sold them at a trilling price. The success of these bluebooks not only changed the genre but also gave rise to a new community of entrepreneurs and consumers.

Gothic bluebooks were a series of small pamphlets, distinguished by their blue covers, that were published to satisfy the demand for sensational fiction that followed the success of Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). The popularity of these short pamphlets was enormous: they were devoured by readers, primarily those of the working class, eager to acquire entertaining and moralistic tales of terror. Gothic novels, after all, were quite expensive: well beyond the earnings of the average worker.

As interest in the Gothic dramatically increased throughout the 1790s, an expanding number of publishers were ready to supply Gothic fiction to a steadily growing readership in a variety of forms. In the eighteenth century, chapbook sellers hawked their wares on street corners, but by the nineteenth century these vendors had been replaced by circulating libraries that lent books and pamphlets at rates as low as a penny a volume. The Gothic bluebook trade – principally a secondary market for fiction specializing not only in original work but also in redactions – arose from this street literature and from cheap ballad sheets and chapbooks. The pamphlet trade comprised several large publishing houses in London including Dean & Munday, Ann Lemoine, and Thomas Tegg. Authors such as Isaac Crokenden and Sarah Wilkinson contributed short tales of terror to any publisher willing to pay. The appeal of these tales was in part a result of their simple plots and a quick succession of terror and horror (see TERROR). It was that sort of appeal that made bluebooks a viable...
commodity in the circulating library and attracted readers, even those who had the means to procure full-length novels. In part, the appeal of bluebooks was their ability to extract the most horrific parts from the terrific and make them even more horrifying.

The most obvious source for plundering the Gothic was the novel itself. There, terror and horror built up slowly through multiple volumes as authors harvested the rich and plentiful terrifying motifs developed in the Gothic of Matthew Lewis and Ann Radcliffe (see Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann). There were numerous plagiarisms or abridgements of popular Gothic novels, including Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto, Sophia Lee’s The Recess (1783–5), Clara Reeve’s The Old English Baron (1778), and Ann Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794). One of the most popular targets of bluebooks was certainly Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796), which was adapted as Father Innocent, Abbot of the Capuchins; or the Crimes of Cloisters (1803), Almagro & Claude; or Monastic Murder; Exemplified in the Dreadful Doom of an Unfortunate Nun (1803), Raymond & Agnes; or, the Bleeding Nun of the Castle of Lindenberg (1820), and The Castle of Lindenberg; or, the History of Raymond and Agnes (1820).

While canonical novels proved to be rich in subplots and inset tales, there were likewise multiple redactions of popular Gothic novels as well. For example, Francis Lathom’s The Midnight Bell (1794) was adapted as The Midnight Bell, or the Abbey of St. Francis (1802) and Sarah Wilkinson’s The Fugitive Countess; or, The Convent of St. Ursula (1807) appeared a year later as The Convent of St. Ursula; or, Incidents at Ottagro (1808), redacted by herself. In the case of the anonymous Eastern Turret; or, Orphan of Navona (1803), the tale was drawn from a subplot of Eliza Parsons’ The Castle of Wolfenbach (1793) in which the hero, Ferdinand Ruperti, seeks his true identity. Ferdinand, whose Gothic forerunners include the peasant orphans Edmund in Clara Reeve’s The Old English Baron and Alleyn in Ann Radcliffe’s The Castle of Athlin and Dunbayne (1789), is hidden from the world in the Castle of Navona. In his midnight wanderings he discovers a living specter inhabiting the eastern turret and, like most Gothic heroes, is required to wait until midnight to hear her unhappy account. However, unlike the countess of Wolfenbach, the living specter Correlia is immediately revealed as Ferdinand’s mother. The abrupt shift in plot signals a hasty resolution. Oswald, the strange and consequently evil custodian of Ferdinand, confesses to the assassination of his own brother and summarily dies. The act of utterance turns out to be the hero’s means of honorable retribution.

As in the majority of bluebooks, there are no inexplicable mysteries in The Eastern Turret. The action, though underdeveloped, is complete, and, once the evil has been discovered, justice is immediate. The plot follows a straightforward chronological sequence with the moral of righteous diligence reinforced in the closing lines. The Eastern Turret is a single episode of terror confined to the solitary location of the castle. It is easy to see the potential that the tales of terror, found in many subplots of Gothic novels, held for the authors of bluebooks.

Gothic novels, however, were not the only source for bluebooks. Historical stories, plays, operas, and melodramas were all skillfully transformed into bluebooks as well, including The Wife of Two Husbands, Translated from the French Drama and Formed into an Interesting Story (1804), which claimed to be a translation from the French by René-Charles Guilbert though it was actually a redaction of the English translation of “The Wife of Two Husbands; A Musical Drama” (1803) by James Cobb; Inkle and Yarico; or, Love in a Cave (1805), a redaction of the opera of the same name by George Colman the younger; The Travellers; or, Prince of China (1806), a redaction of the opera The Travellers (1806) by Domenico Corri with a libretto by Andrew Cherry; The Water Spectre; or, An Bratach, founded on Charles Dibdin’s popular melodrama, as performed at the Aquatic Theatre, Sadler’s Wells (1805); and The Ruffian Boy; or,
the Castle of Waldemar (1820), founded on the popular melodrama and taken from Mrs. Opie. Matthew Lewis’ The Castle Spectre (performed in 1797 and published in 1798), in particular, demonstrates the adaptability of a drama into a short tale of terror. Sarah Wilkinson’s clever adaptation The Castle Spectre: An Ancient Barontial Romance (1820) expands the dramatic effects of the stage by removing the architectural limitations of the theatrical Conway Castle and replacing that space with concealed chambers and a haunted wing. The drama operates by emphasizing well-known Gothic conventions and by adding the comic to the horrific. In the drama, the characters of Motley the Fool and Father Philip, for instance, not only alleviate the horrific through hyperbole but also underline the viewer’s expectations regarding the machinations of Gothic motifs. For Wilkinson, however, such elements threatened the spectacle of supernatural horror by undermining the readers’ expectations. In transforming those possibilities from a drama to “an interesting story,” Wilkinson eradicated the potential for comedy in supernatural horror, and consequently the emotional opposition to the form, by creating a reputable narrative that is “founded on fact” rather than fancy.

Likewise, domestic and sentimental novels such as Charlotte Smith’s The Old Manor House (1792) were repackaged as tales of terror. Smith’s novel, which contains few Gothic motifs and characterizations, was redacted in 1810 as Rayland Hall; or, The Remarkable Adventures of Orlando Summerville. In it, the decorous trappings of Rayland Hall, home of Grace Rayland, have been removed and the secret enemies that line the decaying halls have been stripped away; what remains is the singular story of Orlando and his lover, now renamed Julianna.

Another rich literary vein tapped by bluebook authors was historical novels. The success of Walter Scott’s Waverley Novels, especially after 1814, resulted in a number of bluebooks that claimed to be “founded on facts,” “founded on historical facts,” “a historical tale,” “a historical romance,” or “an affecting narrative from Walter Scott.” By 1837 there had been at least six bluebook adaptations of Scott’s work, including The Pirate, or, The Sisters of Burgh Westra (1820), and Waverley; or, The Castle of Mac Iver: A Highland Tale, of Sixty Years Since (1821), and The Astrologer; or, The Prediction of Guy Mannering (1836), three from the pen of Sarah Wilkinson. However, the majority of the historical tales or stories that it was claimed were founded on facts were neither historical nor factual, though historical characters tended to appear in a historical context.

The Gothic bluebook’s popularity peaked in 1810 and steadily declined after that point. This sudden shift was undoubtedly the result of two new inventions that completely changed the publishing trade and had a lasting impact on the Gothic bluebook industry. During the Napoleonic wars, publishers had been weighed down by the cost and unpredictability of the paper supply. The cost of books increased with paper cost, which ran as high as thirty-four shillings a ream. By 1822, however, the cost of paper had significantly decreased and the steam-powered printing press aided the demand for inexpensive reading material. The result was a wave of cheap publications, mainly periodicals, that signaled the end of the Gothic bluebook industry. While the decline of the bluebook could be seen as symptomatic of the waning interest in the Gothic, the mechanization of the publishing industry – which facilitated the acceleration of magazines, serial stories, and newspapers – was principally the factor that caused the failure of the bluebook market. Many bluebook publishers recognized, however, that the cheaper periodicals as well as annuals were drawing Gothic bluebook readers away. Consequently, bluebook publishers took calculated steps to retrain their readership by launching periodicals that contained Gothic tales; for example, Dean & Munday turned their attentions to The Ladies’ Monthly Museum (1798–1832) and John Arliss to Arliss’ Pocket Magazine (1818–33).

There is no doubt that the Gothic bluebook industry supplied redactions or adaptations of popular novels in the hundreds by simply exploiting the well-known motifs and
characterizations of the genre. This secondary market for Gothic fiction, which specialized in originals and redactions, existed independently of the larger Gothic novel industry (publishers such as J. F. Hughes and Minerva Press primarily produced novels) and street literature (generally connected with John Pitts and Catnach). Publishers in this unique market provided readers with tales that reflected modern literary taste and, when interest turned to another field, the industry immediately adapted.

SEE ALSO: Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann; Terror.

FURTHER READING

**Braddon, Mary Elizabeth**

BENJAMIN F. FISHER

Although Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835–1915) is far better known for her Sensation novels (see *sensation fiction*), her supernatural and weird fiction has gained greater attention since the 1970s, despite the fact that an uneventfulness in quality marks her supernatural fiction, with that in short-story form being the superior. Like Poe (see *poe, edgar allan*) Braddon’s finest efforts in supernatural fiction are short stories and novellas, as if brevity makes the otherworldly more convincing. Braddon experimented with varied themes in these works, often reminding readers of antecedent Gothic tradition. “The Dreaded Guest” (*Belgravia Christmas Annual*, 1871) and “The True Story of Don Juan” (*Belgravia Christmas Annual*, 1869) evoke themes of premature burial and, in the former, a supposedly dead man’s ironic return to life. Braddon mutes gruesome details of burial alive, avoiding extended melodramatics. These stories neatly balance the supernatural or seeming supernatural with elements of utter reality. The latter story may allude to the Don Juan legend as filtered through Byron’s fashioning of that lore, and both stories may also acknowledge Braddon’s gratitude to Bulwer Lytton’s advice and fiction (see *bulwer lytton, edward*).

These and other stories appeared for the Christmas trade, several in the *Mistletoe Bough*, a Christmas annual Braddon edited from 1878 until 1892, and to which she contributed till 1887. Dickens (see *dickens, charles*) is usually credited with inventing the Christmas story, which, some think, has to end in inevitably pleasant circumstances. More often, such fiction — that appeared as parts or the entirety of special Christmas numbers in periodicals or publishers’ Christmas books — depicted emotional trauma, sexual predation, murder, often supernaturalism, without happy endings. Unlike the Dickensian manipulation of supernaturalism — wherein what initially appears to characters within the story, as well as to readers, as supernaturalism, may prove ultimately to be no supernaturalism at all — Braddon’s ghostly stories contain more actual supernatural causes linked with unpleasant rather than pleasant situations. Braddon’s spectral visitants usually seek either to right wrongs from the past or to wreak revenge upon those whose criminal acts created tragedy or whose thoughtlessness in noncriminal situations also brought about tragedy, which calls forth the ghost. Ghostly revelations often result in no bright future for the protagonist. Therefore, the overall atmosphere of gloom in the story enhances and strengthens thematic unity.

“The Island of Old Faces” (*Mistletoe Bough*, 1892) and “The Cold Embrace” (*Welcome Guest*, 1860) offer representative texts. Hal, narrator in the former, becomes ill from his relentless work for wealth. While on a resuscitating voyage he visits an island, imagines that he meets a friend, Lionel, after long separation, also dreams of his early betrothal, blighted when his beloved Lucy dies from tuberculosis, is saddened when Lionel tells him that he must
return to the world instead of remaining on the idyllic island, and later realizes that the island visit was actually a fantasy experienced during a severe illness. “The Cold Embrace” centers on visitations by Gertrude, a jilted girl, to her faithless lover. His false love has driven her to suicide, but her cold arms encircle him at a masked ball in Paris, causing him to dance until a fatal hemorrhage kills him. The fatal masked-ball motif is reminiscent of that in several Poe tales, for example, “The Masque of the Red Death” (1842) or, with slight variations, “William Wilson” (1839), in which appearance versus reality in the backdrops coalesces deftly with the uncertainties and fragility in human emotions and ensuing acts. Another promise made by the living but fulfilled by the dead is found in “Eveline’s Visitant: A Ghost Story” (Belgravia, 1867). There, Eve-line’s first lover, killed in a duel by the man she marries, returns as a vengeful ghost. Akin to Dr. Prestwich’s fantasies in “The Dreaded Guest,” the narrator’s fantasies in “The Cold Embrace” alternate pleasant with unpleasant imaginings, the latter becoming the main feature. What amount to curses being leveled at hapless characters give these stories a tinge of earlier Gothicism, notably that voiced by Frankenstein’s Creature (see shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft). “The Mystery at Fernwood” (Temple Bar, 1861), with its imprisoned madman, who, when released, turns murderer, recalls the madwoman Bertha Rochester in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847). As in a Radcliffe novel, Braddon’s haunter proves to be all too human (see radcliffe, Ann).

In “Good Lady Ducayne” (Pall Mall Magazine, 1893) Braddon’s downplaying of gruesomely sensational details frequently enlivening a vampire’s victimizing his or her hapless prey, all the while keeping the medical underpinnings of the plot firmly before the reader, produced a tale in which medical issues plus the wealthy benefactor who may simultaneously be a monster, bears resemblances to the better known Count Dracula, published not long afterward (see stoker, Bram; vampire fiction). Both works also incorporate another motif current during the 1890s, that of the trusted traitor, Judas Iscariot. Another precur-sor to Dracula, in which the motif of the treacherous apostle is important, “A Kiss of Judas,” by X.L. (Julian Osgood Field), appeared, too, in the Pall Mall Magazine (1893), the time frame (“A Kiss of Judas” in July, and “Good Lady Ducayne” in December) allowing perhaps for Braddon’s consideration of similar material. These were, of course, not the only vampire fictions in the 1890s that preceded publication of Dracula, and all of these rank with many other pieces, in prose and verse, that kept vampire lore popular during the nineteenth century and beyond.

Following trends already established in ghostly fiction, Braddon’s Gothic fiction stands as a barometer to popular reading tastes in much of her career. Nevertheless, her supernatural short stories embody greater literary art than those of many other purveyors of ghostly tales.

SEE ALSO: Bulwer Lytton, Edward; Dickens, Charles; Ghost Stories; Poe, Edgar Allan; Radcliffe, Ann; Sensation Fiction; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Stoker, Bram; Vampire Fiction.

FURTHER READING

Brite, Poppy Z.
JAMES CAMPBELL

With the publication of Lost Souls (1992), Poppy Z. Brite (1967–) achieved instant
notoriety as one of Gothic’s enfants terribles. Accused of privileging style over substance (Joshi 2004: 208), Brite’s earliest works, including Lost Souls, Drawing Blood (1993), and the short story collection Swamp Foetus (published in the United States as Wormwood, 1994), are heavily indebted to both the Gothic and Goth subcultures (see goth). Jason K. Friedman described Brite’s early works as the products of a “postmodern southern goth” mode of writing (2007: 203). Like Goth performativity, this mode playfully parodies, while also participating in, the now ubiquitous Southern Gothic (see southern gothic). Also central to Brite’s “minoritarian Gothic” is a transgendered subjectivity (Holmes 2007: 70). Born Melissa Ann Brite, the author became Poppy Z. Brite in 1985 before relinquishing the pseudonym upon becoming Billy Martin in 2011. As detailed in the autobiographical essay “Enough Rope” (1998), Brite self-identifies as a queer male, hence the abundance of queer male characters and the marginalization of women throughout his work. While respecting Brite’s stated preference to be referred to with male pronouns, it should be noted that his work was closely informed by his gender dysphoria and his vacillation between the categories of “male” and “female,” much like “Dr. Brite,” the authorial alter-ego that first appeared in Self Made Man (published in the United States as Are You Loathsome Tonight?, 1998), who changes gender with each new story s/he appears in.

Though closely associated with the Goth subculture (Siegel 2005: 72), Brite’s position is best described as that of an interested observer. In Lost Souls, the narrator’s tone is sympathetic, even seductive, causing the novel’s depictions of sex and violence to recall the tagline to the film The Lost Boys (Joel Schumacher, 1987): “It’s fun to be a vampire.” “Death is easy,” “Death is dark, death is sweet,” chant Brite’s vampires (1994: 47) – a sentiment appealing to “Deathers: kids who loved the night, loved the bands whose music spoke of dark beauty and fragile mortality” (307), and who share the vampires’ consumerist appetites if not their thirst for blood (see vampire fiction). But, as Caitlin R. Kiernan has noted, “vampires are, by definition, serial killers” (in Brite 1999: 177), and Brite does not shy away from depicting the vampires as monstrous, amoral predators, or from punishing head vampire Zillah for his “sins” (343). Death, in Brite’s premillennial Goth fiction, more often belies the vampires’ seductive consumer myths, being hard, ugly, painful, and protracted for many of his characters, especially for those in Exquisite Corpse (1996) and The Crow: The Lazarus Heart (1998). But Brite’s association with the “splatterpunk” movement is a reminder that each grisly spectacle is also a product for consumption. These texts may repel the squeamish, but they also fascinate those interested in the aestheticization of violence.

This aspect of Brite’s work finds its ultimate expression, and figurehead, in Exquisite Corpse. The corpse in question belongs to Tran, a young man whose Vietnamese name coincidentally, but meaningfully, “suggest[s] movement (transmission, transpose) and the crossing of boundaries (transcontinental, tranquilize, transvestite)” (Brite 2008: 39). It is Tran’s liminal qualities – his homelessness, his cross-dressing, and his being caught between Vietnamese and American identities, as Tran Vinh and “Vincent Tran” – that make him “the ideal victim” (184), an indeterminate being whose fate is, at every turn, determined by others. Prior to his death, Tran loses himself in the urban labyrinth that is the city’s decadent French Quarter, where “for each point of illumination there were ten impassive brick facades, ten rusty gates that hung ajar on blackness” (221). Next to the French Quarter of Lost Souls and Drawing Blood – a Disneyland for Deathers, a playground for the performance of Goth identity – the hollowed-out French Quarter of Exquisite Corpse and The Lazarus Heart substitutes the guiding spirit of voodoo priestess Marie Laveau (1994: 310–11), the familiar enchantment of “old black magic” for the “blankness” of a vampiric void, a Nietzschean abyss (see abyss, the) shown to annihilate selfhood (Brite 2008: 223). While The Value of X (2002), set in the early 1990s, would
confirm Brite’s association of the French Quarter with adolescence, sexual awakenings, and immaturity, his decision to turn away from the district suggests a desire to be seen to have matured, to have become a different sort of writer.

By participating in popular myths regarding the city’s permissive attitudes toward sexuality, Brite’s work can be located in a similarly permissive New Orleans Gothic literary tradition, beginning with Baron Ludwig von Reizenstein’s *Die Geheimnisse von New Orleans* (1854–5) and later made popular by Anne Rice (see rice, anne). Rice’s vampires, Louis and Lestat, suggest the template for the teacher-disciple relationship between Jay and Andrew Compton, Tran’s killers in *Exquisite Corpse*, and are echoed in the relationship between a different Louis and the unnamed narrator of Brite’s “His Mouth Will Taste of Wormwood” (collected in *Swamp Foetus*). Both couples have a taste for transgression that proves their undoing. But, of the couples who survive Brite’s first two novels—Steve and Ghost in *Lost Souls*, Trevor and Zach in *Drawing Blood*—a different pattern emerges, and, by erasing any lingering traces of taboo (see taboo), they foreshadow the arrival of John Rickey and Gary “G-man” Stubbs in *The Value of X*. In each pairing, one partner evinces signs of emotional instability (Steve, Trevor, Rickey) while the other (Ghost, Zach, G-man) serves as a counterbalance, someone with whom to share, and in time overcome the burden of trauma. That such healing relationships are absent from *Exquisite Corpse* and *The Lazarus Heart* underscores their tendency toward nihilism—though the latter does reunite its dead lovers after a period of prolonged suffering (Brite 1998: 209), marking the beginning of Brite’s relentless drive toward the “happy ending,” however problematic this may later prove.

Writing, in *The Devil You Know* (2003), that the city’s Gothic aspect has had more than sufficient exposure (2005b: 12–14), Brite abandons the tourist gaze of the outsider looking in at the seductive, commoditized surface overlaying the French Quarter’s “heart of darkness” to assume a native’s insight into “the true heart of New Orleans” (137), which Brite now locates in working-class communities such as the Lower Ninth Ward. With the shift from a Goth to a New Orleanian subjectivity, it is—according to a sentiment first expressed in John Kennedy Toole’s seminal New Orleans novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980) and reiterated by Brite (2004: 190) – “outside of the city limits [that] the heart of darkness, the true wasteland begins” (Toole 2006: 11). Thus, in *The Value of X*, the threat of desubjectification is relocated to New York, and, while no longer relying on “vampires and serial killers to spice things up” (Brite 2005b: 12), it is only a short leap from these to the sexual predators and madmen who stalk Chef John Rickey here and in *Liquor* (2004) and *Prime* (2005). In addition, Chef Cooper Stark’s attempt to seduce the naïve Rickey, by telling him he is “far too young to plight [his] troth to one person” (Brite 2002: 131), highlights the “Liquor” series’ idealization of monogamy through its evocation of courtly romance, romanticizing New Orleans’ European heritage and its medieval revivalism or “white Gothic”.

Trevor Holmes considers Brite’s rock biography *Courtney Love: The Real Story* (1997) to be the author’s clearest attempt to distance himself from the Goth subculture, and notes how the book simultaneously incorporates elements of the female Gothic (see female gothic). “Gothicisation happens at the expense of Goth subculture” (Holmes 2007: 71), so that, even while departing from the latter, Brite can still be seen to exploit Gothic tropes and conventions in his post-Goth, post-millennial “foodie fiction.” Thus, the building that will house Rickey’s restaurant in *Liquor* is initially described with close reference to Stephen King’s *The Shining* (1977) (see king, stephen), a work that had previously informed Brite’s *Drawing Blood* (Brite 2004: 136). Like the hotel in King’s novel, the building was once the site of a murder that threatens to repeat itself during the novel’s climax (144). No sooner is the Gothic invoked, however, than Brite attempts to dispel it, by subsequently
likening the building to “the haunted mansion on Scooby-Doo,” an innocuous children’s cartoon (140). And, when a local journalist later refashions Liquor’s sensational subplot into a Southern Gothic narrative (“Dark Kitchen [...] the Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil of the restaurant world”), Rickey’s dismissal of the title seems like an attempt to distance not only the kitchen but this entire new phase of fiction from what has gone before (Brite 2005a: 20–1).

Nevertheless, this idea of a history of violence that continues to haunt the present, so prevalent in Liquor (2004: 193–4), proves especially strong in Soul Kitchen (2006), Brite’s last full novel to date. It begins with the arrest of Chef Milford Goodman, framed for the murder of his employer by the true culprit, local businessman Clancy Fairbairn, whose wealth and social status allow him to operate outside the law. In this, the book closely echoes the plot of William Godwin’s Caleb Williams (1794) (see godwin, william). Above all, however, the book is predicated on New Orleans’ class and racial tensions, showing the rich, white representative of an “old” New Orleans resistant to social change ruining the promising career of a working-class African American chef. Gothic’s archetypal villainous aristocrat, Fairbairn, also plays the role during Mardi Gras of Comus, a monstrous harbinger of chaos and social anarchy (Brite 2006b: 25–7). His persecution of Goodman, following the latter’s release from prison and return to work, reaches boiling point in the novel’s climax, when Goodman snaps and pours a pot of molten gumbo over his tormentor (242). Exposing Fairbairn to the contents of this cultural melting pot reveals the raw ugliness and hypocrisy of racism simmering beneath the surface of contemporary New Orleans (see race). By killing Goodman, Fairbairn brings the novel to a grisly climax (243). Its humorous epilogue cannot dispel the lingering sense of injustice that this turn of events and Fairbairn’s continued evasion of the law create, and there remains the troubling possibility that Fairbairn will return to torment Rickey for testifying against him (252).

In his dedication to Soul Kitchen, Brite notes that the novel was completed in 2005, the night before Hurricane Katrina, one of the worst natural disasters in America’s history, which devastated New Orleans. When the subsequent failure of its federal levees saw the city lapse into a Hobbesian state of nature, anthologies in which the city’s resident writers condemned the incompetence of those in charge, or sought to make a memento mori of events, were abundant. Brite, opting for the latter approach, entitled a collection of short stories written prior to the disaster Antediluvian Tales (2007), acknowledging that this and other recent work would now be conditioned by its historicity, the Lower Ninth Ward having been erased from the map. Rather than face this reality, the novella D*U*C*K (2006), set in a “slightly alternate fictional universe” to the other “Liquor” texts (2006a: 9), allowed the hurricane to bypass the city, preserving Brite’s characters in a state of grace (132). “For those of us who lived and continue to live in New Orleans, these events,” Brite laments, “will continue to haunt us and change our lives forever” (9). Still residing in New Orleans, Brite retired from fiction writing in 2007, but as Billy Martin continues to maintain a significant online presence through his internet journal “Dispatches from Tanganyika.”

SEE ALSO: Abyss, The; Female Gothic; Godwin, William; Goth; King, Stephen; Race; Rice, Anne; Southern Gothic; Taboo; Vampire Fiction.

REFERENCES

Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810) has been characterized not only as the inventor of the American Gothic (Kafer 2004: xi) but also as the father of the American Romance novel (Levine 1989: 29) and America's first professional writer (Verhoeven 1992; 203) (see American Gothic). Brown further has been hailed as a pioneering American feminist (Verhoeven 1992: 203), historian, and political theorist (Carpenter 1981: 221). Today, he is remembered primarily for his four Gothic novels, Wieland; or The Transformation. An American Tale (1798); Ormond; or The Secret Witness (1799); Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793 (part I 1799, part II 1800); and Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker (1799), in which he adapted to his post-Revolutionary American setting conventions of the European Gothic novel associated with Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis (see European Gothic). Brown's literary output, however, also included an important discussion of women's rights and marriage, Alcuin: A Dialogue (1798); two epistolary sentimental novels, Clara Howard (1801) and Jane Talbot (1801); an unfinished Gothic novel, Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist (1803–1805); and another unfinished novel, Memoirs of Stephen Calvert (1799–1800), combining elements of the romance and sentimental novel. As editor of and a primary contributor to the Monthly Magazine and American Review (1799–1800), The Literary Magazine and American Register (1803–1806), and The American Register and General Repository of History, Politics, and Science (1807–9), as well as a frequent contributor to other magazines of the day, Brown published prolifically on many topics and also authored several important political pamphlets, including one arguing for acquisition of the Louisiana Territory. During the last years of his life, Brown translated and annotated a geographical study of the United States by French author Comte de Volney and was at work on a geographical study titled System of General Geography; Containing a Topological, Statistical, and Descriptive Survey of the Earth. He is credited with having influenced authors including James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

What the writings of Charles Brockden Brown offer is a snapshot of a man growing up and attempting to earn a living by his pen in the midst of one of the most tumultuous periods in American history. Brown was born into a Quaker family in Philadelphia on January
17, 1771. Although the American Revolution was still five years away, Philadelphia – the political and intellectual center of the thirteen original American colonies (and subsequently the first capitol of the newly formed country) – was already a hotbed of political agitation and a place that would become increasingly uncomfortable for pacifist Quakers. Indeed, in what Kafer figures as a foundational moment for Brown’s development, Brown’s father Elijah, who as a result of his Quaker religious principles refused to bear arms or to take a patriotic oath of allegiance, was arrested in September of 1777 and held for eight months in Virginia with other individuals considered seditious (2004: 34).

It appears that Brown’s family intended him to pursue a career as a lawyer and at the age of sixteen, in 1787 – the same year the Federal Convention met in Philadelphia to draft the American Constitution – he entered the Philadelphia law office of a non-Quaker, Alexander Wilcocks. Even while working under Wilcocks, Brown was already pursuing literary interests, noting in his journals ideas for epic poems taking as their foci the discovery of America and the conquests of Mexico and Peru and composing imitations of the Book of Psalms, the Book of Job, and a cycle of poems published in 1760 referred to as the Ossian poems (Elliott 1981: 214). Brown’s first literary works, a series of sketches called “The Rhapsodist” modeled after the works of Rousseau and exploring the temperament of the “visionary writer,” were published on the eve of the French Revolution in 1789, when he was eighteen. He gave up his formal study of the law several years later and in his novel Ormond caustically characterizes the law as a “tissue made up of the shreds and remnants of barbarous antiquity, polluted with the rust of ages, and patched by the stupidity of modern workmen, into new deformity” (Brown 2009: 15).

Pivotal to Brown’s development after giving up the law were the associations he made with other intellectuals, most especially Elihu Hubbard Smith (1771–98), a Yale-educated physician who Brown first met in Philadelphia in 1790. Smith was an abolitionist and deist committed to progressive ideals (Barnard and Shapiro 2006: xii) as well as a man of letters who composed opera libretti, authored a biography of a group of colonial American intellectuals known as the Connecticut Wits, and edited an anthology of American poetry (Chapman 1999: 19). It was Smith who encouraged Brown’s literary ambitions and, when Smith established a medical practice in New York City in 1791, Brown visited him frequently before moving in with him in New York in 1797 – alas, Smith was to die the very next year from yellow fever.

Brown’s friendship with Smith inevitably involved Brown in the Friendly Club, a New York City social group that gathered weekly to discuss books, politics, poetry, philosophy, and religion. As part of this group, Brown was first exposed to or had his knowledge deepened of radical democratic writers of the period – especially William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft – as well as of scientists, philosophers, and political thinkers of the day. During 1796 and 1797, Brown shared a number of his own works in progress with this group, including Alcuin, his dialogue on women’s rights. In April of 1799, when the Friendly Club founded a periodical titled Monthly Magazine and American Review, Brown became the magazine’s editor and a frequent contributor of essays, criticism, and fiction.

Starting around 1798 – seemingly affected by the death of Elihu Smith from yellow fever and Brown’s own narrow escape – and lasting into 1801, Brown entered into a frantic writing and publication period that is unlikely ever to be matched. He apparently was at work on all four of what are considered to be his major novels between September and November of 1798. Wieland, Ormond, Arthur Mervyn, and Edgar Huntly were all written during an eighteen-month period, as were his unfinished works, Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist and Memoirs of Stephen Calvert.

Following the publication of the second part of Arthur Mervyn in 1800, Brown – perhaps exhausted from his unprecedented
explosion of writing, perhaps in response to petitions from his family – abruptly left New York City to return to Philadelphia, stopped working on the *Monthly Magazine*, and proclaimed his intention to give up writing novels altogether. He even went so far as to regret his previous efforts publicly, later writing in 1803 in his *Literary Magazine and American Register* “I should enjoy a larger share of my own respect at the present moment if nothing had ever flowed from my pen, the production which could be traced to me” (Brown in Axelrod 1983: 126). Nevertheless, he published two more novels in 1801, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*, sentimental novels that differ markedly in form and tone from his previous more clearly Gothic novels. After his return to Philadelphia, Brown went to work with his brothers in the family business – a mercantile import/export business – and married a Presbyterian, Elizabeth Linn, in 1804 (for which he was formally disowned by the Philadelphia Quaker Meeting House (Kafer 2004: 194)), with whom he had four children. This period of Brown’s life has often been interpreted as marking a shift in his philosophical orientation from Enlightenment-influenced religious questioner and political progressive to a more conservative orthodox Christian. Whereas the young Brown had been an avowed Godwinite with pro-Jeffersonian Republican leanings, during the final decade of his life, after Jefferson was elected President, Brown authored a series of pamphlets critical of his administration. He continued to remain a fixture in the literary world throughout the first decade of the nineteenth century, authoring a variety of miscellaneous pieces and translating and annotating a geographical study of the United States by the French author Comte de Volney. Brown contracted tuberculosis in 1809 and died during February of 1810 at the age of thirty-nine.

Beyond publishing the first American Gothic novel with *Wieland*, Charles Brockden Brown must be recognized as an important innovator within four subcategories of the Gothic: the psychological, the frontier, the urban, and the female. Beginning with the psychological Gothic, although Edgar Allan Poe is generally regarded as the Gothic author who shifted the focus of fear away from external threats and emphasized instead the irrationality of the human mind (see, for example, Fisher 2002; Bloom 2007), what stands out most clearly about Brown’s novels is their critique of Enlightenment rationality and Lockean sensationalist psychology, which presumes that the mind can draw accurate inferences based on sensory perception. Well before both Poe and Sigmund Freud, Brown presented to the reader a model of human cognition that emphasizes the uncertainty of assumptions made based on sensory impressions and the unsettling power of the human unconscious (see psychoanalysis). In Brown’s fiction, it is the mind, rather than the external world, that is a haunted space. This psychological Gothic drama, while evident in all of Brown’s novels, is most obvious in his first, *Wieland*, and his last, *Edgar Huntly*.

Gleaning inspiration from the case of James Yates, a man who in 1781 heard voices and murdered his wife and three children in upstate New York, *Wieland* recounts the horrible events that befell the narrator Clara Wieland, her brother Theodore, and a close circle of family and friends who are at the center of a series of baffling events. First, Wieland Sr. bizarrely dies from what seems to be spontaneous human combustion. A number of years later, mysterious voices are heard making prophecies, offering warnings, and plotting to kill Clara. These events culminate in Theodore’s belief that he has been commanded by God to sacrifice his family – he murders his wife and four children and unsuccessfully pursues Clara to finish the job.

The central question at the heart of *Wieland* is what to make of the mysterious voices. Most of the strange happenings can be attributed to the machinations of a stranger named Carwin who is a “biloquist” – a ventriloquist – and who confesses to misleading the Wielands and Clara’s suitor, Henry Pleyel. Carwin, however, steadfastly maintains that the voice commanding Theodore to render up his family to God
was not his, thus leaving three possibilities: Carwin may be lying and Theodore’s actions were precipitated by human intervention, Wieland is mad and the voices in his head compelling him to kill were his own, or – like Abraham in the Bible commanded by God to sacrifice Isaac – Theodore truly did hear the voice of God. While this question is not conclusively answered by the novel, the text does insistently thematize the precariousness of conclusions drawn from sensory data and the irrationality of human cognition. In the estimation of both Hagenbüchle (1988) and Looby (1996), Brown in *Wieland* essentially calls into question the human ability to access truth and to be certain of anything at all.

These themes of the precariousness of human assumptions and of the irrationality of human impulses introduced in *Wieland* are developed most fully in Brown’s fourth novel, *Edgar Huntly*. *Edgar Huntly* is ostensibly a murder mystery as the eponymous protagonist attempts to track down the killer of his friend Waldegrave. Disconnections between intention and action and evidence and inference, however, are evident almost immediately as Edgar happens across an unexpected sight: a man digging in the middle of the night in the woods by the scene of Waldegrave’s murder. Stranger still, Edgar concludes that the man is asleep. This in a nutshell is the fundamental premise informing all of *Edgar Huntly*: that human beings are not always or even mostly in control of themselves. Unconscious impulses and repressed desires and anxieties move individuals in ways of which they are not aware.

As the novel progresses, stranger and stranger things keep happening to Edgar. Not only has Waldegrave been murdered but also a packet of his letters entrusted to Edgar by Waldegrave disappears. Most dramatically, Edgar wakes up in the dark in a pit. The letters he presumes must have been stolen – although why anyone would want them or how anyone could have known where he kept them is a mystery. As for ending up in the pit, Edgar is baffled but concludes when he finds Indians in possession of his musket that he must have been knocked over the head, kidnapped by them, and deposited there. The truth the reader discovers at the end is that Edgar himself is the thief in the night who removed Waldegrave’s letters and that Edgar is responsible for his own interment in the pit – Edgar, the reader learns, is a sleepwalker just like Clithero. Well before Poe and Freud, what Brown presents in *Edgar Huntly* is a picture of a world in which the individual cannot be certain of anything and in which to be haunted is the essential human condition. The realization at the heart of Brown’s psychological Gothic is that the psyche is essentially a haunted space.

While Brown consistently paints a picture of human beings as strangers to themselves, he also quite consciously makes use of the American wilderness as an essential component of his Gothic writing, thus pioneering the American frontier Gothic. He indicates this intention in a note to the public prefacing *Edgar Huntly* in which he explains that it is the purpose of his work to “exhibit a series of adventures, growing out of the condition of our country” (2006: 3). In place of the established conventions of the European Gothic, he will substitute devices he feels are more appropriate to the American situation: “incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness” (3–4). In keeping with this expressed intention, much of *Edgar Huntly* involves his protagonist’s sojourns through the wild and rude wilderness of Norwalk, Pennsylvania. Along the way, he kills and eats a panther, rescues a captive woman from Indians, and jumps from a cliff into a river. In *Edgar Huntly*, his short story “Somnambulism,” and to a lesser extent *Wieland*, Brown arguably was the first American author to realize the potential of the American wilderness for constructing an intrinsically American Gothic romance. In so doing, Brown, as Seelye observes, established the borders of a distinctly American fiction (1988: 184).

In addition to making use of the raw material of the American wilderness for constructing his American Gothic, Brown also exploits the fundamental uncanniness of urban existence, most notably in his two novels set in
Philadelphia during the deadly 1793 yellow fever outbreak that ravaged the city, Ormond and Arthur Mervyn. Although the urban Gothic subgenre is usually considered by critics to have developed later in the nineteenth century (see, for example, Spencer 1992; Mighall 1999), Brown in these two novels clearly constructs his urban environment as a labyrinthine space concealing vice and deceit. The essence of Brown’s urban Gothic in Ormond and Arthur Mervyn is to turn Philadelphia into a city of the dying, of the dead, and of ghouls that prey upon the downtrodden (see urban gothic).

Ormond tells the story of the virtuous Constantia Dudley, who attempts to care for herself and her impoverished father in the midst of plague and surrounded by heartlessness and deception. Indeed, the related themes of disguise and forgery are insistently foregrounded in Ormond. The villainous Thomas Craig initially presents himself as frank, modest, and forthright and is welcomed into Mr. Dudley’s home and business, where he embezzles funds and ruins the Dudleys’ name and fortune. Although actuated by the love of liberty rather than the desire for personal gain, Martinette de Beauvais, the cross-dressing freedom fighter masquerading as Ursula Monrose, presents an equally false front to the world. And the true master of disguise and obfuscation is revealed to be none other than Ormond himself, the eponymous antagonist of the novel, who at one point even visits the Dudleys’ home disguised as an African American chimney sweep.

Ormond, like Craig and like his sister Martinette, presents himself as the opposite of what he really is. The face he shows to the world is one governed solely by dispassionate reason. In the end, though, he is revealed to be an egomaniacal criminal, governed by lust and the desire for power.

In Brown’s Arthur Mervyn, he again presents to the reader an image of a Philadelphia devastated by plague and rife with corruption. In Arthur Mervyn, however, the question of the reliability of perceptions themed in Ormond becomes all-encompassing. The accuracy of assumptions made about everything and everyone in Arthur Mervyn, including those made by the reader about the eponymous protagonist himself, are repeatedly called into question, and, as in Ormond, this epistemological uncertainty is echoed and magnified by the psychological distortions and confusion of the urban environment, which, as Grabo asserts, “itself takes on nearly the aspect of a character whose conditions generate the actions of most of the other characters, and whose contagions infect all” (1980: 450). Well ahead of later-nineteenth-century literary trends, Brown in Ormond and Arthur Mervyn creates a picture of the fundamental strangeness of urban existence in which one lives in close proximity to multitudes one doesn’t know; apartments and houses conceal vice and crime; streets that seem straight curve and lead in unexpected directions; and all assumptions based on appearances are suspect.

In addition to the psychological, frontier, and urban Gothics, Brown was instrumental in developing one other subgenre of the Gothic—the female Gothic, which dramatizes women’s disempowerment, highlights the forces of explicit and implicit violence used against women to coerce their submission, and critiques these forms of oppression (see female gothic). These are themes that Brown explicitly considered in his dialogue on women’s rights, Alcuin. He subsequently dramatized them in his fiction, most notably in Wieland and Ormond.

Wieland is a Gothic tale of victimization and murder and Clara, as Christophersen notes, is a heroine clearly indebted to Radcliffe and the Gothic tradition (1993: 127). In the midst of a story replete with seemingly supernatural phenomena, Clara is repeatedly placed by Brown into situations into which first her virtue and subsequently her life are in danger. It should be pointed out that, far from being a conventional Gothic heroine, Clara has her own house, her own thoughts, and her own identity. She has received an unconventional education for a young woman of the time—seemingly in keeping with Wollstonecraft’s recommendations in The Rights of Woman, Clara
appears to have been educated together with her brother and participates in the intellectual life of her small community – and, with admirable Age of the Enlightenment clarity, investigates unusual circumstances to the best of her ability and inclines toward rejecting groundless conjecture and supernatural explanations.

The dilemma Clara faces, however, is that no amount of level-headed investigation or rational cogitation can penetrate or undo the irrational restrictions on female autonomy and potential in the rigidly patriarchal culture in which she lives. What Brown’s novel ultimately reveals is that Clara’s real problem is not Carwin or Pleyel or even her brother Wieland, but rather the all-encompassing and smothering patriarchal system their combination represents. Carwin’s role here is clearest – he is a sort of watered-down Gothic villain who sports with Clara because she is vulnerable. What he brings to the fore through his actions is the threat of sexual violence against women underlying and energizing both the conventional Gothic and sentimental romance plots.

Brown’s Wollstonecraftian feminism arguably finds its fullest expression in *Ormond*, which fuses the explicit meditation on women’s rights initiated in *Alcuin* with the female Gothic plot derived from Radcliffe and others (see *Radcliffe, Ann*). The problem for Constantia is that it is hard to be a self-aware independent woman in a world that preys on weakness and presumes women to be less competent and weaker than men. Constantia’s is a world in which a woman goes from living in her father’s household to her husband’s – and by default shares the fortunes of both – and in which a woman without a male protector is a target. Brown’s original spin on the female Gothic plot is to make his protagonist Constantia in *Ormond* an atypical and self-aware Gothic heroine who consciously considers the ways in which both law and custom conspire to disempower women.

Charles Brockden Brown thus must be considered a central figure in the development of four subgenres of the Gothic: the psychological, the frontier, the urban, and the female. In *Wieland, Ormond, Arthur Mervyn*, and *Edgar Huntly* – as well as to lesser extents in his dialogue on women’s rights, *Alcuin*; his sentimental novels, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*; and his other writings – Brown consciously appropriated elements of the existing Gothic novel tradition and rescripted them better to reflect his own insights and experiences in a newly established country attempting to chart its path forward on the cusp of the nineteenth century. In his novels, Brown presents the dark underside to Enlightenment optimism as he repeatedly questions the extent to which human beings can draw accurate inferences from sensory data and foresee the outcome of their actions. In advance of Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Ambrose Bierce, he depicts the American frontier as a liminal zone fraught with danger. Looking forward to Charles Dickens, George Lippard, and even twentieth-century film noir, Brown establishes the city as itself a sort of labyrinthine wildness populated by insidious confidence men. Setting the stage for Edgar Allan Poe’s fiction and later Sigmund Freud’s psychology, Brown powerfully represents the mind as inherently haunted as the unconscious, the stranger within, compels irrational and “perverse” behavior. And, well before Harriet Prescott Spofford, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and contemporary authors such as Margaret Atwood and Angela Carter, Brown in his female Gothic narratives vividly demonstrates the forms of violence and victimization to which women are exposed in patriarchal culture.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; European Gothic; Female Gothic; Radcliffe, Ann; Psychoanalysis; Urban Gothic.

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FURTHER READING

CAROLINE RUDDELL

Buffy the Vampire Slayer is a fantasy-based television series created by Joss Whedon, and is an important text for a variety of reasons: the series repositions traditional gender politics and embodies a Gothic sensibility by mixing humor with the macabre while also managing to be, as Michelle Callander (2001) points out, deeply emotional. The series was produced in America and ran for seven seasons from 1997 to 2003. Buffy the Vampire Slayer can be seen in the context of other fantasy-based television series produced at a similar time that focus on a central, strong female protagonist who is physically able to defend herself. Such series include Xena: Warrior Princess (1995–2001) and Dark Angel (2000–2).

Buffy Summers is the eponymous protagonist of the series and her sacred duty is to slay vampires and generally to keep the forces of darkness – including demons, zombies, and a further wealth of monstrous figures – at bay; one episode even features Count Dracula himself (see vampire fiction; zombies). A Gothic sensibility runs through the series in several key ways, most obviously in that it is part of what could be termed the vampire subgenre (although the series draws on many different generic conventions). However, other elements of the Gothic are also apparent in the series; for example, certain styles of clothing, notably those worn by the character Drusilla, are of a particular Gothic sensibility. The series also constantly makes use of traditionally Gothic landscapes and religious iconography.
such as graveyards, crypts, and crucifixes, which, as Nevitt and Smith (2003) note, are
often juxtaposed with a sunny Californian teenage lifestyle consisting of cheerleading,
football games, and proms.

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is largely based on the divide between the human world that exists
aboveground and the demon underworld that infiltrates that human existence. The series
therefore deals with the supernatural in varied ways; story lines are often centered on figures
such as vampires, witches, werewolves, and demons (see *werewolves; witchcraft*). Vampire narratives are distinctly Gothic for
a number of reasons and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* draws on the conventions attached to
such traditions. For example, vampire “families,” such as the one formed by Angelus, Darla,
Drusilla, and Spike, are a subverted form of the nuclear family and hint at incest, which draws
on a Gothic literary tradition (see *incest*). Buffy’s relationship with Angel is also in the
vein of Romantic Gothic, being a doomed relationship between a human and a vampire with
a soul (see *romanticism*).

The series increasingly focuses on the murky divide between good and evil, and often this
“grey area” is the source of dramatic tension and narrative drive. For example, the charac-
ters Angel and Spike are both vampires yet often fight on the side of good; in Angel’s case
this is because he has reacquired his soul as the result of a Gypsy curse (see *Angel* (1999–
2004)). In season four, Spike is medically modified by a shady military operation so that he
can no longer hurt humans without suffering a great deal of physical pain himself. Spike also
later regains his soul after going on a personal quest to become what he once was. One of
Buffy’s closest friends, Willow, dabbles in magic, which she mostly uses for the greater
good, yet in season six Willow becomes addicted to dark magic; her status as a “good”
character here is disrupted as she ultimately plays the part of the villain in the final episodes
of this season. Characters in the show are therefore rarely simply good or evil in a Mani-
chean sense; rather, the show explores the complex nature of identity in a contemporary
context by drawing on the Gothic theme of problematizing human identity through inter-
action with supernatural figures.

As the series both follows and plays with horror and fantasy generic conventions, there
is often a focus on the macabre; story lines regularly feature, or intimate, bloody horror,
and also, in a traditionally Gothic sense, use the demon underworld as a metaphor for that
which breeds discontent in modern society. For example, in earlier seasons (and again in
the final season), Buffy’s high school is placed above the “Hellmouth,” which is the opening
between the demon underworld and the world as we know it above. In line with the comedic
elements of the series, the show therefore implies that going to high school is, on occa-
sion, quite literally hell (see *comic gothic*).

In this way, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* uses elements of the supernatural to comment on
current anxieties and issues that are likely to be relevant to a contemporary audience. A further
example is the transformation of the character Oz into a werewolf. Here, as with many were-
wolf narratives, the bestial change is suggestive of the transformations one goes through in
adolescence, when bodily changes might pro-
voke anxiety about one’s changing identity.
The literal “monster” here is used to represent
growing up as both horrific and potentially
liberating. As noted above, Willow’s identity as
a witch is used as a metaphor on several occa-
sions; her inability to “kick the habit” of using
dark magic can be read as a narrative about
drug addiction and, in season four, magic is
used in a more positive, albeit implicit, way to
suggest a sexual relationship between Willow
and her girlfriend Tara (see *lesbian gothic*).

A Gothic sensibility is also apparent in the
series’ preoccupation with how the past perme-
ates and impacts upon the present. Narratives that feature vampires are particularly able
to incorporate the past in the sense that vam-
pires can live much longer than their human
counterparts and therefore have a much longer,
historical past. The vampire characters are
haunted by their past; their earlier actions as
both humans and vampires impact on their psychological makeup in the present as well as having a hand in steering the course of the narrative in places. There are several flashbacks throughout the series that feature the core vampire characters: Angel(us), Spike, Drusilla, and Darla. These flashbacks give a sense of the differing struggles the vampires might face in terms of immortality. Angel, for example, has led a tortured existence for many years due to having his soul returned to him after committing countless heinous acts as the “evil” Angelus. Showing some of his past deeds as Angelus allows viewers an insight into the dark past that he now has to live with as the “good” Angel.

In the series, past events can also impact forcefully on the present; Spike’s difficult relationship with his mother (once he has turned her into a vampire, which can be read as a further hint at incest) fuels a storyline in season seven in which a song she used to sing to him becomes his trigger as a sleeper agent for the First Evil (the villain of season seven). In his past, as a more clearly defined “evil” vampire, Spike killed two slayers, one of which turns out to have been the mother of the new high school principal, Robin Wood, in season seven, who attempts to kill Spike in a revenge attack; Wood uses Spike’s weakness as a trigger agent for the First Evil by playing him the song his mother used to sing to him. Here the past (with a particular focus on the maternal) permeates the present in a very direct sense; Spike’s former existence as both human and vampire is truly inescapable and continues to haunt his present and impact on his less simple existence as a vampire with a soul.

The many flashbacks in the series also make visual the styles of dress the vampire characters have worn throughout the centuries; this serves as visual pleasure for the audience, who can relish the extravagant costumes worn by the characters in, for example, the Boxer Rebellion in China in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and the Victorian era in Britain. The flashbacks generally incorporate a style of dress that draws on Gothic Victoriana. Whereas most of the vampire characters in the present have more or less updated their fashion sense to a contemporary context, albeit with an emphasis on black and red color schemes and leather garments, the character Drusilla continually dresses in a Gothic Victoriana style, with a slightly modern twist of Gothic Lolita. Drusilla favors long, flowing dresses, lace, bodices, low and pointed waistlines, Victorian-style boots, and nails painted black or red. She also wears white clothing more than most vampire characters. Style of dress is often used to indicate character status in terms of their identity; Angel starts wearing leather (and smoking) when reverted to his evil self (Angelus), while Willow’s vampire doppelganger wears black and red leather (see doubles). In each of these examples, clothing indicates a difference in the character’s identity, a difference that is performed through their largely Gothic style of dress.

The Gothic tendency of doubling is a central theme in Buffy the Vampire Slayer; this is perhaps most pervasive in the Gothic sense of the vampire figure as a dark shadow to the human self. Vampires can generally be read in Gothic fictions as the Other to the human characters, and such a reading can certainly be applied to Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Doubling also features in the series as several characters have literal doubles or are metaphorically doubled through certain devices: Willow and Xander have vampire doppelgangers; Xander is split into two as a consequence of magic in one episode; Buffy is doubled by a second slayer, Faith, after her brief death at the close of season one (when one slayer dies another is reborn, according to the logic of the series); Giles has a former past identity as the troubled, and troublemaking, Ripper; Angel is doubled by Angelus; and Anya is doubled by her identity on and off in the series as an ancient vengeance demon. In a broader sense, the vampire characters are consistently “split” characters as they are a hybrid of demon and human. Playing with character identity through doubling is a traditionally Gothic device in the vein of such texts as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (see
Bulwer Lytton, Edward

MARIE MULVEY-ROBERTS

The work of Edward Bulwer Lytton (1803–73) is little known today, yet during his lifetime his fame rivaled that of his friend Charles Dickens, while his literary earnings surpassed that of any other Victorian novelist. In addition to a career as a prominent politician, Bulwer Lytton was also a poet, playwright, historian, short-story writer, and novelist. He was a prolific writer, whose greatest literary achievement was the formative role he played in the evolution of various literary genres, including the historical novel and Gothic fiction. In addition, he was at the forefront of the burgeoning Newgate novel, the thriller, the sensation novel, science-fiction, fantasy, detective fiction, silver-fork fiction, the bildungsroman, and domestic realism. Bulwer Lytton was also accomplished at intermingling genres. His ability to transgress, unsettle, and destabilize the generic partook of the Gothic, as did his deployment of the themes of madness, revenge, and terror. In short, Bulwer Lytton was a supreme practitioner of the psychology of fear.

His contributions to the Gothic included relocating it from its Radcliffean Continental settings onto British soil (Small 2009: 15), appropriately for the author of England and the English (1833), while his alignment of the Gothic with the commonplace formed part of what he described as “the absorbing tyranny of every-day life”:


that whenever some such startling incident disturbs its regular tenor of thought and occupation, that same every-day life hastens to bury in its sands the object which has troubled its surface; the more unaccountable, the more prodigious has been the phenomenon which has scared and astounded us; the more, with involuntary effort, the mind seeks to rid itself of an enigma which might disease the reason that tries to solve it. We go about our mundane business with renewed avidity; we feel the necessity of proving to ourselves that we are still sober practical men, and refuse to be unfitted for the world which we know, by unsolicited visitations from worlds into which every glimpse is soon lost amid shadows. (Bulwer Lytton 1862: I, 99–100)

The uncanny pokes its long dark finger into Bulwer Lytton’s fiction starting with his first novel *Falkland* of 1827 where he declares: “Life is our real night” (1827: 221). Here Bulwer Lytton pays homage to two Gothic forefathers as when his hero, Erasmus Falkland, named after a character in William Godwin’s *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), reads Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). The novel eclipses the terror-induced swoon of an Ann Radcliffe heroine, as when Lady Emily Mandeville, who shares the name of Godwin’s *Mandeville* (1817), drops dead from shock and her ghost induces “wild and unutterable terror” (1827: 218) in her beloved, when she endeavors to prove the existence of a life beyond the grave.

In his second novel *Pelham; or the Adventures of a Gentleman* (1828), which became a best-seller, Bulwer Lytton mixes the silver-fork or fashionable novel with domestic Gothic. Its dandified hero made sartorial history by setting the standard for men to wear black evening suits. Among its melodramatic ingredients are a murder and the rape of a young woman, who is later incarcerated in a madhouse. Bulwer Lytton had a particular fascination with women and madness, played out in real life when he confined his wife Rosina in a lunatic asylum in 1858. In his novel *Godolphin* (1833), the daughter of an astrologer loses her reason after being abandoned by the title hero.

Bulwer Lytton’s most lurid treatment is in *Lucretia: or The Children of Night* (1847), whose Borgia-inspired heroine murders two husbands and accidentally poisons her son. At the end of the novel, she is chained up in a madhouse cell as a homicidal maniac, “a grisly, squalid, ferocious mockery of a human being – more appalling and more fallen than Dante ever fabled in his spectres” (1847: 427), whose maniacal laughter anticipates the disrupted nights at Thornfield in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, which appeared later that year. The reception was damning. *The Times* (December 17, 1846) warned parents against bringing the book into the family home, insisting “you do ill to bring hangmen and murderers to your hearth” and that “save in the *Newgate Calendar*, we never heard of so many murders in so few volumes.” Bulwer Lytton obligingly reduced the death toll in a later edition. His interest in madness was not confined to women. The narrator of his 1829 short story “A Manuscript Found in a Madhouse” is a deformed and hideously ugly hero, whose isolation and social rejection resonates with that of the monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818). Another short story that may be traced back to *Frankenstein* is “Monos and Daimonos” of 1834, whose solitary hero is haunted by a doppelganger whom he eventually tries to kill (see doubles). Bulwer Lytton was attracted to what he regarded as the dark metaphysics of Shelley’s father, William Godwin, whose *Caleb Williams* delves into an underworld of criminality and injustice. In turn, Godwin was an admirer of Bulwer Lytton’s *Paul Clifford* (1830), about a highwayman who ends up being convicted of robbery. He escapes the death penalty only because the judge, who turns out to be his father, commutes it to transportation. But unlike the reception of *Caleb Williams*, a novel about the wrongful accusation of an innocent man, opponents rounded on Bulwer Lytton’s novel to accuse him of glamorizing villainy. This accusation was further compounded by the publication of *Eugene Aram* (1832), whose title hero is a schoolteacher who commits murder.
Bulwer Lytton shared with Dickens an interest in criminality and low-life characters, though his perspective was from the vantage point of landed gentry. Becoming a baronet in 1838, he was later raised to the peerage for his contributions to literature. After the death of his mother and only surviving parent, he redesigned his family home, Knebworth House in Hertfordshire, during 1843–5 in the fashionable Gothic Victorian style with the help of Henry Edward Kendall, Jr., studding it with stuccos, gargoyles, and griffins and employing John Gregory Crace to work on the interior (see architecture, gothic; architecture, gothic revival). In common with Horace Walpole and William Beckford, Bulwer Lytton contributed to the Gothic both as writer and builder. He had been brought up with the ghost story of Jenny Spinner and her spectral spinning wheel haunting Knebworth’s East Wing. In later life, Bulwer Lytton wrote one of the most popular and widely anthologized ghost stories, “The Haunted and the Haunters or, The House and the Brain,” which first appeared anonymously in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine in 1859. This London house was home to numerous apparitions, mysterious knocks, and an unfathomable and menacing darkness. The source of the haunting turned out to be a cursed compass set up by an ex-servant with the inscription “as moves the needle, so work my will!” (2000: 159).

Bulwer Lytton conducted his own psychical research with the help of mediums, including the celebrated D. D. Home, whom he invited to Knebworth in 1855 (see psychical investigation). During a séance, Bulwer Lytton tried contacting his dead daughter Emily, who was buried in the family mausoleum on the estate (see spiritualism). His pursuit of the paranormal, science, and the occult is most apparent in Zanoni (1842) and A Strange Story (1862), which he labeled metaphysical novels. Both are characterized by erudite footnotes, learned disquisitions, and a preoccupation with the actual and the ideal. The plots are variations on the demonic pact and Rosicrucian quest to prolong life through the elixir vitae, which can banish disease, old age, and death. In 1835, Bulwer Lytton had a dream about a magus who created the elixir, which prompted him to write the fragment Zicci. In a preamble to the novel, he explains that this was an abridged version of a hieroglyphic manuscript passed to the narrator by a supposed Rosicrucian. Zanoni is the longer version into which Bulwer Lytton also incorporated his short story “The Tale of Kosem Kesamim: The Magician” (1832). The novel is set during the Terror of the French Revolution and tells of how the eponymous hero sacrifices his immortal life on the guillotine for the love of an opera singer, Viola. Its concoction of mysticism, the supernatural, and politics is best represented by the phantasmagorical “Ghostly One that dwells on the Threshold, and whose victims are the souls that would aspire, and can only fear” and the “dim shapelessness going before the men of blood, and marshalling their way” (1842: III, 146).

The Gothic was used by Bulwer Lytton to express the often irreconcilable tensions between nineteenth-century idealism, materialism, mysticism, and utilitarianism (Small 2009: 17). In A Strange Story, Allen Fenwick, a young doctor who is a materialist and arch-empiricist is confronted by the sinister occultist Margrave, a mesmerist and exponent of Eastern magic, who has obtained the secret of the elixir of life. Bulwer Lytton’s novels on characters in pursuit of bodily immortality parallel his own longing for fame as a statesman and man of letters. He had hoped to make his mark as Secretary of State for the Colonies in Lord Derby’s Tory administration when, in 1858–9, he helped to establish the new colony of British Columbia and presided over the secession of Queensland from New South Wales. But he is remembered more widely today for his imperial Gothic novel, The Coming Race (1871), about a subterranean race called the Vril-ya, who are waiting to lay claim to the surface. The powerhouse for their technological utopia is a universal fluid called Vril, which has the power to heal and destroy. It is described as a force beyond that of electricity,
being closer to nuclear energy, capable of annihilating not only individuals but also armies. The Coming Race with the Vril-ya’s women, who are more powerful than the men, is a futuristic tongue-in-cheek allegory of American imperialism.

Bulwer Lytton made a major impact upon American Gothic mainly through his influence upon the work of Edgar Allan Poe, while nearer home he was an important precursor for the sensation fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins. In recognition of his services to literature, he was buried at Westminster Abbey in 1873.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Architecture, Gothic; Architecture, Gothic Revival; Braddon, Mary Elizabeth; Collins, Wilkie; Doubles; Poe, Edgar Allan; Psychical Investigation; Science Fiction; Secret Societies; Sensation Fiction; Spiritualism.

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Bürger, Gottfried

DOUGLASS H. THOMSON

In terms of Gothic literature, Gottfried August Bürger (1747–94) is best known for his supernatural ballads of terror (see supernatural, the), chief among them the popular “Lenore,” “Der wilde Jäger” (The Wild Hunt) and “Des Pfarrers Tochter von Taubenheim” (The Parson’s Daughter of Taubenheim). Unabashedly aimed at the volk and strategically positioned against the still prevailing neoclassical taste of the day, Bürger’s ballads caused quite a stir in both Germany and England. In his native country, Bürger’s example inspired the writers of the Sturm und Drang movement (see sturm und drang) to develop a native German idiom of poetry by appealing to the ballad tradition its country shared with Britain. British writers initially greeted Bürger’s ballads with great enthusiasm. William Taylor of Norwich, the main conduit of German literary developments for British writers, led the way with his translation “Lenora” in the Monthly Magazine, and five other poets, including the young Walter Scott, followed suit with their versions in 1796 alone. The reception of Bürger’s ballads eventually mirrored the larger pattern of how Gothic literature came to be regarded in the 1790s. For after the early outpouring of praise for his spirited and dramatic imagination, the critical establishment, primarily Schiller in Germany and many alarmed arbiters of taste in England, turned sharply against his poetic tales of terror.

By all accounts, Bürger’s life was a difficult one, marred by dissipation, economic difficulties, and more than a whisper of scandal. After desultory attempts at studying theology and law at the University of Göttingen, he pursued his real interest, literature, and became closely
associated with a group of writers, the Göttinger Hainbund (Grove League of Göttingen), who sought to vitalize German poetry by turning back to its old ballads and Norse mythology. The League’s annual poetry anthology, the Musenalmanach (Muses’ Almanac), published “Lenore” in 1773, and Bürger later became its editor in 1778, the same year that saw the publication of his first collection of poems. Despite his growing fame as the poet of the people, Bürger continued to struggle financially, and his marriage to his sister-in-law after his wife died only fueled rumors of his dissolute ways. Wounded by the death of his second wife, his beloved “Molly,” and stung by Schiller’s criticism of his ballads, Bürger spent his last sad and largely unproductive years at the University of Göttingen in the unsalaried position of “extraordinary professor.”

One of literary history’s little ironies concerns British reviewers’ acerbic dismissal of Bürger’s ballads as “German nonsense,” when, in fact, Bürger drew his inspiration from the works of Shakespeare and such collections of old English ballads as Percy’s Reliques of Ancient Poetry (1765). His mentor Johann Gottfried Herder directed Bürger’s attention to these sources and provided his own productive model with the Volkslieder, which collected many old German, Scottish, and English ballads. Bürger’s most famous – and most infamously “German-mad” – ballad “Lenore” was actually inspired by the old English ballad “Sweet William’s Ghost.” Admittedly, Bürger ratchets up the drama of this story of a young woman who turns against God because her lover has not returned from the wars. In Bürger’s version, the knight returns one ominous night and invites Lenore to join him on a thrilling ride to what he promises will be their wedding bower – a ride that in Taylor’s translation provides the most famous acoustic set-piece in all of Gothic balladry:

Tramp, tramp, across the land they speeded;
Splash, splash, across the sea;
“Hurrah! the dead can ride apace;
Dost fear to ride with mee?”

“Lenora” (Monthly Magazine 1, March 1796: 135–7)

The lover, of course, turns out to be a hideous skeleton and the bower, a coffin swirled around by ghastly specters, as Bürger drives home his point about how young ladies should not question Providence.

For today’s readers conversant with all kinds of sophisticated media of terror, “Lenore” might seem a slight thing, too obvious and melodramatic (see melodrama) in its presentation of the supernatural realm, too shrill in its perfunctory moralizing. The reaction of Bürger’s contemporaries, however, tells a different story. Taylor reports that Frederic Leopold Stolberg, a member of the Göttinger Hainbund, experienced an “agony of rapturous terror” in listening to a recitation of the same ballad (Taylor 1830, II: 21). In his “Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad,” Scott, whose first published poems were translations of Bürger, tells of how Anna Letitia Barbauld’s dramatic reading of Taylor’s “Lenora” “electrified” an Edinburgh literary society (Scott 1902, IV: 38). In a letter to Coleridge on July 6, 1796, Charles Lamb cannot quite find the words to express his excitement about Taylor’s translation: “Have you read the ballad called ‘Leonora’ [sic]? If you have !!!!!!!!” (Marrs 1975, I: 41). Robert Southey’s reaction typifies the early enthusiasm for the German ballad of terror: “I shall hardly be satisfied till I have got a ballad as good as ‘Lenora’” (Packer and Pratt 2011).

Two other ballads by Bürger contain vividly Gothic treatment of their subject matter and elicited creative responses from British poets. “Der wilde Jäger” depicts the tale of a brutal aristocrat who will stop at nothing to pursue his cruel sport. Profaning the Sabbath, the hunter callously destroys peasant farms and laborers in his path, only to encounter divine retribution for his brutal mistreatment of the folk as hell-hounds emerge to pursue him eternally: the hunter becomes the hunted. Walter Scott translated the poem as “The Chase.” The ballad provides a dramatic example of what so worried critics like T. J. Mathias and other anti-Jacobin commentators: the Gothic tendency to vilify the aristocracy and sentimentalize treatment of the lower classes. Also noteworthy on
this score is “Des Pfarrers Tochter von Taubenheim” (The Parson’s Daughter of Taubenheim), which features the seduction of a parson’s daughter by a deceitful nobleman who abandons her. The ballad contains a visceral description of the poor and despairing mother killing her own illegitimate child with a hair pin, and a host of ghostly effects that detail her haunting the grave. In addition to Taylor’s translation of the ballad, Charlotte Dacre attempted in her “Lass of Fair Wone” to curb “the overstrain’d attempt at nature” of the original and to invite greater sympathy for its tragic heroine (Dacre 1805, II: 82).

The turn against Bürger, partly fueled by stories of his dissolute life and marital indiscretions, began with Friedrich Schiller’s sharply negative review of his ballads in the Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung of 1791. Schiller focuses on Bürger’s claim that Popularität forms the true measure of assessing poetic quality. Schiller can agree with Bürger that poetry should address the concerns of the common people, but it should do so in a way that elevates the mind and aims at a general and representative, not a local and tangential, truth. From this Classicist point of view, which charts Schiller’s own movement away from his earlier affiliations with the Sturm und Drang movement, Bürger’s ballads lack a critical perspective and rely too much on sensation and emotion for their effects.

The British turn against Bürger’s ballads in the late 1790s, part of a broader program to “dethrone German sublimity,” has been expertly documented by Peter Mortensen (2004: chapter 2) and Michael Gamer, who asserts that such poetry, in the troubled political climate of the times, came to be regarded as “culturally invasive, morally corrupting, and politically jacobin” (Gamer 2000: 144–5). Both critics, however, stress the formative role Bürger’s ballads played in the emerging poetics of Romanticism (see Romanticism). Several studies have addressed the influence of Bürger on Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and other poems of his that display “supernatural agency.” For his part, Wordsworth drew upon Bürger source material for four of his lyrical ballads: “The Thorn” obviously relies upon “Des Pfarrers Tochter,” “The Idiot Boy” upon the night-time ride of “Lenore,” “The Reverie of Poor Susan” upon “Des armen Souchsen Traum,” and “Hart-Leap Well” upon “Der wilde Jäger” (see Wordsworth, William). His attempt in these lyrical ballads to “counteract” what he considered the “degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation” (Wordsworth 2008: 177) participates in the larger literary movement at the very end of the eighteenth century to police or to rehabilitate the more extravagant aspects of Bürger’s achievement. The need to do so acknowledges the original power of Bürger’s Gothic ballads.

SEE ALSO: Melodrama; Romanticism; Sturm und Drang; Supernatural, The; Wordsworth, William.

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Burton, Tim

ASPASIA STEPHANOU

Tim Burton (1958–) is an American filmmaker, producer, writer, and artist whose work has been associated with the Gothic. His films evoke the atmospheres of foggy, Gothic landscapes, mysterious, oneiric spaces, and ghostly presences, while the bittersweet melancholy of lonesome doppelgangers and outsiders conjures up the Gothic’s sensibility toward doubles and villains, and their adventures, pursuit, and final destruction. The term “Burtonesque,” which captures the dark, unconventional, and eccentric aesthetics that characterize his films, is used to describe similar works by other filmmakers (see film).

Timothy William Burton was born on August 25, 1958 in the Los Angeles suburb of Burbank, the son of Jean and Bill Burton. From an early age, Burton discovered his love for monster films and misperceived and estranged monsters (see monster movies). Horror films, such as Frankenstein (1931), The Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954), and Destroy All Monsters (1968), made up his fantasy universe and became the antidote for the sense of alienation experienced as a result of his suburban upbringing and reclusive personality. These were his fairy tales, populated with such influential figures as Vincent Price, Burton’s personal idol. The eroticized macabre tones of Hammer horrors (see hammer house), with the stylish presence of actors Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing; the stories of Edgar Allan Poe; the Roger Corman films starring Vincent Price; and the classic horror films of the 1930s and 1940s have been influential in the making of Burton’s dark and Gothic cinematic images.

Burton’s first film, owing its birth to Edgar Allan Poe, Vincent Price, and Burton’s passion for monster films, was Vincent (1982), a stop-motion animated short shot in black and white following the style of the 1920s German Expressionist films, especially Robert Wiene’s The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920). Vincent, narrated by Vincent Price himself, tells the story of the seven-year-old Vincent Malloy who wants to be Vincent Price. He imagines acting out the roles of Vincent Price that recall the films based on Poe’s work, such as Corman’s House of Usher (1960), The Pit and the Pendulum (1961), The Raven (1963), and The Masque of the Red Death (1964). Vincent is also inspired by William Castle’s House on Haunted Hill (1958) and André de Toth’s House of Wax (1953), both of which star Vincent Price. The short film ends with the last line from Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven”: “And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor, shall be lifted nevermore” (see Poe, Edgar Allan).

In 1984, Burton directed Frankenweenie, a twenty-five-minute black and white film principally in the style of German Expressionist films and also paying homage to James Whale’s Frankenstein (1931). The film begins with ten-year-old Victor Frankenstein showing to his family a Super-8 film entitled Monsters from Long Ago in which his dog Sparky, dressed like a dragon monster, is attacked by a creature. The title and the dragon-like costume of the dog allude to Jack Arnold’s Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954). Following the narrative of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, the dog is reanimated (twice) by young Victor. Finally, Sparky falls in love with a black poodle with a white streak in her hair, like Elsa Lanchester in Whale’s Bride of Frankenstein (1935). Both Vincent and Frankenweenie capture Burton’s empathy for the outsider and can be seen as a manifestation of his alter ego.

The theme of death reappears in Burton’s film Beetlejuice (1988), in which a couple, Adam and Barbara Maitland (Alec Baldwin

FURTHER READING


Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron

CAROLINE FRANKLIN

Lord Byron (1788–1824) influenced the history of Gothic as a historical personage as well as through his poetry. Novelists such as Mary Shelley (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft) were inspired by his adventurous life as well as his mysterious “Byronic heroes.” In addition, the philosophical skepticism and Romantic
irony of Byron’s satire Don Juan paved the way for the dark Gothic humor of Victorian poets such as Thomas Hood and Thomas Lovell Beddoes (see ROMANTICISM).

Byron was born in 1788 to aristocratic parents, both of whose families had long been infamous for sexual scandal and feuding. His English father, Captain "Mad Jack" Byron, quickly spent the fortune of his Scottish wife, Catherine Gordon, and decamped to France, where he lived with his sister until his early death. His son had been born with a club foot, which was perceived as a stigma. His mother’s self-fulfilling prophecy that her only child would inherit the Byrons’ wildness enhanced the fatalism and guilt induced by his Calvinist upbringing. Aged ten, Byron inherited the baronetcy, the ruinous Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire, but little capital. The lame boy, devouring Gothic literature along with tales of the last owner, his great-uncle, “the wicked lord,” who had murdered his neighbor, easily imagined himself born to play the role of Gothic villain. As a student, he dared his friends to awaken the spirits of the medieval monks by using as a drinking cup a skull the workmen had dug up.

During his exceptionally adventurous Grand Tour, Byron met the picturesque yet brutal Klephs, who were rebelling against the Ottoman Empire. An influential Philhellenist travel poem, Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage cantos I and II (1812) contrasted the Klephs’ savage energy with the dissipated ennui of Harold, a fictionalized version of Byron himself, insensible after the death of a mysterious beloved, Thyrza. His Orientalist romances focalized through rebellious antiheroes became phenomenally popular. The Giaour (1813) describes the adulterous protagonist being ritually cursed by the Islamic master of his beloved, willing the Westerner to become a vampire feeding on his own female relations. Robert Southey’s 1801 epic Thalaba and Byron’s friend Herman Merivale’s poem “The Dead Men of Pest” (1807) (see Franklin 2011), both of which featured vampires, were influences. However, this curse passage was the first to bring together the undead ghoul of folktales and a charismatic aristocratic seducer. It inspired Gothic fiction by Lamb and Polidori (see Polidori, John), giving new blood to animate the stock Gothic villain.

In 1816 Byron left England to travel again through Europe, never to return. His libertinism had blasted his reputation. Byron’s disastrous marriage to the heiress Annabella Milbanke had ended in an acrimonious separation shortly after the birth of their daughter, Ada. Rumors circulated of incest with his half-sister, Augusta, and of his bisexuality. His reign as literary lion of fashionable society was over. Yet Byron rose to the challenge of personal and professional disaster and the next eight years would see his best work: Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage III (1816) and IV (1818), Cain (1821), and his masterpiece Don Juan (1819–24). Moreover, Byron gained new readers throughout Europe and among the lower classes. For, after Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, European independence movements and British campaigns for parliamentary reform arose and became inspired by Byron’s political rhetoric.

In Switzerland, Byron met Percy Shelley and his teenage mistress (later wife), Mary Godwin. Byron had another daughter with Mary’s step-sister, “Claire.” The two young women had run away from home, claiming female sexual liberation in the name of Mary’s dead mother, the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft. The group spent the summer sailing Lake Geneva reading and writing together, and continued to inspire each others’ work for the rest of their lives. At Byron’s residence, the Villa Diodati, after thrilling his guests by reciting Coleridge’s Christabel and supernatural tales from Fantasmagoria (1812), the poet inaugurated the famous ghost story competition that produced Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) and Polidori’s novella, The Vampyre (1819). Polidori published his tale under Byron’s name, until the latter repudiated it. It was based on the poet’s unfinished story “Augustus Darvell.” Byron had returned to poetry: his verse drama, Manfred (1817), became one of his most influential works. In the poem, the Gothic ingredients of a magus
figure, secret sin, an old castle, and a sublime landscape are transformed into a modified monodrama in which the character Manfred represents the human psyche interacting with the forces of nature. Act III Scene IV, in which Manfred refuses to bow to Arimanes, the Prince of Darkness, recalls the Hall of Eblis in William Beckford’s *Vathek* (1782) (see *Beckford, William*). Byron had also been inspired by a visit from Matthew Lewis (see *Lewis, Matthew*), who had on the occasion recited his own translation of Goethe’s Romantic drama *Faust* (1808).

Byron settled in Italy and committed himself and his poetry to the country’s struggle for independence from dynastic and papal rule. In his comic masterpiece *Don Juan*, he featured a parody of the Gothic fiction of Lewis and Radcliffe. In 1824, Byron died in Greece, where he was using his name and fortune to support the war for independence from Turkish rule.

SEE ALSO: Beckford, William; Lewis, Matthew; Polidori, John; Romanticism; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft.

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Regarded primarily as a composer of ironic fantasies, the American novelist James Branch Cabell (1879–1958) treated the Gothic as a rich reservoir of characters, situations, and tropes to be subverted, undermined, and satirized. The highly imaginative novels that he corralled into the loose sequence “Biography of the Life of Manuel” between 1927 and 1930 continually refine and reconfigure Gothic characteristics, delighting in torturous genealogies and improbable encounters. As a fantasist, Cabell is ultimately more akin to writers such as Fritz Leiber (especially his “Lankhmar” novels) and Michael Moorcock than to the determinedly comic Terry Pratchett, his trademark devices being wordplay (especially anagrams), irony, and a fascination with the mechanics and transmission of narrative. Cabell combines stylistic archaism (one reason why his work quickly fell from fashion) with intertextuality and narrative legerdemain that anticipates the methods of later modernists (and partially explains Cabell’s brief resurgence during the late 1960s and early 1970s) (see contemporary gothic).

The “Biography” occupied Cabell for the most part of three decades, though it was only gathered together in its final form in 1930, when its author finished publishing everything he had written before that date including critical essays and artistic manifestos such as Beyond Life: Dizan des Démiurges (1919, an extended attack on literary realism), in the lavish eighteen-volume “Storisende” edition of his work. In some ways the fantasy genre’s version of Balzac’s Comédie Humaine, the component parts of the Biography are all set in Poictesme (pronounced “pwa-tem”), an imaginary high medieval French region which borders sundry enchanted realms: fairyland, Hell and a version of the United States caricatured as “Philistia.” Deploying an extraordinarily diverse range of historic, mythic, and literary allusions (Langford 1997: 117) as well as a fondness for sexual innuendo that saw Jurgen (1919) unsuccessfully prosecuted for obscenity in 1922, the books are notable for their skepticism toward received wisdom and for their structural ingenuities. In some ways, Cabell takes the “Chinese box” or “Russian doll” models of narrative often associated with Gothic novels to new extremes, as stories nest inside other stories, or are transformed by the preoccupations and exigencies of their diverse tellers.

Cabell’s first published story was “An Amateur Ghost” (1902), later refashioned and included in Jurgen. Its plot concerns a young man persuaded by ancestral spirits to haunt the family castle, the influence of Wilde’s “The Canterville Ghost” (1887) being evident (the appearance of H. G. Wells’ “The Inexperienced

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“Ghost” in the same year is, however, probably a coincidence). Even at this stage of his career, Cabell’s ambivalent relationship with Gothic ideas was obvious, and he has rarely been considered as a Gothic writer. His lapidary style could be seen as an influence on H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, but his prose is actually more akin to that of late Victorians such as Walter Pater and Arthur Machen (see Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Machen, Arthur). Moreover, his use of fantastic settings and characters from myth and legend – figures from Arthurian romance rub shoulders with centaurs – aligns him with fantasy writers such as Lord Dunsany.

Despite his characterization as a sometimes whimsical fantasist, aspects of Cabell’s work have obvious significance for those reading the Gothic, particularly in the ways in which he satirically revisits the types of encounters found first in hagiography and Christian-inflected folklore, and then in Gothic versions of them: the satanic pact, the meeting with a personified Death, and so on. Jurgen (the working title of which was “Go to the Devil”), features a humble pawnbroker who, deemed to be a solar myth (a parody of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, a rich source of inspiration for many of Cabell’s modernist contemporaries), spends the winter underground in Hell. Here he discovers that Satan’s wife, Phyllis, does not understand him and that Satan, distrusting her fidelity, keeps one of her bat-wings clipped, (not that this prevents Jurgen from having a brief affair with her). Jurgen then marries Florimel, a beautiful vampire who lives beside a lake of blood (water being banned in Hell for fear it will be used in baptism), only to find that she is prone to terrible indigestion. Elsewhere in the book, Jurgen’s shadow is replaced by one given to him by the goddess Sereda which reports to her on his conduct. In *The High Place* (1923) subtitled “A Comedy of Disenchantment,” Cabell reworks the story of Sleeping Beauty, first having Beauty impregnated by her amoral rescuer, and then having her child given to Satan as a result of that rescuer’s bargain with him. *The Silver Stallion* (1926) is in many ways a religious satire, explaining how an entirely misleading posthumous cult grows up around Manuel, the antihero of *Figures of Earth* (1921). Here Cabell shows his interest in acts of misinterpretation (the motto of Poictesme is “Mundus Vult Decipi!” – the world wishes to be deceived) as well as a flair for the comic set piece: Donander of Évre is slain in a battle with Nordic pagans and carried off to Valhalla after being mistaken for Red Palnatoke, his heathen rival, who is in turn taken to the Christian Heaven.

Because his work looked back to the fin de siècle, Cabell was overshadowed in the US by figures such as John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway – it is not surprising to learn that one of his most enthusiastic advocates, Carl van Vechten, also admired Machen. Cabell’s influence was also limited in Britain, but his work markedly impressed Aleister Crowley, who wrote a laudatory review of Jurgen and sent him a copy of *The Book of the Law* after noting similarities between Jurgen’s “The Breaking of the Veil” and his own magical ceremonies (Kollatz 2007: 109). He hoped to convert Cabell to “Crowleyanity” but Cabell kept his distance and soon stopped answering his letters (Kaczynski 2010: 639) (see Crowley, Aleister).

SEE ALSO: Contemporary Gothic; Crowley, Aleister; Lovecraft H. P. (Howard Phillips); Machen, Arthur.

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Campbell, Ramsey

NICHOLAS ROYLE

Born in Liverpool in 1946, Ramsey Campbell was much influenced in his early years by H. P. Lovecraft (see LOVECRAFT, H. P. (HOWARD PHILLIPS)). “The first book of Lovecraft’s I read made me into a writer,” Campbell wrote in the introduction to Cold Print (1985: 9), a collection of Lovecraft-inspired tales and new work. Those Lovecraftian stories were reprinted from Campbell’s first collection, The Inhabitant of the Lake and Other Less Welcome Tenants (1964), and they have their admirers, but it was arguably only “once [he had] finished imitating Lovecraft” (Campbell 1992: 26) that his work started to show signs of startling originality and powerful insight. As Campbell put it in an afterword to a 1992 chapbook publication, Two Obscure Tales, after The Inhabitant of the Lake “I was able to explore what sort of a voice of my own I had” (1992: 26).

That voice found its expression in the deeply unsettling stories that made up his 1973 collection, Demons By Daylight, which had the same kind of effect on a number of younger writers — among them Poppy Z. Brite — as Lovecraft’s work had had on Campbell (see BRITE, POPPY Z.).

I understand that Poppy Z. Brite read Demons By Daylight when she was thirteen. If it had any influence on her writing then I’m proud to have been of some use. It helps me feel that I’m a part, however minor, of a continuing tradition. More importantly, it’s heartening to discover such talent so young. Poppy is already a better writer — more lyrical, more sharp-eyed, surer of her characters, at least as fond of language but more precise – than I am. (Campbell 2002: 339).

As well as being modest, Campbell has always been a strong supporter of other writers, as ready to champion new voices as he is to pay tribute to his heroes, notably Robert Aickman. A significant editor in the field as well as a writer, Campbell launched a number of writers (among them Steve Rasnic Tem and Marc Laidlaw, who have gone on to acquire excellent reputations) alongside Aickman, Christopher Priest, Stephen King, and other well-known names in his New Terrors anthologies published in 1980.

Throughout his career, Campbell has been drawn back time and again to the cinema. Two novels deal explicitly and in some depth with the power of film – Ancient Images (1989) and The Grin of the Dark (2007) – and it is a subject that has been present in his short stories at least since “The Second Staircase” in 1973 and “Horror House of Blood” in 1976. Listeners to BBC Radio Merseyside have also been able to enjoy Campbell’s film reviews over the years. Aside from the movies – or as well as the movies – he deals with the same subjects that most of the best Gothic or horror writers confront: love, sex, death, mortality, and whatever might lie beyond. After all, what else is there to write about? His characters are often a little bit paranoid or completely insane, his points of view extremely partial. “I recall that most of Incarnate was written during the last year my mother was alive, when she was hopelessly insane and I could often hardly sleep,” he wrote in “Writing and Depression” (2002: 339).

In recent years there has been a tendency to send characters back where they came from, like Trent in “The Retrospective” (2002), described by Poppy Z. Brite in the introduction to the 2003 collection Told By the Dead as “probably one of the finest and most disturbing tales Campbell has ever written” (2003: 10) or Todd in “The Room Beyond” (2011), selected for reprint in The Best British Short Stories 2012. There has also been more humor...
in evidence in Campbell’s stories as the years have rolled by, all of it on the dark side, naturally, and usually quite well concealed. In “Next Time You’ll Know Me” (1988), he pokes fun at amateur writers’ attempts to avoid using the verb “to say” by insistently avoiding it himself and instead using every other possible verb to attribute speech; “Becoming Visible” (1999) wrests humor from awkward telephone exchanges; and “The Room Beyond” provokes more than a few grim chuckles at the ultimate human predicament, our burdensome awareness of where we are headed.

Campbell has published more than two dozen novels and a handful of movie novelizations, and no fans or scholars of the genre would dispute his mastery of the form. They might also agree that it is in the short story field that he most consistently performs to his very best. No one who has ever read Demons By Daylight or The Height of the Scream (1976) at an impressionable age will ever forget either collection. The original US edition of The Height of the Scream contained a revealing introduction by the author that was left out of the British mass-market edition. In it, Campbell writes, “Lovecraft had rooted his horrors in recognisable settings; I wanted to root mine in recognisable human behaviour, an altogether more universal thing” (1976: xi). This is key to the success of his work. Campbell’s understanding of human psychology and his ability to represent it on the page, particularly through distorted points of view, is partly what makes readers keep coming back. That and his unique prose style, which uses insinuation to engender sympathy for paranoid protagonists. As Poppy Z. Brite points out, Campbell is an excellent reader of his own work and once you have heard him read, it is impossible to read his work without hearing his voice in your head. It renders the innocuous sinister and sows doubt where there might otherwise have been reassurance.

SEE ALSO: Brite, Poppy Z.; King, Stephen; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips).

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FURTHER READING


Campus Gothic

ASPASIA STEPHANOU

Campus Gothic refers to slasher movies that are set in the locale of a college or high school campus (see slasher movies). One of the reasons for the location of these slasher movies is the circulation of legends about serial killers on college campuses since the mid-1960s (Tucker 2005: 177). As the most prolific category of all slasher movies, campus Gothic thrived during the 1980s in Reagan’s America. In the 1990s there was a slasher revival with Wes Craven’s Scream (1996), and other non-campus-based slashers such as I Know What you Did Last Summer (1997). Characterized by its low-budget productions, campus Gothic
invited teenage viewers to enjoy nudity, blood, and gore. Manipulating the “body-count” film that structures its progression around the growing number of horrific murders and the teen exploitation picture, campus Gothic addressed teenagers with cautionary tales. The transgressions of the teen protagonists that the viewer was invited to enjoy voyeuristically were also the prerequisite for their punishment by adult authority, symbolized in the identity of the killer. While these movies superficially called for the enjoyment of transgressive behavior, of violence and sexuality, they were actually constructed as conservative fairy tales warning Red Riding Hoods about the dangers of the lurking wolf. They expressed Republican ideas about sin and punishment and the nation’s social and political anxieties about Reagan’s policies during the 1980s. President Reagan’s illusory promises to the people were fundamentally disparate from what he actually managed to deliver in reality (Muir 2007: 11). This double mentality, of a deceptive happiness and order and an uncertain, fearful reality reflects the attitude of the campus slasher movies: underneath the seemingly secure, lustrous, and peaceful surface of the campuses lay a different reality that was about to violently erupt on screen.

The abundance of campus Gothic movies in the 1980s, partly due to the popularity of home video entertainment targeted at teenage spectators, demonstrates the inventiveness of the movies’ titles to invoke teenage anxieties through their thematic concern with certain college events. Titles such as Cutting Class (1989) and Final Exam (1981) playfully conjure up carnivalesque transgressions and disciplinary methods, while Graduation Day (1981), Night School (1981), and Prom Night (1980) refer to teenage anxieties about college life or rites of passage.

Looking at the majority of campus Gothic movies it is easy to expose their formulaic structures. The murders usually take place during holidays or certain events (Prom Night) so that the campus setting is transformed into a deserted and isolated locale to facilitate the killer’s evil plans. This is evident in such films as Black Christmas (1974), The House on Sorority Row (1983), Sorority House Massacre (1986), Scream 2 (1997), Urban Legend (1998), and the slasher parody Return to Horror High (1987).

Another recurrent motif is the portrayal of dark and unwelcoming corridors and classrooms and the sound of running feet during the victim’s pursuit by the killer (Harper 2004: 49). The last victim who survives to tell the events and reveal the hidden secrets is always a heroine called the “final girl” who confronts the killer in a deserted location. The isolated setting makes it difficult to get any help; nonetheless, the police do arrive, but always too late (Harper 2004:51).

If the action in the movie is set in an appalling, desolate location, then the world is usually embellished as a secure and unrealistically normal place. Similarly, the killer is banished from the idealized surroundings of the city to a dark and Gothic location. By juxtaposing images of a normalizing society to the killer’s bleak and gothicized dwelling, the film constructs limits and forbidden zones where the teenagers are warned not to transgress. At the same time the superficial image of a secure suburbia masks a past drenched in violence and dark events. Most of the campus Gothic movies present a killer who returns to avenge past deeds (Harper 2004: 54). This Gothic concept of history is evident in the Scream trilogy where the final girl’s family and past sins are symbolized in the return of the killer and his or her punishment. The significance of the past and its disregard by teenagers is another reason for their final demise. The use of teenage pranks in Prom Night or Urban Legend is usually the cause for their torture or punishment by the killer or their family and the survival of the only repentant, the final girl (Harper 2004: 54).

The first slasher film that has set out the conventions for campus Gothic is the classic Black Christmas (1974). It is set during Christmas in a sorority house, where the young
women are disturbed by a stranger’s obscene phone calls. The stranger, a psychopath who recalls Psycho’s (1960) Norman Bates, makes repeated calls to the sorority house during which he talks with various voices, especially his own voice and his mother’s, an element that will appear later in Lucio Fulci’s The New York Ripper (1982) and of course the Scream trilogy. The movie also makes use of campus rumor scares, an urban legend about a killer who will strike at a particular date, usually Halloween, in a dormitory (Brunvand 2001: 58), another feature of Scream 2 (1997). The movie functions as a cautionary tale for girls, since most of the women are killed, including the sorority housemother. The final girl, Jess, who wants to have an abortion, is evidently the real cause for the killer’s violent spree against single, emancipated women. In a scene that resonates with Norman Bates’ mother in the basement, the killer takes comfort by positioning his first victim on a rocking chair with a teddy bear and rocking her to sleep in a maternal way. The film has defined many of the conventions of later slasher and campus Gothic movies, including the idea of the final girl.

SEE ALSO: Nightmare on Elm Street, A (1984); Slasher Movies.

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FURTHER READING


Canadian Gothic

FAYE HAMMILL

Gothic has been a very important strain in Canadian literature since the early nineteenth century. Explanations for its prominence in the national canon vary in emphasis, but generally invoke the alienating effects of a vast, sparsely populated, and apparently hostile landscape; the traumas of colonization and, subsequently, decolonization; and the unsettling of national, racial, gender, and sexual identities as a result of colonial encounter, immigration, and diaspora.

In the pre-Confederation era (that is, before 1867), an atmosphere of fear and violence pervades many fictions and memoirs about white settlers’ and colonizers’ encounters with the wilderness. One of the earliest, and most influential, examples is John Richardson’s historical novel Wacousta; or, The Prophecy (1832), which reconstructs a particularly bloody episode in Canadian history: Pontiac’s Indian alliance against the British, and his 1763 attack on the British forts at Michilimackinac and Detroit. Pontiac’s campaign is headed by the mysterious Wacousta, a figure of terrifying strength and savagery. Eventually revealed as a British gentleman who has gone native, Wacousta is motivated by a desire for revenge against the commander of the forts.

A second founding text of Canadian Gothic is Susanna Moodie’s Roughing It in the Bush; or, Life in Canada (1852), a narrative of hybrid genre which combines autobiography with advice (or rather warnings) to potential emigrants, and also incorporates poems and comic
sketches. The upper-middle-class Moodie’s traumatized literary response to emigration and the hardships of bush settlement has influenced several later authors, most famously Margaret Atwood, whose poem sequence *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* was published in 1970. The Gothic atmosphere of the poems is enhanced by the afterword, in which Atwood suggests that the idea for the book came to her in a dream, and also by the accompanying illustrations (see Atwood, Margaret). The 1970 edition was illustrated by the author herself using collages depicting Moodie’s alienation from her environment, while a 1980 limited edition contained nightmarish paintings by Charles Pachter, capturing the tortured psychic world of Atwood’s Moodie.

The pattern established in Richardson and Moodie was later identified by Northrop Frye in his famous “Conclusion” to *A Literary History of Canada* (1965) as a “garrison mentality” (Frye 1965: 225). He argued that small, isolated communities, confronted by psychological or physical frontiers and separated from their cultural origins, are bound to construct literal or metaphorical fortresses in order to defend shared values. The real terror in such situations, he suggests, is not the threat of the common enemy but the conflict within the individual who begins to question his or her identification with the group. Frye traced the impact of this mentality on later Canadian writing, remarking: “I have long been impressed in Canadian poetry by a tone of deep terror in regard to nature” (Frye 1965: 225). He was referring, in particular, to modern poets such as E. J. Pratt and Earle Birney, but his much-cited formulation has informed many histories and interpretations of Canadian literature.

Several popular writers in nineteenth-century Canada drew on Gothic conventions. May Agnes Fleming wrote a series of widely circulated Gothic sensation novels about European and American high life, while James De Mille, another writer of cosmopolitan sensation fictions, also produced the intriguing novel *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (1888), a dark satire about a shipwrecked sailor encountering cannibalism and human sacrifice in southern latitudes (see sensation fiction). In his critical study *Gothic Canada* (2005), Justin Edwards connects De Mille’s novel with Wacousta, describing both as imperial Gothic travel literature (see imperial gothic). Several popular historical novels also drew on Gothic conventions; these were often set in French Canada. The classic nineteenth-century examples are William Kirby’s *The Golden Dog: A Legend of Quebec* (1877) and Philippe Aubert de Gaspé père’s 1863 novel *Les anciens Canadiens*. Kirby projects colonial and class politics through a story of ill-fated love affairs and violent revenge, while Aubert de Gaspé’s novel contains grotesque and supernatural elements, and bears clear traces of the influence of Walter Scott. Both novels explore the period of the Seven Years’ War and the fall of New France.

Indeed, owing to the perceived romance of its past, together with the dominance of the Catholic Church, Quebec is a frequently chosen setting for Gothic texts in both French and English. Among twentieth-century francophone writers, the most important in the context of Gothic are Marie-Claire Blais and Anne Hébert. Blais’ first novel, *La belle bête* (1959), translated as *Mad Shadows* in 1960, is a psychological novel focusing on a depraved family group including a vain, beautiful son and an ugly, intelligent daughter. Hébert’s *Kamouraska* (1970) is a fictionalized version of the 1839 killing of the Seigneur of Kamouraska by his wife’s lover. Characterized by a dreamlike, poetic discourse, the novel is told from the point of view of the victim’s wife, Elisabeth, who – from the vantage point of middle age – recalls the details of her conspiracy with her lover. Images of confinement dominate the narrative: the marriage itself is presented as a much more terrifying prison than is the actual jail in which Elisabeth is briefly incarcerated, while the small, stifling room in which the older Elisabeth sits watching over her second husband in his last illness contrasts strikingly with the wild landscapes of Kamouraska, over which her memory ranges.
Modern Canadian Gothic texts are often grouped by region. For instance, prairie Gothic begins in the 1920s with Martha Ostenso’s *Wild Geese* (1925) and Frederick Philip Grove’s *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), moves on through Sinclair Ross’ *As for Me and My House* (1941) and episodes in Margaret Laurence, Joy Kogawa, and Hiromi Goto, and enters the twenty-first century with novels such as Lee Gowan’s *Confession* (2009), a story of religion, delusion, and murder set in a town called Broken Head in Saskatchewan. Another regional grouping is “Southern Ontario Gothic,” a subgenre marked by a focus on the repressions and claustrophobic terrors of small towns surrounded by bleak landscapes, which may be compared, in some respects, to American Southern Gothic (see *southern gothic*). The phrase was coined by Margaret Atwood (1992: 199) and Graeme Gibson (1973: 138) to describe the work of authors such as Robertson Davies, Alice Munro, Matt Cohen, Marian Engel, James Reaney, Timothy Findley, and Graeme Gibson. Among these authors, it is perhaps Munro who receives the most critical attention as an author of Canadian Gothic: her fine short stories exhibit a distinctive combination of the domestic and the uncanny (see *uncanny, the*).


Canadian film directors have produced some of the most significant recent manifestations of contemporary Gothic. David Cronenberg’s exploration of damaged or monstrous bodies is particularly striking in *Dead Ringers* (1988), a horror film about identical twin gynecologists, and *Crash* (1996), set in Toronto and focusing on characters who fetishize car accidents. *Margaret’s Museum* (1995), directed by Mort Ransen, unfolds in a Cape Breton mining community and traces the mental breakdown of a girl whose father, brother, and husband all die in the pit. Atom Egoyan’s *Exotica* (1994), set in a sinister Toronto strip-club, concerns obsession, abuse, murder, and revenge. Lynne Stopkewich’s *Kissed* (1996), about necrophilia, is based on a short story by fellow Canadian Barbara Gowdy. *The Divine Ryans* (1999), directed by Stephen Reynolds and adapted from a novel by Canadian Wayne Johnston, centers on a family-run funeral parlor in St. John’s, Newfoundland. Thom Fitzgerald’s film *The Hanging Garden* (1997) has a dual plotline emphasizing the different possible outcomes of the gay protagonist’s life: in one version, the teenaged Sweet William hangs himself as a result of his parents’ rejection of him; in the other he lives to adulthood and confronts his troubled family.

Themes of homosexuality are again combined with Gothic motifs in the work of some contemporary dramatists, notably Michel-Marc Bouchard and Brad Fraser. Among other Canadian dramatists whose work features the grotesque and supernatural are Jean-Pierre Ronfard, founder of the Théâtre Experimental de Montréal, and First Nations writers Daniel David Moses and Tomson Highway. In the work of Moses and Highway, as in autobiographies and fictions by a number of Native, ethnic minority, and white authors (Maria Campbell, Shani Mootoo, Ann-Marie MacDonald, Michael Ondaatje), monstrosity and terror are used to explore issues of racial identity and racially motivated violence.

The imagery, plotlines, and motifs of Gothic occur with particular frequency in modern historical fiction. The *Trilogie de l’âge sombre* (1968–70) by one of the most widely read and translated Québécois authors, Roch Carrier, consists of novels set in rural Quebec during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and combines realistic historical detail with myth, fantasy, and the grotesque. Leonard
Cohen’s controversial postmodern novel *Beautiful Losers* (1966) combines the story of the seventeenth-century “Iroquois Virgin,” Catherine Tekakwitha, with that of the decadent modern historian who is obsessed by her. Jane Urquart’s several historical novels are densely intertextual and refer in particular to the classics of Victorian Gothic. In the work of these authors, along with numerous others, the national past provides rich possibilities for the elaboration of a Canadian Gothic aesthetic.

SEE ALSO: Atwood, Margaret; Imperial Gothic; Sensation Fiction; Southern Gothic; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING

Angela Carter (1940–92) is one of the most studied late-twentieth-century British Gothic writers and influenced a generation of women authors interested in the Gothic, including Margaret Atwood, Jeanette Winterson, Fay Weldon, and Sarah Waters. She produced nine novels, each of which is crammed with an extraordinary range of ideas, themes, and allusions; several collections of short stories; a number of works of nonfiction; edited collections of fairy stories; children’s stories; and radio plays. Her fiction might be described as a fusion of Gothic, horror, fantasy, and myth.

The various schools of thought that have emerged in Gothic studies offer different critical labels by which Carter’s use of Gothic conventions might be described, including female Gothic (Moers 1976: 93), feminist Gothic and postfeminist Gothic (Brabon and Genz 2007), and post-Gothic (Peach 2009: 22–5). The concepts of “female Gothic,” a term coined by Ellen Moers (1976: 93), and “feminist Gothic” emerged in the wake of second-wave feminism in the 1960s and were associated with the women’s movement of that decade, which was the period in which Carter herself came to maturity. The term “postfeminist Gothic” might be seen as continuing the strand of power feminism from this time, associated with feminists such as Naomi Wolf, but it is a moot point as to whether postfeminist Gothic, like Carter’s own work, evolved from or in conflict with feminist Gothic. In the eyes of postfeminist criticism, female Gothic and feminist Gothic have become associated with oversimplified readings of Gothic conventions, especially regarding the innocence of the Gothic heroine and the universality of structures of domination – key themes in Carter’s own fiction (Brabon and Génz 2007: 6–7).

Carter’s Gothic is based on interpretations of late-eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Gothic texts, such as Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), in which, as Chris Baldick (1993: xiii–xiv) has pointed out, the “imprisoning house” is a symbol, and manifestation, of patriarchy. The Gothic heroine as the victim of an imprisoning patriarchy is a dominant motif in Carter’s fairy stories, such as *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979); novels that are based on fairy stories, such as *The Magic Toyshop* (1967); and texts centered on apocryphal fantasies, such as *Heroes and Villains* (1969). In these works, Carter recognizes that the Gothic house, and the women who occupy it, encapsulate deep-rooted cultural anxieties about women’s domestic situation and about women’s lives generally under patriarchy. Gina Wisker has said, in a discussion of Carter’s work, that “contemporary women Gothic and horror writers engage with the frightening cultural legacy and claustrophobic spaces characteristic of this enduringly popular form” (Wisker 1997: 118). She points out that “the living doll is the central conceit of *The Magic Toyshop*” (121), in which an orphaned teenager moves into a home controlled by her oppressive uncle and puppet master, and that “The Bloody Chamber” is a “rewriting of the Bluebeard legend, the archetypal fantasy of male control over women” (122).

Readings of the Gothic that see the Gothic heroine simply as an innocent victim and structures of domination as universal do not rest easily with those parts of Carter’s work that complicate and question the aggressor and victim binarism and examine a diverse range of dominating structures, including those in *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and *Nights at the Circus* (1984), which feature women subjugated by other women. In this regard, her fiction appears to be postfeminist rather than feminist Gothic. In arguing for the concept of postfeminist Gothic, Benjamin Brabon, drawing on the work of Diane Long Hoeveler, highlights how the Gothic heroine “adopts a subject position that embraces the abusive power of patriarchy, reveling in the violence exacted upon her” (Brabon 2007: 59). Hoeveler’s psychoanalytic critique of female masochism in Gothic fiction is close to the postfeminist
deployment of Gothic convention in Carter’s fiction. Hoeveler argues that the Gothic heroine employs “passive-aggressive strategies” (Hoeveler 1998: 13) to maneuver herself into positions where she will be the subject of further abuse. This is a recurring topic in Carter’s work, explored, for example, in Heroes and Villains, Love (1971), and The Passion of New Eve.

In Carter’s Gothic writing, the emphasis frequently falls on the psychology of masochism, especially the way in which it involves, as Deleuze says, “an indefinite awaiting of pleasure and an intense expectation of pain” (Deleuze 1971: 63), which Brabon sees as important to the role of the Gothic heroine as victim (Brabon 2007: 59–60). An example of this in Carter’s work is the way in which Annabel in Love maneuvers herself into a situation where Lee will abuse her, tying her hands with his belt and beating her for striking him because he took her queen in a game of chess. The masochistic pleasure that she desires is delayed until the beating is over and, alone in her bedroom, she can stroke her bruises. The whipping of Leilah in The Passion of New Eve is similarly the result of her maneuvering herself into a situation in which she will be abused. Both Annabel and Leilah allow themselves to be tied by, and in Leilah’s case beaten with, a belt. Carter’s work is more obviously postfeminist than feminist fiction in its focus on how the Gothic heroine, as manipulative masochist, emasculates the male; in Love, Lee is left “weeping, a despicable object” (Carter 1971: 40) and Leilah is beaten, as she knew she would be, for forcing Evelyn’s limp penis inside her and taking, as it were, an orgasm from him against his will.

Carter’s approach to sadomasochism in her Gothic writing privileges the role of the observer, as Sarah Henstra has pointed out, which allows for the exploration of the experience of both sadism and masochism (Henstra 1999: 109) in complex narratives of unexpected twists and turns, such as The Passion of New Eve. In this way, Carter’s novels undermine the archetypes that she argued, in her cultural essay The Sadeian Woman (1979), turned pornography into “a tableau of falsification” (Carter 1979b: 8). The role of the Gothic heroine in Carter’s fiction is thus further complicated by her emphasis, to which Nicola Pitchford has drawn attention, on the different identities and multiple discourses that can be occupied by any one person and inhabited by any one body (Pitchford 2002: 178). It is no coincidence that Leilah in The Passion of New Eve is a striptease performer, who consents to sadomasochistic “play” and reappears at the end of the novel as a guerrilla fighter, and is a combination of Carter’s Justine and Juliette in The Sadeian Woman. Indeed, The Sadeian Woman and Carter’s Gothic are part of the same project, in which Carter explores the relationship between cultural discourses that determine sexuality and identity and concepts of performance and role play.

Although Carter’s postfeminist Gothic has roots in her interpretation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic fiction and in twentieth-century Gothic films, including adaptations of the Dracula and Frankenstein stories, a further influence on her fiction was American Gothic. The work of nineteenth-century American Gothic novelists, especially Herman Melville and Edgar Allan Poe, proved especially influential. Their preoccupations and locations not only constituted an American version of the Gothic but also drew extensively on German Romantic literature and British authors, such as Thomas Carlyle, who were themselves influenced by German Romanticism. But, while Carter’s use of Gothic is indebted to her own personal reading in Gothic texts, as well as her passion for cinema, it was undoubtedly mediated through Leslie Fiedler’s important critical work of 1960, Love and Death in the American Novel (Peach 2009: 21), from which she quotes in the epigraph to her fourth novel, Heroes and Villains.

Parody, exaggeration, and the grotesque are key features of Carter’s Gothic and it is clear from the Fiedler passage quoted in the epigraph of Heroes and Villains that Carter’s understanding of Gothic as a parodic and
subversive genre was honed by Fiedler’s study: “The Gothic mode is essentially a form of parody, a way of assailing clichés by exaggerating them to the limit of grotesqueness” (Carter 1969). The expanded summary of American Gothic toward the end of Fiedler’s book is so close to Carter’s own work that it obviously had a significant role in shaping it, as noted by Peach (2009: 21) and Bristow and Broughton (1997: 119). Fiedler’s overview of the Gothic stresses the following conventions that Carter’s fiction follows closely: the substitution of terror for love as a central theme (especially evident in her first novel, Shadow Dance (1966), as well as The Magic Toyshop, Heroes and Villains, and The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman (1972)); the vicarious flirtation with death (which informs the style and content of Love); an aesthetic that replaces the concept of “nothing-in-excess” with the “revolutionary doctrine that nothing succeeds like excess,” which summarizes not only Carter’s early fiction but the longer, later novels Nights at the Circus and Wise Children (1991); and a dedication “to producing nausea, to transcending the limits of taste and endurance” that characterizes Shadow Dance, The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman, The Passion of New Eve, and episodes in the later novel Nights at the Circus (Fiedler 1960: 126).

Terror rather than love constitutes the experience of the majority of Carter’s female characters; for example, Ghislaine in Shadow Dance, who is raped and then has her face slashed by her attacker, who later murders her; Melanie in The Magic Toyshop; Marianne in Heroes and Villains, who is removed from what remains of so-called civilization in a postapocalyptic narrative to live with a people who are perceived as barbarians; and Fevvers in Nights at the Circus, who as a young woman is forced to live and work in a brothel run by the emaciated Madame Schreck. From her beginnings as a writer, Carter was interested in questioning the boundary between the monstrous Other of Gothic fiction and what might be perceived as “normality.” Carter employs the Gothic motif of the monstrous Other to out the monstrosity that she suggests permeates so-called respectable society. Thus, protagonists such as Uncle Philip in The Magic Toyshop and Evelyn in the initial chapters of The Passion of New Eve raise questions about the nature of normality. Attacking the Christmas goose with his carving knife, Uncle Philip, like many Gothic villains, appears to be driven not only by a desire to control and manipulate, which the reader sees in his toy shop, but also by a repressed and violent sexuality evident in his puppet show based on the rape of Leda. These suggestions become even more complex when Philip is compared to Nazi concentration camp guards. Nevertheless, despite Carter’s interest in the blurred boundary between the monstrous Other and “normality,” throughout her work there is evident enjoyment in recreating and recontextualizing the macabre side of the Gothic, which is reinvigorated in a gallery of characters who are visually and conspicuously Other.

Although there is a significant amount of apparent mimicry and playful mockery in Carter’s fiction, she uses the Gothic to pursue searching cultural criticism. David Punter was one of the first critics to point out that in her Gothic writing there is an engagement with, rather than a rejection of, realism. He argues that Carter does not parody the “real” world but exposes “some of the ways in which the real world habitually parodies itself” (Punter 1996: 141). Feminist approaches to Carter’s exploitation of the parodic and subversive nature of the Gothic, such as Wisker (1997), have stressed her exploration of the oppressive reality of women’s lives in patriarchal societies. Thus, normality, environment, and individuals in Carter’s fiction reflect the multidimensionality of the Gothic that is encapsulated in one of its most prominent, and most parodied, symbols: the Gothic mansion. Lucie Armitt points out that “the overarching structure of the Gothic mansion is sub-divided up into a series of three dimensional worlds within worlds: rooms containing closets, closets containing locked chests, locked chests containing secret drawers, secret drawers containing ticket boxes” (Armitt 1997:
Carter’s work, especially her longer, later novels, exploits the “worlds within worlds” spatiality of Gothic fiction. There is a recurring tension in Carter’s Gothic between her delight in parodying a genre that was in itself subversive, continually pushing against limits of aesthetics, form, and taste, and her critiques of the discourses and assumptions that constituted the social norm. This is evident, for example, in the way in which she develops two preoccupations which, according to Fiedler’s book, dominate American Gothic writing: an evil misogynistic masculinity and the disintegration of subjectivity into a narcissistic solipsism. The representation of an evil masculinity as a kind of shadow to normal life is evident in the most memorable two-dimensional male characters in her work written in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Honeybuzzard in Shadow Dance, Uncle Philip in The Magic Toyshop, the Count in Heroes and Villains, and Zero in The Passion of New Eve. This is especially noticeable in what happens to Ghislaine, as a victim of male violence, in Shadow Dance. After returning to haunt Morris, she is murdered near a plastic crucifix on which Honeybuzzard had planned to take pornographic photographs of her. The shadow constituted by characters such as Honeybuzzard and the monstrous deeds of which he is capable recall Fiedler’s argument in American Gothic that “there is a sense in which the evil principle is mythically male” and that “it is the Shadow projected as male which most impresses itself upon the imagination” (Fiedler 1960: 125).

In Carter’s Love, the influence of Edgar Allan Poe’s work is evident in the exploration of narcissistic desire through the character of Annabel, a version of the Gothic “doomed beloved” figure. Although she never admitted it, it is very unlikely that, in writing a novel with characters named Annabel and Lee, Carter did not have Poe’s poem “Annabel Lee” in mind, especially as the poem, like her novel, is concerned with reshaping the world inwardly according to an unhealthy oversubjective awareness of life, death, time, and space. Punter’s argument that the Gothic mode is “related to perceptions of the failure of accounts of the world and the mind predicated on the supremacy of subjectivity” (Punter 1996: 143) is especially relevant to this novel and to Poe’s poem. But once again the representation of Annabel recalls Fiedler’s interpretation of American Gothic, particularly his account of the “doomed beloved.” In her disheveled appearance, Annabel seems to reflect Fiedler’s observation that the doomed beloved “bears the stigmata of a tabooed figure” and is marked as “the carrier of madness and death” (Fiedler 1960: 385).

Carter’s approach to traditional Gothic protagonists – such as the Gothic heroine, the doomed beloved, and the monstrous Other – as complex cultural constructions suggests that she is a postfeminist rather than a feminist Gothic writer. This is reflected in her representation of the phallic mother in The Passion of New Eve and the monstrous feminine in Nights at the Circus as limited and limiting expressions of power feminism. Despite what they appear to achieve in terms of their own liberty, these two figures are actually shaped by the discourses that constitute female oppression, which they seek to transform but unwittingly embody. In the former novel, Evelyn, when a captive in an all-female community, is castrated by a somewhat masculine mother figure, identified with a phallic knife and a cruelly deep baritone voice. The scene itself exemplifies how Carter’s work is often written at the permeable boundary between parody and horror. Mother makes sure that Evelyn is awake for the operation, and there are echoes of Victorian sadomasochistic pornography in which a male is whipped by a surrogate mother. Within this context, Mother’s baritone voice is significant because, as Steven Marcus (1964: 258) says, references to masculine attributes suggest that behind the violent phallic mother is the father. The novel might be seen as exemplifying how in the late twentieth century, as Benjamin Brabon argues, “the symbol historically associated with masculinity – the phallus – has become a ghostly form for men” (Brabon
The link between the biological organ and the cultural construction of its significance in definitions of masculinity and also femininity (especially the separation of the phallus from the human) is a recurring theme in Carter’s Gothic. In *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, Desiderio and the Count enter a brothel wearing costumes that hide their faces, which signify their identity and humanity, but leave their genitals grossly exposed. In *The Passion of New Eve*, the phallus is a symbol of aggressive masculinity that is linked to cultural expectations determining the appearance and behavior of men. In the monstrous figure of Zero, whose desires for a transvestite suggest his sexual ambivalence, and in the aftermath of Evelyn’s operation, the phallus is a specter that haunts the, initially, uncompromisingly masculine protagonists. The internal drama of *The Passion of New Eve* is rooted in one of the central concerns of American Gothic: the survival of the cultural specters of the past when the myths that have sustained them have collapsed.

Like much American Gothic, especially the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, Carter’s fiction is characterized by a sense of postmodern game-playing. The reader is drawn into what the author encourages him/her to think of as artifice. The excess and transgression in Carter’s early work exemplify this, as in the brothel scene in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* in which monkeys are turned into living candelabra, and prostitutes, who are kept in cages, are mutations: part human, part vegetable, and part clockwork. In a later text, *Nights at the Circus*, Carter’s Gothic is postfeminist and postmodern in that meaning is generated by the self-conscious interplay of visual and verbal signs and the deliberate interweaving of intertextual puns and allusions. In *Nights at the Circus*, at one level Fevvers is a product of the monstrous feminine that emerged in feminist Gothic. But the notion of artifice that we find in Carter’s early fiction and in American Gothic writers such as Poe is developed in this novel into a feminist aesthetic based on artifice. In reinventing herself as a winged trapeze artist, half bird and half human, Fevvers inverts the way in which, traditionally, men had more opportunities than women to invent themselves.

Much recent criticism of Carter’s work – even that which avoids terminology such as postfeminist Gothic, such as Munford (2007) – suggests that she is a postfeminist Gothic writer. Munford argues that Carter’s early female Gothic narratives “most frequently draw on representations of the Gothic heroine as orphaned, passive and masochistic adolescent” without recognizing that Carter eschews the oppressor and victim binary of feminist Gothic. She is equally cautious about the concept of “power feminism,” represented by Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* (Munford 2007: 64, 67), which “like ‘victim feminism’, is similarly defined by the structures within which it is enacted” (Munford 2007: 67). But, in arguing that Carter “moves beyond the narrativisation of the Gothic character of woman’s experience under patriarchy, and refuses an unproblematic understanding of gendered power relations” (Munford 2007: 67), she suggests that Carter is a postfeminist rather than feminist Gothic author. Avoiding the term “postfeminist Gothic” in her conclusion, she maintains that the “interrelationship between feminist Gothic and Gothic discourse [in Carter’s work] offers up the possibilities of reading beyond narratives of victimhood and victimisation” (Munford 2007: 67). In “reading beyond narrativisation of victimhood and victimisation,” Carter’s fiction reinvigorates many of the stock Gothic motifs, linking the Gothic trope of decay, for example, with the demise of the British empire, through the discarded relics and antiques in the first novels and grotesque parody in her later work, where, for example, the tattooed map of the empire on the torso of the body builder Gorgeous George in *Nights at the Circus* slips down to other parts of his body as he gets older.

It is now recognized that Carter’s fiction has an intellectual depth and seriousness that, for earlier critics, was belied by its excess and flamboyance. At its heart, there is an engagement
with Gothic themes, images, and symbols that goes beyond conventional Gothic narratives, for example of victimhood and victimization, and secures Carter’s position as one of the first postfeminist Gothic writers.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Poe, Edgar Allan.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Collins, Wilkie
LAURENCE TALAIRACH-VIELMAS

Born in London, William Collins (1824–89) became known to the reading public as Wilkie Collins, his middle name having been given to him as a compliment to his godfather, the painter Sir David Wilkie. Novelist, essayist, and playwright, Collins was anticonformist and unconventional—physically, socially, and morally. Short, with small hands and feet, disproportionately large head and shoulders, and a bulge on the right side of his forehead, he constantly revolted against bourgeois codes and morals, living with two women—Caroline Graves and Martha Rudd—not either of whom he ever married. As a child he traveled to France and Italy and grew up in an artistic environment.

He left school in 1841 to work for a tea merchant in London’s Strand while writing his first short story, “The Last Stage Coachman,” which appeared in the Illuminated Magazine in August 1843. His first novel, Iolani was never published in his lifetime. His second historical novel, Antonina, impressed his father, who allowed him to read law and qualify as a barrister. However, his first published work was his father’s biography, Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., RA (1848). It was in 1851 that the painter Augustus Egg introduced Collins to Charles Dickens (see CHARLES DICKENS). Collins then performed parts for him, and wrote articles and fiction. His contributions first appeared in Bentley’s Miscellany, The Leader, and Dickens’ Household Words and All the Year Round. When Basil was published by Richard Bentley in 1852, Collins’ reputation was established. The novel was undoubtedly a forerunner of his later more sensational works. It was followed by Hide and Seek in 1854; a collection of short stories, After Dark, in 1856; and two novels, A Rogue’s Life (1856) and The Dead Secret (1857). His fame was sealed with the publication of The Woman in White, first serialized in All the Year Round in November 1859. The novel launched the literary genre of sensation fiction (see SENSATION FICTION), which grounded its plots upon revising late-eighteenth-century Gothic fiction and transposing Gothic elements into modern settings. According to Jenny Bourne Taylor, the question of whether the new literary genre represented “a modern adaptation of earlier Gothic or romance forms or a degenerated sub-species of them—and thus a morbid deviation from a dominant mode” prevailed in most of the literary criticism dealing with sensation fiction (Taylor 1988: 5–6).

Throughout his literary career, Collins endlessly adapted late-eighteenth-century Gothic motifs and plot-patterns to Victorian modernity. His novels and short stories made bountiful use of usurped identities, superstitious and ghost-haunted characters, or resurrected protagonists, and their fragmented narratives, using multiple narrators and embedding letters and manuscripts, shared a lot with those of Gothic fiction. More precisely, Collins’ fiction took Gothic themes and presented them through the prism of contemporary scientific, medical, and psychological discourses, from debates revolving around insanity to those dealing with heredity and transmission. Because the Gothic deals with illegal and immoral practices, such as the violation of taboos and the breaking of boundaries, Collins used the literary genre as a sensational terrain to experiment with up-to-date frissons. Increasingly fueled by evolutionary theory, Collins’ novels revised the conventions of the late
eighteenth-century genre, coloring his sensational plots with ever-new experimental scientific discoveries and psychological theories. Degeneration theory, in particular, gradually became a leading issue in the course of Collins’ career, whether or not Collins actually denounced or appropriated determinism and transmission theories (see degeneration).

Indeed, if all of Collins’ characters are haunted by the sins of the past, Collins’ later novels resonate far more with Darwinian anxieties. In his novels of the 1870s and 1880s, the Gothic motto of “the sins of the fathers visited on the children,” which appeared as early as Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto: a Gothic Story (1764), functions as a deterministic threat, and many of Collins’ protagonists are marked by symptoms of degeneration, ranging from melancholy, nervousness, and monomania to delusional behavior, insanity, and epilepsy.

In fact, the world of the medical becomes a laboratory in which to examine villainy and crime and to study moral choice. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the dehumanizing aspect of medical study reverberated especially in debates concerning experimentation: more and more medical practitioners seemed to be breaking taboos, from the treatments related to insanity, in particular, often linked to electrical experimentation, to animal experimentation. This is why, with medicine and the emerging neurosciences as modern weapons to control or unleash unruly bodies and minds, rebellion and revolt became increasingly located (and dramatically staged) in medical institutions: the very place where novelists could find fertile sources of inspiration and swap traditional aristocratic villains, dusty ghosts, and derelict castles for ambitious scientists, helpless patients, and newly painted asylums or laboratories. Thus crimes, pathology, and the medical world inform Collins’ novels. Collins’ characters are melancholic, hysterical, or epileptic, revamping Gothic’s sensitive subjects. They suffer from heart complaints or blindness, undergo surgery, or take drugs. Though William Baker’s (2002) reconstruction of Collins’ library shows that Collins owned very few medical books, citations and allusions to medical figures and textbooks appear over and over again throughout his novels, from John Elliotson and William Carpenter in The Moonstone (1868) to David Ferrier in Heart and Science (1883).

Of course, Collins’ fiction completely reconfigured Gothic literary stereotypes. The cursed heroes of Gothic fiction are changed into obsessive detectives (as in Basil and The Woman in White) and the victimized maidens are lunatic asylum inmates or modern sleuths (The Woman in White); the femmes fatales do not make a pact with the devil but with their beauty advisors (Armadale 1866); the buried manuscripts recording the crimes of the past are turned into a series of modern documents presented in court or offered to the public as a play (The Woman in White; The Haunted Hotel 1866); supernatural curses result from altered states of mind, while ghosts are the products of scientific experiments (Man and Wife 1870, Jezebel’s Daughter 1880). More significantly, if some of Collins’ novels define villains as degenerate creatures or individuals biologically predetermined to commit crimes (Poor Miss Finch 1872, The Legacy of Cain 1888) – thus following current criminological discourse – others frequently feature scientist-protagonists, from doctors and physicians to psychologists and chemists, as modern representations of the Gothic villain (The Woman in White, The Haunted Hotel, Heart and Science 1883). Indeed, Collins capitalized on the ambiguous status of practitioners and resorted to a whole range of medical figures from general practitioners, surgeons, anatomists, and quacks to experimental chemists.

Moreover, the medical world is also frequently used as a means of probing social questions, the Gothic framework highlighting anxieties related to power and control. As a case in point, Armadale contrasts a superstitious male character and a modern villainess to revise the theme of cursed ancestry. However, the dream manuscript which warns the male characters of the potentially dangerous influence of the villainess, Lydia Gwilt, suggests less
how the male characters may be haunted by their fathers’ sins, than it hints at the fatality to which Collins’ female character seems to be subjected. In fact, the story seems to deal less with the question of whether, just like his father, Ozias Midwinter will be fatally led to murder Allan Armadale, than whether Lydia Gwilt will successfully escape the role that men have literally “dreamt” for her. Like Walpole’s Manfred, the more Collins’ villainess tries to control her fate, the more she loses control of the plots she schemes. Though shaped after the model of famous contemporary female poisoners and well versed in the modern art of applying make-up, Lydia Gwilt has in fact no agency. Unlike the prototypical femme fatale and much-feared castrating woman of the male Gothic tradition, in the vein of Matilda in Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796), Collins’ villainess is gradually tamed, killed, and erased from the narrative. Ironically, as she eventually plots her last murder in a sanatorium, Gwilt is subjected to Collins’ quack doctor, who turns her into one of his patients, underlining how the power of the medical – much more than the power of the past and its ability to determine the present – defines modern woman’s fate.

The growing impact of the medical on Collins’ fiction is also palpable in the evolution of his Gothic heroines. Like Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie in The Woman in White, in Poor Miss Finch Lucilla is a stereotypical victimized maiden. The blind girl is physiologically imprisoned in a world of darkness, shadows, and monsters before she recovers her sight after an operation. Much more powerfully than in his earlier novels, Collins demonizes disease, even more so by using epilepsy as a sure index of immorality. Indeed, Lucilla’s fiancé is an epileptic patient whose medical treatment has changed his color into a blackish blue and who deceives her by exchanging his identity with his twin brother. Yet, besides playing upon male deception, the novel also constructs medical practice as a barbaric and “Gothic” activity, since Collins’ helpless heroine agrees to submit her body to the knife of Herr Grosse, a German eye surgeon. Prefiguring the mad scientists in Collins’ novels of the 1880s, the eye surgeon – though not the Gothic villain of the narrative – is nevertheless figured as a potentially dangerous character. Simultaneously showing fears related both to the medical practitioner and to the epileptic patient, Collins reworks and transforms villainy, as he steeps his Gothic narrative in late nineteenth-century medical, criminological, and sociocultural discourses.

Likewise, Collins’ obsessive characters also follow the evolution of scientific and medical advances. They range from monomaniacs, as in Basil (1852), “Mad Monkton” (1855), and The Woman in White, to mad scientists and their Faustian quests (as Colonel Herncastle in The Moonstone; Baron Rivar in The Haunted Hotel; Paracelsus and Fontaine, the two experimental chemists in Jezebel’s Daughter 1880; and Nathan Benjulia, the vivisectionist, in Heart and Science). In so doing, Collins’ fiction underlines how the laboratory replaces the medieval castle and points to (human) experimentation as a new source of fear. In Jezebel’s Daughter and Heart and Science, Collins’ physicians bear no resemblance to the benevolent outcast fascinated by mental physiology (Ezra Jennings) or the tricky practitioner playing with laudanum (Dr. Candy) found in The Moonstone. The devious practices of Count Fosco, the charming villain of The Woman in White, pale in comparison with the perverse medical experiments encountered in Collins’ late novels. While undertones of the old anatomist visiting the graveyard at night to dig up his study materials are part and parcel of Jezebel’s Daughter, in which a living-dead female character barely escapes live burial, Heart and Science expresses Collins’ virulent opposition to vivisection and features a mad scientist who tests his theories on a cataleptic young girl. As both novels revisit literary stereotypes, they provide an insight into late Victorian constructions of the mind, especially subjecting the female mind to the scientist’s cruelty – or even saw and knife. The Gothic heroine is remodeled into an anatomist’s
collins, wilkie

patient; her brain serves to carry on experiments on woman’s weak will, as defined by most alienists of the time. Other novels feature brain surgery, such as The New Magdalen (1873), in which Grace Roseberry is injured by a shell-wound on the head and undergoes a surgical operation, or The Black Robe (1881), in which a silver plate is placed on the right parietal bone of Emma Winterfield’s skull after her fall in the circus. These novels, like The Moonstone, Poor Miss Finch, and The Haunted Hotel, point out the period’s growing interest in brain functions and cerebral localization and the terrifying potential of experimental brain surgery.

Collins’ revision of the figure of the Gothic villain in the light of contemporary psychology and criminal anthropology, shifting from the field of demonology to that of criminology, is furthered in many of his later novels. The Haunted Hotel reworks the motif of the Gothic curse and the image of impending doom to illustrate modern conceptions of the human mind, since the villainess’ premonitions hint at hidden trace memories – marks of reversion which anticipate her murderous instincts. Similarly, Collins’ final completed novel, The Legacy of Cain, explores how the issues of inheritance and transmission, of cursed legacies, become increasingly interwoven with the concept of degeneration. Though the theme of degeneration permeates most of Collins’ narratives, it literally informs The Legacy of Cain in which the plot revolves around the heroine’s inheritance of morbid propensities. But if Eunice’s appearance and habits suggest that she has inherited the taint of criminality from her criminal mother – even more so when she is visited by the ghost of her executed mother who urges her to kill her sister Helena, who has captured her fiancé’s affections – Eunice controls herself far more than her sister, who is revealed to be a poisoner and sentenced to two years’ imprisonment. Whether Collins’ ghostly apparition may allegorize biological determinism or merely be a sensational drug-induced hallucination, his cursed heroine, pursued by the ghost of fatalism, nevertheless renders medical science and criminal anthropology uncertain.

Hence, Collins’ novels increasingly use medical elements to push further the limits of verisimilitude in line with advances in physiology. In Collins’ early novels unstable mental states and psychological morbidity, maniacs, half-wits, and entranced characters pave the way for his later novels in which the fields of psychiatry and criminology bring the Gothic up to date. Somnambulism and mesmerism (as in The Moonstone) give way to suspended animation (Jezebel’s Daughter) in the creation of the sensational plot twist. Probing in a new way the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate, between life and death, Collins manipulates Gothic archetypes and peoples his late novels with animated corpses and death-in-life states which effectively replace his earlier ghostly figures. Ever more rooted in evolutionary discourse, his novels follow the evolution of psychiatric discourse, thereby reconstructing late eighteenth-century villainy through medical discourses which equate moral and mental dysfunction. Collins’ “materialist supernaturalism” (Taylor 1988: 6), and his obsession with pathology, manifestly following in the footsteps of Edgar Allan Poe or Mary Shelley, thus shaped fresh and up-to-date horror narratives which heralded many fin-de-siècle novels, such as Bram Stoker’s focus on atavistic regression in Dracula (1897) or Robert Louis Stevenson’s reworking of the Gothic theme of the double in chemical terms in The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) – novels typifying the incursion of science into late Victorian horror narratives. His mad scientists will also re-emerge in H. G. Wells’ fiction as doctors experimenting on their patients with even more cruelty. Likewise, his play on the mysterious East and the threat of supernatural intrusion, as in “I Say No” (1884), in which a superstitious West Indian heiress resorts to witchcraft and black magic and indulges in primitive rituals, will surge up again in novels such as Rider Haggard’s She: A Story of Adventure (1887) or Richard Marsh’s The Beetle (1897).
comic gothic

SEE ALSO: Crime; Degeneration; Dickens, Charles; Sensation Fiction.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Comic Gothic

SUE ZLOSNIK AND AVRIL HORNER

It is perhaps no coincidence that the Gothic novel emerged at about the same time as opera, melodrama, and the circus, since all evoke a highly emotional and complex response to the modern world (see MELODRAMA; OPERA). This response involves both laughter and fear. However, most orthodox accounts of Gothic do not sufficiently acknowledge its hybridity, which is signaled by a juxtaposition of incongruous textual and surface effects. Such incongruity opens up the possibility of a comic turn that deliberately exploits the fragile boundary between comedy and horror. Rather than setting up a binary between “serious” and “comic” Gothic texts, then, it is perhaps best to think of the Gothic as a spectrum that, at one end, produces horror writing containing moments of comic hysteria (for example, the intrusion of “King Laugh” as identified by Van Helsing in Bram Stoker’s Dracula) and, at the other, produces works in which there are clear signals that nothing is to be taken seriously (such as The Rocky Horror Picture Show).

The hybridity of Gothic makes possible a mixed response to the loss of transcendence that characterizes the modern condition. If, as Peter Brooks (1995) suggests, melodrama and the Gothic gesture theatrically toward a lost transcendence, then perhaps the comic within the Gothic offers a position of detachment and skepticism toward such cultural nostalgia, foregrounding a self-reflexivity and dialectical impulse intrinsic to the modern subject. Such a perspective challenges the cultural twinning of the Gothic and the psychoanalytic: it is not for nothing that Stella Gibbons sends Cousin Judith, the fixated Gothic mother, off for a luxurious bout of psychoanalytic treatment at the end of Cold Comfort Farm (1932). In similar vein, Patrick McGrath shows us the founding fathers of psychoanalysis literally cut down to size as little manikins in “The Skewer” (1988).

Gothic has been a hybrid mode of writing from the beginning. Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto, published in 1764, is usually described as the first Gothic novel in English. Yet in this tale of death, incest, malevolent intrigue, and the supernatural, Walpole offers his readers several moments of farcical humor, combining the uncanny and the melodramatic to comic effect. One of these takes place when Bianca, a young female servant, expresses her terror at having seen a supernaturally large hand within the confines of the castle:

“Oh! The hand! The giant! The hand! – Support me! I am terrified out of my senses” cried Bianca; “I will not sleep in the castle tonight. Where shall I go? My things may come after me tomorrow. – Would I had been content to wed Francesco! This comes of ambition!” (Walpole 1996: 102)
Bianca’s servant perspective, with her concern about her “things,” strikes an incongruous note of practicality and materialism in the midst of high feeling presented so intensely. Her immediate concern about what she owns (not much, presumably) and what she should, or should not, strive for in a rapidly changing social world, comically reflects the larger themes of inheritance, primogeniture, property, marriages of convenience, and aristocratic lineage that inform the main plot. While these larger themes reflect the Marriage Act of 1753, devised to award ambitious parents the power to prevent their children marrying clandestinely, Bianca’s response to “the hand” comically relativizes any anxiety associated with it. There are many such moments in Walpole’s novel and he obviously delighted in them: writing to his friend Elie de Beaumont, he remarked “If I make you laugh, for I cannot flatter myself that I shall make you cry, I shall be content” (quoted in Clery 1995: xxii). Anne Williams (2000) sees the larger-than-life qualities of Walpole’s novel as closely related to opera, of which Walpole was a devotee. Both new forms were attacked during the eighteenth century by contemporary reviewers for ignoring generic conventions, for embracing surface rather than depth, for delight in excess. Clara Reeve, for example, criticized Walpole for excess in her preface to The Old English Baron (1778).

However, once we accept that the roots of the Gothic lie in the comic as well as the tragic, we are able to see Gothic texts rather differently. Ann Radcliffe’s The Italian (1797), for example, not only perpetuates the emphasis on property and lineage set up in The Castle of Otranto, but also metaphorically draws attention several times to the close relationship between horror and laughter. Indeed, Victor Sage cites Ann Radcliffe’s The Italian as “a very clear example of the peculiarly close relationship between horror and humour in the Gothic novel” (Sage 1994: 190). Late in The Italian, Schedoni and Ellena, guided by a peasant, arrive in Rome and pass close by the walls of the Inquisition building. Here they come across a fair where peasants “in their holiday cloaths” [sic] are enjoying themselves. Forced to stop near a stage “on which some persons grotesquely dressed, were performing,” Ellena and Schedoni witness a tragedy turned to comedy by the actors’ “strange gestures” and “uncouth recitation” (Radcliffe 1991: 274). This scene, with its mingling of nightmare, farce, coincidence, comedy, and terror, perhaps suggests an implicit awareness that a mixture of emotional opposites such as mirth and terror allows the Gothic, like melodrama and opera, to reflect the psychic world more accurately than realist modes. In this sense, the strange player scene in The Italian offers both a corrective to the competing demand for realism in the new form of the novel and an early understanding that theatricality, comedy, and melodrama are essential weapons in the Gothic text’s rejection of naturalism as a dominant mode for representing modern subjectivity. It is not surprising, then, to find that authors such as Charlotte Brontë (in, for example, her description of the midnight fête scene in chapter 38 of Villette) and George Meredith (in the “living statue” scene in The Adventures of Harry Richmond) chose to preserve this form of creative eclecticism in an attempt to temper the claims of realism.

In addition, if Gothic demonstrates the horror attaching to a shifting and unstable world, it also, in its comic and ludic aspects, celebrates the possibilities thereby released. Certain novels by more recent writers very clearly demonstrate this celebratory embrace of Gothic instability. Muriel Spark’s ebullient and quasi-demonic Dougal Douglas in The Ballad of Peckham Rye (1960) emerges victorious from his encounter with the forces of goodness, determinedly pursuing his picaresque career as a free spirit at the end of the novel but not before having wreaked havoc in working-class Peckham. Acting as what we might call a catalytic converter within a novel of comic Gothic turns, Dougal is the uncanny presence through which Spark probes the stifling constraints of the vestiges of a conservative Christian morality in a community in
thrall to material values. The oblique reference to Blake’s vision of the angel in the tree on Peckham Rye, made through another character’s sudden awareness that “there was another world than this” (prompted by the Rye “looking like a cloud of green and gold, the people seeming to ride upon it”), invokes a previous text to indicate loss of the deepest kind, but within an overall context of comic irreverence (Spark 1963: 111). Hilary Mantel’s Fludd (1989) also contains an ambiguous and uncanny figure; Fludd intervenes in a Gothic world of Catholic oppression and anxiety in order to set others free. Based on the real Fludd, a scholar and alchemist born in 1574, Hilary Mantel’s character, with his “bloodless,” “pointed” fingers and his “corps-like pallor” is able to enter the minds of those around him: Miss Dempsey experiences “a whisper at the back of her mind, and only he could have put it there: I have come to transform you, transformation is my business” (Mantel 1990: 45–6, 106, 54–5). His earlier trade of “releasing matter from spirit” (109) has translated itself into releasing spirit from matter and, in awakening Sister Philomena to sexual desire, he frees her from a fossilized religious dogma and the social practices that accompany it. It is no coincidence that both novels are set in the 1950s, Spark and Mantel using comic Gothic to critique the after-effects of World War II which produced an anti-liberal materialist ideology. Writers who parodically appropriate the Gothic not only irreverently target precursive works but also invariably engage critically with aspects of their contemporary world. It is, then, essential to place comic Gothic texts within their historical and cultural moment in order to understand their full import. For example, both Maria Edgeworth’s Castle Rackrent (1800) – which parodies Walpole’s Castle of Otranto – and Eaton Stannard Barrett’s The Heroine (1813) – which parodies mercilessly dozens of contemporary popular Gothic novels – engage with questions of law. Given that Barrett was a lawyer and that Edgeworth was very well acquainted with the sort of legal struggles that define the plot of her best-known work, this is not surprising. Both novels, while hugely entertaining, are concerned with the rapid development of the legal framework in England and Ireland in the eighteenth century. Both works envisage the freedoms which might be accorded to the new legal subject while noting that those very freedoms would also accelerate the destruction of the old order.

It is also clear that certain kinds of parody, in self-consciously foregrounding intertextuality, draw attention to writing itself, so that they offer both a reflection on fiction and the act of writing fictions. Margaret Atwood’s Lady Oracle (1976), for example, is deeply immersed in the negotiations between writing and readings. The relationship between the writing of the main character, Joan Foster, and her life with its plural identities is at the core of the novel and the heart of the maze that is its central metaphor. In the act of writing, Joan penetrates to the “central plot” of her heroine’s maze and her commercial narrative becomes a mode of confrontation with these multiple selves (Atwood 1982: 341). Here, the literature of parody becomes also a literature of irony and a literature of liberation. Thus parody can function as a key aspect of comic Gothic, not in the traditional sense of being parasitic upon an “original” text, but because, through “repetition with critical difference” (Hutcheon 1985: 6) it foregrounds the production of the modern subject through discourse. In this sense, parody can offer Gothic another form of comic turn. This turn frequently allows a fresh perspective on a changing world, one of accommodation rather than terrified apprehension. As the Gothic novel evolved in the late twentieth century, this dialogic and metafictional strain inherent in Gothic writing became even more pronounced, as is evident in the work of authors such as Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, and Patrick McGrath. In the comic turn what we see is an exploitation of the stylized theatricality of the Gothic device, which is always teetering on the edge of self-parody. The result is not so much
abdication of the powers of horror as a process of turning them to creative purpose. This effect is different from the humor inadvertently evoked by the use of outworn devices that simply repeat, but that do so without “critical difference.” Comic Gothic moments, then, invite a conscious, self-reflexive engagement with the Gothic mode that sets up a different kind of contract between the reader and the text, offering a measure of detachment from scenes of pain and suffering that would be disturbing in a different context. Thus the grotesque body in a comic Gothic text does not manifest itself in the horrific corporeality of a Frankenstein’s Creature or an atavistic Hyde, but in the comically presented excess of flesh that constitutes Ruth Patchett in Weldon’s The Life and Loves of a She-Devil (1983), Fevvers in Angela Carter’s Nights at the Circus (1984), and the Dog Woman in Jeanette Winterson’s Sexing the Cherry (1989). Gothic’s tendency to the sinister grotesque is easily converted to the comic flamboyance of the grotesque as excess, particularly during periods of rapid change resulting in a sense of instability and flux. The “surface” elements of such Gothic fictions seem to allow an easy dialectic between the rational and the irrational, emotion and intellect, artificiality and authenticity and, above all, between horror and laughter. Indeed, it is the Gothic’s preoccupation with “surface” that enables it so easily to embrace a comic as well as a tragic perspective, resulting in what Peter Berger has described as a “distinctive diagnosis of the world” (Berger 1997: 34). This “diagnosis” includes a fresh perspective on modernity, seeing it as hugely entertaining and productive as well as threatening.

SEE ALSO: Atwood, Margaret; Melodrama; Opera; Stoker, Bram; Uncanny, The.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING
1 There are strong thematic, structural, aesthetic, cultural, and historical links between the Gothic and comics in Britain and America. These include themes such as appropriation, absorption, and inversion; the use of psychoanalytic and Gothic/horror motifs; structural devices such as embedded narratives, overwriting strategies (“retroactive continuity”), and the problematizing of the texts’ own (non)fictonal status; textual parallels such as comics’ aesthetic of excess and ability to visually shock and horrify; and shared cultural factors such as a strong subcultural status and sense of delegitimation, which has nonetheless allowed for the construction of a canon and reclassification as “literature.”

Appropriation and absorption underpinned the comics industry from the start. The penny dreadfuls (see penny dreadfuls) and pulp magazines that prefigured comics publishing in Britain and America included reprints of Gothic thrillers (such as Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796) and Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764)) alongside new stories, such as The String of Pearls (1846–7), which introduced Sweeney Todd, who was later to appear in his own title (1878) (see magazines). This adaptation of Gothic novels and the reuse of titles and characters prefigured the industry’s propensity to reuse and revisit characters. Appropriation was also apparent in comics’ earliest creative practices: American writers and artists working in this “golden age” (circa 1938–48) were seldom credited by name and freely worked on whichever character or title they were assigned to.

Along similar lines, a subsequent trend in the industry was the revival of long-forgotten superheroes, which sparked the so-called “silver age” of comics. Marvel Comics had unsuccessfully attempted to revive the Human Torch, the Sub-Mariner, and Captain America (Young Men 24–8, 1953–4), but it was DC Comics’ revival of The Flash (Showcase 4, 1956) that began the silver age of comics (which ran circa 1956–70). The Flash originally appeared in Flash Comics 1 (All-American Comics, 1940) as college student Jay Garrick, but the silver-age Flash was given a new origin story and identity as police scientist Barry Allen and, within this comic’s fiction, Barry takes his name from one of the golden-age Flash Comics he reads. A Gothic absorption of the previous text is apparent here, and characterizes this era of comics publishing, during which multiple other superhero revivals followed.

In the 1980s, Alan Moore rewrote the classic horror title Swamp Thing (20–65) by absorbing previous incarnations into a new backstory. The Swamp Thing was closely modeled on an earlier one-off character called The Heap (Hillman Periodicals, 1942) and first appeared in House of Secrets 92 (DC Comics, 1971) before gaining his own series (1972–6). All of these versions used the origin story of a freak individual, a man-turned-plant-creature – until the character was relaunched again in Saga of the Swamp Thing (1982–96). Moore swept aside the series’ supporting cast and redefined the character as a “plant elemental”; a godlike being literally made of plant matter who could regenerate at will, and whose long line of elemental predecessors included Swamp Thing’s previous incarnations, such as scientist Alex Olsen and pilot Albert Höllerer (Saga of the Swamp Thing 47, 1986). Subsequent writers on this series returned to the pre-Moore character and two further series have since been published, but Moore’s treatment of Swamp Thing and his combination of the old and the new epitomized the Gothic tradition’s
incorporation and alteration of other genres. It also sparked a trend for this type of literary overwriting, and in 1990 DC launched its Vertigo imprint, the six core titles of which were all reinterpretations of previous series.

Retroactive continuity ("retcon") is a common narrative device used in comics to iron out the inconsistencies and contradictions that can arise in long-running series or when multiple characters inhabit the same world. It can add, subtract, or alter events by explaining that "that wasn’t what really happened," using tropes such as dreams, false memories, parallel worlds, and so forth. It was *The Flash* that introduced the parallel worlds device, used to explain the coexistence of Garrick and Allen, who lived on fictional parallel worlds. Using their powers to cross worlds, the two finally met in "Flash of Two Worlds" (*The Flash* 123, 1961), the first crossover in which a golden-age character met a silver-age character. The meeting of different and incompatible worlds seems a very Gothic trope and formed the basis of DC Comics’ *Crisis on Infinite Earths* retcon (Marv Wolfman and George Pérez, 1985), the most significant attempt to date to simplify a multiverse.

Although the majority of the changes to comics narratives are done by retconning, other forms of absorption can also be seen. Neil Gaiman incorporated Cain, Abel, and Eve (host figures of *House of Mystery* and *House of Secrets*, DC Comics, 1951–83, 1986–7, 1998, 2008–present) into his blockbuster series *The Sandman* (DC Vertigo, 1989–96), using an "inverted intertextuality" that was similar to Alan Moore’s work on *Swamp Thing*. Gaiman’s *Sandman* was itself an overwriting of a golden-age title (*The Sandman*, DC Comics, 1974) but, rather than retconning this previous version out of existence, Gaiman instead incorporated his dream character into the industry’s history, implying that Cain and Abel’s 1970s horror comics were told from The Dreaming (a kind of celestial realm where dreams take place) and that Wesley Dodds, the golden-age Sandman, received his superheroic calling due to the "real" Sandman’s imprisonment (which opens Gaiman’s saga).

Structural multiplicity is also a defining feature of the Gothic tradition; for example, as in the use of multiple texts and points of view (Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, 1897) and embedded stories (Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, 1818). In comics, this nesting of story arcs is created by the multiple forms of trade paperback, graphic novel, and single issue. Long-running series often tell individual narratives (in a single comic, or over a few issues) that take place within larger story arcs that generally stretch the length of the trade paperback collection (approximately eight issues). The majority of comics narratives therefore rely upon an embedded structure, although a more obvious use can also be seen in titles such as *Watchmen* (DC Comics, 1986–7) and *The Sandman: Worlds’ End* (DC Vertigo, 1995). Visual strategies such as elaborate frames, colored text, inset panels, different artistic styles, and the signifying possibilities of panel shape, area, and location allow comics narratives to sustain multiple narrative voices, contradictions, and interruptions.

Individual motifs of the Gothic can also be seen in comics. The psychogeographic nature of setting and the haunted house are epitomized by the "House of Mystery," a singular location that nonetheless has multiple incarnations and interpretations. It exists as an actual building in the DC Universe (in Kentucky) and simultaneously also in *The Dreaming* (*The Sandman*), and has been portrayed both as a setting for out-and-out horror (in the original *House of Mystery* series) and black humor (*Plop!*, DC Comics, 1973–6). During the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* retcon, the house even had its own identity crisis as the television/film horror character Elvira stayed there while host Cain was missing; during this time eleven issues of *Elvira’s House of Mystery* were published (1986–7). In 2008, Vertigo revived *House of Mystery* as a multinarated series set in purgatory that featured a different story each issue, exploiting the Gothic penchant for unreliable narration (in the tradition of Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw*). The attention paid to the house as psychogeographic setting
makes this title, in its many incarnations, truly Gothic.

The questioning of authenticity and the blurring of fact and fiction are other Gothic tropes apparent in comics. The earliest superhero comics often blurred the lines between fiction and reality as superheroes fought villains such as Hitler (Superman 17, 1942). Subsequent crime comics of the 1950s (such as True Crime Comics (Magazine Village, 1947) and Murder Incorporated (Fox, 1948)) mixed fictional and “true crime” stories. Later works—some autobiographical, such as Art Spiegelman’s holocaust survivor tale Maus (originally published as a short three-page strip in 1972 by Apex Novelties and subsequently expanded for Raw (1981–91) and released as a two-volume graphic novel in 1986 and 1991)—took a more measured approach to the question of authenticity and used the tension between words and pictures to explore the narrating process. Autobiographical comics today seem both popular and Gothic; for example, Alison Bechdel’s “tragicomic” Fun Home (Jonathan Cape, 2006) is a cross-generational homo-normative tale set in a family funeral parlor.

From Hell (Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, originally serialized in Taboo (SpiderBaby Press, 1989–92) and later published by Kitchen Sink Press, 1991–6) draws on meticulous research to interrogate notions of fact and fiction in the story of Jack the Ripper. Moore also plays with the construction of fact and fiction in Watchmen, using footnotes and extracts from (fictional) supporting texts. Bryan Talbot’s Alice in Sunderland (Jonathan Cape, 2007) breaks down the myths surrounding Lewis Carroll’s book and offers an alternative history that explores the dichotomy between reality/illusion and our cultural tendency to mythologize. These comics question notions of authenticity through the very process of attempting to create it, as is also seen in Gothic texts that draw attention to their performative structuring by using extratextual markers claiming antiquity and authenticity. The resulting structures are performative not only because they use this process to create authen-
ticity (whether this is believed or disbelieved) but also because it is only through this process that the question is ever raised.

Such strategies also allow for metafictional comment and even permit the presence of the creator in his/her own comic; for example, writer Grant Morrison appears in Animal Man 26 (DC Comics, 1990) and editor Karen Berger features in House of Mystery 292 and 321 (DC Comics, 1981, 1983). In this last, Berger takes Cain through a secret door to the DC offices to reveal that his series has been cancelled, and the issue ends with the House being torn down while Cain ponders his own existence and reveals that he is his own storyteller. This type of metafictional analysis of the nature of fact and fiction seems particularly Gothic.

Other common tropes of Gothic fiction can be seen in comics. The vampire bat is often cited as one of the inspirations for Batman (Bob Kane and Bill Finger, first seen in Detective Comics 27, National Periodicals, 1939). Initially a Gothic figure, tortured and driven by revenge, early Batman comics have a noir look and make heavy use of black ink, although the stories were then progressively lightened to draw in a younger readership. Later titles such as The Crow (J. O’Barr, Kitchen Sink Press, 1981) also incorporate vampiric visual elements, privileging the undead. Similarly, the Marvel character Wolverine (X-Men, 1963–present) has been linked with the werewolf, as his superpower (a metal endoskeleton made of adamantine and equipped with claws that push their way through his skin) is both visually and conceptually reminiscent of the werewolf (both in being wolfl ike and in requiring his physical form to “change”). Zombies have seen a recent revival in Robert Kirkman’s The Walking Dead (Image Comics, 2003–present). Other Gothic stereotypes and figures are too numerous to mention here.

Visual elements make comics’ depictions of the tropes of Gothic horror particularly disturbing, and this “aesthetic of excess” has drawn negative attention in the past that is at least in part responsible for the subcultural status of American comics more generally.
Classic Comics' *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1943) is acknowledged as the first horror comic alongside other precursors such as *Suspense* (Continental, 1943–6) and *Dynamic* (Harry A. Chesler, 1941–8), which relied on elements of horror such as ghostly spirits, witches' curses, and the like. One-shot “monster” comics such as *Eerie* (Avon Periodicals, 1947) are often credited with starting the horror comics genre, although the first serial horror comic is accepted as *Adventures Into the Unknown* (American Comics Group, 1948–67). Rather than using an excess of gore or lurid violence, this series was based on traditional prose ghost stories, with *Adventures Into the Unknown* 1 printing an adaptation of *The Castle of Otranto*. These earliest titles reflect many of the areas discussed above as they include a focus on Gothic motifs, humor, retellings of classic tales, and even an element of reprinting (as *Eerie* 1 reprinted a story from *Eerie*).

The historically limited genre of American horror comics dominated the industry between 1947 and 1954, using themes including violence, gore, zombieism, werewolfism, cannibalism, sexual perversion, sadism, and torture. The genre’s most prominent examples came from Entertaining Comics, whose most famous titles were *Tales from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, and *The Haunt of Fear*. These featured the “GhouLunatics”: host figures named The Cryptkeeper, The Vault-Keeper, and The Old Witch who bookended each tale with ghastly puns and jokes, squabbled with one another, and mocked and insulted the “boils and ghouls” reading. This humor was essential to the comics of Entertaining Comics, whose intense artwork was balanced with a mocking and ironic tone and whose plots often followed a pattern whereby an ordinary situation was followed by an ironic or gruesome twist that represented some sort of poetic justice, recalling the Gothic’s dual sense of fear and play.

Other companies such as Atlas Comics (later Marvel Comics) followed suit (releasing over twenty-one horror titles) and other publishers also began to plagiarize stories, although Entertaining Comics’ trademark wit was often lacking and its intense artwork replaced by gory closeups. *Dark Mysteries* (Masters, 1951–5) and *Mysterious Adventures* (Story, 1951) are two examples, the former including stories such as “Terror of the Stolen Legs” (*Dark Mysteries* 18, 1954) and “The Living Dead” (*Dark Mysteries* 20, 1954). Short-lived titles such as *Weird Chills* (Stanley P. Morse, 1954) appeared alongside longer-running anthologies such as *Chamber of Chills* (Harvey Publications, 1951–4; Harvey would also begin publishing the lighter-toned *Casper the Friendly Ghost* in 1952). These comics are notable for images of torture, sadism, bondage, cannibalism, decapitation, and so forth. Many feature shock endings (often using some kind of deus ex machina), characters announce their intentions, jilted lovers exact revenge, and the dialogue, like the artwork, is characterized by excess and exclamation marks.

Other publishers shied away from gore and placed the emphasis on plot, tension, and characterization; examples include *This Magazine is Haunted* (Fawcett, 1951–3) and *Black Magic* (Prize Comics, 1950–61, featuring work by Jack Kirby and Joe Simon). The popularity of these stories lay not just in their ability to shock and therefore entertain children but also in their subtext. References to the Cold War and cultural paranoia pervade titles such as “Dungeons of Doom” (*Chamber of Chills* 6, Harvey Comics, 1952), which suggests that friends and neighbors should be scrutinized carefully as they may be “monsters” – a motif frequently used to represent the Other in the Gothic tradition.

In 1954, after a failed attempt at self-censorship in 1948, parental outrage and Dr. Fredric Wertham’s book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1953) led to a US Senate investigation that established the Comics Code, which censored the content of so-called children’s comics. Its dictates included banning the use of the word “horror” or “terror” in titles; prohibiting “all scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism”; “all lurid, unsavory, gruesome illustrations”; and all references to the “walking
dead, torture, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism, and werewolfism” (Nyberg 1998: 167). Titles without Code approval would not carry the Code sticker and government pressure meant that many distributors refused to stock them. The Code drove many small publishers out of the business and it could be argued that the resulting lack of competition led to the partisan structure of today’s American industry, as the silver-age recycling of superheroes can be read as a direct response to this censorship. Although some publishers still published horror, these titles focused on suspense rather than outright gore (Tower of Shadows (Marvel, 1969–75), later renamed Creatures on the Loose; and Chamber of Darkness (Marvel, 1969–74), later renamed Monsters on the Prowl) and were often dominated by reprints. Other companies avoided the Code by using a magazine format and produced some notable horror comics. Of these, Creepy (Warren, 1964) and Eerie (Warren, 1965) strongly recalled the Hammer Horror movie industry (and also utilized Entertaining Comics-style hosts) and Eerie Publications produced similar titles such as the black-and-white magazine Weird (1966–79). Overall, though, most comics at this time were safe, bland, recycled superheroic fare.

As a result, comics went underground in both Britain and America; the countercultural content and subcultural audience of these underground “comix” also align them with the Gothic (see cult fiction). These independent comics dealt with subjects such as psychedelics, sexual scenarios, politics, humor, and violence: nothing was taboo. Companies such as Apex Novelties, Kitchen Sink, Print Mint, and Rip Off released a high number of solo comix that would last for one or two issues, the first and most prominent of which was Robert Crumb’s Zap (Apex Novelties, 1967–present). Crumb also produced the porn anthologies Jiz and Snatch (Apex Novelties, 1969) and other explicit titles such as Young Lust (Company and Sons, 1970) and Bizarre Sex (Kitchen Sink, 1972). Gay comics such as Harry Chess (Trojan Books, 1966) appeared and women’s comix (dealing with female politics and erotica) were pioneered by creators such as Trina Robbins, Willy Mendes and Lee Marrs; this latter group of comix broke onto the scene in the early 1970s with the anthology It Ain’t Me Babe (Last Gasp, 1970) and subsequent publications such as Wimmen’s Comix (Last Gasp, 1972) and Tits ‘n’ Clits (Nanny Goat Productions, 1972).

The American underground also revisited horror with titles such as Bogeyman (San Francisco, 1969), Insect Fear (Print Mint, 1970), and Deviant Slice (Print Mint, 1972); the most famous of these was Skull (Rip Off, 1970), which was reminiscent of the style of Entertaining Comics. The British underground followed in the footsteps of that of America and bootlegged American work was reprinted alongside emergent British work in titles such as Cyclops (Innocence and Experience, 1970), Nasty Tales (Bloom, 1971), and Cozmic Comics (H. Bunch, 1972). British writers and artists such as Brian Bolland, Dave Gibbons, Hunt Emerson, Ray Lowry, and Chris Welch produced science fiction satires and political diatribes, and reflected on the hippie subculture, a subject that Bryan Talbot’s Psychedelic Alchemist, Chester P. Hackenbush, would continue in Brainstorm (Alchemy, 1975). In an example of Gothic inversion, the audience and narrative of these underground horror comics were completely upended from their predecessors: nothing was implied, and an abundance of blood and guts was shown alongside a new level of black humor and satire.

Ultimately, these comics were either closed down or toned down by local antiboozentry laws, and, amid arrests and cautions, the underground became adopted by the mainstream, losing much of its subversive energy in the process (see, for example, Marvel’s Comix Book, 1974). In Britain, the biggest seller was sci-fi, and emergent titles such as 2000AD (IPC and Fleetway, 1977), Deadline (Tom Astor, 1988; founded by Brett Ewins and Steve Dillon), and Overkill (Marvel, 1992) published science fiction horror whose non-Manichaean narratives recall the Gothic pleasure in amorality.
After the bland superheroics of the 1960s and 1970s, and subsequent gimmicks such as alternative covers and multiple first issues, the superhero again saw a rewriting in the 1980s – as a troubled figure, a vigilante, with a fragmented identity, competing impulses, and a tortured psyche that invokes the Gothic. The superhero’s multiple identities can be read as an example of constitutive otherness, where marginalized elements define the text and apparent unity is maintained only by processes of exclusion and opposition. The alter ego is often directly opposed to the superhero identity (the mild-mannered Clark Kent versus the powerful Superman; the timid Peter Parker versus the brash Spiderman), and in this sense the two halves define each other. Although early comics about superheroes such as The Spirit (Will Eisner, various publishers, 1940–present) made use of Gothic themes and visuals (looming buildings, vast rooms, dungeons, haunted houses, shadowed landscapes, and underground dwellings), the Gothic underpinning of superheroes was most explicitly interrogated during this period. While the reluctant Marvel heroes that characterized the silver age also struggled to reconcile their wishes with their duties, these “modern age” (or “dark age”) titles used psychological references and metaphor to make the resulting fragmentation of identity more explicit, for example in a renewed focus on the mask as symbol and a cryptomimetic “other within.” Comics such as Batman: The Dark Knight Returns (Frank Miller and Lynn Varley, DC Comics, 1986) focused on the problems of an aging superhero and redefined him as an outsider and vigilante, while other titles set their focus on exploring the supervillain psychology. The Killing Joke (Alan Moore and Brian Bolland, DC Comics, 1988) tells the story of the Joker’s origin and represents a trend toward focusing on supervillains that characterized this period (continued to the present day in texts such as Joker (Brian Azzarello and Lee Bernejo, DC Comics, 2008)). In this sense, every superhero may be read as a Gothic motif, representing themes of isolation and the internal/external divide.

Most recently, comics in Britain and America have become redefined as graphic novels. They have made the leap into bookstores and are now being produced by mainstream publishing companies. Today’s comics incorporate multiple Gothic elements within a medium whose visual and textual excesses allow for multiple contradictions and paradoxes. Like the Gothic, these comics pair a tradition of subcultural status and delegitimacy with a canon of texts that have attained cultural legitimacy. Their history is dogged with censorship and scandal, but these tendencies have not prevented the construction of a kind of canon, as should be evident from the discussions here. Although the era of traditional horror comics has passed, its influences still abound, for example in the 1980s turn to more sophisticated and adult rewritings. Today’s comics have moved beyond simple scares and children’s tales, and today demonstrate a Gothic sensibility throughout their content and structuring practices.

SEE ALSO: Comic Gothic; Commodity Gothicism; Cult Fiction; Magazines; Manga; Masks, Veils, and Disguises; Monster Movies; Penny Dreadfuls; Popular Culture; Poststructuralism and the Gothic.

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FURTHER READING
In its most intense forms, the commodity Gothic represents a sinister variant on what Elaine Freedgood has influentially termed the “ideas in things.” As Freedgood conceives them, those material objects that fill Victorian novels are frightening enough in their own right: for the knowledge that is stockpiled in these things bears on the grisly specifics of conflicts and conquests that a culture can neither regularly acknowledge nor permanently destroy if it is going to be able to count on its own history to know itself and realize a future. (Freedgood 2006: 2)

As the commodity Gothic perceives them, however, such objects go one step further. Not content with containing ideas, they develop, or threaten to develop, ideas of their own; and these ideas tend toward the possibility of wreaking historical vengeance at once through and against the process of commodification itself.

As Charlotte Sussman’s Consuming Anxieties dramatically demonstrates, the commodity Gothic clearly predates the work of Marx (Sussman 2000: 110–29). Within the early anti-slavery writing that Sussman studies, commodity Gothic fantasies repeatedly give shape to powerful rhetorical invocations of the confluence of commodification with cannibalism and bodily corruption, as would-be consumers of the products of slavery find themselves consuming enslaved bodies instead. Such visions may well attain their most crystallized form within what Timothy Morton has since termed the “blood sugar” topos (Morton 2000: 172–3): that is, the Gothic scenario whereby slave-produced sugar, once stirred into a cup of tea, transforms itself (back) into a bloody, all-too literal embodiment of its own brutal histories of origin.

If Marx’s 1867 account of “the Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof” (Marx 1992: 31) postdates visions of “blood sugar,” however, that work remains indispensible to understanding such visions’ force, not least as key points of origin for the “post-Romantic Gothic imagination” (Smith 2005: 39). For in Marx’s terms, even before blood sugar enters the teacup in the scenario above, that sugar has already undergone transformation into a commodity. Like its counterpart, that now-legendary “plain, homely, bodily form” of a table to which Marx’s account of fetishism so famously turns (Marx 1992: 13), such sugar has undergone a process of abstraction. For by rendering objects commodities – by replacing their use value with exchange value – we put out of sight both “the useful character of the various kinds of labour embodied in them, and the concrete forms of that labour” (Marx 1992: 5). Now reduced to the status of a “mirror” of abstract value (Marx 1992: 24), the sugar has lost something by becoming a commodity. Still, in another sense (from an object’s perspective, one might say), it has also taken on new power. For like Marx’s legendary table, blood sugar, once commodified, has become “something transcendent” (Marx 1992: 31). It has assumed “a social relation” to “the whole world of commodities”; it has joined the ranks of those human productions that can appear as “independent beings endowed with life,” even seeming to “rule” their “producers instead of being ruled by them” (Marx 1992: 24, 32, 35).

Comic though it may be, Marx’s suggestion that a table, once commodified, “evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more
wonderful than ‘table-turning’ ever was,” is also thoroughly uncanny (Marx 1992: 31). And indeed, as “critics as diverse as Jacques Derrida, Chris Baldick, and Terry Eagleton,” point out this turn to the Gothic seems “central” to Marx’s thinking as a whole (Smith 2005: 39). Where Marx’s fetishized table merely “stands on its head” (Marx 1992: 31), however, objects in the commodity Gothic mode turn on their consumers. In this, they take the already uncanny process of commodity fetishization one step further, in part by taking it a half step back. What if objects, while retaining the transcendent claims of commodities, attempted to resist, and perhaps avenge, their subjection to abstraction, by laying bare the now-hidden, “grotesque idea” of their own now-occluded material, even corporeal origins? This is the fear that creates blood sugar; and it is a fear that animates commodity Gothicism throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

With its Crystal Palace, department stores, and explosive development of advertising, mid-Victorianism stakes clear and immediate claims as a highpoint of the commodity Gothic. Certainly authors of the realist novel, and Dickens in particular, have provided particularly rich resources for investigations, both of the commodity Gothic and commodity fetishism in general (see Freedgood 2006, especially 138–58, and Smith 2005). Still, the invocation of commodities’ uncanny, often veneful half-reversals of fetishization accepts no generic limits (Lootens 2003); and boundary crossings may be particularly important here. Consider, for example, the mid-century trope of the genteel woman adorning herself in poisoned finery. Wilkie Collins’ moonstone, in the novel of that name; the maddening diamond necklace of George Eliot’s (1876) Daniel Deronda (Eliot 1995: 358–9): these haunted, haunting objects and others like them may wield an impact whose force resonates, in part, through juxtaposition with even more explicit invocations of commodities as things with veneful ideas of their own (see Victorian Gothic). Punch’s 1863 cartoon “The Haunted Lady, or ‘The Ghost’ in the Looking-Glass” offers one example of such invocations. Here, the artist directly enacts commodities’ refusal fully to “mirror” one another, by depicting a female figure who stands frozen, half-turned toward a modiste’s glass. What stands reflected in the mirror before her is not just her own elaborately dressed form; it is the emaciated corpse of the needlewoman who seems to have died while laboring over the ball-gown that the would-be consumer has just put on (Lootens 2003: 150, Walkley 1981: 36–54). In a related Punch cartoon of 1848, the pattern of a child’s smock, depicted in close-up, reveals the frighteningly low going rate for ten hours’ sewing, interspersed with images of death’s heads (Lootens 2003: 151; Walkley 1981: 67). Raw as these half-reversals are, moreover, they too draw power from earlier work. Indeed, the child’s smock cartoon is named for one of the greatest of all object-heirs to blood sugar: the subject, that is, of Thomas Hood’s wildly successful “Song of the Shirt.” In this 1843 ballad, the fabric of clothing comes to hang on its wearer, as if he were suddenly encased in dying sweated laborers’ skin: “It is not linen you’re wearing out, / But human creatures’ lives!” (Hood 1970: 305).

Intensely Victorian though the commodity Gothic may be, however, in many respects it survives, like so much else that is Victorian, well beyond the end of the nineteenth century. When, for example, Walter Benjamin proposes that the: “bourgeois interior of the [eighteen-] sixties to the nineties, with its gigantic buffets, overrun by carving, its sunless corners where the palm tree stands [...] provides adequate housing only for corpses,” his assertion that “the bourgeois living space [...] trembles for nameless murder” (Benjamin 1972: 89, my translation) looks beyond Dickens to the social criticism of John Ruskin, who read the smooth surfaces of late-Victorian furniture, shaped as they had been by the effort “to banish imperfection” through mechanical production, as material accusations revealing a corrupting aesthetics whose values acted to “destroy expression, to check exertion, to paralyze vitality” (Ruskin 1904: 204). At the same time,
though, Benjamin’s point also speaks to the
later writer’s own fascination with modernity’s
relations to the collector.

Indeed, as far as students of the Gothic
are concerned, Victorian commodity Gothic
visions may live, at once sharpened, diffused,
and reversed, in the bitter vision of a work like
Shirley Jackson’s 1948 *The Road through the
Wall*. Here, on comfortable suburban Pepper
Street, a Mr. Desmond and other “descendents
of farmers” are “accustomed to thinking of
themselves as owners”; and the objects they
own allow them to do so. True:

> even the very chair on which Mr. Desmond sat
in the evenings belonged to him only on suffer-
ance; it had belonged first to someone who made
it, in turn governed by someone who planned it,
and Mr. Desmond, although he had not known it,
had chosen it because it had been presented
to him as completely choosable (Jackson 1969:
128–9).

True, too, that it is “on the same principle” that
Mr. Desmond has “a house,” that he has “a
street in front of his house.” Still, none of these
objects are telling. And thus, Mr. Desmond
continues to live “on the patience of all the
people who did not kill him.” Eating the foods
they are allowed to buy and sleeping “at night
between sheets made by hands they would
never shake,” he and his neighbors remain,
apparently unthinkingly, subject to

unseen governors: the prices in a distant town,
regulated by minds and hungers in a town even
farther away, all the possessions which depended
on someone in another place, someone who con-
trolled words and paper and ink, who could by
the changing of a word on paper influence the
very texture of the ground.

With “nothing to say about how soon their
houses” will “begin to rot, when the sheets
might tear” (Jackson 1969: 128–9), Mr.
Desmond and his Pepper Street neighbors will
not have much to say, either, when their chil-
dren begin dying. In this, they might serve to
remind us, by reverse example, that in the end,
the terrors of the commodity Gothic tend to
turn toward the ends of social reform: invoca-
tions of horror, here, most often signal com-
mitment to hope (see Jackson, Shirley).

SEE ALSO: Jackson, Shirley; Victorian Gothic.

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Summer 2011 saw the launch of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s new production of Macbeth (dir. Michael Boyd), with Jonathan Slinger in the title role. Macbeth is, of course, a play around which superstition and the sinister accrue like no other, and in this respect Boyd’s production is controversial, abandoning what is arguably its most Gothic ingredient: the three witches on the heath who greet Macbeth in Act I Scene 3 and to whom he returns for evil counsel in Act IV Scene 1. In Boyd’s production these hags, and their culinary experiments with “Eye of newt and toe of frog, / Wool of bat and tongue of dog” (Act IV, Scene 1, 14–15), disappear and are replaced by fearful apparitions of more familiar proportions. So the play opens with three children’s corpses being lowered from the fly loft on wires. As they descend they start to kick and it is only then that the audience recognizes them to be “ undead” children, lowered like the half-lynched. These are Macduff’s “ pretty ones” (Act IV, Scene 3, 217), slaughtered by the “ butcher and his fi end-like queen” (Act V, Scene 11, 35), and their presence collectively embodies the slaughter of innocents returned to haunt. Just as they refuse to “ play dead” in the opening scene, so does child’s play remain an important part of the theatrical spectacle. Dolls frequently accompany the child actors and, in order to embody Banquo’s lineage of kings, myriad toy puppets descend from the rafters. Far more chilling to a twenty-first-century audience, as the children confront Macbeth they keen in a nursery-rhyme tone: “ Macbe-eth!” “ Macbe-eth!”

In an age in which we no longer believe in witches (see witchcraft) or spirits – let alone the divine right of kings – neither regicide nor sorcery can be relied on to provide the “ fear factor” for a contemporary audience. Though child and adult spectators alike sat braced for a confrontation with three terrifying hags, the three dead-alive children proved more than a match for them in the uncanny “ stakes.” Moreover, though the production split reviewers’ opinions (Michael Billington of The Guardian and Susannah Clapp being among its detractors; see Billington 2011; Clapp 2011), Charles Spencer (2011) in The Telegraph recognized how the changes in production restore the play’s original sense of superstitious dread:

There were many moments when I found that my palms were clammy and my heart was racing. And when I emerged into the fresh air in the interval and heard the bells of Holy Trinity Church ringing, it felt like a blessed escape from evil. But then it was back to the horrors and the heart of darkness.

It is this preponderant fascination with the haunted or haunting child that Armitt identifies, in Twentieth-Century Gothic (2011), as the key characteristic setting apart the contemporary Gothic from its antecedents. It is a fascination that began with Henry James’ The Turn of the Screw in 1898 (see James, Henry), a text which, with its unspoken/unspeakable threats and the indeterminate language of horror and guilt that consumes Miles and Flora, the two

Contemporary Gothic

LUCIE ARMITT

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children of the tale, casts a long shadow in setting the tone for many late-twentieth-century and early-twenty-first-century depictions of children and childhood within and beyond Gothic literature. A film such as Alejandro Amenabar’s *The Others* (2001) bears an affinity with James’ novella in this respect and shares its depiction of how, despite our greatest fears suggesting otherwise, the most dangerous perils facing children often reside within our own homes.

It can be argued that it is our need for monsters that fuels what can be considered to be a “pathological” contemporary Gothic fascination with the media reportage of child misery, child neglect, and child murder (see *monstrosity*). Nothing sells newspapers “better,” and, in a secular and postsuperstitious world, the closest living relative to the vampire, the ghoul, and the dybbuk is surely the pedophile, a shadowy presence who belongs with the other creatures of the night-world and surrounding whom is an all-pervasive rhetoric of seen and unseen fears that surely derive directly from Freud’s reading of the uncanny: “It may be true that the uncanny [...] is something which is secretly familiar [...] which has undergone repression and then returned” (Freud 1990: 368) (see **uncanny**, *The*).

That such a connection between supernatural activity and child protection exists in contemporary popular discourse as well as literature can be seen in the case of the “Gorbals Vampire,” an urban myth that sprang up among a group of Glaswegian schoolchildren in 1954 (see *vampire fiction*). Emerging from the power of collective playground gossip, rumors spread of the existence of a vampire in a local graveyard with the wonderfully evocative name of the Southern Necropolis. In response, a large group of children, aged between four and fourteen years of age and armed, allegedly, with sticks and knives, agreed to meet there after dark and confront it. When the police were called to the scene they were informed by the children that they were hunting “a 7ft tall vampire with iron teeth who had already kidnapped and eaten two local boys” (Nicholson 2011). Several points strike us on reading this report: first, how impossible it would be for a group of children of this age to meet in a public cemetery after dark today – we simply do not grant our children this amount of freedom to roam. Second, we note how quickly rumors of supernatural activity translate themselves directly into the threat of criminal assaults against children. As Stuart Nicolson, who reported on the story in 2011, observed, “There were no records of any missing children in Glasgow at the time.” Third, consider the fact that, in the absence of an actual monster, reading and storytelling took on the guise of a monstrous activity. American comic books, the subject of growing interest at the time, were blamed for “corrupting the imaginations of children and inflaming them with fear of the unknown” (see *comics and graphic novels*). Nicolson identified “a few dissenting academics” who pointed out that no creature matching the description of a seven-foot vampire existed in these publications, although “there was, however, a monster with iron teeth in the Bible (Daniel 7.7).” Nevertheless, the incident played a key role in the introduction of the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act 1955, which banned the sale of such comic books (see Nicholson 2011). While fear of the unknown is a key element of all Gothic, surely interest in the unknown is a key element of all literature and other dangers come to the fore here. While we may envy these children their social freedom to roam outdoors, we surely pity them the curtailment of freedom to read that followed.

While the “real” monsters in society retain their original potential for fearful dread, others have been tamed or domesticated through popular television. This is most obviously true of the vampire, whose original potential for a specifically adult or hard-core form of cannibalistic horror has more recently found its greatest circulation in popular television dramas such as *The Fades* (BBC Three) and *Demons* (ITV), both of which contain genuine horror content but whose narratives are far
more “soft focus” and are aimed at a predominantly teenage or young-adult audience. Such dramas seem to build on the appetite for popular teen-style vampire narratives one also finds in the Twilight series of books by Stephanie Meyer, themselves recently adapted into a series of five films (2008–12) (see Twilight). As Brendan O’Neill observes in the BBC’s own online magazine, “The vampire has had a makeover. He’s no longer a weird, threatening foreigner, with a strange voice and even stranger dining habits – the vampire has become super-cool, lusted after by girls and envied by boys” (O’Neill 2008).

Clearly the contemporary Gothic sells: be it in the form of literature, film, television, the theme pub, or the theme park. As Catherine Spooner observes in her book on the subject, “Gothic no longer crops up only in film and fiction, but also fashion, furniture, computer games, youth culture, advertising. Gothic has always had mass appeal, but in today’s economic climate it is big business” (2006: 23). In part this may be because, in its flaunting of dressing-up and costume (see masks, veils, and disguises), Gothic enables a particular form of self-renewal based entirely on storytelling. At the same time, Gothic takes play seriously (as we saw in Boyd’s Macbeth) and embraces the thrill of danger. In the case of the theme park Alton Towers, for instance, originally a hunting lodge developed into a fine Gothic country house by Augustus Pugin in the nineteenth century, we now have the perfect creative centerpiece for what became, in the late twentieth century, “white knuckle” Gothic with candy floss on the side. Pugin was the architect (with Sir Charles Barry) behind the façade of the Palace of Westminster and, as such, was no stranger to the intriguing combination of power and overelaborate ornamentation that characterizes the Gothic architectural façade (see architecture, gothic revival). The contemporary Gothic is simultaneously self-aggrandizing and kitsch, camp and intimidating. Such paradoxes feed directly into Jerrold Hogle’s influential reading of the Gothic as the “ghost of the counterfeit” (see counterfeit), whereby he examines how what is “fake” in the Gothic nevertheless enables a very real interrogation of class, sexuality, race, and faith within contemporary society. It is the Gothic’s engagement with abjection that facilitates such interrogations, he argues, precisely because the Gothic

Employs symbols from earlier times largely emptied of many older meanings. [Hence, Gothic] quite readily becomes a symbolic space into which the fears and horrors generated by early modern cultural changes can be “thrown off” or “thrown under” as though they exist more in the now obscure and distant past than in the threatening present. (2000: 296–7)

It is perhaps for this reason that, even in our secular, cynical world, contemporary writers of quality literature, such as Sarah Waters, still find the Gothic a perfect medium for exploring issues around sexual difference. Of Waters’ five novels to date, three can be classified as contemporary Gothic, though all adopt historical settings for their plots. So Affinity (1999) explores Victorian clairvoyance as a mechanism for exploring the seen and unseen in the Victorian class structure, and Fingersmith (2002) adopts a double plot structure, interweaving the fates of two women, Sue and Maud, one of whom is brought up by the criminal underclass of Victorian London while the other enjoys what only appear to be the “privileges” of an upper-class country house retreat called Briar House. As the destinies of both women become entwined, Sue learns how the Gothic and its ghosts can harbor illicit pleasures as well as dangers. Finally, in Waters’ 2009 novel The Little Stranger, set in the 1940s, she hides the lesbian “in full view” in the form of her central female protagonist, Caroline Ayres, a woman whose family home (Hundreds Hall) is a typically dilapidated Gothic mansion haunted by family secrets, the ghosts of which increasingly threaten not only its inhabitants and their guests but also the very architecture itself (see Armitt 2009).

If Hogle is right, then our undying fascination with ghosts, vampires, monsters, and the
undead must speak of contemporary terrors that may not be occult but remain chillingly unknowable. It is to this David Punter turns in his essay “Terror and the Uncanny, or, The Caves of Tora Bora” (2008) (see Terror). Reading twenty-first-century terrorism through the filter of Freud’s essay on the uncanny, Punter questions the relationship between issues such as familiarity, homeland, and the eternally “unknowable” as manifest in what we have come to accept as the familiar reportage of questions around “The War on Terror.” Such issues, though wholly real, “haunt” like the ghost-children in Boyd’s production of Macbeth: they are the legacy of a society in which dread attaches itself to those objects and beings that define the very core of who we are – our children, our homes, our nations, our bodies – and yet that, like the witch, the ghost, the vampire, and the monster, confront us with our fears of what faces us beyond death. The contemporary Gothic may glory in its self-conscious playfulness and we may delight in our knowing complicity with its monsters, but its ability to give form to our otherwise unspeakable fears remains significant on a global as well as a Shakespearian stage.

SEE ALSO: Architecture, Gothic Revival; Comics and Graphic Novels; Counterfeit; James, Henry; Masks, Veils, and Disguises; Monstrosity; Terror; Twilight; Uncanny, The; Vampire Fiction; Witchcraft.

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Corelli, Marie

ELAINE HARTNELL-MOTTRAM

Best-selling author of more than twenty novels and writer of short stories and nonfiction, Marie Corelli (1855–1924) has been in print continuously since 1886. Her novels have been filmed, staged, and translated into languages...
as diverse as Gujarati and Swedish. Her initial readership was drawn from all levels of society and included Oscar Wilde and Queen Victoria.

Born Mary Mackay, Corelli initially created her persona in order to pursue a musical career. She retained it as an author. From the time she submitted her first manuscript for publication to well after her death she attracted extreme responses from the literary establishment. Publisher George Bentley was so intrigued by the vitriol expended by his readers on this first manuscript that he read it for himself. Seeing its commercial potential he ignored the readers’ reports and published it. Despite her enormous popularity, Corelli constantly battled with a hostile press, eventually refusing to send out any review copies of her books at all.

Corelli never married, her significant relationships being those with her father; her half-brother, Eric Mackay; her life-long companion from the age of 21, Bertha Vyver; and the painter Arthur Severn – though her obsessive love for him was unrequited. She spent her later years living in Stratford-upon-Avon where she campaigned on local heritage issues.

Corelli’s fiction is rich in the staples of the popular literature of her day: adultery, murder, and romance, scenes of almost unimaginable wealth and fantastic scientific discoveries. Yet, despite their diverse subject matter, a significant number of Corelli’s novels may be classified as Gothic. These Gothic novels contain preoccupations from every phase of the Gothic, from the tortuous labyrinths and heightened sensibilities of *The Castle of Otranto* and the sensuous excesses of *Vathek* to the scenes of mass destruction to be found in horror films such as *Carrie*. Filled with excess and transgression, Corelli’s Gothic novels overflow with extreme emotions and contain much that is reminiscent of melodrama. More significantly, Corelli’s work focuses upon, and at times luridly dramatizes, metaphysical and ethical concerns, this material providing the basis for most of the Gothic elements in her work.

Corelli claimed to write from a normative Christian perspective but evidence is against her. For example, while *Thelma* (1887) critiques low-church Protestantism, and sentimentalizes Roman Catholicism, it also sympathetically portrays a modern-day Viking who is fetched away to Valhalla by his own personal Valkyrie. Corelli also rewrites the story of the Crucifixion in *Barabbas* (1893) and rehabilitates the Evil One in *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895). Discarding the major Christian tenet that Christ is a sacrifice for the redemption of humanity, she relegates him to a mere link between God and humanity. Instead of this salvation, she argues for reincarnation, absolute free will, and strict personal liability for all actions.

Though threats of hell are to be found throughout Corelli’s novels, she is, at best, ambivalent about the possibility of eternal damnation. Like Origen (circa 185–254 CE) she posits that hell is a temporary state and that, in the end, even Satan will be redeemed. Moreover, a number of her novels are more obviously predicated upon an eclectic religious “system” in which elements of Eastern religions and Theosophy are grafted onto Christianity. *Ardath* (1889) and *Ziska* (1897) deal with human reincarnation, while other novels about human reincarnation which additionally feature representations of other worlds and nonhuman incarnations include *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), *The Soul of Lilith* (1892), *The Young Diana* (1918), *The Life Everlasting* (1911), and *The Secret Power* (1921). Corelli’s religious worldview thus yields two contradictory areas of Gothic interest: fear of “damnation” (whatever this might mean) and the dangers of “out-of-the-body” experiences.

In all the novels atheistic characters imperil their souls by their utter indifference to, or defiance of, spiritual matters. Thus, in *The Sorrows of Satan*, the eponymous hero directly invites another character to gamble his soul at cards (he agrees, loses and, shortly afterwards, commits suicide) and no one even notices – apart from the reader. By comparison, astral travel has a positive aspect. If spiritually informed, it can be a legitimate way of gaining knowledge, as in *A Romance of Two Worlds*, for
example. However, in other novels, horror is generated by the profane employment of such out-of-the-body experiences.

In *Ardath*, the soul of Alwyn, a world-weary religious skeptic seeking new sensations, manages to escape his body. The spiritual master, Heliobas, turns pale at the thought of the personal and cosmic consequences of Alwyn’s flight and the description of ensuing events is worthy of a ghost story: a window blows open with a loud crash and there is a freak storm. Once again Corelli suggests that a character will end up in some kind of “outer darkness.” Yet her cosmology supports nothing beyond physical death and exact karmic consequence. In fact, the novel is about Alwyn’s redemption. Conscious misapplication of occult knowledge is found in *The Soul of Lilith*. There, an agnostic “scientist” called El-Râmi forces the soul of a young girl to remain attached to her physical body, even though she has technically died, in order to aid him with his research into humanity’s post-mortem state. This time, reader fears about the karmic consequences of this hubris are justified. We see heavy karmic payment exacted in this same life.

With the late nineteenth-century drive toward dividing literature into elite and popular modes, inevitably some contemporary reviewers openly deplored Corelli’s melodramatic and sentimental romances. Equally inevitably, Leavisite criticism condemned her, whether in the context of vitiated public taste or “the Great Tradition.” The middle years of the twentieth century produced several patronizing biographies of Corelli but no concerted literary analysis. Even by the 1970s, some critics, still basking in Leavisite elitism, were saying, along with Kowalczyk (1973: 850), that “No-one questions the judgment literary history places upon Corelli’s works.” However, Kowalczyk’s stance was never totally representative. There has always been a trickle of articles taking a more serious stance. Moreover, as the fields of psychoanalytic and Marxist criticism dislodged notions of “touchstones” and classical paradigms in favor of analysis of readership, context, and modes of production, Corelli could be assessed by new contextually based criteria. She was also favored by the growth of the academic subdisciplines of Victorian Studies, which included the feminist project of “rediscovery,” and Gothic criticism which enabled assessment of Corelli on her own terms. Thus in 2000 Annette Federico produced a full-length study of Corelli’s novels – discussing them as literature as well as a phenomenon – and in 2006 Davidson and Hartnell coedited a special edition of *Women’s Writing*, reappraising Corelli in the light of recent theoretical perspectives. Each of these goes some way toward rehabilitating both Corelli as author and some of her characters as New Woman/feminist. More recent articles deal with Corelli and race and with Corelli’s literary aesthetics.

Currently, Corelli’s novels appear to be largely read in academic/pedagogical contexts so their fate is tied to the evolution of theory (see criticism). Feminist critique, never favorable to Corelli’s insistent femininity (notwithstanding her belief in sex equality), is moving away from exclusively white/European/middle-class perspectives, toward coverage of literature that more effectively reflects cultural diversity. Morality is unfashionable or, at best, relativized. The “classical” versions of the theoretical approaches so favorable to Corelli’s work, such as Marxism and psychoanalysis, seem to be on the wane. Meanwhile, a revival in literary formalism is eclipsing interest in literary affect. However, the arrival of new technologies and new-style presses are having a counterbalancing effect. Most of Corelli’s novels are available in e-book reader format and from other electronic sources; and small specialist presses such as Zittaw and Valancourt are reprinting some of the novels. For Corelli has her devotees still: Those with a critically informed enthusiasm for the Gothic, and with a taste for her style of other-worldly melodrama in particular.

SEE ALSO: Criticism; Melodrama; Protestantism.
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FURTHER READING

Counterfeit
JERROLD E. HOGLE

From Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764) onwards – and even before – the post-Renaissance “Gothic” has always been rooted in fakery. The neo-Gothic revival in architecture at Walpole’s time, as in his own toy-Gothic house at Strawberry Hill with its painted Protestant recastings of Catholic icons once carved out of stone, is openly faux-Gothic in copying drawings, more than actual cathedrals and castles, in the manner of the several garden “follies” on other estates of the time built as antiqued ruins even though they were new (see Ames 1999) (see Walpole, Horace). Similarly, the ghosts that Walpole views as helping to set standards for future “Gothic Stories” in the Preface to the second edition of Otranto (Walpole 1996: 9–11) are more images of older images than signifiers of substantial bodies. The gigantic specter that appears in huge fragments throughout the castle turns out to be the shade of an effigy on a tomb in the nearby abbey’s crypt (Walpole 1996: 20–1); the ghost of the antihero’s grandfather appears to him by walking out of a full-length portrait (quite literally the figure of a figure; p. 26); and the skull-faced Hermit of Joppa who suddenly rises up in a chapel (Walpole 1996: 106–7) is far more a repetition of the ominous skeletons in medieval danse macabre paintings than the wraith of a physical person. Moreover, these indicators of buried secrets all refer back by the end of Otranto to the cover-up of the original owner’s murder decades ago and the counterfeit of a “fictitious will” to produce an illusion of legitimate inheritance (Walpole 1996: 113). As if all of this were not enough, every bit of it takes place within the frame of the 1764 Preface in Walpole’s first edition. There the Anglican “translator” of what is supposedly a much older Catholic text claims that he is conveying “preternatural” figurations, “exploded now even from romances,” in the reality of which neither he nor his readers should believe, making them emptied-out signifiers cast adrift, fakings of a grounding that has been evacuated from them (Walpole 1996: 5–6). We can hardly be surprised that Walpole’s letters see such playings with “old castles, old pictures, old histories” as allowing him to “live back,” however falsely, “into centuries that cannot disappoint one,” precisely because there is “no reason” in using all these leftovers “to quarrel with their emptiness” (Walpole 1996: 10, 192). His use of figures of figures, which sets the stage for so much of subsequent Gothic fiction, insistently has no “true specie” behind it, however much his settings and characters claim to be pointing to a past reality.

We should also not be surprised, then, that his 1765 second Preface to Otranto reveals its most significant “original” to be Shakespeare (an author of dramatic fictions) and especially the Shakespeare of the medievally inflected Hamlet (Walpole 1996: 10–11). The Prince of Denmark in that play, already labeled the bard’s most “Gothick” work by 1725 (Pope, 1: xxiii–iv), famously taunts his mother for her too-quick marriage to the usurper-monarch Claudius after the death of old King Hamlet by placing two portraits before her. These he calls the “counterfeit presentiment of two brothers” (3.4.54), one ostensibly more “false” than the other, yet even the “truest” of the pair looks
back for him more to a ghost of his father than to the father himself, to a “spirit” that may be only a “pleasing shape” that the “devil” may have “assume[d]” to deceive Hamlet (2.2.594–6), one among the conflicting beliefs about ghosts in 1600, the year Shakespeare most likely brought this play to the stage. As Jean Baudrillard has pointed out, this curious use of the term “counterfeit” reflects some assumptions quite pervasive in the use of signs at Shakespeare’s time:

“Counterfeit” then can mean a portrait fairly accurate to the nature of the person represented, Hamlet’s claim about the picture of his father, in the late medieval sense of the “obligatory sign” that firmly attaches the signifiers of an individual to that person’s preordained status and being. (Baudrillard 1993: 50)

But this belief by 1600, adds Baudrillard (1993: 51), has really become a “nostalgia for the natural referent of the sign.” Now the greater possibility of class mobility, as in the middle-class Shakespeare’s later purchase of a coat of arms, allows the “transit of values or signs of prestige from one class to another” (Baudrillard 1993: 51). Signifiers can be uprooted from their older grounds to stand for beings or entities not originally entitled to such signs, even to the point of a rising middle-class person fashioning himself into the “counterfeit” of an aristocrat or a ghost that seems to be “Hamlet,/ King, father, royal Dane” nevertheless coming “in such a questionable shape” (1.4.43–5) that a play within Shakespeare’s play, in which the Prince supplies newly written words for an older work, appears necessary to test the ghost of the father’s veracity (2.2.584–601). The Shakespearean “counterfeit” inherited by Walpole’s “Gothic Story,” then, which appears in the ghosts of *Otranto* that clearly recall the one in *Hamlet* and even its portrait, is thus already a Janus-faced symbolic scheme looking retrogressively toward a solid past ground for meaning yet also looking progressively toward a transfer of older aristocratic signs into representing more middle-class systems and quandaries of belief. Indeed, by making his ghosts more explicitly figures of sheer figures in *Otranto*, Walpole is beginning the Gothic mode of modern times by simultaneously grounding and ungrounding it in “the ghost of the counterfeit” as Baudrillard has defined the latter term (see Hogle 1994), in a later simulacrum of what has long been a conflicted symbolic scheme by the time Walpole takes it up in the 1760s. This counterfeit of counterfeiting, in other words, is precisely what Walpole is setting in motion when he defines the “Gothic Story” in his 1765 Preface as an “attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern” (Walpole 1996: 9).

It is almost inevitable, therefore, that the post-Walpolean Gothic vividly plays out his “ghost of the counterfeit” in the many versions over the years of what the counterfeit is in its Gothic form: a symbolic hearkening backward and forward at the same time, plus a self-conscious “ghosting” of that process, to such an extent that the invoked past is denied or falsified and present conflicts of belief are inserted in place of the old, even while the emerging present cannot completely escape the vestiges of what it would parody from the past. It is to this ghost-of-the-counterfeit dynamic that Terry Castle is referring when she sees the “romances” of Ann Radcliffe in the 1790s as “spectralizing” whatever they depict, whether the focus is on internal misperceptions or on external landscapes that are always already paintings, not realities. Invoking the most radical aspect of John Locke’s empiricism that makes every impression a memory of a lost sense experience, Radcliffe’s Gothic, it turns out, transforms any representation into a ghost-like figure that is forever distanced from what it purports to signify and so raises the question of how much of perception is based on the retroactive, and thus biased, projection of the mind’s associations rooted in spectral memories (see Castle 1987) (see radcliffe, ann). Walpole’s breathing-then-walking portrait-ghost, in addition, is one of the many prefigurations that are reworked in the half-
natural/half-artificial creature of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818). Consequently, that counterfeit “monster” leaves behind much of what it alludes to from the “homunculus” of medieval alchemy and becomes a repository for, indeed a misrepresentation and disguising of, many repressed impulses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in both his creator and his culture, ranging from preconscious drives of erotic desire and death-wish destruction to deep social conflicts over the rise of industrialism, the newest biological sciences, and the capitalist and imperialist exploitation of “othered” human races (see Hogle 1998). By 1886, amid the controversy over Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution—and the devolution that can come with it in Darwin’s *Descent of Man* (1871) – Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) responds to the debate by changing the nature of the old Calvinistic “Satan within us” that it invokes. It turns that simple dark shadow into the newly malleable body’s capacity to substitute a “second form and countenance,” a devolved other, for that body’s customary appearance; the result is a fabricated “aura and effulgence” that conceals (or hides) a more complex “war among [the evolving body’s] members” and manifests its counterfeiting, among other ways, by “sloping” the effulgence’s “hand backwards” to produce a signature for Hyde that is also a forgery of Dr. Jekyll’s (Stevenson 1987: 105–11) (see Stevenson, Robert Louis).

In all these cases, as well as many other instances, the Gothic ghost of the counterfeit intensifies what was already at work in the Shakespearean counterfeit epitomized by the ghost of Hamlet’s father and its portrait. There the figure that intimates a lost ground but can also be an illusion incarnates an unresolved debate at its author’s time about whether ghosts are reliable harbingers of divine truth or deceptions sent from Hell, as well as whether aristocratic or middle-class views of signs are the most believable ones. By Walpole’s day, the ghost of such a counterfeit and its harboring of an ideological irresolution has come to manifest and disguise an Enlightenment-era tug-of-war “between the traditional claims of landed property” where the portrait solidly represents the founder of the estate “and the claims of the private [bourgeois] family” in which portraits can be divorced from their ancestry, yet ceremonially linked to that old pedigree, by new rights of purchase and even marriage (Clery 1995: 77). The Gothic ghost of the counterfeit thereby becomes a symbolic location, given its inherent pulling backward and forward while still concealing its complex foundation in conflicted cultural beliefs, where the unresolved ideological debates of the new author’s own time can be both manifested and obscured, dealt with and evaded, in a fake reincarnation of an older manifestation that distances the old ground it still invokes, one which itself concealed the ideological conflicts of that previous era. Such is the process in the Gothic by which the “middle class,” its primary readership, as David Punter has put it, “displaces the hidden violence of present social structures, conjures them up again as past, and falls promptly under their spell” (Punter 1980: 418). The very term that Walpole adopted for this mixed-genre form, “Gothic” viewed as an aesthetic, after all, is really the ghost of a counterfeit itself that has always been about ideological contestation and has sought to conceal that fact. As the description of a style of building or writing, it began as a Renaissance-era misnomer about a pointed-arch mode of construction, one with which no “Goths” had any real involvement, that Italian critics wanted to type as barbarous and antiquated compared to the Greco-Roman classical style they wanted to revive while medieval cathedrals still continued as embodiments of Catholic power (Frankl 1960: 259–60). What better name could there be, then, than “Gothic” for a mode of fiction that, ever since Walpole, keeps oscillating between the old and the new using ghosts of counterfeits so as to provide a symbolic repository for unresolved conflict as though it somehow lay in a distant past and not in the present where it might scare us to death.
Two works from the mid-eighteenth century are touchstones for the theme of crime and the Gothic. The first is the original Gothic novel, Horace Walpole’s 1764 Castle of Otranto (see Walpole, Horace) and the second is Cesare Beccaria’s “An Essay on Crimes and Punishment,” published in Italy in the same year. Among other faults he found with the criminal justice system of his day, Beccaria wrote against the medieval use of torture, secret accusation, the arbitrary power of judges, and capital punishment; his essay is recognized as an early rationalist and progressive approach to crime and punishment. In contrast, the Gothic novel began with an eighteenth-century portrait of medieval transgressions as spectacle. Otranto rendered a vibrant image of medieval crime, backward legal practices, tyranny, corruption, and superstition – the very elements Beccaria attempted to remove. The value of its portrayal has, over a number of centuries, been contested. Whether a Beccarian rationalism frames Gothic crime is a question that has shaped the critical response to the genre since its inception.

Walpole positioned Otranto as “an attempt to blend the two kinds of fiction, the ancient and the modern” (2002: 9); that is, he wished to create a new form that merged the older imaginative romance and the eighteenth-century’s realist novel, which “copied nature.” The experiment also led, through the prism of the medieval Gothic, to the emergence of a new view of crime. Manfred’s hidden usurpation of Otranto is the energizing current that captures and holds our interest. But an uncanny, spectral dimension comes into play and a fantasia-like atmosphere develops around the crime, the aura of a world infiltrated by uncertainty,
ghostly presences, and uncanny events (see uncanny, the).

The plot of Otranto turns on the guilt and deceptions of Prince Manfred and the spectral appearances resulting from his fraudulent claim to nobility. He attempts to ensure the continuation of his line through his son Conrad’s marriage to Isabella, but Conrad’s improbable death will lead Manfred to attempt to marry Isabella (while remaining married to Hermione); to threaten and imprison anyone who might have guessed his secret; and to accidentally murder his daughter, Matilda. As with Claudius in Hamlet, the uncovering of Manfred’s crime is presaged by the appearance of an apparition, in this case of a monstrous armored knight. We are only allowed to see parts of him, beginning with the fall of a massive helmet that kills Conrad, until he is fully constructed, piece by piece, like a puzzle. How we read this bizarre appearance in relation to Manfred is crucial to our understanding of the novel and our judgment of his crime. While a criminologist’s psychopathy checklist could capture a few of Manfred’s character traits, he does not appear, on balance, to be deranged or psychotic; thus, we cannot place the supernatural appearances he sees as hallucinatory, as a mental aberration. His responses and motives are sane, understandably venal, often canny, though clearly not laudable. To complicate matters, Manfred’s crime and his imagination are also set within a picture of medieval religion. In the end it is a mixture of criminal impulsivity and the appearances of the specter that gets the better of him. In a blind and enraged reaction to “an indistinct whisper” near the tomb of Alfonso (“Manfred will never permit our union” (2002: 108)), he kills Matilda, his daughter, by mistake, thinking her to be Isabella, whom he is trying to force into marriage. The mistake is the climax of his increasingly desperate attempts to deny the powers of the now almost formed spectral gestalt of the castle’s rightful owner. Theodore, raised as a peasant although really a noble, turns out to be the true heir of the castle, as is finally attested when a gigantic Alfonso, now fully constructed, “dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the centre of the ruins [of the castle wall]” (2002: 112). In the end, Manfred is found as insignificant socially as Alfonso is gigantic. He turns out to be no more than a chamberlain’s grandson – the usurping of the castle and his name the product of a forged will.

Given Manfred’s crimes, he appears to be let off with a light sentence. After the disruption he has caused and the murder of his daughter, he is quickly forgiven by Matilda on her death bed, and then by his long-suffering wife Hippolita. In the end, their doom is pronounced as “ejected by heaven,” and the two assume religion, to retire from the world to a life of divine contemplation in “yon holy cells” in “neighbouring convents” (2002: 113, 115). But how are we to take the gigantic Alfonso and his providential powers, and his influence on Manfred’s crimes? Is Otranto best framed through a Beccarian rationalism as a critique of the Gothic-medieval view of crime as evil, or are we meant to enter and believe in this supernatural zone? If we do so, we must have faith in such specters and their influences; we must assent to the secure judgment and penalty for Manfred’s crime in the penance of his monk’s cell, and we must also acknowledge the divine will, as Alfonso “ascended solemnly towards heaven” (113) as the clouds part and he is finally received by Saint Nicholas.

Many critics have probed Otranto’s uncanny events to find whether they are framed by rational distance, and many have concluded that there are instabilities in the overarching values of the novel. David Punter’s two-volume The Literature of Terror (1996) early found Freudian psychological depths in an ambiguity of framing values. For an early feminist critic, Kate Ferguson Ellis, Otranto’s supernatural appearances are a code indicating a wider shift in patriarchal power and a questioning of primogeniture; the picture of life in the castle delineates the systemic oppression of women and domestic violence (1989: 48). Robert Miles (1999) bases an analysis of Otranto’s uncanny crimes on Lord Kames’ concept of “ideal
crime

presence” – Kames, a well-known legal scholar and critic, pronounced that an active and ideal moral perspective should oversee any literary narrative. But, again, a religious ambiguity lies at the center of Walpole’s supernatural events. A reader cannot tell which religious frame to take as authoritative. In what spiritual world, either Catholic or Protestant, would a courageous daughter such as Matilda be sacrificed? Why, given Alfonso’s persistent and frightening appearances, and the seriousness of the crime, is the villain let off so easily? What necessitates the bizarre appearances of the supernatural, if their outcome is an accidental and unjustified death (see supernatural, the)? For E. J. Clery (1995), the overstated supernatural events of the novel are likely ironic, though no “contemporary reader ... took up the challenge to decode Walpole’s ghostly giant” (69); for Michael Gamer (2000), Otranto’s Alfonso is parody (Gamer 1996: xvii); and for Jerrold Hogle (1997: para. 3) the Gothic supernatural is a counterfeit (see counterfeit) – Alfonso exists as symbol in the long-vacated space of religion, now available for new cultural tensions and new problems of authority and social positioning. Thus, many critics have found the blend of the uncanny and the criminal in Otranto to be both instrumental and carefully ambiguous. They find a resonating, often parodic distance between the supernatural action and Manfred’s crimes.

This blend of the supernatural, crime, history, and psychology in Otranto thus shows us the possibility of an emerging pattern, one yet within the “Age of Reason” but reviving the “romance” side of the equation as well. Unlike the realism of Richardson’s Pamela (1740) or Fielding’s Tom Jones (1749), Walpole’s novel uncovers a fantasia state, a spectacle of uncanny forces both caused by and causing the emotional stress, terror, and uncertainties of violent criminality. The gigantic Alfonso and the other spectral appearances seem to materially interpenetrate events; they are indicators of Manfred’s guilt and are corroborated by many characters. As the true motive and desire are uncovered, as clues are given, and as providential messages of innocence and guilt are provided, Manfred becomes progressively more out of control, more irrational, and less able to hide. The supernatural is then an active agent in the outcome and is implicated in Manfred’s murder of Matilda. In terms of its placement and judgment of a murder, Walpole’s ambiguous supernaturalism allows the framing values in Otranto to hover between faith and parody, between a religious and a more critical, secular perspective.

The rebirth of the Gothic medieval world with its superstitions and crimes was entirely successful and quickly generated copies. However, its subtle, parodic approach to Gothic-medieval religion, which seemed to decenter the frame rule of an “ideal presence” and reduce the supernatural to a troubled fantasia state, was another matter. Any rule of taste by which a rational distance is kept from medieval supernaturalism quickly became more broken than followed. Taking one side of Walpole’s duality, many authors, great and small, worked this vein to blend the supernatural and crime and, toward the end of the century, the blue-fire Gothic of William Lane’s Minerva Press produced a flood of cheap Gothic novels dealing in every kind of criminality mixed with superstition, most without edifying theory or a rational frame, irony, or parody. Many borrowed from German sources (Schiller’s Die Räuber (1782), Bürger’s “Lenore” (1733), or Veit Weber’s Die Teufelbeschwörung (1791)); titles included The Castle of Wolfenbach (1793), The Maid of Hamlet (1793), Necromancer of the Black Forest (1794), Horrid Mysteries (1796), The Mysterious Warning (1796), The Animated Skeleton (1798), and Orphan of the Rhine (1798).

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the Gothic panoply of villains quickly grew to include most ranks of the medieval aristocracy and their religious equivalents: evil counts, contessas, marches, slipped priests, monks, novitiates, nuns, priores, abbots and abbes, robber barons, or progressive or psychotic cult leaders enact most of the known transgressions labeled as criminal. In terms of
crime typologies, violent crime, often spurred by a satanic figure, is predominant, including murder (patricide, matricide, and filicide were favored), serial murder, rape, kidnapping, incest, child abuse, organized crime conspiracy, extortion, violent threat and assault, sexual predation and sexual abuse, treason, and state and nonstate terrorism. In other, more refined, versions of the Gothic romance, Gothic criminals engage the less violent types of property crime (and what we today call white-collar crime), such as fraud, theft, forgery, counterfeiting, and various schemes for removing inheritances from their rightful owners. By the turn of the century the Gothic mode had become well enough established to warrant Jane Austen’s ironic portrait of Catherine Morland, the Gothic ingénue of *Northanger Abbey* (1817), who looks for, but does not find, Gothic crime in the fashionable world of Regency Bath.

Other writers of the later eighteenth century, however, saw serious possibilities in Walpole’s ambiguous framing of supernaturalism and crime. *Vathek* (1782), an oriental tale by William Beckford, has Gothic dimensions, especially in its rendition of the tyrant caliph (see *beckford*, william). Beckford’s perspective on the uncanny is, like Walpole’s, doubled. *Vathek* is a nightmarish tyrant whose range of crime is unparalleled—he murders fifty youths to win the favor of the Giaour and become immortal in order to “receive the diadem of Gian Ben Gian” and other rewards (2001: 76). He also burns his supporters alive in a tower he has built to be closer to paradise, but in the end will remain forever contemplating his crimes, and a flaming heart, in a forbidding, underground Islamic hell under the eye of Eblis. Vathek’s punishment is an almost canonical resolution, and the view of hell is entirely convincing, but the cultural difference between Islam and Christianity provides the distance Beckford needed to decenter the religious perspective and the uncanny appearances in the novel, much as Walpole had done with the Christian medieval supernatural as spectacle.

Other fictional explorations of the Gothic mode and crime found additional uses for Walpole’s original pattern: William Godwin’s *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799) and *Caleb Williams* (1794) and Ann Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) (see *godwin*, william; *radcliffe*, ann). These authors found that Gothic crime could be made both entertaining and intellectually challenging through further theorizing the ambiguous frame discovered by Walpole. For Godwin, the approach allowed a critique of prevailing aristocratic and religious values: he could show how crime was defined and labeled by those holding social power. Radcliffe’s *Udolpho* offers up, and then subtly deconstructs, a crime fantasy; the uncanny is gradually dissolved until we see it as a product of the imagination of the ingénue under threats of abduction. According to Markman Ellis, Emily St. Aubert’s sensibility is tuned to “threats to her innocence and chastity, portending murder, violent rape, or at least forced marriage” (2000: 58). Emily’s terror produces the belief that uncanny visitations are occurring in the whispers and shadows around her, though she gradually uncovers the truth about her abductor, Montoni, and the fantasy state dissolves into the effects of an overactive imagination. In M. G. Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796), the opposite occurs: the fantasy state intensifies into a breakdown of reason and ends in a rape and murder, complete with vivid appearances of Satan and a succubus, Rosario/Rosaria (see *lewis*, matthew). The novel, written when Lewis was twenty, was designed to horrify and provoke a strong response and did so, more perhaps than Lewis bargained for. Evidently a priest could not yet be made a full-fledged rapist and Gothic villain. Coleridge preached against it, as did the well-known literary critic James Mathias. Both claimed the novel was corrupting. Mathias attempted to bring Lewis, who was a Member of Parliament, to court on obscenity charges. For Gamer, “subsequent commentators have concluded that Lewis most likely would have been prosecuted under the common law for obscene libel had he not published a bowdlerized fourth edition early in 1798” (2000: 1048). The policing of the Gothic portrayal of criminality (its uncanny
dimensions and its ambiguously religious or secular frame) has remained with us to this day.

The variations on this challenging theme of Gothic crime were developed in many interesting directions by many writers of the Romantic period. David Punter aligns the full development of the Gothic novel with Romanticism, finding the attraction in its portrayal of inequality between the sexes, its distrust of reason as a principle motive, and its articulation of darker and more hidden parts of the psyche (1989: 111). The duality of approach to criminality and the Gothic fantasia state were, for instance, used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Christabel (1797, 1800) and The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner (1798). Both seek to refine Gothic criminality and the Gothic uncanny by opening them to a revised, more contemporary religious frame. Charles Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) uncovers an outcast who has made a pact with the devil and must roam the earth seeking a victim to release him from his crime; it also offers scathing portrayals of medieval religious hypocrisy (see Maturin, Charles Robert). Percy Bysshe Shelley’s early Gothic novels Zastrozzi (1810) and St. Irvyne (1811) were written when he was sixteen and published when he was eighteen (see Shelley, Percy Bysshe). They are in large measure adolescent fantasies of criminality as occult, and they borrow wholesale from Charlotte Dacre’s Zofloia; or The Moor (1806). However, taking a page from Godwin, they show skill in portraying revolutionary ideas as having supernatural powers. Shelley’s later play The Cenci (1820) and parts of his last long poem “The Triumph of Life” (1822) use Gothic sources, their crimes and the uncanny now more securely employed for a progressive argument. Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) took the Godwinian pattern of the critique of an ideology and applied it to a new theme of familial crime, the refusal of paternity (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft). Her new Gothic vision interlaced crime with uncanny and futuristic science to create the fantasias of “the Creature” who has supernatural powers for good but is made evil by alienation and rejection. Byron, himself something of a stylish Gothic villain, created the Byronic hero (see Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron). His dramatic poem Manfred (1817) (a clear connection to Walpole’s villain) explores a hidden crime (perhaps incest between Manfred and his sister Astarte) and a Faustian debate with vast supernatural presences. His The Giaour (1813) is a Gothic oriental tale. The Vampyre (written in 1816 and published in 1819) by Polidori, Byron’s doctor, shows the possibility of criminality of predation linked to ancient folk myth reset in an aristocratic milieu, with Lord Ruthven as the new shape of the vampire. James Hogg’s Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) is an exploration of the fantasies, fanatisms, and crimes of one of the elect (the Calvinist “predestinarian” Robert Wringhim) set in the late-seventeenth-century period of religious struggle in the Scotland of the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Covenanters (see Hogg, James). The Romantics thus usually placed the crime and uncanny of the Gothic as a critique of established social-religious structures and continued Walpole’s duality of framing values to this new purpose.

For the Victorians, especially toward the end of the century, the Gothic’s doubled view of crime and the uncanny aligned exceptionally well with the period’s questioning of religion and its contest with science. Dickens is laced with Gothic touches (Miss Havisham and Magwitch) that portray the Gothic cruelties of social and religious hypocrisy as causes of crime (see Dickens, Charles). The Brontës’ work gothicized lines of criminality in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847) and Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights (1847), with Romantic, more-gender-aware versions of Gothic villains such as Heathcliff and Rochester modeled somewhat on Byron. Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841) and Wilkie Collins’ The Woman in White (1859) and The Moonstone (1868) marked a phase in the transition from Gothic to the more scientific frame of detective fiction. In this new approach, logic and reason supersede...
the uncanny. In *The Woman in White*, fake apparitions are made by the thieves so that a victim can be judged as unstable – the supernatural becoming merely a ruse to forward the robbery of an inheritance (see Collins, Wilkie). Poe's Gothic stories move in the same duality of approach to the uncanny and crime as did *Otranto*, with additional psychological ambiguities (see Poe, Edgar Allan). In “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), a neo-Gothic mansion appears sentient, and there is a ghostly return of a sister who may have been inadvertently encrypted. It was in the Victorian period as well that the positivist view of crime, begun by Beccaria, began to gain traction in intellectual discussions. In 1842, the great French statistician L. A. J. Quetelet wrote "On the Development of the Propensity to Crime," an exhaustive analysis of crime statistics showing that environmental factors (rather than moral factors) were instrumental in causing crime. In England, similar work is found in Glyde’s 1856 “Localities of Crime in Suffolk.” The tension between secular-scientific and Gothic-demonic or uncanny versions of criminality became more clear and more deeply informed on both sides as the century drew to a close. Darwinian analysis began to inform the debate on criminality, as did eugenics; Cesare Lombroso’s theory (*Criminal Man*, 1884, translated 1911) of criminal atavisms (physical traits) proclaimed that criminals were a type of evolutionary throwback – they were “born criminals”; and Freud’s psychoanalytical theory of the unconscious, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899, translated 1911), found instinctual forces leading to breakdowns of control of a tenuous rational ego.

Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890, revised 1891) revived the duality of frame initiated by Walpole more than 120 years before, now with Darwin as a likely subtext. In *Dorian Gray*, the Gothic novel returns to its roots in a stylish revival of the ambiguous framing of the uncanny and crime to forward aesthetic and social criticism. As Riquelme (2008) shows us, in *Dorian Gray* the painting gives rise to a dark double that counters Dorian’s physical perfection. The dark double is a vampire-like being who steps out of its existence as a work of art to feed destructively on humanity. For Riquelme, the device is a thin cover for a troubled view of homosexuality, never clearly articulated other than in coded ways and perhaps the true hidden “crime” of the novel. Shortly after the appearance of the novel, in 1895, Wilde was found guilty of sodomy (considered a crime in this period) in a sensational trial in which he was sentenced to two years of hard labor first in Pentonville and then in Reading. But, according to Riquelme, the attempted resolution of Dorian’s crime (and the final evaluation of the uncanny) through his death and reversion to mortality does not work. The true dark double is never fully explained or exorcised; the homosexual relationships that lie just under the surface are left inarticulated and unacknowledged. *Dorian Gray*, however, remains an iconic testament to the oppressive laws of the period, the level of fear they generated, and the heroic nature of any opposition to them.

The scientific possibilities of the uncanny technologies of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* are played out by H. G. Wells in *War of the Worlds* (1898) (the crimes of an alien invasion) and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) (the horrific crimes that can victimize animals under the rubric of science) and by Jules Verne in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) (the uncanny powers of a new undersea form of transport). Henry Rider Haggard’s *She* (1887) reveals a renewed uncanny and demonized criminality drawn from then-recent anthropological discoveries and interpretations of African myth. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) uses a scientific breakthrough to construct a dual personality – one conventional and scientific, the other atavistic and criminal – to show us a continuous threat of reverse evolution and a return to ancient biological structures and an animal past. In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), we find another framing of the supernatural as criminal fantasia in what a number of critics have found to be a depth analysis of the injustices of the system of criminal justice at work in late
Victorian England (see stoker, bram). Anne McGillivray’s 2002 analysis uncovers Count Dracula as a lawyer, showing the persistence of the problem of Gothic framing both within and outside the novel. McGillivray sees Stoker’s narrative as “a cautionary tale of lawyers who serve vampires” (2002: 116). Dracula represents the legal-aristocratic tradition of the barrister and its legitimizing structures in ancient state law and “inheritance through blood. McGillivray also connects Stoker’s work to a well-known modern Canadian criminal case (Homulka and Bernado) that opened up a disturbing debate about the legal profession’s tendencies to make deals for convictions at the expense of truth and the just treatment of victims. With Henry James’ The Turn of the Screw (1896), the Gothic novel arrived at a high degree of sophistication in its scientific understanding of criminality and its relation to the uncanny (see james, henry). James’ novella develops the theory of a fantasia of crime to a new level. The crime is so well hidden that many critics have had difficulty finding it, though numbers have guessed at it. One strong camp, arising from Edmund Wilson’s 1934 essay, asserts that the apparitions of Quint and Miss Jessel were fantasies on the part of the governess. Others have seen that the seemingly innocent children, Miles and Flora, are deceiving the adults and have likely been abused by Quint and Jessel, who appear as ghosts. In this view, the governess is sensitive enough to see them, to struggle with their influences, and also to guess at a much darker criminal truth behind these “perfect” children. The ambiguity of framing values comes through the psychological complexity offered by the limited “I” narrator. Are these appearances true ghosts of the past or the hallucinations of an overstressed heroine whose descriptions can be discounted? We come to the crucial moment of discovery in the novel when the housekeeper, Mrs. Grose, cannot see the apparition, clearly seen and described by the governess. Unlike in Otranto, there is no corroboration of the uncanny by other characters, but nor is there a definitive deconstruction of it. With Mrs. Grose’s denial, we have the threatened collapse of the supernatural into a psychology of fear, a fantasia state, and a Radcliffean type of stress reaction. However, the governess’ accurate descriptions of Miss Jessel and Quint, whom she could not have known, remain unanswered, as does the cause of the sudden death of Miles at the very end. The novel presents us, then, with a number of irresolvable, contesting views – and James shows us the depths of ambiguity involved in our reactions to any serious crime, a reaction that includes the uncanny as explanation.

Twentieth- and twenty-first-century Gothic crimes are played out in today’s versions of the uncanny, criminality, innocent victims, and Gothic settings. We find, for instance, familial crimes occurring with the rise and fall of familial control over crumbling plantations in American Southern Gothic (Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom! (1936)); falsely accused and mesmerized victims kept in Canadian neo-Gothic prisons (Margaret Atwood’s Alias Grace (1996)); genocidal crimes seen from the point of view of the slaves who suffered them, who make ghostly intercessions from the past (Toni Morrison’s Beloved (1987)); and a future Gothic Internet, the basis of vast corporate empires run by crime families who commit parricide and assassination within satellite pleasure hotels hovering miles above the earth (William Gibson’s Neuromancer (1984)). These more contemporary and futurist visions of criminality and the uncanny yet derive much from the original dualities of the supernatural and the rational, crime and the uncanny, given to us in Walpole’s originating Gothic novel.

The Gothic novel has a long-standing paradigmatic subject in crime and our moral responses to it. In their introduction to the classic work on environmental criminology, Patterns in Crime, criminologists Brantingham and Brantingham provide a sense of this scope:

Crimes are inherently dramatic events. They cause great harm and elicit a strong social response [...]. Crime implies punishment and raises the issue of power. It relates the individual citizen to society and government [...]. The
patterns of crime have long been seen as a touchstone that reveals the inner composition of society. (1984: 1)

As we have seen, the Gothic novel can portray crime as a demonization of the criminal and as an exploration of fantasia states of horror and terror that arise in the crime's victims. The novels sketched here show how wide-ranging the intersection of the uncanny and the criminal can be, and also how, over the course of the development of the Gothic mode, Gothic novelists have increasingly viewed the uncanny as a way to reveal the inner selves of both criminals and victims, the inner composition of society, and the underlying patterns of social power and its abuses. As the related genres of science fiction and detective fiction developed, the uncanny played an increasingly secondary role in them. Novels of Gothic criminality, however, have not dropped the uncanny. They have adapted their originating elements to fit modern transgressions, changes in criminal justice systems, and changing technologies. The Gothic novel has, over the 240-plus years it has been with us, successfully adapted its view of crime and the interplay of the uncanny with it to uncover our own ways of demonizing criminality and of assuaging or denying the terror and horror of its victims.

SEE ALSO: Beckford, William; Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Collins, Wilkie; Counterfeit; Dickens, Charles; Godwin, William; Hogg, James; James, Henry; Lewis, Matthew; Maturin, Charles Robert; Poe, Edgar Allan; Radcliffe, Ann; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Shelley, Percy Bysshe; Stoker, Bram; Supernatural, The; Uncanny, The; Walpole, Horace.

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FURTHER READING
If the two prefaces that Horace Walpole attached to *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) might be regarded as a sort of playful manifesto for the nascent Gothic, the earliest reactive criticism to be applied to the genre was that embodied in the reviews published by readers who were, as often as not, authors in their own right. Thus, serious interventions into the definition of acceptable Gothic aesthetics were made by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his 1797 review of *The Monk* by Matthew G. Lewis, though a perhaps less polemical consideration of the genre as a whole was to be produced in two short essays by Nathan Drake, “On Gothic Superstition” and “On Objects of Terror,” both published in 1798. Further general considerations of the genre’s aspirations and achievements were to be provided by a series of early-nineteenth-century essays mostly premised upon the function of the supernatural within post-Enlightenment fiction. These include Coleridge’s “The Gothic Mind” and “Gothic Literature and Art” (both 1818), and the posthumously published “On the Supernatural in Poetry” (1826) by Ann Radcliffe.

If the eighteenth-century bellettrist and dilettante traditions underpinned the earliest criticism of Gothic, their decline within the nineteenth century coincided with a quiet period for published reflection upon the genre. Sporadic reflection came, no doubt, through those authors whose interests in the Gothic were associated with a humorous appreciation of the extremes its styistics may be taken to. One might note here the comic Gothic of *Northanger Abbey* (1818) by Jane Austen, or the satirical wit of Thomas Love Peacock, whose short fiction lampooned both the genre and those who adopted its mannerisms in their everyday lives. This is an abiding tradition – self-conscious parody is evident in twentieth-century works such as *Cold Comfort Farm* (1932) by Stella Gibbons and *Vampires Anonymous* (1991) by Jeffrey McMahan. Gothic, though prolifically produced during the Victorian period, attracted very little controversy, and, where literary and cultural critics were apt to commentate upon the controversial sexual content of sensation fiction or the problem novel with guarded approval or vehement disdain, no such attention was directed to the often suggestive incidents depicted in fin-de-siècle Gothic works such as *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker or *The Beetle* (1897) by Richard Marsh. Again, contemporary reviews, which usually dwell upon one or more works rather than the genre as a whole, represent the bulk of Gothic criticism well into the twentieth century.

The twentieth century, however, brought the first substantial critical considerations of the genre. The first modern academic study of the Gothic as a genre was almost certainly *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917) by the American critic Dorothy Scarborough. Its eight chapters covered the eighteenth-century tradition, folklore, the influence of science, ghost stories, and the representation of Satan, as well as a number of authors prominent in Scarborough’s day but neglected thereafter. Though an innovative volume, it suffers somewhat from deficient referencing. Scarborough’s lead was followed by Edith Birkhead, who published, some four years later, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (1921). Constructing antecedents for the genre in Elizabethan drama, folklore, and the ballad tradition, *The Tale of Terror* surveyed Gothic writing from Walpole to Wilkie Collins and J. Sheridan Le Fanu. Indeed, Birkhead’s study may arguably be one of the most under-acknowledged influences in the formation of the modern Gothic canon, in that its twelve chapters embrace the novels and novelists most frequently encountered in the teaching of, and research into, the genre today. As well as Radcliffe, Lewis, Peacock, and Austen, Birkhead exemplifies the works of Charles Robert Maturin, William Beckford, William Godwin, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, John Polidori, Mary Shelley, Edward Bulwer Lytton, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Rudyard Kipling.
The book also considers the vampire, the short stories published in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, and, in a chapter on American Gothic, the fiction of Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allan Poe. Arguably, this survey of genre was as influential in its day as *The Literature of Terror* (1980) by David Punter was to be some sixty years later. Another work of note from the earlier twentieth century – but with somewhat less academic pretensions – is *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (1938) by the bibliophile and occultist Montague Summers (1880–1948). Summers followed this work with *A Gothic Bibliography* (1940) and also published three works on folklore relevant to the Gothic: *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* (1928), *The Vampire in Europe* (1929), and *The Werewolf* (1933), as well as a translation of the *Compendium Maleficarum* (1608) of Francesco Maria Guazzo, a Latin treatise on the witch. Summers’ disparaging response to *Dracula* in *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* probably represents the first criticism of that novel outside of a literary review. Comparatively few critics followed the lead of these two pioneers, however: notable exceptions include *Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu and Others* (1931) by Stewart Marsh Ellis and *Horace Walpole and the English Novel: A Study of the Influence of The Castle of Otranto, 1764–1820* (1934) by Kewal Krishna Mehrotra. These pioneering critical works are rarely read today, though they should be acknowledged for their contribution to the gradual accession of a previously ephemeral genre to the field of academic study.

The tradition of the practitioner-critic did not disappear with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reviewing, however. The long essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1927) by the American Gothic and fantasy writer H. P. Lovecraft is probably better known today than the book-length studies published by his academic contemporaries. No doubt this is a consequence in part of Lovecraft’s enduring fame as a writer, though scholarly and annotated reprints of his comparatively short study of the genre produced during the 1970s and at the dawn of the twenty-first century have certainly enhanced its reputation. Lovecraft’s critical study surveys the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century traditions but represents an advance on its contemporaries through the acknowledgment of the Gothic work of Montague Rhodes James, M. P. Shiel, William Hope Hodgson, Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, and Lord Dunsany. It is an idiosyncratic work, nonetheless, and – in part because of its initial publication as an article in *The Recluse* – retains much of the informal tone of belletrism.

Formal academic criticism of the genre had been established, however, and, though almost no full-length studies appeared between the English translation of *The Romantic Agony* (1933) by the Italian critic Mario Praz and *The Gothic Flame: Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England* (1957) by the Indian scholar Devendra Prasad Varma, critics found a small but steady market for shorter works in refereed journals such as *New England Quarterly*, *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, *Sewanee Review*, and *Yale Review*. It is no coincidence that many of the scholarly journals that published Gothic criticism in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were based in the United States. In the United Kingdom, Gothic frequently found itself somewhat at odds with the rather restrictive canon then associated with university pedagogy. The Gothic had no place in the elitist Great Tradition endorsed by the influential British critic Frank Raymond Leavis, and it was, arguably, the more radical pedagogy associated with the founding of the so-called “plate-glass universities” of the 1960s that institutionalized Gothic within the British university system, and thence within the nation’s literary canon. Journals continue to be an important conduit for critical ideas, and a specialist journal dedicated to the genre, *Gothic Studies*, was established in 1999. The journal is published by the International Gothic Association, founded in 1991, one of several bodies that today actively promote Gothic scholarship within the genre (see *International Gothic Association*, *The*).
The more substantial critical commentary represented by monographs rather than articles was effectively restarted in the late 1950s following a hiatus of almost thirty years. The generic survey remained – and remains – popular. A number of works stand out as milestones in this respect, and as influences upon successive generations of undergraduate and graduate students. The work of earlier critics was consolidated, for example, in *The Romantic Novel in England* (1972) by Robert Kiely. The title is something of a misnomer – or else a telling strategy by which the genre was quietly coupled to the more canonical genre of Romanticism – for it embraces the Gothic from Walpole to Emily Brontë, albeit with the novel inclusion of a chapter on *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) by James Hogg. Like *Le Roman “Gothique” Anglais, 1764–1824* (1968) by Maurice Lévy, Kiely’s work stresses the English heritage of the genre.

In *The Literature of Terror*, however, David Punter returned to the conception of the Gothic as a genre that had resonances, if not a discrete identity, in the literary productions of countries beyond the British Isles, his work laying great stress upon early and later American Gothic and the postmodern generally. Punter’s magisterial survey (which was reprinted in two volumes in 1996) marks the beginning of the rise of large-scale British academic interest in the Gothic: the work’s importance to later scholarship cannot be underestimated, and its status as an unavoidable landmark has to be acknowledged. Possibly the most influential single work on the Gothic since *The Literature of Terror*, Fred Botting’s *Gothic* (1996) has in many respects re-energized the debate as to what the parameters of the genre actually are. Its frequently quoted opening sentence – “Gothic signifies a writing of excess” – encapsulates the retreat from a generic definition based on supernatural content that criticism had been making for some time: Botting’s readings of the Graveyard School of poetry, of science fiction, and of persecutory romance are especially praiseworthy. A more recent survey of the genre, *Gothic Literature* (2007) by Andrew Smith, is also highly commendable.

Parallel to the generic survey volume, the single-author monograph has become a central resource for students of the Gothic. The commercial pressures of supply and demand, of course, have naturally influenced the development of scholarly publishing, and so the majority of works in this category relate to the canonical texts taught most frequently in English-speaking universities. Hence, a significant number of monographs consider institutionally established authors such as Radcliffe, Le Fanu, and Stoker but far fewer publications of any kind examine writers only just coming into prominence in academic circles, such as Clara Reeve, Marie Corelli, and Richard Marsh. Under-read writers such as these do, however, inform the content of the other staple of contemporary Gothic criticism, the edited collection. The commercial attractiveness of an issue or a theory central to contemporary criticism effectively offsets the commercially lesser status of understudied writers, and maneuvers them into conjunction with established figures. The issues considered in such collections are characteristically timely and responsive to changes in Gothic, its alignments with other genres, and theory. Recent collections, for example, have examined imperial Gothic, Queer Gothic, the inhuman and posthuman, and European Gothic. The edited collection is analogous also to the “companion” volume, a form that came into prominence at the dawn of the twenty-first century. These are edited collections whose content characteristically embraces the history of the genre, its international variations, a selection of its key thematic and narrative issues, and a speculative projection of its future. David Punter’s *A Companion to the Gothic* (2000) arguably laid the foundations upon which similar works might prosper, and its successors have included *The Cambridge Companion to the Gothic* (2002), edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, and *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* (2007), edited by Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy.
Gothic, then, has moved from the ephemeral to the canonical. Publishing in the field is vibrant, and student enthusiasm for the genre substantial. It is, of course, tempting to speculate upon the future direction likely to be taken by Gothic criticism, though such an action is inevitably risky. Suffice it to say that Gothic in its critical practice is an inclusive discipline, and is likely to embrace innovative developments in theory, such as ecocriticism and the posthuman. The ongoing production of Gothic works in the current millennium, again, will no doubt ensure that the Gothic canon is not restricted to works published during the preceding three centuries.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; International Gothic Association, The; Queer Gothic; Radcliffe, Ann; Romanticism; Theory.

REFERENCE


FURTHER READING


Cronenberg, David

STEPHEN CARVER

David Cronenberg (1943–) is a Canadian auteur filmmaker who made his name with intelligent, innovative, and graphic horror films. His work explores human fears and desires not commonly expressed in cinema, such as disease, aging, mental illness, and sexual fetishism. Cronenberg approaches the human condition through the unconscious and physical processes of the thinking animal, with an extreme existentialism that celebrates the body (in all its disgusting glory) while admitting the horror of the individual consciousness trapped within ever-decaying flesh. These themes are present in Cronenberg’s early genre work, and he continues to explore them through the adaptation of postmodern literature.
Cronenberg was born in Toronto in 1943. He majored in biochemistry at the University of Toronto before switching to English. Cronenberg began making films at university, abandoning literary ambitions, and these juvenilia contain key themes that he would later develop. Transfer (1966) is a dialogue between a psychiatrist and patient in a Surrealist and nouvelle vague setting, while From the Drain (1967) is about two soldiers in a mental hospital bath. One is disconcerted by the plughole, and a vine-like tendril eventually snakes up from the drain and strangles him. From the Drain feels like Beckett, but with a money shot. Stereo (1969) is framed as an experiment by “Dr. Luther Stringfellow” filmed by “The Canadian Academy of Erotic Enquiry.” A group of volunteers are given telepathic capabilities (a device later developed in Scanners), and encouraged to explore these through sexual experimentation, the theory being that sexually bonded telepathic groups will replace the “obsolescent family unit.” One subject has her identity annexed by a secondary personality, and as the telepaths become stronger the scientists lose control. Crimes of the Future (1970) also contains a mad scientist in absentia. The dermatologist Antoine Rouge has disappeared after a pandemic caused by his cosmetics wipes out all adult women. Adrian Tripod, director of the House of Skin Clinic, is searching for him. Anticipating later projects such as The Brood and Videodrome, Tripod meets a man whose body mimics childbirth by growing new organs, while the new world is carved up by the sinister corporations Metaphysical Import-Export and the Oceanic Podiatry Group. Rouge is eventually discovered reincarnated as a little girl. It sounds better than it is, but the themes of these early process pieces – absentee scientists/father figures, physical and psychological transformation, mutation, sexually transmitted disease, and things coming out of drainpipes – all recur in Cronenberg’s later work.

Moving on from the avant-garde, Cronenberg hooked up with fellow-Canadian filmmaker Ivan Reitman, whose low-budget Cannibal Girls (1970) had been distributed by American International, and Cinepix, a small Montreal film company specializing in soft-core pornography. Cronenberg, who has described his early writing as “possessed by Nabokov and Burroughs” (Rodley 1997: 157), wrote and directed “Orgy of the Blood Parasites” (Shivers) for Cinepix while Reitman produced.

As parasite-infested, sex-crazed maniacs overrun an exclusive Montreal apartment block, the influence of Romero’s Night of the Living Dead (1968) is conspicuous. Shivers also looks and feels like soft-core pornography, which is both a sign of its production roots and an elegant visual metaphor. The film is rough, and there is a sense of young filmmakers learning their craft, but between bad acting, experimental cinematography, and some groundbreaking special effects, there is a very high concept. While notionally researching an “alternative to organ transplants,” psychopharmacologist Dr. Emil Hobbes secretly believes that “Man is an animal that thinks too much.” To help the instincts along, Hobbes has developed a parasite that is “a combination of aphrodisiac and venereal disease,” that will “turn the world into one beautiful, mindless orgy.” While the hapless Dr. St. Luc blunders around trying to work it all out, Cronenberg treats us to a collection of sexually violent setpieces, including an insurance broker befriending his parasites as they crawl beneath his skin, Gothic stalwart Barbara Steele penetrated by a parasite that has come up through the plughole, and children and pensioners alike perverted. The heart of the film comes when St. Luc’s lover explains a dream in which she was making love to an old and repulsive man who explains that: “everything is erotic, that everything is sexual [...] that even old flesh is erotic flesh, that disease is the love of two alien kind for each other, that even dying is an act of eroticism.” This is Cronenberg’s manifesto, and it is present in almost everything he writes. The closing scene, as parasite-carriers drive off to infect Montreal – looking like a group of bourgeois baby-boomers going to the beach – is inspired.
The controversial *Shivers* stuck Cronenberg’s work with the rather reductive critical label of “body horror.” He followed up with *Rabid* in 1977, picking up where *Shivers* ended, and casting the hard-core actress Marilyn Chambers as Rose, an accident victim whose experimental skin graft results in mutation, turning her into a postmodern vampire with a tumor-like, blood-sucking, and retractable phallus. Again, there is an absentee scientist (Dr. Keloid, plastic surgeon), a sinister institution (the Keloid Clinic), and a scientific explanation (morphogenics). Like Typhoid Mary, Rose infects Montreal with a virulent form of rabies, leading to Romero-esque zombification (although *Rabid* predates *Dawn of the Dead* by two years), AIDS allegories, and martial law. The film concludes with a death camp image of soldiers in biohazard suits tossing Rose’s corpse into a garbage truck.

The road movie *Fast Company* followed, although petrolhead Cronenberg was now a horror brand, his name prefixing the title credits of his next film, *The Brood* (1979). Reitman, meanwhile, moved to comedy and then Hollywood, producing and directing *Ghostbusters* in 1984. *The Brood* is a disturbing film about divorce and child abuse that the director has wryly described as “my version of *Kramer vs Kramer*” (McCarty 1984: 73). At the Raglan Clinic, a variation of primal therapy called “psychoplasmics” leads patients to manifest their rage as physical symptoms. The estranged wife of the hero is manifesting her rage through homicidal, parthenogenetic children that murder her parents and abduct her daughter. The theme continues to evolve in *Scanners* (1981), in which an experimental prenatal drug makes its inventor’s children telepathic.

After considering an adaptation of *Frankenstein*, Cronenberg continued the science fiction-based exploration of identity present within *Scanners* in the hyperreal *Videodrome* (1983), a prophetic vision of a world dominated by electronic mass media. “Videodrome” is an underground S&M television show, produced by the Spectacular Optical Corporation and intended to cause brain tumors. Sleazy cable executive Max Renn is made an agent of “The New Flesh” (a fusion of man and technology), programmed by videotape inserted into a vaginal slot in his stomach. “The battle for the mind of North America,” explains Professor Brian O’Blivion, “will be fought in the video arena, the Videodrome,” where “television is reality and reality is less than television.” McLuhan is an obvious influence (Rodley 1997: 67), but Tania Modleski has convincingly argued that Renn most closely resembles Baudrillard’s concept of the “new schizophrenic” (Modleski 2000: 288). Which aspects of Renn’s (terminal) odyssey are just tumor-induced hallucinations remain unclear. *Videodrome* marks the end of an experimental era for Cronenberg, after the revision of the complex Canadian tax laws that supported such creative freedom. In a brief move to Hollywood (Lorimar and the Dino De Laurentiis Company), he directed *The Dead Zone* (1983), an adaptation of the novel by Stephen King in which a coma survivor develops the curse of second sight. Cronenberg was slated to direct the Philip K. Dick project *Total Recall*, but could not agree a script with De Laurentiis (Rodley 1997: 120–1). Mel Brooks then offered Cronenberg *The Fly* (1986), a reworking of the 1958 cult classic starring Vincent Price, based on the short story by George Langelaan. In Cronenberg’s version, the famous teleportation accident becomes a gene-splice. “It mated us, me and the fly,” Seth Brundle, the lovable and doomed scientist, explains to his girlfriend Veronica, “I think it’s showing itself as a bizarre form of cancer.” Cronenberg has described *The Fly* as “a metaphor for aging” and “a compression of any love affair that goes to the end of one of the lover’s lives” (Rodley 1997: 120–5). Brundle falls apart — “Every time I look in the mirror, there’s someone different, someone hideous” — and ultimately chooses assisted suicide by shotgun, leaving Veronica pregnant. The allegories are universal, and *The Fly* remains both touching and deeply disturbing.

*The Fly* was a major commercial success, reaching a wide audience and gaining an
Academy Award for special effects. Instead of conventionally capitalizing on this success with a move to the Hollywood mainstream, Cronenberg returned to Canada to make Dead Ringers (1988), a sparse and elegant Cartesian tragedy based on the novel Twins (1974) by Bari Wood and Jack Geasland. This move toward serious literary adaptation continued in the form of the bold, flawed, and sometimes brilliant film version of The Naked Lunch by William Burroughs in 1991. Rather than attempting a straight adaptation, Cronenberg transposes the essence of Burrough’s prose, process, and philosophy into a pseudobiographical meditation on creativity, addiction, and sexuality. Most of all The Naked Lunch is a film about what it means to be an artist. The film is transitional, blending the slimy special effects of The Fly and the ambivalent unreality of Videodrome with the original text. The Naked Lunch is a preface to Cronenberg’s more realized literary adaptations: David Henry Hwang’s play M. Butterfly (1993), J. G. Ballad’s Crash (1996), Patrick McGrath’s Spider (2002), and A History of Violence (2005), a graphic novel by John Wagner and Vince Locke. His choice of authors reflects his opinion that “an artist is meant to be extreme” (Rodley 1997: 43). Cronenberg’s other films are eXistenZ (1999), a virtual reality allegory of the human condition that returns to issues explored in Videodrome and The Naked Lunch, and the Russian Mafia thriller Eastern Promises (2007), which again addresses the nature of individual identity and works as a companion piece to A History of Violence. A Dangerous Method, a film about the relationship between Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud, and Sabina Spielrein, was released in 2011, while an adaptation of London Fields by Martin Amis is rumored.

Cronenberg has said that his original purpose was to “show the unshowable” and “to speak the unspeakable” (Rodley 1997: 43). Although the horror genre was a vehicle through which this vision could be initially realized, the “body horror” label is erroneous. Cronenberg’s films are not violent to shock, but because the process of life is violent – his more recent (nongenre) work therefore continues to force us to look. Although his early films can be historically aligned with the American New Wave in horror, Cronenberg’s art makes him look more like Hitchcock, Truffaut, or Kurosawa. As John Carpenter, the director of the seminal Halloween (1978) has observed: “Cronenberg is better than the rest of us combined” (Rodley 1997: xvii).

SEE ALSO: Canadian Gothic; Film.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING
Edward Alexander Crowley (1875–1947) was the most famous British occultist of the twentieth century (see occultism). The son of a wealthy brewer who was also a member of the evangelical Plymouth Brethren, Crowley's early years were marred by his mother's antipathy: she called him the “Great Beast,” an allusion to the Book of Revelation. Crowley regarded his demonic title as a badge of rank, rebelling against his Christian upbringing and changing his name to “Aleister,” a version of Shelley’s “Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude” but given a modish Celtic twist (Decker 2011). He attended Cambridge University in the mid-1890s, leaving without a degree but possibly having encountered the papers of the Elizabethan magus John Dee, then being catalogued by M. R. James (see James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes)). There is no evidence that James and Crowley met, however.

Although nominally reading Natural Sciences, Crowley gave himself over to writing poetry, playing chess, bisexual experimentation, travel, and mountaineering. He received a generous inheritance, with which he paid for the publication of lavish editions of his Gothic-tinged verse, beginning with Aceldama, A Place to Bury Strangers In (1898), issued by the sometime pornographer Leonard Smithers. He also commenced the serious study of esotericism, joining various magical societies, including the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and in time proclaiming the imminent end of Christianity and the birth of a new eon with himself at its spiritual center. His “magickal” beliefs and teachings were promulgated in a series of enigmatic grimoires (magical textbooks), beginning with Liber legis (The Book of the Law, 1904). Over the next thirty years he reiterated its Rabelaisian mantra, “Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be the Whole of the Law,” and his sexual and narcotic excesses became notorious. He was often wryly amusing, and took great pleasure in newspaper descriptions of himself as “The Wickedest Man in the World.”

Crowley’s importance to Gothic literature is twofold, in that he was both a writer of it and an inspiration to others. His fiction, much of which first appeared in his occult journal The Equinox before World War I, drew on his knowledge of sex, drugs, and magical ritual and is described by David Tibet as “manifestations of a continual autobiography” (Crowley 2010: viii). “The Vixen” (1911) offers a characteristic mixture of lycanthropy, blasphemy, and quasi-pornographic description of a girl being flogged while strapped to a crucifix, all in the space of four pages. The more sophisticated “The Testament of Magdalen Blair” (1913), dedicated to his mother, features a telepathic young woman who is able to commune with her husband's soul during and after his death; when he reveals rather more about the horrors of the afterlife than Poe's M. Valdemar managed (see Poe, Edgar Allan), she is left prematurely aged, suicidal, and insane. Alert to trends in popular fiction, Crowley fashioned an occult detective, Simon Iff, to rival Algernon Blackwood's John Silence and William Hope Hodgson's Carnacki, though most of the Iff stories remain unpublished (see Blackwood, Algernon; Hodgson, William Hope). The most successful of his longer works, Moonchild, written in 1917 but not published until 1929, is an occult roman à clef involving rival magicians (including caricatures of the Golden Dawn members Samuel Macgregor Mathers (his one-time mentor), A. E. Waite, and W. B. Yeats) and a plot to impregnate a woman with an astral being, the “moonchild” of the novel’s title. Crowley’s fiction abounds in imaginative incident but he never took it as seriously as his other occult work and it lacks the polish of magickal texts such as The Book of Lies (1912 or 1913). His quasi-autobiographical novel Diary of a Drug-Fiend (1922) was an unashamed potboiler.

Crowley's image and reputation inspired a number of contemporary and later writers. He was caricatured as the obese and depraved Oliver Haddo in Somerset Maugham's The
Magician (1908), the plot of which is reworked in Moonchild, and, although he is not the sinister Karswell of M. R. James’ “Casting the Runes” (1911), he is clearly the inspiration for “Oscar Clinton” in H. R. Wakefield’s James homage, “He Cometh and He Passeth By!” (1929). Clinton freely advertises his transgressions (“I use all drugs but am the slave of none”) and writes mystical maledictions in “smoky sullen scarlet” ink (Wakefield 2005: 56, 63), while conjuring evil spirits to do his dark bidding. Crowley’s Celtic affectations led him to be caricatured as “Hamish Corbie” in Dylan Thomas and John Davenport’s The Death of the King’s Canary (1940, published 1976), and he has been suggested as the model for the sadistic villain Le Chiffre in Ian Fleming’s Casino Royale (1953) and Dr. Trelawney in Anthony Powell’s A Dance to the Music of Time (1951–75). Perhaps his most notable Gothic influence, however, was on the brand of Satanism served up by Dennis Wheatley in novels of “black magic” such as The Devil Rides Out (1934) (see wheatley, dennis). In Arthur Calder-Marshall’s autobiography, The Magic of My Youth (1951), however, Crowley is merely a “shagged and sorry old gentleman, trying to outstare [him] across a table” (Calder-Marshall 1990: 191). Jake Arnott’s The Devil’s Paintbrush (2009), set in the Paris of The Magician, depicts Crowley attending a black mass, taking part in sexual magick, and providing the disgraced soldier Hector MacDonald (a historical figure who killed himself following accusations of homosexuality) with an invigorated perspective on sex and empire.

Crowley has also had a significant influence on popular music and cinema, appearing on the sleeve of The Beatles’ Sergeant Pepper LP in 1967, inspiring the radical filmmaker Kenneth Anger in works such as Lucifer Rising (1981), and frequently being referenced in heavy metal and Goth music. Until the occult revivals of the 1960s, Crowley and his avatars made convenient bogeymen in Gothic fiction, but, as Ronald Hutton (1999) has shown, a changing spiritual and sexual climate has been more prepared to consider the liberating aspects of his ideas.

SEE ALSO: Blackwood, Algernon; Hodgson, William Hope; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); Occultism; Poe, Edgar Allan; Wheatley, Dennis.

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FURTHER READING


Cryptonymy

CYNTHIA SUGARS

Cryptonymy, as it is used in psychoanalytic theory and adapted to Gothic studies, refers to a term coined by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. It receives extended consideration in their book The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy (1986). The term refers to “words that hide,” by which is meant a word in the form of a “cryptonym” that has apparently no phonetic or semantic connection to the prohibited word it is disguising. Repression has been exercised upon the word itself, which means that the original word has been concealed. According to Abraham and Torok, the presence of cryptonyms points to a rift or split in the ego, as if one part of the ego acted as the unconscious for the other half. This split in the ego is important as it connects to a related term elucidated by Abraham and Torok in The
Shell and the Kernel (1994), the theory of the “phantom,” a form of transgenerational haunting in which a memory trace of an ancestral presence becomes manifest in the unconscious of a descendant. The phantom moves from mind to mind, haunts the subject, and begins to “speak” in the subject’s place. Its speech takes the form of encryption. In Gothic terms, one might speak of the phantom as a version of the living dead that returns as inheritance. What comes back to haunt are the tombs of others which have become entombed within the self. In the context of Gothic literature, this theory can be applied to the way an undisclosed family secret or obsession is handed down in masked form to an unwitting descendant.

In Abraham and Torok’s usage of the term, there are two aspects of “Cryptonymy” that are significant: first, Cryptonymy as the designifying function of language; second, the “crypt” as an encased, nonintrojected internalized object that “haunts” the subject from within. The two are linked in that Abraham and Torok “found that patients suffering from a secret identification with a departed love-object invented particular forms of obfuscation in their speech. The patients obscured beyond recognition the linguistic elements that might reveal their secret’s existence and contents” (Abraham and Torok 1994: 105). Those designifying linguistic moments pointed to an encryption of an internalized ancestral object whose introjection had been blocked (see inheritance).

Abraham and Torok use as their departure point two central texts by Sigmund Freud: “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) and The History of an Infantile Neurosis (1918), the latter also known as the “Wolf Man” case. In “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud defines melancholia as a condition in which the self identifies so profoundly with a lost person or object that it encrypts the lost object as a kind of psychic-physiological precipitate. What interested Torok and Abraham about this theory was the possibility that an apparently incorporated object was making its presence felt in the Wolf Man, a phenomenon which Freud, for all his efforts to comprehend the case along “normal” psychoanalytic channels, was unable to unravel. In the case of the Wolf Man, Abraham and Torok saw evidence of an object that had been incorporated within the ego but lived on in there, encrypted (or buried alive) and influencing the ego’s thought and behavior. In short, the lost object is encased within the ego, operating from within, but without the subject’s conscious awareness of it.

If this represents a psychoanalytic explanation of “Gothic” possession, it is interesting for the ways it allows for both a concept of crossgenerational haunting and for an account of obstructions to processes of signification. These concepts have been useful in Gothic studies for the ways they evoke motifs of ancestral inheritance, buried secrets, cryptic messages, and literal encryptment, where the site of the crypt itself becomes a cryptonym that shields a family secret or curse. The theory has been applied both to actual crypts or graves in Gothic novels, as well as to encrypted messages. The latter approach is prominent in Tom Cohen’s excellent study Hitchcock’s Cryptonomies (2005), in which he investigates the signatures and cryptograms that traverse Hitchcock’s oeuvre. However, in a novel such as Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764), the crypt itself has the status of a disguised message (see walpole, horace). In Otranto, one can argue that the crypt of Alfonso is the focal point of the mystery that haunts the families, even though the tomb is a fabrication built by the usurper to mask his murder of Alfonso. The tomb contains vestiges that are sundered from previous meanings, which explains why Matilda perceives something meaningful in the tomb but cannot say what it is. As Jerrold Hogle puts it in his essay “The Restless Labyrinth” (1980), in Otranto the crypt is a “place of concealment that stands over mere ashes of something not fully present” (Hogle 1980: 332). The crypt thus represents a kind of vanishing point that is directly linked to an unconscious transgenerational curse.

A similar series of crypts within crypts occurs in Ann Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of
Udolpho (1794), in which the protagonist, Emily, is literally imprisoned within a kind of crypt, the Castle of Udolpho (see Radcliffe, Ann). Throughout, Emily is haunted by what she considers to be evidence of the crimes of Signor Montoni, the man who is holding her prisoner. All signs point to Montoni’s guilt, deflecting attention from the real murderer, the former mistress of the castle, Lady Lauren- tini. This is epitomized by the veiled “painting” that conceals not a painting of Laurentini, as was expected, but a crypt embedded in the wall of the chamber. Just as Emily is held in a castle which seems to be connected to her ancestry but is not, so the “mystery” behind the veil is apparently evidence of Montoni’s occulted murder of Laurentini. We do not learn until the end of the novel what is hidden behind the veil: a crypt that is, in fact, only an illusion of a crypt (i.e., a wax figure of a decaying body, which Emily takes to be real and thus interprets as evidence of Montoni’s guilt for Laurentini’s death). Constructed as a memento mori by an ancestral owner of the castle, the figure initiates Emily’s misreading of the castle’s encrypted secret. The absence of the painting of Laurentini in this spot points to the true crime at the heart of Udolpho: Laurentini’s disappearance, faked death, and participation in the murder of Emily’s unacknowledged ancestor the Marchioness de Villeroi. The “mementos” provided by encryption seek to deflect attention from a secret; in this case, the death that is signaled attaches to different objects (much as homonyms attach to different signifieds). The novel thus works as an example of what Hogle describes as the crypt’s “double operation of revealing to conceal” (Hogle 1980: 337).

An inherited generational curse is prominent in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The House of the Seven Gables (1851), which features the “phantom” of the notorious Colonel Pyncheon who resurfaces periodically in the family’s descendants (see Hawthorne, Nathaniel). The phantom, in this case, carries with it the secret of his acquisition of the house, which was wrongfully attained by accusing its owner, Matthew Maule, of witchcraft. The encrypted secret is twofold in that the cause of death of the Colonel (and those descendants who inherit him as an incorporated phantom) has been masked in such a way that Maule’s ghost appears responsible for his murder. When, generations later, a sinister descendant of the Colonel appears on the scene to claim the property, he, too, dies under similarly mysterious circumstances as his ancestor. The secret is revealed when the rightful deed to the property is discovered, symbolically concealed behind a portrait of the Colonel that hangs in the house, an emblem of the encrypted psychic trace that has been passed down, within the psyches, of subsequent generations of the Pyncheon family. This notion of an encrypted Other inside the ego achieves its epitome, perhaps, in Alfred Hitchcock’s film Psycho (1960), in which the character of Norman Bates has psychically incorporated his dead mother (even as he keeps her mummified corpse) and allows his mother to control his behavior.

The concept of an encrypted transgenerational haunting is also useful for discussions of postcolonial Gothic because it enables a way of thinking about the experience of colonialism being passed down through the generations (see Postcolonial Gothic). Many postcolonial Gothic texts contain an encrypted memory trace that exists beyond individual consciousness. Ann-Marie MacDonald’s novel Fall on Your Knees (1996) reveals the ways an encrypted trauma haunts a family across the generations. The instigating cause of the rupture is the racism inherent in the family patriarch (who rejects his Lebanese wife as “debased” and “unnatural”). This catapults the family into a series of graphic traumatic scenes, which are encased in the “cave mind” of one of the daughters of the family. The novel demonstrates a central tenet of cryptonomic theory: that the unspeakable can determine the fate of an entire family line.

SEE ALSO: Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Inheritance; Postcolonial Gothic; Radcliffe, Ann; Walpole, Horace.
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FURTHER READING


Cult Fiction

ARIS MOUSOUTZANIS

If cult fiction may be seen as a distinct genre, its most defining feature is perhaps its peculiar, almost inverse, relation to other types of writing. Unlike conventional genres, it is defined not in terms of internal, thematic, or conceptual features of the text itself but in terms of reader reception, conditions of material production, and wider debates of cultural value and canon formation.

The designation of a text as “cult” lies not with the author but with the reader; an author may consciously set out to write a romance, horror, or crime novel, but whether the text will achieve cult status depends largely on its reception by the reading public. “Nowhere in literature,” according to Thomas Reed Whissen, “is the interaction between text and reader so flagrantly symbiotic” (Whissen 1992: xiii). The novel that he considers to be the very first cult text attests to this feature of cult writing. Goethe’s The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774), a novel about the torments of a passionate artist led to suicide out of his desperate love for a woman, was almost instantly an international success and generated the phenomenon of “Werther-fever,” a widespread fad that made young men around Europe dress in the “Werther costume,” encouraged the manufacturing of Werther dolls in China, and even led to copycat suicides. The novel is therefore important as the first modern narrative to create fan communities. For Whissen, however, its importance lies more in its status as “the first full-fledged expression of the Romantic temper in novel form” insofar as he considers cult fiction to be “a natural outgrowth of Romanticism” (Whissen 1992: xx). The connections between the cult and the Romantic become obvious when bearing in mind the latter
movement’s privileging of the marginalized, its resistance to consensus, its emphasis on individualism, and its celebration of the active power of the imagination. There is a strong link between cult writing and the Gothic in this respect, and several critics have underlined the complex relations between Romanticism and the Gothic. Emma McEvoy, for instance, has suggested that “the course of the Gothic is bound up with the myth of Romanticism; Romantic texts indulge in dialogic interplay with the Gothic, and Gothic texts themselves comment on the phenomenon of Romanticism” (McEvoy 2007: 20). It is hardly a surprise, then, that classic texts from the first cycle of Gothic writing, such as The Mysteries of Udolpho or The Castle of Otranto, still enjoy “a sort of camp cult status” (Whissen 1992: 203). Novels like these were reprinted or even rewritten several times in serialized format during the nineteenth century in those cheap-paper publications known as the “penny dreadfuls” (see penny dreadfuls). Originally called “penny bloods,” the stories featuring in the early Victorian publications were heavily influenced by the Gothic tradition, and their increasing popularity throughout the century led to the establishment of figures such as Varney the Vampire, Spring-Heeled Jack, and Sweeney Todd. Their high degree of popularity must be seen as a result of developments in technological innovation, economic regulation, and educational reform. The rotary steam printing press and the cheaper machine-manufactured paper it employed, the removal of paper taxes, and declining paper costs, in combination with legislation such as the 1870 Education Act, contributed both to an expansion of publishing cheap enough to be accessible to a mass audience and to the creation of an audience literate enough to read and enjoy this type of fiction. As such, the dreadfuls, and their American equivalents, the “dime novels” that flourished between 1845 and 1910, underscore the significance of conditions of production and distribution, market forces, and the materiality of the text itself for the definition of the cult. In this sense, they may be seen as precursors of those American magazine and paperback publications that saw their heyday between the 1920s and the 1950s and are commonly referred to as “pulp fiction” – a term whose “low” cultural associations are evoked precisely in terms of poor paper quality.

Furthermore, whereas the “bloods” were initially aimed at a working-class readership, by the end of the century the “dreadfuls” were addressing almost exclusively a male juvenile audience, and their widespread popularity at the end of the century provoked public accusations of encouraging juvenile delinquency. In this sense, the dreadfuls are representative of a common public response to marginalized forms of cultural production with a cult following, such as, for instance, the American comic books of the 1950s with the accompanying “moral panics” regarding their effects on young readers. Furthermore, in staging “the late-Victorian struggle between middle-class morality and popular demand” (Springhall 1994: 326), the debates over the influence of the dreadfuls, in combination with public dismissals of their basic plot, stereotypical characterization, and sensationalism, demonstrate the ways in which notions of the cult get caught up with debates on cultural value and canon formation that have involved figures such as Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis, and Richard Hoggart, among others. “Cheap fiction was a particular target” in these debates, according to John Springhall, “because it was felt that wider literacy had led to the corruption of literature” (Springhall 1994: 345).

Cult narratives, however, achieved even higher prominence throughout the twentieth century, particularly in the postwar period, largely because of developments in information and media technologies and the fragmentation of culture often associated with postmodernism – processes that brought about the dissemination, even “performativity,” of the cult across different media and subcultures. Classic figures such as Count Dracula have further escaped the confines of their original texts and found incarnations in various films, television shows, video games, and actual impersonations in Goth
subcultures. Fans of films such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) attend screenings dressed like characters from the film, singing along or repeating lines from the script. Members of online communities produce “fan fictions” that expand on or even subvert the original text. At a cultural moment where narrative is produced, disseminated, and consumed by authors and readers alike across different media, the cult finds itself in an ambiguous relationship to the mainstream, both embracing and opposing itself to it.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; European Gothic; Film; Goth; Penny Dreadfuls.

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FURTHER READING


Cults

JOHN WHATLEY

The Latin word *cultus* means worship, the deferential attitude paid to a god, and “cult” today means an esoteric religious or political group. The term usually has negative connotations, but cults are one of the more powerful, variable, and porous of social groupings in Gothic literature. Cults are often the source of the secrets and threats that energize the plot of a Gothic novel, and are usually woven, in period Gothic, into a medieval and supernatural backdrop. Through contrast, cults and cult leaders can highlight and help legitimate the established cultures from which Gothic protagonists and ingénues are typically drawn; or they can undermine oppressive cultures. The play between an exteriorized cult and a culture of interiors (home, castle, domesticity, right thinking, or family), animates many rhetorical oppositions in the Gothic mode including the relations between progressive and retrograde views, good and evil, the insightful and the blind, the illuminated and the veiled, invasive forces and the invaded, the hidden and the transparent, surface and depth, the eternal traveler and the rooted proprietor, or the citizen and criminal.

The Gothic novel itself originated in a view of medieval religion as cult-like. In the famous first Preface to the *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) Horace Walpole, supposedly found his manuscript “printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529” (Walpole 2002: 5) (see walpole, horace). “The black letter” refers to Gothic type as opposed to current Roman type, but also invokes an esoterica of secret writings and ancient mystical knowledge. Walpole sets his originating story between 1095 and 1243 ce and makes steady reference to a religious atmosphere of “Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events” (Walpole 2002: 6). Necromancy informs the novel from the beginning when the protagonist Theodore, who correctly finds the cause of Conrad’s death to be a huge helmet once attached to a statue of Alfonso (the rightful ancestor of Otranto), is immediately accused by the villain Manfred of being a necromancer and magician and is quickly jailed. In period Gothic after *Otranto* (from about 1764 to 1810) cults often merge with secret societies,
conspiracies, robber bands, schismatics, cabals, or covens which threaten contamination or a takeover of established power (see secret societies). In modern Gothic (after 1900) “cult” can be used to describe radical sects, radical political cells, networks, or terrorist organizations. In the science fiction version of popular Gothic, cult fears merge easily with the arrival of monstrous aliens and threats of invasion. In a new cult term, computers housing valuable, secret, or sensitive data are invaded and the information is stolen by the “hackers” of cybercrime now hidden deeply in cyberspace.

It was early realized that cults could be covers for activities other than the uncanny (see uncanny, the). Counterfeit cults could, according to Emma Clery, include the Gothic robber bands. For Clery, there are two types of these earlier cult-like bands of outcasts. The first are simply, “smugglers and bandits [who] ... like specters are of necessity creatures of the night” who use “popular superstition as a cover for their illegitimate activities” (Clery 1995: 7). In the second grouping, Clery pinpoints groups like the Jesuits (suspended by Pope Clement XIV in 1773), the Swedenborgians, the Illuminati, the Freemasons, the Reading Societies, and the Rosicrucians as holding potentials for a new type of cult. In Romantic Gothic, unlike the early robber bands, such groups can become centered around ideology, and form a revolutionary group hoping to become mainstream and powerful. Wollstonecraft, Godwin, and Maturin use such bands (see romanticism). Byron’s Manfred and Childe Harold are incipient cult leaders, occasionally dreaming of wider vistas of social action and change.

Byron was himself involved with the Carbonari movement (1820) against Austrian rule of Italy. Victor’s Creature in Frankenstein (1818) is a product of the marriage of modern science, the Illuminati sect, and the ancient immortalist thinking of Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa. Victor was terrified that his Creature’s quest for a mate would make him into a leader of a growing cult that could threaten humanity. The Illuminati was formed first in Germany by Adam Weishaupt in the Bavarian city of Ingolstadt (1776). While the movement wished for nothing more radical than a reformation of church and society using science and reason, it was seen as enough of a threat to established religion to be banned as subversive in 1896 by the Bavarian Elector Carl Theodore. The Rosicrucians, the brothers of the Rosy Cross, were another favorite Gothic cult and can be found in Godwin’s St. Leon (1799), P. B. Shelley’s St. Irvyne: or the Rosicrucian (1811), and Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820). Rosicrucians believed in an immortal hero who must wander the earth eternally (see rosicrucianism).

James Hogg’s Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) explores cult thinking in its uses of the Covenanters-Ex敬畏erian sects and a language of reprobation, the elect, and the sinful. For the Victorian Gothic writers, cults were fascinating Others, footnotes to a more scientific anthropology in which atavistic remnants of the medieval occult could yet be found, even, according to William Hughes, in “darkest England” (Hughes 2003) and tourist France. In Algernon Blackwood’s John Silence (1908) seemingly benign tourist attractions can be the surface through which protagonists like Vezin discover that the town is home to a coven of witches (see victorian gothic). The cult of science as immortalist was given a rebirth after Frankenstein in works like The Island of Dr. Moreau (1896), and in Wilde’s Picture of Dorian Gray (1890, 1891) a cult-like formation can be detected around Pater’s New Aestheticism. The KKK is a modern cult, and in American Southern Gothic novels like Toni Morrison’s Beloved (1987) the Klan show the cruelties and adamantine oppositions, rooted in quasi-religious occultism, that fought against abolition of slavery in the South (see southern gothic). The Rastafarians of William Gibson’s dystopian Neuromancer (1984) form a positive cult of noncompliance, and help the antihero Case survive his war with a massively powerful corporate elite that forms a dominant culture through manipulation of cyberspace. The Da Vinci Code (2003) and
Eco’s *Foucault’s Pendulum* (1988) are variations of the atmospherics of cults and secret societies found first in Walpole’s *Otranto*. The term can be applied today to almost any small group of aficionados, as in fans of a “cult film” or “youth subculture.”

For Ed Cameron (2003), taking a Lacanian view, the small quasi-religious cult is an example of the return of the primal father, as we have given up on the symbolic father though we yet hunger for his authority. For Marie Mulvey-Roberts, cult aspects of Gothic literature are found in her scholarly studies of secret societies like the Masons and Rosicrucians, which she finds as a focus for small cells of politically motivated members who are playing out, through coded means, progressive or traditional approaches to religion, or, with Hogarth, his membership in the Freemasons and attachment to Enlightenment thought (Mulvey-Roberts 2003). The opposition between cults and cultures becomes less certain when critics apply the terms to modern and postmodern Gothic texts. In modernity and postmodernity, the cult can become a mere term, the rhetoric of an oppressive dominant culture (see contemporary Gothic). We can recognize something like the outline of the postmodern approach to Gothic cults in Don De Lillo’s *White Noise* (1985) and *Mao II* (1991), or Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* (1988) and *Shame* (1983). In such novels the focus is often not on the cult in itself, it is more on the wider cult complex with its dimensions of fascistic authority figures and the cross-currents of hegemonic ideologies. To conclude, Maria Beville (after Baudrillard), finds an ultimate reversal as in current literature, the cult of terrorism has now become our culture: “In our postmodern era of terrorism and more particularly our post-9/11 era of global terrorism, it is significant that postmodern literature has become possessed by a Gothic imagination” (Beville 2009: 198).

SEE ALSO: Contemporary Gothic; Romanticism; Rosicrucianism; Secret Societies; Southern Gothic; Uncanny, The; Victorian Gothic; Walpole, Horace.

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FURTHER READING


Curse

JUSTIN D. EDWARDS

We do not generally associate opera with the Gothic (see opera). But in 1853 the Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi wrote an opera that included a power-crazy, womanizing Duke; a vengeful, corrupt hunchback; a young, innocent woman who is abducted, raped, and brutally murdered; and a corpse wrapped up in a sack. This work became known as Rigoletto but its original title was “The Curse” (La Maledizione). And it is a curse that motivates much of the opera’s action, for in the first scene the Duke and Rigoletto (the hunchback) are cursed by Count Monterone, who has been dishonored by the two men. The curse terrifies Rigoletto; it inspires him to hire an assassin, and then to seek revenge on the Duke, who has abducted his daughter, Gilda. But Rigoletto’s plot backfires and Gilda is murdered, stuffed into a sack, and given to the hunchback. He opens the sack and, to his despair, discovers his mortally wounded daughter. For a moment, she revives and declares she is glad to die for she has deceived her father by loving the Duke. She dies in his arms. Rigoletto’s wildest fear materializes when he cries out in horror, “The curse!”

A curse is often defined as a solemn utterance intended to invoke supernatural power to inflict harm or punishment on someone or something (see supernatural, the). In Rigoletto it is the Count’s curse that destroys the eponymous protagonist, but the trope is also sometimes ancestral: a family, a lineage, a bloodline, or “a house” can be cursed. In Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764) (see walpole, horace), for instance, the castle is described as being under a curse: “the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it” (2008: 13). While its meaning is ambiguous here, one thing is clear: the curse is something to be feared. As Walpole’s narrative continues, the plot revolves around a curse that has been placed upon Manfred’s family. In fact, the curse usurps Manfred’s power through strange events, including the bizarre scene in which Manfred’s son, Conrad, is crushed on his wedding day by a gigantic helmet, “an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being” (24). The curse threatens Manfred’s authority through the ruin of his family (see ruins), but his schemes to outwit the curse only make things worse: the family lineage is destroyed and the castle crumbles.

Walpole utilizes a common Gothic feature of the curse: evil, misfortune, and harm arise out of a response to (or retribution for) deeds (or misdeeds) committed against (or by) one’s ancestor(s). A slight variation of this convention is found in American Gothic (see american gothic), wherein the “burden of the past,” like the ancestral curse, concerns misfortunes and evil befalling one as a result of another’s past actions. The writing of Nathaniel Hawthorne combines “the burden of the past” and the ancestral curse (see hawthorne, nathaniel). In “The Custom House” section of The Scarlet Letter (1850), for example, Hawthorne writes of “that first ancestor” – a “grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steeple-crowned Puritan” – who “haunts” him and casts the shadow of the Salem witch trials over his life (1991: 9). Hawthorne is burdened by the weight of history, the violent and “persecuting spirit” of his religious forefathers, who condemned so many women to death in 1692. In 1851, Hawthorne published the House of the Seven Gables, arguably the most complex
treatment of the curse in American Gothic writing. In the novel, the wealthy and powerful Colonel Pyncheon accuses Matthew Maule of witchcraft (see witchcraft); Maule is then sentenced to death and Pyncheon steals Maule’s home and land. But, at “the moment of execution” on the scaffold, Maule curses Pyncheon and his descendants: “‘God,’ said the dying man, pointing a finger with a ghastly look at the undismayed countenance of his enemy, ‘God will give you blood to drink!’” (1991: 8). Maule’s curse has a destructive force: the Colonel mysteriously dies alone in his study on the day he opens the new house he has built on Maule’s land. And the malediction does not end here, for “the curse, flung from the scaffold, was remembered, with the very important addition, that it had become part of the Pyncheon inheritance” (21). Indeed, the curse becomes ancestral, passed on from one generation to another, exerting a heavy influence on those of the Colonel’s descendents who continue to live in the crumbling house of the seven gables.

Another house – a Bleak House (1853) – also has a curse (see Dickens, Charles). But in Dickens’ novel it is related to money and rightful (legal) inheritance (see law and the gothic). At the novel’s core is the long-running litigation in England’s Court of Chancery, Jarndyce and Jarndyce, which has far-reaching consequences for all involved. Participants have been driven to madness and suicide over the case; John Jarndyce calls it “the family curse” and beseeches the young Richard never to put faith in the outcome (2003: 596). But Richard becomes consumed by the case and the family curse destroys him morally and physically, eventually killing him. The burden of the curse is interlocked with other Gothic features of Bleak House. For Lady Dedlock’s secret past – the birth out of wedlock of her daughter, Esther – is symbolized in the “Ghost’s Walk,” the haunted path at Chesney Wold. Lady Dedlock’s guilty conscience joins with Esther’s sudden arrival and fascination with the Ghost’s Walk. In fact, Esther is a key to the fulfillment of the family curse, for while she is wondering about it Lady Dedlock arrives to make her aware of her part in it. Esther’s link to the curse becomes blatant when she decides to explore the Ghost’s Walk: “I was passing quickly on [...] when my echoing footsteps brought it suddenly to mind that there was a dreadful truth in the legend of the Ghost’s Walk; that it was I, who was to bring calamity upon the stately house” (104).

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Dickens, Charles; Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Law and the Gothic; Opera; Ruins; Supernatural, The; Walpole, Horace; Witchcraft.

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FURTHER READING

Cyberspace
JASON WHITTAKER

Introduced as a term in William Gibson’s 1982 story “Burning Chrome” and expanded in his 1984 novel Neuromancer, “cyberspace” was a conceptual science-fiction framework for the development of new technologies in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Just as the communicators used by Captain Kirk inspired Martin Cooper to invent the mobile phone (Beuchner et al. 2007), so too did Gibson’s description of cyberspace motivate a number of inventors working in the fields of
virtual reality and information and communication technologies.

Gibson’s description of cyberspace as “A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators” (Gibson 1984: 69) is well known, and in particular has contributed to looser definitions of cyberspace that concentrate less on the technical aspects of hardware and software than on the social interactions between those users and technology. What are less often appreciated, however, are the ways in which Gibson himself employed Gothic tropes to configure his notions of cyberspace, which in turn was a significant feature of cyberpunk. The Goth influence is most clearly evident in Gibson’s steampunk novels with Bruce Sterling, but, as Tatiani G. Rapatzikou (2004) has pointed out, the “fractal filth” of Gibson’s virtual architectures creates “labyrinthine spaces” that are intrinsically Gothic in their reinforcement of uneasy and alien appropriations of the Sublime (192–3).

While cyberspace itself in the second decade of the twenty-first century is treated in a much more casual fashion than it was in the final years of the twentieth, surrounded as we are by the apps and hardware of Apple ecosystems that appear to be the antithesis of the Gothic in their emphasis on minimalism, clean lines, carefully curated online stores and white, consumer goods, nonetheless the involutions and dark spaces invoked by the architecture of virtual spaces still demonstrate the continuing appeal of Gothic notions of cyberspace. The twenty years prior to 2012 have seen a steady commercialization and normalization of online communications, yet these still remain a patchwork of fragmentary and even contradictory protocols and practices, with cybercrime one example of an industry that refuses to submit to social norms.

As such, the rhetoric of cyberspace – with references to the “dark side” of the internet, the “deep web,” or the “darknet” where malware may be shared and criminal activities pursued – is a constant reminder that virtual and online communities do not constitute a smooth and coherent entity. Darknets themselves may not automatically be scenes of criminality, of course, but rather attempts to assert autonomous interactions outside a totalizing commercial sphere: as Andy Beckett (2009) observes, here can be found “all the teeming life of the everyday internet, but rendered a little stranger and more intense.”

Cyberspace, then, was conceived by William Gibson as a complex and convoluted structure that could be as well described as Gothic as part of that technological sublime – a bright, clean future – so often invoked by tech evangelists such as Vince Cerf at Google and the late Steve Jobs. Gothic motifs and architectures have also had an important role to play in another way in which many of us experience virtual reality, which is through the medium of computer games (see games).

While the very earliest computer games tended to invoke a science-fictional aesthetic, from Spacewar! (1962) to Space Invaders (1978), or else drew upon other gaming activities in the fields of board games, puzzles, and sports, Gothic elements have become ever more important in computer games since the 1990s. Early horror titles, such as Alone in the Dark (1992), began to draw a sizeable audience among gamers, but probably the most important game to heavily feature Gothic motifs was the first-person shooter Doom, released by id Software in 1993 and followed by Quake in 1996, the latter involving music and sound design by Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails. Since then, Gothic horror games such as the Silent Hill series (1999–2012) and Resident Evil (1996–2011) have regularly featured among the best-selling computer game franchises.

Typically, such games involve players struggling to stay alive in horror scenarios that incorporate traditional fare from movies and fiction, such as zombies or serial killers, very often employing visual imagery and motifs that are particularly familiar from a century of Hollywood and European Gothic cinema (see film). As well as survival horror games, Gothic also provides an important element to the virtual reality of other games, a notable recent release being Batman: Arkham City (2011).
As Laurie N. Taylor (2009) observes, the best forms of “ludic-Gothic” games are those that emphasize “a process of transgression for the game design including the narrative and game play” (55).

Yet, if darknets and horror gaming emphasize the transgressive relations between cyber-space and the Gothic, there are also much more affirmative, even mundane, ways in which the experience of digital communication has provided an important impetus for the formation of online communities. Although early theorization on online (or virtual) communities saw them as essentially different from those based on physical communication (notably Rheingold 1993), the rapid spread of online communications throughout the twenty-first century, as well as the widespread adoption of social networking, has made participation in such communities the norm rather than the exception. Nonetheless, at the turn of this century, commentators such as Paul Hodkinson (2003) were correct to distinguish that “Net.Goths” were emerging as a special subcategory of Goth subcultures (see goth). Indeed, in recent years, part of Goth subcultural participation in online communities has often presented itself ironically, as in DarkStarlings.com, which describes itself as “The Anti-Social Network.”

Indeed, while Goth subcultural groups and activities can easily be found on popular social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, such membership seems to invoke strongly antagonistic reactions, partly perhaps as a response to the smooth and corporate vision of seamless online identities that forms the image of the “big four” technology media companies: Apple, Amazon, Facebook, and Google. Thus, sites such as VampireFreaks.com, devoted to Gothic/Industrial music and culture, and Gothic.net, dealing with lifestyle, literature, and movies, demonstrate the vitality of online Goth communities in cyberspace much more effectively than more mainstream social media networks. On such sites, it is easy to find people sharing information, arranging events and meetings in physical space, and making recommendations on things to read, listen to, or watch – essentially, doing all those things that people do when they participate in online networks, but among a much more receptive and appreciative audience.

SEE ALSO: Film; Games; Goth; Sublime, The.

REFERENCES


De Quincey, Thomas

STEPHEN CARVER

Thomas De Quincey (1785–1859) was a prolific periodical writer. He is usually aligned historically with the early English Romantics, and is best known for his remarkable autobiography *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) and the satirical treatise “On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts” (1827). De Quincey rarely wrote Gothic fiction, but he radiated Gothic sensibility. To the Victorians, the identification of De Quincey with the mad, morbid, and macabre was so absolute that he is cited, along with Poe, in *The Times*’ original coverage of the Jack the Ripper murders.

De Quincey was a sensitive child, and the death of his sister, Elizabeth, in 1792 was a trauma from which he never recovered. The following year he lost his father to tuberculosis. The memory of the family awaiting the dying man’s return home, listening to the slow approach of the carriage in the dark, fused with his imagination forever. Somber processions and ill omens, particularly the leitmotif of the dying girl, recur throughout De Quincey’s writing. Her shade is present in the figure of the doomed prostitute, “Anne of Oxford-street,” in the *Confessions*; in the epiphanic account of his sister’s viewing in *Suspiria de profundis* (1845), “standing between an open window and a dead body on a summer day” (De Quincey 1889: *Works*: I, 43); and in his reaction to the death of Wordsworth’s daughter Catherine, who died aged three. “Little Kate” was De Quincey’s favorite, and for several weeks he haunted the child’s grave, often passing the night there and claiming to see her in visions (see *romanticism*).

De Quincey ran away to London in 1802, and he first took opium as an analgesic while at Oxford. By 1813 he was hopelessly addicted, taking up to 480 grains a day (the equivalent of three grams of morphine). He never took his degree, and relocated to Grasmere, where he became a close friend of the Wordsworths. He married Margaret Simpson, a local farmer’s daughter, in 1817. It was the need to support a family that led De Quincey toward journalism, beginning with the editorship of the *Westmoreland Gazette* in 1818. The *London Magazine* published the critically acclaimed *Confessions* in 1821, making its author a literary celebrity overnight. He joined the rival *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1826, moving to *Tait’s* in 1833. Despite his productivity, the threat of debtor’s prison was always present, leading to a fugitive life of false names and fake addresses, with articles delivered to editors in secret by his children. De Quincey’s writings were not collected until 1850, and he was still revising the final volume of *Selections Grave and Gay* when the opium finally caught up with him in 1859.

De Quincey’s childhood notebooks reveal a love of Gothic fiction. He wrote one traditional
gothic novel, *Klosterheim: or, The Masque* (1832), which is a wonderful metaphysical muddle of intense dream sequences, Radcliffian device, and thinly disguised autobiographical detail – Landgrave, the villain, for example, tortures students with a set of “tyrannical regulations” from the author’s own experience of the Manchester Free Grammar School. De Quincey was out of his comfort zone with an extended narrative, however, and tried to have it excised from his collected works. De Quincey’s relationship with the Gothic discourse was, however, rarely so literal. As R. L. Snyder notes, De Quincey’s stylistic attraction to the Gothic mode is best explained through his sensitivity to the delicate balance between illusion and reality (1981: 130). This metaphysical insight is most realized in the surreal self-exploration of his autobiographical writing, which De Quincey described as “impassioned prose” (1889: Works I, 14). The Confessions follow both the evangelical and Enlightenment forms of revelatory narrative, while anticipating New and Gonzo Journalism. Although the pariah status of the author is implicit, these are not sordid depictions of addiction but meditations on imagination and psychology, with the author’s self-awareness, memory, and creativity explored through the analysis of the opium dream. Hypnogogic and hallucinatory passages are epic, sublime, and terrible, and external urban spaces always dark and labyrinthine – De Quincey’s London is a lot closer to the rookeries of Reynolds, Dickens, Poe, Balzac, and Stevenson than that of his contemporaries. In Gothic terms, it is the psychological dissonance of the addict and the deep narcosis described in “The Pains of Opium” that provide the most influential material, as well as the symbolic experimentation of the author in search of a language of dreams. Much of the psychological urban Gothic of the later nineteenth century would have been unthinkable without De Quincey (see Urban Gothic).

After the Confessions, De Quincey is probably most remembered for his Swiftian treatise “On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts,” which he wrote initially for *Blackwood’s* in 1827 and which he returned to and refined in 1839 and 1854. This was a return to the sensational aspects of the *Westmorland Gazette*, which reported murder trials alongside the general news. Presented as a connoisseur’s lecture, De Quincey gleefully analyzes various horrible murders in the same way that Burke had considered the Sublime and Aristotelian tragedy, the gallows humor and sustained irony masking a genuine interest in the violent and macabre that is present in his letters and journalism. Dark humor, horror, and suspense can also be found in “The English Mail-Coach” stories, published in *Blackwood’s* in 1849.

In Albert Zugsmith’s 1962 film version of the Confessions, Vincent Price played “Gilbert De Quincey,” a descendant of Thomas who rescues slave girls from the San Francisco Tong Wars with a wisecracking dwarf.

SEE ALSO: Romanticism; Tales of Terror; Urban Gothic.

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FURTHER READING


Degeneration

ANDREW SMITH

In *Dracula* (1897), Mina Harker declares that “The Count is a criminal and of criminal type.
Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him" (Stoker 1996: 342) (see stoker, bram). Her conclusion is based upon a description that Jonathan Harker had earlier made in his journal of the Count’s physiognomical attributes. Harker’s description, as Leonard Wolf has noted, is a paraphrase of Cesare Lombroso’s description of the archetypal criminal in his Criminal Man (1876) (Wolf 1975: 300). The link signifies the Count’s inherent degeneration as it marks out his innate criminality. Mina’s reference to Max Nordau, whose Degeneration was first published in 1892 (carrying a dedication to Lombroso), compounds the Count’s degeneracy by aligning him with an amoral foppishness (the Count as dissolute aristocrat) that Nordau regarded as a troubling characteristic of the fin de siècle (see fin-de-siècle gothic). Theories of degeneration thus shape Stoker’s novel in particular, but they also provide a more general context that underpins the fin-de-siècle Gothic’s engagement with disease, the body, race, and decadence. In order to appreciate this it is important to consider how theories of degeneration elaborated a language of “otherness” that the Gothic could conceptually import within the form’s ideological construction of the abnormal.

The roots of a theory of degeneration are to be found in the work of Bénédict Augustin Morel, who published widely on the topic in the 1840s and 1850s in France. He was famous for his work on “Cretinism” and he attempted to map a theory of heredity that included social diseases and ethical issues such as alcoholism and supposed sexual impropriety. Morel thus sought to develop a theory of human behavior that medicalized culturally illicit practices and saw their reproduction in biological terms. Daniel Pick has noted that Morel’s exploration of degeneration in France should be seen within the political context of, and social dilemmas inaugurated by, the foundation of France’s Second Empire in 1848 (1989: 54). Morel’s account of the hereditary degenerate was thus part of a national soul-searching that sought to pathologize behaviors and traits that could threaten the health of the nation. It is thus not accidental that subsequent re-modelings of degeneration took place in similar contexts of political upheaval, such as Italy in the 1870s (Lombroso) and in fin-de-siècle Britain (Nordau).

Lombroso’s work on criminality depended upon a notion of atavism in order to identify the degenerate, delinquent type (Pick 1989: 126), who needed to be isolated from the rest of society. As in Morel, the understanding was that various social issues such as prostitution, for example, should be seen in physical terms, and Lombroso went to great lengths to photograph the faces of criminals (and parts of faces such as ears) in order to develop composite images of particular types of criminal propensity.

Both Morel and Lombroso saw degeneracy as potentially lurking within certain types of physiology – an idea that would ultimately culminate in a movement for eugenic regulation. However, Nordau transposed the idea of symptomology from a medical or criminal context to an artistic one in order to account for what he, and other reactionary cultural commentators, regarded as troubling fin-de-siècle forms of art. Nordau grouped a disparate range of writers including Ibsen, Wilde, and Zola in order to account for what he saw as a failure of moral vision in the focus on images of social and economic conflict (Zola), the celebration of symbolic forms (Ibsen), and a dangerous art for art’s sake attitude (Wilde). While Nordau’s Degeneration was a popularly received critique of the fin de siècle, it was not without its detractors (including William James and George Bernard Shaw). It is the book’s reliance on an implicit discourse of atavism (inherited from Lombroso) that provides a context for a certain strand of British fin-de-siècle Gothic.

As critics such as David Punter (1996) have noted, the fin-de-siècle Gothic entertains a troubling fear that humanity may relapse into a state of animalistic barbarism. This also means that one cannot (as in Nordau) have too much confidence in the prevailing models of civilization because they may contain within
them the possibility of a reversion to a more primitive state.

A novella such as R. L. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) tacitly reworks a discourse of degeneracy (found, for example, in one of Nordau’s precursors: Edwin Lankester’s *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwin*, 1880) in order to argue that the ostensibly civilized world of the bourgeois professions (such as medicine and the law) are ghosted by the possibility of a return to a more savage identity (see Stevenson, Robert Louis). However, more radically it could be argued that the novella claims that it is an adherence to middle-class rituals that develops monsters of its own. Henry Rider Haggard explored in depth the relationship between savagery and civilization via a nuanced critique of degeneration in *She* (1887), in which the presence of fallen empires is used as a gloss for contemporary concerns about British empire building (see Imperial Gothic). H. G. Wells, who was a trenchant critic of the misuse of Darwin in theories of degeneration (see his critique of Lankester in “Zoological Regression,” 1891) also explored the image of threatened empire in *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and the relationship between the human and the nonhuman in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) (see Wells, H. G. (Herbert George)). These concerns were given an aesthetic twist by Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), where the representation of the double life (mapped in *Jekyll and Hyde*) works against the novel’s apparent endorsement of Walter Pater’s art for art’s sake ethos (in which Dorian becomes bad art by trying to cultivate beauty).

It is, however, *Dracula* that explicitly explores the concern that the middle-class professional harbors within him the possibility of a degenerative decline. Much of this concern is focused through the figure of the recently qualified solicitor, Jonathan Harker, who is required to transform himself from bourgeois pen pusher to heroic man of action. This also makes clear, as do the other texts mentioned here, how much such concerns are imbricated with a discourse of masculinity.

Theories of degeneration provide a very useful way in which to explore the fin-de-siècle Gothic because those theories employ a language of otherness and are shaped by fears of regression that are so readily embraced by the Gothic. The Gothic of the period, like *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Dracula*, tacitly asserts that models of civilization are not quite so safe or secure after all.

**SEE ALSO:** Anti-Semitism; Disability; Fin-de-Siècle Gothic; Imperial Gothic; Race; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Stoker, Bram; Wells, H. G. (Herbert George).

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**FURTHER READING**


**Dickens, Charles**

**MICHAEL HOLLINGTON**

Charles Dickens (1812–70) shot to fame in the 1830s, and as he did he effected decisive and lasting change in the history of Gothic fiction. Essentially, he fastened on to a Romantic paradox enunciated at its simplest and clearest...
in Byron’s *Don Juan*: that “truth is stranger than fiction” (Byron 1902: 541) (see Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron). In the context of Gothic, this implied that the true sphere of terror lay not in remote times and Catholic places but in the here and now of contemporary urban society (see Urban Gothic). The emerging techniques of flâneurial realist writing and reportage – focused upon the physiognomical signs of human appearance, with the supposedly disinterested passer-by engaging in a fashionable new activity of detecting urban mysteries and observing and interpreting what he saw in the streets of great cities – gave birth to a new version of Gothic that came to maturity in the Victorian period, in the work of Dickens and Wilkie Collins above all (see Collins, Wilkie).

Dickens had nevertheless begun as a pretty average consumer of fairly standard Gothic or sub-Gothic reading matter. As a boy in the 1820s, he regularly imbibed terror from such weekly sources as *The Portfolio of Entertaining and Instructive Varieties in History* and *The Terrific Register: A Record of Crimes, Judgments, Providences and Calamities*. We may pick out the word “Providences” from the latter title to highlight a fundamental ambivalence in its pages, which betray a transparently hypocritical appetite, not unfamiliar before or since in such publications, for simultaneously indulging in and deploring sensation. *The Terrific Register* offered a rather monotonous catalogue of grisly crimes while attempting at all times to maintain high moral ground by insisting that murder will always out, in consequence of a “providential” unseen divinity that mysteriously intervenes in human affairs to ensure that evil will sooner or later be punished. “The Dog of Montargis” of French folklore is a representative exhibit from *The Terrific Register* that obviously left its mark on Dickens. In medieval times, his owner having been murdered in his presence, this dog is supposed to have betrayed such regular signs of aggression toward the perpetrator that he was eventually licensed to take part in a trial by combat in which he fought so ferociously that the villain was compelled to confess his crime (see Crime). The dog Lion in Dickens’ *Little Dorrit* (1855–7), smelling evil in the murderer Rigaud and attacking him while he poses as Gowan’s model in Venice, seems clearly to have derived from such reading, but, more generally, Dickens’ partiality as a novelist for “providential plotting” may owe something to this source.

More generally still, we may speculate whether this “shiftiness” in *The Terrific Register* helped the young writer to perceive that Gothic fiction as it then stood was anything but a fixed and stable or fully evolved genre but was instead eminently suitable and ripe for redeployment. Having presumably in the meantime read Mrs. Radcliffe and other “classic” Gothic writers such as Mary Shelley (to whom Dickens refers, as we shall see, in *Great Expectations* (1860–1)), the flâneur/narrator of *Sketches by Boz* (1836) shows himself ready and eager to effect such realignments. For example, in “The Bloomsbury Christening” he gazes at London street transport through Gothic-tinted spectacles: “Cabs whisked about, with the ‘fare’ as carefully boxed up behind two glazed calico curtains as any mysterious picture in one of Mrs Radcliffe’s castles” (Dickens 2008a: 406). The effect is one of making the familiar strange: Gothic seems here to consort well with the narrator’s aim of achieving a pseudo-scientific detachment that will enable him to construct a “physiology” or anthropology of modern urban life.

But Dickens goes further than this in another, more polemical, reference to Mrs. Radcliffe in *Sketches by Boz* (see Radcliffe, Ann). In “Criminal Courts,” going past Newgate Prison, the narrator’s peripatetic eye catches a glimpse of what lies inside the forbidding walls of this modern “Castle of Udolpho,” which triggers a meditation on the great Quaker prison visitor Elizabeth Fry in relation to Ann Radcliffe: “We have a great respect for Mrs Fry, but she certainly ought to have written more romances than Mrs Radcliffe” (Dickens 2008a: 161). Here we encounter for the first time in Dickens’ writing the cutting edge of Byron’s
paradox – an apologia ostensibly for the aesthetics of realism but in practice for a version thereof that contains so much imaginative intensity that Fanger’s term “Romantic Realism,” in his classic *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism* (1965), seems the most appropriate and accurate description.

Both these techniques – the “making strange” of urban reality through the use of Gothic analogy, and the rhetorical assertion of the far greater “romantic” extraordinariness of the realities of contemporary urban life as opposed to the imaginative fantasies of Gothic inspiration – were to become part of the stock-in-trade of Dickens the novelist and journalist, and to serve acute critical and satiric purpose. An extended example of the former in more mature guise can be found in *American Notes* (1842), where the Central Bank of the republic appears as another version of Udolpho. The flâneur here, on foreign soil, has to do a distinct double take before he can decipher the bank’s ghostly mystery:

> I saw, on the opposite side of the way, a handsome building of white marble, which had a mournful ghost-like aspect, dreary to behold. I attributed this to the sombre influence of the night, and on rising in the morning looked out again, expecting to see its steps and portico thronged with groups of people passing in and out. The door was still tight shut, however; the same cold cheerless air prevailed and the building looked as if the marble statue of Don Guzman could alone have any business to transact within its gloomy walls. I hastened to inquire its name and purpose, and then my surprise vanished. It was the Tomb of many fortunes; the Great Catacomb of investment; the memorable United States bank. (Dickens 2008g: 40)

Here the “providential” associations of Gothic gleaned from *The Terrific Register* return in brilliant guise as Dickens remembers his beloved *Don Giovanni* of the 1820s and 1830s, and the Commendatore’s avenging reappearance as the stone guest at the Don’s table, to link US capitalism with crime, guilt, mystery, and death.

To gain a proper appreciation of a yet more dazzling instance of Dickens’ innovations in the Gothic traditions in one of the great novels, we must also highlight the essential psychological “inward turn” (to borrow Erich Kahler’s (1973) phrase to describe the history of the modern novel) the Gothic took in his hands. Poe, for whom Dickens in works such as “The Black Veil” in *Sketches by Boz* was something of a model, wrote famously of the genre in his preface to his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* “that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul” (see *Poe, Edgar Allan*). It is clear that Dickens would have agreed with him, as he shows in passages that contemplate the effect of extreme conditions such as isolation in darkened rooms or solitary confinement in prison as inducements to indelible psychological disturbance. Again in *American Notes*, this time in a passage about Philadelphia, we encounter a striking example of meditation on the terrors of the mind (see *terror*), to be fathomed here only by some ideally perceptive observer-physiognomer capable of reading the unspeakable suffering wrought on those condemned to the silent system of solitary confinement in the Eastern Penitentiary:

> I believe that very few men are capable of estimating the immense amount of torture and agony which this dreadful punishment, prolonged for years, inflicts upon the sufferers; and in guessing at it myself, and in reasoning from what I have seen written upon their faces, and what to my certain knowledge they feel within, I am only the more convinced that there is a depth of terrible endurance in it which none but the sufferers themselves can fathom, and which no man has a right to inflict upon his fellow-creatures. I hold this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain, to be immeasurably worse than any torture of the body; and because its ghastly signs and tokens are not so palpable to the eye and sense of touch as scars upon the flesh; because its wounds are not upon the surface, and it extorts few cries that human ears can hear; therefore I the more denounce it, as a secret punishment which slumbering humanity is not roused up to stay. (Dickens 2008g: 82)
Again, here, with a slightly different inflection, torture in the real world not only outdoes its imagined equivalents in fiction but in its refined "enlightened" forms inflicts psychological wounds that are far deeper than the physical.

An arresting passage in The Uncommercial Traveller (1860) makes a similar point as it reflects on the implications of a week of haunting by a dead body seen in the Paris morgue. The sensation of being pursued in this way by a monstrous apparition leads the narrator/flâneur to muse upon childhood:

The experience may be worth considering by some who have the care of children. It would be difficult to overstate the intensity and accuracy of an intelligent child’s observation. At that impressionable time of life, it must sometimes produce a fixed impression. If the fixed impression be of an object terrible to the child, it will be (for want of reasoning upon) inseparable from great fear. Force the child at such a time, be Spartan with it, send it into the dark against its will, leave it in a lonely bedroom against its will, and you had better murder it. (Dickens 2008h: 55)

Our paradox returns here once more in a hyperbolic rhetorical formula – literal death is less awful and terrifying than the living death that a person pursued by an idée fixe implanted in the mind in childhood must endure. And Dickens knew something about such fixations at first hand, having encountered one in Genoa in Mrs. de la Rue, whom he attempted to cure through hypnosis, an experience reflected in the “Gothic” story “To be Read at Dusk” (1852).

Another passage seems also to have its origin in childhood terrors that stemmed from the Gothic of everyday life – the period when Dickens worked as a child on display in a boot polish factory. “No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship” (1948: 155) is how Dickens describes his youthful sufferings in the company of Bob Fagin and others at Warren’s Blacking House, and Great Expectations seems to echo this phrasing as it begins to attempt to describe the unspeakable terror that Pip experiences from the haunting presence of Magwitch:

Words cannot tell what a sense I had, at the same time, of the dreadful mystery that he was to me. When he fell asleep of an evening, with his knotted hands clenching the sides of the easy-chair, and his bald head tattooed with deep wrinkles falling forward on his breast, I would sit and look at him, wondering what he had done, and loading him with all the crimes in the Calendar, until the impulse was powerful on me to start up and fly from him. Every hour so increased my abhorrence of him, that I even think I might have yielded to this impulse in the first agonies of being so haunted, notwithstanding all he had done for me, and the risk he ran, but for the knowledge that Herbert must soon come back […] I doubt if a ghost could have been more terrible to me, up in those lonely rooms in the long evenings and long nights, with the wind and the rain always rushing by. A ghost could not have been taken and hanged on my account, and the consideration that he could be, and the dread that he would be, were no small addition to my horrors. When he was not asleep, or playing a complicated kind of patience with a ragged pack of cards of his own – a game that I never saw before or since, and in which he recorded his winnings by sticking his jack-knife into the table – when he was not engaged in either of these pursuits, he would ask me to read to him – “Foreign language, dear boy!” While I complied, he, not comprehending a single word, would stand before the fire surveying me with the air of an Exhibitor, and I would see him, between the fingers of the hand with which I shaded my face, appealing in dumb show to the furniture to take notice of my proficiency. The imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made, was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me, and recoiling from him with a stronger repulsion, the more he admired me and the fonder he was of me. (Dickens 2008e: 254)

The Gothic present here throughout – in vocabulary such as “mystery,” “haunted,” and “ghost” and culminating in the reference to Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft), placed as so often in
relation to the "real" terror of Magwitch's presence – serves to effect a disturbing probe into the complex recesses of Pip's psyche and the problems of interpretation that these pose. The Gothic/realist parallel works through inversion: Pip did not make Magwitch as Frankenstein made his monster; is Pip then the real monster, and are his class-based reactions of revulsion against the peaceable and comfortable convict the symptoms of moral monstrosity (see monstrosity)? At the same time, the image of the vulgar "Exhibitor" displaying his commodity in a theater of objects takes us back to the primal hurt of the Blacking Factory, and complicates our responses still more.

To sum up: Dickens' rehandling of Gothic is never "pure." Inheriting from Scott's Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft (1830) the Enlightenment tradition of materialist explanation for the supernatural, Dickens was always able to laugh at conventions derived from Radcliffe or Shelley, as when in A Christmas Carol (1843) Scrooge initially scoffs at Marley's ghost as a product of gastric disorder: "you may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than grave about you" (Dickens 2008f: 12). Terror in his fiction is very much applied according to the "streaky bacon" aesthetic announced in Oliver Twist (1838), in which intensity and levity occur in regular alternation (Dickens 2008d: 112). Thus, in the scenes following the murder of Tigg in Martin Chuzzlewit (1843–4), the powerful tracking of the criminal mind as it displays itself in Jonas Chuzzlewit's feverish paranoia produces Gothic effects that are interleaved with the sublime comedy of Sarah Gamp and her imaginary "Mrs. Harris." A comic climax matches the sensational murder scene when Mrs. Harris is "murdered" by Betsey Prig's declaration of her belief that Harris is a fiction. As a result, Mrs. Gamp must bring along "Mrs. Harris" rather than Betsey to look after the faithful Chuffey, whom Jonas fears will spill the beans of his crime. Thus, brilliant farce and Gothic nightmare feed off each other (Dickens 2008c: 667 ff.) (see comic gothic).

But this should not be taken to mean that Dickensian terror is less authentically Gothic than the writing of the previous generation. One can in fact argue the exact reverse – that Dickensian hybridity resurrects the teasingly mixed tone of Walpole and Lewis that characterizes the first stages of the form and reinvents in a new and challenging guise the aesthetics of "quell'orror bello che attristando piace" (that lovely horror which pleases as it spreads gloom) as these are articulated by Ippolito Pindemonte in the poem "La Notte" (Night) (1817). Dickens' work seems to address modern skepsis about the irrational and supernatural and to unsettle it, disturbing the reader who might seek untroubled and uncritical consumption of Gothic convention. Dickens' houses are haunted, not by ghosts but by crime, by active moral and social evil practiced daily – the "treacherous old chair by the fire- place, whose withered arms had hugged full many a client and helped to squeeze him dry" (Dickens 2008b: 219) at the office of Sampson and Sally Brass in The Old Curiosity Shop (1840–1) is a representative example. In the last resort, as in The Haunted House of 1859 (Dickens 2008f: 237–63), they are haunted by ourselves.

We can say too that Dickens' contribution to Gothic puts on striking display what Angus Wilson (1960) memorably identified as a feature of Dickens' imagination that sets him apart from most English novelists and aligns him more closely with writers such as Dostoevsky: a powerful sense of evil (see dostoevsky, fyodor). No wonder, then, that Dickens' public readings privileged sensation and terror, and he seems to have felt compelled to continue acting out Bill Sikes' murder of Nancy against medical advice in his final years, very probably hastening his own death. "Terror to the end," he wrote in the margin of his performing copy of the text.

SEE ALSO: Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Collins, Wilkie; Comic Gothic; Crime;
Dostoevsky, Fyodor; Monstrosity; Poe, Edgar Allan; Radcliffe, Ann; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Terror; Urban Gothic.

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Disability

MARTHA STODDARD HOLMES

The relationship between disability and the Gothic as a genre and literary/cultural mode is both overdetermined by a plethora of representations and undertheorized by literary scholars. Since the gigantic, spectral body parts that appear in Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764), fiction, poetry, drama, and film have reiterated a connection between disabled embodiment and the Gothic. Disability’s uses and meanings, however, have varied considerably, from metaphor or metonym to embodied social identity, making this element of Gothic literature and culture a rich area of exploration for Gothic studies, as well as for disability studies and body studies more generally.

One can argue for a “pre-Gothic gothic body” in works such as Oedipus Rex, Beowulf (Grendel and his mother), Richard III (1587–92), The Faerie Queen (1590–6) (Duessa), Macbeth (1603–8) (the Weird Sisters), King Lear (1603–8), and Paradise Lost (1674) (Sin and Death). In all these works, bodily difference, deformity, or damage produces symbolic meanings and creates aesthetic effects such as shock, fear, curiosity, mystery, and desire.

Within works more commonly identified as Gothic literature, key early examples of Gothic disability include Coleridge’s Christabel (1816); Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818); Keats’ Lamia (1819); Hugo’s Notre-Dame de Paris (1831) (featuring Quasimodo, the Hunchback of Notre Dame) and L’Homme Qui Rit (The Man Who Laughs, 1869); Dickens’ The Old Curiosity Shop (1840–1); some of Hawthorne’s short stories (“Rappaccini’s Daughter” and “The Birthmark,” both 1844); Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847) and Villette (1853); some of Poe’s short stories (“Hop-Frog,” 1849); Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” (1872); Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886); and Stoker’s Dracula (1897). Elements of Gothic, carried by disabled bodies, occur in a number of other novels by Dickens (Bleak House, 1852–3; Little Dorrit, 1855–7; and Our
\textit{Mutual Friend}, 1864–5), as well as in many mid-to-late-Victorian sensation novels, notably the works of Wilkie Collins: \textit{Basil} (1852), \textit{Hide and Seek} (1854), \textit{The Dead Secret} (1857), \textit{The Woman in White} (1858), \textit{The Moonstone} (1868), \textit{Man and Wife} (1870), and \textit{The Law and the Lady} (1875) all enfold disabled bodies and minds into Gothic plots. In addition to more canonic works, disability was also a significant thread in the popular literature of the early nineteenth century (penny dreadfuls (see penny dreadfuls), broadside ballads, shilling shockers, and stage melodramas), which regularly included both disablement through acts of violence and also disability as plot elements. Stage melodramas that employ disability in combination with Gothic elements include Thomas Holcroft’s \textit{A Tale of Mystery} (1802), James Kenney’s \textit{The Blind Boy} (1807), and René Pixérécourt’s \textit{The Dog of Montargis} (1814).

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Gothic migrated from literature into an important film genre and, more generally, a cultural mode. Fictional intertwinings of disability and Gothic include \textit{The Phantom of the Opera} (1910); Kafka’s \textit{The Metamorphosis} (1915); the Southern Gothic of Flannery O’Connor (“Good Country People,” 1955); the Gothic-inflected fiction of Daphne Du Maurier (“Don’t Look Now,” 1971) and Patrick McGrath (\textit{Dr. Haggard’s Disease}, 1993); the Gothic elements of magical realism as shaped by Toni Morrison (\textit{Sula}, 1983), Salman Rushdie (\textit{Midnight’s Children}, 1980), and Angela Carter (\textit{Nights at the Circus}, 1984); Katherine Dunn’s postmodern fantastic novel \textit{Geek Love} (1983); Stephen King’s horror novel \textit{Misery} (1987); and Doris Lessing’s dystopian novel \textit{The Fifth Child} (1988), as well as numerous other examples. Children’s literature has also carried the twin threads of Gothicism and disability, notably in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s \textit{The Secret Garden} (1910), in which a Gothic estate houses the actually or psychosomatically disabled bodies of Archibald Craven and his son Colin, and more recently, in J. K. Rowling’s immensely popular Harry Potter series (1997–2007), which characterizes the body transformations of vampires and werewolves as physically disabling, socially stigmatizing chronic illnesses.

Film and television, as well as generating interpretations of many of the works listed above, have carried some of the more resilient associations between disability and Gothic horror. Modern and contemporary horror film relies not simply on the body but also on disability to produce many of its effects. The superior technology of contemporary film allows for wide use of uncanny bodily effects: the transformations of werewolves, cat people, vampires, and others can be viewed as metonyms for the dynamic of chronic illness, with its good and bad days and alteration between passing as nondisabled and “showing up” as disabled. Technical effects have lent power to more literally disabled characters designed to produce horror, such as cyborg-Gothic figure Mason Verger in the \textit{Silence of the Lambs’} (1991) sequel \textit{Hannibal Rising} (2007) or (from another angle) the all-prosthetic Robocop, the genetic replicants of \textit{Blade Runner} (1982), and the mutants of \textit{X-Men} (2000) (a new take on the “supercrip” trope).

Goth fashion and culture of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries can be argued to produce an eros of damage, illness, and/or “freakishness” that has links to ideas of disablement. For example, Goth fashion is deliberately against the grain or mainstream, embracing paleness, the clothing of mourning, and sadomasochistic accessories, whereas mainstream fashion and beauty culture tends to cycle between images of health, robustness, and athleticism and images of illness, decay, sleeplessness, and lassitude, which found their way into mainstream couture for a brief period in the 1990s in the form of “heroin chic.”

While disability is a pervasive element in Gothic literature, film, and culture, its use as a signifier varies widely. When the body, and particularly the disabled body, is used as a source or object of Gothic horror, there is probably no better guidebook than Freud’s “The Uncanny” (see uncanny, the). Theorizing the slippage between the homely or familiar
(heimlich) and the uncanny or unfamiliar (unheimlich), Freud reveals that the unheimlich explored carefully reveals the heimlich, and vice versa. For example, the horror in Edward Hyde’s unnameable deformity is for Henry Jekyll’s friends the realization that he exists in the body of their friend; the similarity in their signatures is one of the first clues to the novel’s most central terrors. Conversely, the body parts that comprise Victor Frankenstein’s creation, all selected for their “beauty,” are even more alarming when animated because they were once productive of comfort; this intimacy between the familiar and the strange is reinforced by Frankenstein’s dream about his fiancée’s change, mid-kiss, from a living lover into his dead mother’s corpse. By the end of Kafka’s The Metamorphosis (1915), the title transformation – as readily applied to sudden physical illness/disability as it is to any number of social or psychic conditions – is equal parts familiar and strange, just as Gregor Samsa is inextricably both human and vermin.

What all these works build on is the capacity of the human body itself to become alien over the course of a normal lifetime. Inherently lacking integrity over time, the maturing and then aging body changes size, scale, and proportion; deteriorates; swells and shrinks; and reproduces itself at the cellular level through both parenthood and cancer. The disabled body (one’s own or another’s) similarly collapses the familiar and the strange. We will all become disabled if we live long enough, and we can change from nondisabled to disabled in the course of minutes, making disability a universal category of embodied “difference.” Before experiencing disability, however, we may think of it as epitomizing the unfamiliar (a perception reinforced by Gothic narrative’s frequent use of disability as a marker for intense alterity).

The impact of science, technology, and medicine on the development of the genre is clearly stamped on the representation of disability in different eras, though it does not follow any clear chronological trajectory. Whether the horror of the body is seen as its inherent lack of integrity, its propensity to disease and disfigurement, its capacity to be seen as a machine or joined with machines, its proximity to death or possible revivification, its hereditary connections, or its gendered materiality (or several of these at once), all these inflections or moments in Gothic narrative are potentially viewed productively as both contributing to and shaped by cultural discourses of disability (see Hurley 1996; Punter 2000). In other words, what is Gothic about the body varies over time.

Not all Gothic texts that engage disability treat it as the ultimate in human strangeness. If the preponderance of representations of disability in the Gothic mode objectify it, using the gothicization of disability as a way to process a horror of people with disabilities (with the result of promulgating such a horror), there are significant exceptions to this pattern. Frankenstein is an exemplar because it unfolds the experience of monstrosity not only from outside, through views of the Creature as a fragmented and reconstituted body (Punter 2000), terrifying in scale and strength, but also from inside. The Creature’s first-person narrative interweaves physical difference with the key threads of parental abandonment, alliances destroyed by an appearance-based culture, and “spoiled identity” or stigma (as theorized by the sociologist Erving Goffman in 1963) that cannot be undone and thus can only be more deeply embraced. Its disablement is explicitly constructed by society. Further, Gothic representations of disability often incorporate a range of more nuanced conditions, from “freakishness” to relatively normalized disablement or chronic illness. While Stoker’s characters resolutely and desperately theorize Dracula as essentially “other,” the world of Hogwarts treats Professor Lupin’s lycanthropy as a condition that, at least for a time, can be handled relationally, with a social support system and accommodations. There is no one mode of “Gothic disability,” then, which makes it a rich topic for cultural studies of disability.

To this date, there have been only isolated explorations of the role of disability in fictions
and films that can be classified as Gothic or as containing Gothic elements; examples include Mitchell and Snyder’s chapter on Byron’s The Deformed Transformed (1824), parts of Norden (1994), and Thomson’s chapter on Toni Morrison (1997). The only start at a theoretical interlinking of Gothic and disability is David Punter’s essay on disability, Gothic, and prosthesis, which makes the argument that “there are elements in the Gothic tradition that can be critically developed by bearing in mind the discourse of disability, in all its complexity” (2000: 39). There is promise for much more work in the realm of theorizing Gothic disability, simply by considering various theoretical modes already linked to the Gothic – abjection, the excessive Rabelaisian body (Bahktin), queer Gothic, and Gothic pathology, to note the most obvious – as critical concepts that can be productively repurposed as “about” disability as a cultural construct.

SEE ALSO: Penny Dreadfuls; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING

Domestic Gothic
ELAINE HARTNELL-MOTTRAM

Domestic Gothic fiction may be identified by its uneasy representation of the historical and socioeconomic developments known as the “domestic ideal.” The concept of “domesticity” goes beyond the mere occupation of the physical domestic space and encompasses more than household servicing as women’s work. Rather, it is a wholly ideological construct relating to the interpretation, as well as the use, of the domestic space.

Domesticity emerged as a concept in the mid-eighteenth century, alongside the modernizing forces of the Industrial Revolution and the Enlightenment. As cottage industry gave way to larger-scale factory production, the nature of the home itself changed. For many, there was a separation of home from commercial premises and many women were removed from the world of remunerative employment altogether. As the domestic ideal became more influential, claustration within the domestic sphere and the possession of appropriate “domestic” qualities became requirements for female respectability.

Meanwhile, traditional family relationships underwent radical change. Romantic ideas of companionate marriage and sentimentalized parent–child relationships, and also the development of the nuclear family, helped to create a concept of the home as a place presided over by a “domestic” woman, in which these newly defined relationships might be enjoyed. The home became a place from which outsiders were excluded and in which servants were relegated from being part of the family to being merely paid employees. The result was a far greater level of familial privacy than previously. Consequently, in domestic matters, even those involving abuse, outside intervention became
minimal due to either lack of knowledge or complicity (see family).

A work of domestic fiction is, then, a construct in which domestic ideology is discussed and, given the position of women within the ideal, this discussion tends to be from a female perspective (not that this automatically implies a female author). Therein lies its potential. At the level of character, weaker inhabitants of the domestic space are frequently represented as open to abuse; at narratorial level, the ideology that contains those characters and configures the relations between them is frequently contested. No matter how conservative the narrative, both of these disruptive/subversive elements are present.

Thus the gap between “domestic” novels and “domestic Gothic” novels is, at best, a narrow one. “Domestic” becomes “domestic Gothic” proper when everyday matters relating to the home become magnified to nightmare proportions, framed by recognizably Gothic tropes and presented in the language of excess. Domestic Gothic narratives magnify the family problems of the non-Gothic domestic novel into horrifically abusive intergenerational relationships. Such novels also frequently deal with their subject-matter through the trope of haunting, whether characters are haunted by a discoverable spectral past or a supernatural spectral presence. Family curses or predictions are ubiquitous, though these range from the sins of the father visited upon the children to the hereditary curse of insanity. In Virginia Andrews’ Flowers in the Attic (1979), characters are haunted, in the nonsupernatural sense, by generations of inadequate parenting, incest, and violence (see incest). By comparison, in Mrs Henry Wood’s The Shadow of Ashclyd (1863), the ancient curse is demonstrably fulfilled and the ghostly shadow that appears before any family catastrophe is never satisfactorily explained.

Domestic Gothic texts rely upon first-phase Gothic motifs such as the castle, distinctive heroines, and highly wrought literary affect; but the emotive matter is very differently framed from one text to another and over time. Most first-phase Gothic novels are domestic and bourgeois in spite of their early-period and aristocratic trappings. Thus, Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764), set during the Crusades, anachronistically debates family relationships and domestic ideology even as it unfolds its tale of dynastic ambition. Similarly anachronistic is Ann Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolpho, published in 1794 but set a century earlier. The heroine’s childhood home, with its familial warmth, is treated at length and her subsequent homes are depicted by way of unfavorable comparison.

After the first phase, domestic Gothic comes out of the castle, moving into a near-contemporary world and, at the same time, overtly debating contemporary issues beyond the domestic. American works such as Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) and Joyce Carol Oates’ Bellefleur (1980) contain extensive domestic description and depict uneasy familial relationships but they also debate what it means to be American and betray an uncomfortable awareness of “that rotting graveyard Europe” (Oates 1980: 1) as a residual presence of an aristocratic European past. Thus Roderick Usher’s home might be described as though it were a European castle but, like the Usher family itself, it cannot last. Both are absorbed, without trace, into the American landscape (see American Gothic).

Back in Europe, Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights (1847) depicts the disruptive nature of the new domestic ideal. Thrushcross Grange, with its trained and semi-invisible servants, is the site of the domestic modern; the eponymous Heigh remains a purely functional farmhouse. Yet the Heights also experiences an incursion of the new. For, on inheriting the farm, Hindley appropriates the sitting-room solely for family use, relegating the servants and the outsider, Heathcliff, to the kitchen. Meanwhile, the undomesticated Catherine chooses a socially desirable companionate marriage rather than an uncertain life of unbridled passion with Heathcliff. Published in the same year, Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre deals with similar issues. Both the insane
Bertha and the ultrarational Jane are women whose lives are controlled by the domestic ideal. They are given no other choice than to occupy the domestic space: the one incarcerated against her will; the other voluntarily staying within its confines in order to maintain her reputation and her (albeit low) class status.

Later-Victorian domestic Gothic texts continue to debate domestic ideology but social conformity becomes ever more a subject for Gothicization in its own right as characters in the novels strive to conceal its opposite. Many popular domestic novelists also wrote ghost stories, the trope of the ghost providing a means by which secret wrongs could be disclosed. Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* (1853) epitomizes the domestic, but her ghost story “The Old Nurse’s Tale” (1852), is emphatically domestic Gothic. Another popular development in domestic Gothic is the Sensation fiction of the 1860s, which utilizes domestic settings and Gothic tropes but adds in specifically criminal behavior, frequently by women. M. E. Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) is a good example of this development (see Braddon, Mary Elizabeth; Sensation Fiction).

Modernism takes on the role of interrogating the domestic in the first decades of the twentieth century but the interwar period produces two enduring domestic Gothic classics: Stella Gibbons’ *Cold Comfort Farm* (1932) and Daphne Du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938). The former is a comic parody of first-phase Gothic, seemingly written in response to the crisis in the domestic created by middle-class women entering the workplace during World War I; both might be read as updated versions of Jane Eyre. However, by the mid-twentieth century, some female writers of domestic Gothic are foregrounding the plot of the mass-produced woman’s romance. For example, Victoria Holt’s *Bride of Pendorric* (1963) features an ancient family seat, a curse, a mystery, an intergenerational family quarrel and a very modern narrative of attempted murder. Yet it is essentially a love story. In the end, the new bride not only stays alive but also earns the respect of her man and becomes established as the mistress of a reformed household.

Romances of this kind seem to have been the last attempt to create a compromise between female autonomy and the domestic sphere. Significant numbers of later-twentieth-century texts focus upon the ruthless imposition of prescribed gender roles. Thus, in Angela Carter’s *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), orphaned Melanie is forced to do endless domestic chores for her uncle and, in a bizarre parallel, she is made to act on a stage alongside the life-sized wooden puppets he has created. This theme of women as “puppets” continues in Ira Levin’s *The Stepford Wives* (1972). In this novel, former independent career women are literally turned into domesticated robots. Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) Gothicizes female suppression differently again. It is set in a futuristic dystopian theocracy in which most people are infertile. “Handmaids” are state-controlled concubines whose sole permitted role is to produce children for high-ranking married couples. Permitted no personal identities, they bear only the names of the men to whom they are allocated. Conception is achieved by ritualized sexual intercourse with the husband, in the presence of the assembled household. Thus loss of identity and agency are related to a specific domestic space and ethos.

However, these tales of female oppression are only one aspect of late-twentieth-century domestic Gothic. For, at this point, even some vampires become domestic beings. In Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872) and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) vampires invade the sanctity of the home and corrupt its occupants but their twentieth-century counterparts are to be found emulating their victims. Louis in Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) shares a home with Lestat and the child vampire Claudia and, in Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* Saga (2005–10), her favored vampires are even more conventional. They adopt the common surname Cullen and, both
Dostoevsky, Fyodor

GAVIN COLOGNE-BROOKES

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–81) received exposure to the Gothic as a child when his father read translations of Ann Radcliffe’s romances to the family by candlelight on winter evenings.
He subsequently came to admire such writers as Dickens, Hoffman, Poe, Pushkin, and Schiller. His novels enact confrontations between good and evil, sometimes in the form of internal, psychological struggles dramatized through a doppelganger, and are filled with tortured souls, monstrous nightmares, waking dreams, wild imaginings, crushing poverty, claustrophobic corridors, shadowy stairways, and unnerving events. They reflect the darkest elements of experience, often more convincingly than they promote Dostoevsky’s own Christian faith.

The depth of Dostoevsky’s psychological explorations may owe much to his distinctly Gothic biography. Born in Moscow in 1821, the second of six children, he lost his mother to tuberculosis when he was 16. His alcoholic father, a doctor at Mariinsky Hospital for the Poor, retired to a country estate and died mysteriously, possibly murdered by his serfs. An epileptic from childhood, Dostoevsky had seizures throughout his life. If these misfortunes were not enough to haunt him, in 1849 he was arrested as a member of the Petrashevsky Circle, who were seen as a threat in the wake of the European Revolutions. Sentenced to death, he endured a mock execution by firing squad, imprisonment in Omsk, and conscription into the Siberian Regiment in Semipalatinsk. There he married his first wife in 1857, only to see her die of tuberculosis in 1864. That same year the disease killed his brother. He wrote his most celebrated novel, *Crime and Punishment* (1866), in direst poverty due to a gambling habit and the need to look after his brother’s family. All his work, not least *The Gambler* (1867), draws on the perilous extremes of his own nature and experience. A second marriage brought respite in later years, despite the loss of two children in infancy. He died in 1881 from hemorrhaging related to emphysema, complicated by epileptic seizures.

Dostoevsky’s darkly comic early writing includes *The Double* (1846), where Mr Golyadkin discovers a Mr Golyadkin junior who claims to know him. A depiction of mental breakdown felt from within, the story takes the theme of the doppelganger into deeper realms of psychology than contemporary convention usually allowed (see doubles). “The Landlady” (1847) is about a dreamer who falls for a weird beauty best described as an epileptic parricide. Rejection returns him to reclusion. “White Nights” (1848) is again about an overimaginative youth who finds his dream girl on a St. Petersburg bridge only to lose her, and perhaps his own mind also. Like The Double, “White Nights” anticipates the blending of tortuous intensity with psychological verisimilitude that characterizes Dostoevsky’s mature writing.

Ghosts, demons, and the living dead abound in Dostoevsky’s major work. His imprisonment led to *Memoirs of the House of the Dead* (1862), an account of the nightmare of incarceration. *Notes from Underground* (1864) is a semilunatic diatribe from a man who has retreated from society. *Crime and Punishment* resurrects the metaphor of premature burial: Rodion Raskolnikov leaves his coffin-like room to murder, returns delirious, and finally seeks spiritual sustenance by demanding that prostitute Sonya Marmeladov read him the story of Lazarus. Following Dostoevsky’s dramatization of the Christian ideal through the character of Prince Mishkin in *The Idiot* (1868), he produced *Devils* (1872), in which Stavrogin is another possibly demonic being. The novel’s epigraph is from the story in St. Luke’s Gospel of Jesus sending devils into a herd of swine. Where in *Crime and Punishment* such characters as Razumikhin, Marmeladov, and Svidrigaylov seem like alternative selves accompanying Raskolnikov toward either damnation or redemption, in his final novel, *The Karamazov Brothers* (1879–80), Ivan Karamazov converses with the Devil, who may be a manifestation of Ivan’s darker self. Meanwhile, his epileptic half-brother Smerdyakov, who commits patricide supposedly at Ivan’s behest, is another doppelganger.

In all his work, Dostoevsky is preoccupied with evil, suicide, sin, violence, and sexual perversion. While the impoverished and oppressed are invariably at its heart, he is as interested in mental depravity as physical, and his characters
Doubles

DALE TOWNSEND

Manifestations of doubles and doubling in literature may be traced back as far as the origins of Western civilization itself. The dualism variously articulated by Plato and Aristotle was easily assimilated by the rise of Judeo-Christian theology, a pervasive system of thought which both reworked and reified classical philosophical endeavors through its accompanying metaphysical distinctions between body and soul, good and evil. Accordingly, medieval morality drama, with its schematic and highly conventionalized depictions of virtue and vice, was fundamentally dualistic in nature. Edmund Spenser would employ a sustained mode of contrast and juxtaposition in his religious and political romance The Faerie

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Manifestations of doubles and doubling in literature may be traced back as far as the origins of Western civilization itself. The dualism variously articulated by Plato and Aristotle was easily assimilated by the rise of Judeo-Christian theology, a pervasive system of thought which both reworked and reified classical philosophical endeavors through its accompanying metaphysical distinctions between body and soul, good and evil. Accordingly, medieval morality drama, with its schematic and highly conventionalized depictions of virtue and vice, was fundamentally dualistic in nature. Edmund Spenser would employ a sustained mode of contrast and juxtaposition in his religious and political romance The Faerie
Queene (1590, 1596), and later, John Milton would exploit the dualisms of Protestant Christianity with his epic account of the struggle between light and dark, good and evil in Paradise Lost (1667, 1674), doubling the figures of God and Satan accordingly. Doubles seem also to have been the particular provenance of Shakespearean comedy, particularly as witnessed in the systematic coupling and uncoupling, the pointed comparison and contrast of lovers, siblings, spaces, genders, and sexualities in such plays as A Midsummer Night's Dream (1600), Twelfth Night (1601, 1623), and As You Like It (1599, 1623).

And yet, as most studies of the literary double assert, it is only with the rise of Romanticism in Europe during the latter half of the eighteenth century that the trope would come into its own (see romanticism). The particular form that the double would assume during this period, together with the specific textual functions that it would come to fulfill, render the literary double a decidedly – though by no means exclusively – Gothic affair. With hindsight, it is easy to see that Horace Walpole in The Castle of Otranto (1764) unwittingly rendered the nascent Gothic aesthetic a rich and fertile seed-bed for the double in his expressed intentions to yoke together in his tale not only the antithetical forces of the modern novel and the ancient romance, but also the crucial differences in dramatic mode (comedy and tragedy, laughter and sublimity) and their attendant relations to class (the lofty status of the nobility, the humble deportment of the servants) (see walpole, horace). Doubling the formal strictures of fact with the unrestrained imaginings of fancy, Otranto also includes in its preoccupations with turpitude and illegitimacy, both political and familial, mirror-images of their opposite: romantic love in place of incestuous embrace, ideal fathers in place of paternal tyranny. A similar scheme of doubling occurs throughout the Gothic romances of Ann Radcliffe during the 1790s (see radcliffe, ann), in which a range of bourgeois values pertaining to property and place, morality and marriage are eventually set in place only once their opposites or mirrored “negatives” have been explored and found wanting. However, it is arguably only with the publication of William Godwin’s Caleb Williams: Or, Things as They Are in 1794 that the double assumes some of the features that the trope, in its most characteristic forms, would come to display in British Gothic fiction of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (see godwin, william). In this text, the political tensions addressed in Godwin’s earlier treatise Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793) are given fictional realization in the suspicious, mutually antagonistic relationship between the eponymous Caleb and his employer, Mr. Falkland. Albeit not to the same extent as in subsequent Gothic fictions, it soon becomes clear that Caleb and Falkland are doubles of one another, with the former, as William Hazlitt pointed out in The Spirit of the Age (1825), serving as the externalized conscience for the latter’s systematic abuse of aristocratic power. Moreover, Falkland himself is doubled in the novel with another one of his adversaries, Barnabas Tyrrel, as well as with Gines, his spy. The pursuer rapidly becomes the pursued, and the roles of master and slave continuously change place: like many pairs of later Gothic doubles, Caleb and Falkland are mutually locked into a complex dynamic of shifting power relations. In a rapid reversal of fortunes at the end of the novel, each character comes to acknowledge his own culpability, while acknowledging the virtues of his adversary. Matthew Lewis’ preoccupation with religious hypocrisy and double standards in The Monk (1796) would do much to galvanize the trope of the double in Gothic fiction of the Romantic period (see lewis, matthew). In this romance, the doubling identifiable between two separate characters in earlier Gothic fictions is reworked in the figure of one individual, Father Ambrosio, the monk of the novel’s title. Split and divided between a public self of religious piety, authority, and respect, on the one hand, and a private self of blasphemy and illicit passion, on the other, Ambrosio pursues his path of base desiring beyond the eyes of all but the novel’s
readers. The eventual exposure of his turpitude, however, brings about his death, and from this moment onwards in the history of the Gothic aesthetic, an intimate relationship between doubling and death, splitting and mortality is set firmly in place.

Demonstrably under the influence of Lewis, E. T. A. Hoffmann’s first novel, *The Devil’s Elixirs* (1814), at once consolidated earlier fictional representations of the double, as well as setting in place many of the characteristics upon which subsequent manifestations of the trope would come to rely (see Hoffmann, E.T.A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus)). Consequently, the text is habitually regarded as a seminal work in the development of the literary double, be it in Britain, Europe, America or further afield. Hoffmann would continue to exploit the fictional possibilities of the double in such fictions as “The Story of the Lost Reflection,” “The Doubles,” and “The Sandman.” Throughout the novel, Monk Medardus is doubled with Count Viktorin, his identical alter ego and half-brother through the paternal line; predictably, visual misrecognitions and confusions of identity, both fortuitous and unfortunate, abound. As both an agent of supernatural import and a psychological projection of the disavowed aspects of Medardus’ own psyche, Count Viktorin, like Ambrosio’s secret self in *The Monk*, facilitates his double’s negotiation of lust, pride, and other compromising pleasures. While the influence of *The Devil’s Elixirs* on subsequent manifestations of the double in British Gothic fiction during the period cannot be overemphasized, it is also important to acknowledge the extent to which Hoffmann himself was the child of his literary milieu. Doubles, in fact, had featured significantly in the earlier work of the major German Romantics in the last few decades of the eighteenth century: Schiller would effect the doubling of the brothers Franz and Karl Moor in *Die Räuber* (1781), while Goethe would undertake a careful doubling of Faust and Mephistopheles in the first part of *Faust* (1808). Other examples of doubles in German literature of the period include Wieland’s *Private History of Peregrinus Proteus the Philosopher* (1791), and Adalbert von Chamisso’s *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (1814), in which the titular character sells his shadow to the devil, but in so doing relinquishes a considerable portion of his own soul. The double also featured prominently in selected works by such other German writers of the Romantic period as Raimund, Heine, and Tieck. But it was probably in Jean Paul Richter’s novels *Siebenkäs* (1796–7) and *Titan* (1800) that Hoffmann encountered the most influential treatment of the double in the literature of his day. Indeed, the influence of Richter not only upon Hoffmann, but upon writers and critics from the nineteenth century through to the present day, is attested to by the continued use of the term *Doppelgänger* (literally “double-goer”), first used and glossed in a footnote in *Siebenkäs*, as a means of both representing and critically describing literary and nonliterary manifestations of the double.

Recasting the ever-shifting power relations between the pursuer and the pursued in her father’s *Caleb Williams*, Mary Shelley, in *Frankenstein* (1818, 1831) would confound any simple distinction between the self and its disavowed other by figuring the Creature as the monstrous externalization of aspects of its creator’s own psyche (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft). Acting out, in some senses, the scripts of Victor’s own repressed desires, the monster, Victor soon realizes, is “my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave” (Shelley 1992: 78). With *Frankenstein*, the centrality of the double to the Gothic mode had been assured. Picking up on the Faustian echoes of earlier treatments of the literary double, the Irish Protestant clergyman Charles Robert Maturin would fashion an extended tale of Gothic doubling between a supernatural tempter and his various victims in *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). The influence of both Jean Paul and Hoffmann upon the development of British literature was assured by the appearance of R. P. Gillies’ English translation of Hoffmann’s *The Devil’s Elixirs* in 1824. Responding to Hoffmann together with such other
contemporary accounts of psychological duality as The Confession of Nicol Muschett of Boghall (reprinted 1818) and Life of David Hoggard, James Hogg, the Etrick Shepherd, anonymously published The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner in Edinburgh in 1824 (see Hogg, James). As in Hoffmann, the doubling that occurs here is between two half-brothers, Robert Wringhim and George Colwan, themselves doubles for their variously assumed paternal figures, as well as through Wringhim and the demonic Gil-Martin, a thinly disguised satanic tempter; in both fictions, the double is, at once, an agent of supernatural power and the embodiment of disavowed aspects of the host's self. In Hogg's Gothic fiction, double begets double, en abyme, as Gil-Martin begins to assume features of both brothers. Hogg's thematic treatment of doubles is matched by the formal construction of the narrative: the story told by an editor is retold by Wringhim, the justified sinner, in the second part of the text, both versions serving to constitute a "double vision" of the events therein described. Hogg would also return to a formal and thematic treatment of the double in the story "Strange Letter of a Lunatic" (1830).

The transmission of the double across the Atlantic to America was largely the work of Charles Brockden Brown, who, under the influence of writers such as William Godwin, would figure versions of the Gothic double in texts such as Wieland: Or, the Transformation, An American Tale (1798) and Edgar Huntly: Or, Memoirs of a Sleepwalker (1799). In accordance with Godwinian precedents, both texts stage the ongoing antagonisms bound up in the dialectic of master and slave, while neither charges its particular rendition of the double with supernatural portent. The best-known practitioner of Gothic doubles in nineteenth-century American fiction is undoubtedly Edgar Allan Poe, most famously in his short story "William Wilson" (1839), but also in the doubling of Lady Rowena Trevanian with Ligeia in the story of that name (1838), and the complex, death-inducing relationship between a painting and its subject in "The Oval Portrait" (1842). The particular inflection given the Gothic double in Poe's "William Wilson" is highly significant, for, in place of the forms of moral turpitude figured in the doubles of numerous earlier texts, the identical double in this story, rendered singular only through his barely audible whisper, is his host-subject's morally better self, a voice of rectitude and conscience. Nonetheless, the havoc he wreaks is no less deadly than in other examples, as Wilson, finally confronting his double before a mirror, presages in the glass his own death. Albeit not always in a distinctly Gothic vein, doubles would feature in Russian literature of the 1830s and 1840s, particularly in such stories by Gogol as "The Nose" (1836) and "The Overcoat" (1843), and most famously in Dostoevsky's humorous treatment of duplicity in his novel The Double of 1846.

In mid-nineteenth-century Britain, the double appears to have fallen somewhat out of literary vogue. However, it would resurface, albeit in considerably less intense a form, in Charlotte Brontë's treatment of the relationship between Bertha Mason and Jane Eyre in her 1847 novel of that name, while Emily Brontë would consistently double names, appearances, identities, and actions in Wuthering Heights (1847). Other significant examples of the double in mid-Victorian fiction, and examples not always steeped in the Gothic aesthetic's characteristic responses of horror and terror, include Wilkie Collins' The Woman in White (1859–60), Armadale (1864–6), as well as the Frankensteinian relationship between Pip and Magwitch in Dickens' Great Expectations (1861). Given the significance of doubling to earlier Gothic modes, it is unsurprising to acknowledge that the Gothic renaissance of the Victorian fin de siècle brought with it at least two major contributions to the fiction of doubleness. Inspired by the real-life account of double-dealing in the life of Edinburgh's Deacon Brodie, Robert Louis Stevenson published The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in 1886 (see Stevenson, Robert Louis). While reinvigorating the fictional double of his fellow Scotsman Hogg of six decades before,
Stevenson in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* also brought the trope to bear upon some of the quasiscientific discourses of his day, including evolutionary theory and its corollary, degeneration; the criminology of writers such as Cesare Lombroso; and the nascent science of sexology. Into this already heady mix, the resonances of a curiously split and divided authorial biography inevitably found their way. The respectable Dr. Jekyll encounters, through his dependence upon a Hoffmanesque elixir, a beast-like double of monstrous proportions, entering with him, like so many of his fictional precursors, into a carefully choreographed dance of hide and seek, persecution and paranoia. Divested of its relations to the supernatural, the alter ego in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is the product of contemporary science, the beast-like vestiges of humankind’s animal origins, the queer impulses of man’s polymorphously perverse sexuality.

Four years later, Oscar Wilde would put the Gothic double to similar use in his exploration of the divided psyche in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Self-consciously referring back not only to the doubling effects of the portrait in the Gothic fictions of Radcliffe, Lewis, and his kinsman Maturin, but also to Poe’s treatment of similar concerns in “The Oval Portrait,” Wilde in *Dorian Gray* parallels the hedonistic pursuits of his title character with a series of horrid changes inflicted upon a veiled and carefully concealed portrait. In an enactment of the philosophy of Wildean aestheticism, art, the novel suggests, facilitates the indulgences of a double life, a life of beauty, stimulation, and indulgence, and one not entirely removed from that being pursued concurrently by Wilde himself. As in Stevenson, though, the vanquishing of time and moral consequence that the double life in *Dorian Gray* apparently affords is only temporary, and in a hideous reversal of fortune, the double, though once the guarantor of Dorian’s narcissism, becomes the agent of death. Albeit not to the same sensational Gothic effects, Wilde would continue to explore the theme of the double life in such texts as *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) and “The Fisherman and His Soul” (1891).

Though Andrew J. Webber’s study, *The Doppelgänger* (1996), is primarily concerned with examples from German literature, much of what it identifies as the characteristic traits of the double might fruitfully be applied to Gothic doubles in the British and American traditions from the nineteenth century onwards (Webber 1996: 3–5). For as the fictions of Stevenson and Wilde so clearly demonstrate, the Gothic double, though not without its auditory counterparts, is primarily a visual phenomenon. Articulating a post-Cartesian split between the mind and the body, the literary double is intimately inscribed in the nineteenth-century discursive invention of sexuality (Rogers 1970: 15; Webber 1996: 12). Bearing testament to the ever-shifting relationship between the ego and the alter ego, the self and its disavowed aspects, the double is intimately inscribed within the power-dynamics of master and slave. For Robert Alter, this makes the double fundamentally violent and aggressive from the start (Alter 1986: 1190). Invariably alluding to doubles that have come before, the Gothic double is intertextual by its very nature: just as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* itself alludes to earlier works, so more recent Gothic doublings undertaken in such texts as Will Self’s *Dorian* (2002) and Oliver Parker’s *Dorian Gray* (2009) rework, with varying degrees of fidelity, the Wildean original. As its highly allusive nature indicates, the double itself is bound up in the maddening dynamics of return and repetition. And although it is usually gendered as male, the Gothic double bears the capacity to throw the distinctions between the sexes into disarray, even in its seemingly less ambiguous feminine forms in the fiction of Djuna Barnes, Daphne Du Maurier, and Angela Carter.

As Stevenson and Wilde’s use of contemporary theories on evolution, criminology, and sexology suggest, fictional representations of the double are inseparable from the broader cultural discourses on subjectivity with which they are contemporary. In Europe, scientists and psychiatric researchers of the early
nineteenth century variously came to postulate the existence of a dark, unknown self that lurked at the margins of rationality. Franz Mesmer’s theory of animal magnetism had probed beyond the limits of consciousness in suggesting that human behavior was governed by a complex and involuntary flow of psychic and corporeal energies; G. H. Schubert’s popularization of Mesmer’s theories, together with his notion of the “shadow self,” was extremely influential among German writers of the Romantic period (see German gothic). The nineteenth-century science of hypnotism, itself the offspring of the work of Mesmer and Schubert, did much to formalize the existence of a second self existing, in secret, at the limits of conscious identity. As Andrew J. Webber has pointed out, the literary double, particularly in German literature of the nineteenth century, invariably had its nonliterary scientific and philosophical underpinnings: Kant’s philosophical doublings were given fictional treatment in the work of Kleist; Fichte’s theories were fictionally explored by Jean Paul; and G. H. Schubert’s account of duality given literary form in the work of E. T. A. Hoffmann (Webber 1996). As Victor Sage has argued, the double in nineteenth-century British Gothic literature is inseparable from the theological pursuits of Protestantism in both its Anglican and Dissenting forms: notions of the internalized conscience inscribed within the Protestant subject a secret, internal self (Sage, 1988). Indeed, philosophical and scientific accounts of the fundamental duality of the human spirit proliferated throughout the nineteenth century, figuring most prominently in the work of Thomas Carlyle, Friedrich Schlegel, Max Dessoir, and Frederic Myers. In almost all instances, doubles in nineteenth-century Gothic fiction are cultural responses to a sense of the human subject in crisis. Discursively, in fact, the foundations of what, following the rise of psychoanalysis, would become known as the unconscious had been in place since at least the final decades of the eighteenth century; consequently, with Freud, the double, while never losing its literary and artistic manifestations, exits the realm of art and becomes one of the dominant tropes of twentieth-century psychology. With its topographical discovery of the unconscious, Freudian psychoanalysis drew upon, and consolidated, the figuring of psychological duplicity in the work of his nineteenth-century literary and scientific forebears; post-Freudian reworkings of classical psychoanalysis in the work of Carl Jung and Jacques Lacan replicated Freud’s doubling of the conscious and unconscious mind with the self and the “shadow self,” the subject and his or her mirrored ego respectively. R. D. Laing would lend further psychological import to the double in his account of human psychopathology in The Divided Self in 1960.

Given its centrality to psychoanalysis, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that the double has itself become the object of much psychoanalytic attention in literary and cultural criticism of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; indeed, the movement of the double from literature into psychology from the late nineteenth century onwards has been followed by a shift toward a self-reflexive enquiry as to how the double, whatever its cultural form, might be read, conceptualized, and interpreted. Otto Rank’s psychoanalytic study of doubling, initially in Der Doppelgänger in 1914 and amplified in a more extensive study of 1925, was crucial in this respect: for Rank, the double was as much literary as it was anthropological and psychological. Citing many of the well-known fictional treatments of doubles mentioned above, Rank’s study proceeds to discuss the sociological antecedents of doubling, as well as its implications for conceptualizing the relationship between authors and their texts: ever since Freud, classical psychoanalysis has tended to perceive the literary work as the dark, repressed double of the authorial psyche. What becomes particularly important in Rank’s account is the range of contradictory meanings between which most manifestations of the double are said to shuttle: though often constructed according to the impulses of primary narcissism – by this logic, the double seems to secure the persistence of the self through the
workings of replication and multiplication – it also bears with it the ghastly potential to serve as the harbinger of mortality: “originally created as a wish-defense against a dreaded external destruction, he reappears in superstition as the messenger of death” (Rank 1971: 86). Freud would draw extensively upon Rank’s account of the contradictory significations of the double in his essay “The Uncanny” of 1919: while reiterating the oscillation between narcissism and death, the double, as epitomized for Freud in the fiction of Hoffmann, is a prime agent of uncanniness, a particularly disturbing compound of the forces of familiarity and strangeness, self and other; consequently, the Freudian uncanny has served as the primary theoretical lens for reading doubles in fiction, particularly in Gothic fictions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Though not without the psychoanalytic leanings of earlier studies, Ralph Tymms’ Doubles in Literary Psychology (1949) was a particularly exhaustive account of doubles in literature well beyond the well-known examples in the German Romantic canon. In addition to their reappearance in the postmodern fictional and filmic reworkings of earlier Gothic texts, doubles also feature strongly within the theoretical endeavors of contemporary culture, not only in Jacques Derrida’s notion of “double-writing,” but also in Steven Bruhm’s queering of narcissism in Reflecting Narcissus: A Queer Aesthetic (2001) and in the Anglo-American feminism of Debra Walker King in Body Politics and the Fictional Double (2000). In these and other writers, the double has become the site of political struggle. Even so, the double’s Gothic potential continues to be exploited by contemporary writers of fiction, with the trope, restored to its horrific and terrific effects, figuring prominently in such texts as Stephen King’s The Dark Half (1989), Chuck Palahniuk’s Fight Club (1996), Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s The Shadow of the Wind (2004), and Audrey Niffenegger’s Her Fearful Symmetry (2009).

SEE ALSO: German Gothic; Godwin, William; Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); Hogg, James; Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann; Romanticism; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Walpole, Horace.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING
Gothic drama evolved out of the melding of Shakespeare’s dramatic ghosts with the themes and plots of the new Gothic novel as written by Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, and Ann Radcliffe. These dramas enjoyed a heyday from 1790 to 1810, but were gradually displaced in popularity by the melodrama, a French-derived dramatic form imported by Thomas Holcroft (see melodrama). Exploring a variety of religious, social, and political ideologies that were current in the 1790s, the major Gothic dramas can be understood as dramatic adaptations of the most popular Gothic novels of the period: Matthew Lewis’ *Castle Spectre* (Drury Lane, 1797) is arguably the most successful Gothic drama produced during the period; Henry Siddons’ *Sicilian Romance; or the Apparition of the Cliff* (Covent Garden, 1794) is based on Ann Radcliffe’s *The Romance of the Forest* (1791); and James Boaden’s *Fontainville Forest* (Covent Garden, 1794) is a Gothic drama based on a vivid vignette drawn from a larger and unwieldy Gothic novel, in this case Ann Radcliffe’s popular Gothic novel *The Romance of the Forest* (1791).

When John Philip Kemble was invited to inaugurate the new Theatre Royal (Drury Lane) in 1794 with a production of *Macbeth*, he decided to make the ghost of Banquo a purely psychological manifestation of guilt in Macbeth’s mind. His audience, however, was not particularly happy with this modernization in the production, although clearly the literary elite had decided that the appearance of ghosts on stage was an uncomfortable reminder of their Catholic past, with all its attendant superstitions. The presence of ghosts on the stage was indeed improper for tragedy, for it is rather calculated to excite laughter and contempt than terror” (Anon. 1794: 351).

Horace Walpole, the author of the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), is also considered to be the author of the first Gothic drama, *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), a play that is frequently discussed as the first Gothic drama in England, but one that circulated only in manuscript form and was never publicly performed during Walpole’s life. This very strange work focuses on the Countess of Narbonne, a grieving mother who has just lost her husband, and who decides to employ the medieval “bed-trick” and take the place of her son’s mistress in his bed (and even more perversely, on the night that she learns of her husband’s death in a hunting accident). She bears his child, a daughter named Adeliza, only to learn sixteen years later that the girl, living in her castle as her young “ward,” has fallen in love with Edmund, her father/brother, and intends to marry him. The Countess is forced to confess her crime immediately after learning of the marriage, and she and her family are destroyed as a result. Edmund rushes to death in battle, the daughter enters a convent, and the mother stabs herself, following which her estates appear to be confiscated by the monks Martin and Benedict, who have had their eyes on them for quite some time (see Walpole, Horace).

Cited by Radcliffe, Byron, and Melville in their own works, and reprinted by Walter Scott in 1811, the drama had a sort of cult status among Gothicists and was recognized as “creating the paradigmatic Gothic drama of intergeneric family conflict and sexual depravity” by its modern editor Frederick Frank (Walpole 2003: 26). In many ways the drama is best understood as a throwback to Sophocles’ *Oedipus* or Euripides’ *Hippolytus* or such Restoration tragedies as John Ford’s *Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (1633) or John Dryden’s *Don Sebastian* (1689). Walpole, in a Postscript written to accompany the play, claimed that the events depicted were based on two historical incidents, one in England and one in France, although he chose to present his play “at the dawn of the reformation; consequently
the strength of mind in the Countess may be supposed to have borrowed aid from other sources, besides those she found in her own understanding” (Walpole 2003: 252–3).

However, the Countess of Narbonne’s “strength of mind” is precisely what is at question throughout the tragedy. When she is forced to explain herself to her son Edmund, she privileges both her body and her imagination as the reasons for her act of incest. Claiming that her husband had been “detain’d from my bed” for eighteen months, she asserts that when he finally was delivered, dead at her doorstep, “I rav’d – the storm of disappointed passions / Assail’d my reason, fever’d all my blood [...]. Guilt rush’d into my soul – my fancy saw thee / Thy father’s image” (Walpole 2003: 246). This overlaying of her husband’s face over the son’s is a highly spectral way of recalling the uncanniness of the past and present, a technique that Walpole also used in *The Castle of Otranto*. This scene presents the female body as an unruly and irrational instrument at the mercy of the mind’s fevered constructions, or is the mind at the mercy of the body? Is the Countess a sexual deviant, a ravenging, lustful aristocrat who would use her own son to sate her appetites (see Clery 2001), or is she a manifestation of a modern subject who loses control of herself so thoroughly that she is powerless and forced to wreak havoc on her family and the larger society?

In fact, the drama can more accurately be seen as persistently misogynistic – “Artful woman!” says Benedict, “Thou subtle emblem of thy sex, compos’d / Of madness and deceit” (Walpole 2003: 241) and blatantly anti-Catholic, with the monks Benedict and Martin using supernatural stories to terrify the secret sin out of the Countess. “I nurse her in new horrors; from her tenants / To fancy visions, phantoms; and report them. / She mocks their fond credulity – but trust me, / Her memory retains their coloring” (2003: 184). But when he sees that he cannot use omens, signs, dreams, or superstitions to intimidate the Countess to publicly confess her sin, Father Benedict begins to despair. Fearing that the Countess is sympathetic to the cause of the Waldensian heretics, he determines to destroy her by exposing her secret sin. Later he praises those soldiers of the Church who have successfully burned the Waldensians at the stake (Walpole 2003: 222, 238–9).

In his Postscript to the drama, Walpole justifies his creation of the villainous Benedict, claiming that his purpose was:

to divide the indignation of the audience, and, to intercept some of it from the Countess. Nor will the blackness of his character appear extravagant, if we call to mind the crimes committed by catholic churchmen, when the reformation not only provoked their rage, but threatened them with total ruin. (Walpole 2003: 254)

In other words, Walpole’s dramatic strategy was one of bifurcated demonization: both sexualized mothers and greedy Catholic monks are “othered” and condemned as monstrosities, both atavistic forms that the British Protestant imaginary has to reject and punish in order to move into a modern and secular nation free from such powerful threats.

Even more fraught with ideological baggage is another early Gothic drama, this one based on a Gothic novel. Henry Siddons’ production of the *Sicilian Romance; or the Apparition of the Cliff* uses the device of a daughter saved by what appears to be her mother’s ghost. This drama undercut the supernatural element by revealing that the mother had been imprisoned by her evil husband so that he could bigamously marry a young and wealthy heiress. The mystery of her ghostly appearances at night, seen by many around the cliff where she is imprisoned, is resolved when the daughter Julia unbars a door and her mother magically emerges, as if from the dead. When the evil Ferrand discovers that the mother and daughter have reunited, he resolves to kill them both himself. As he rushes on them, the mother pulls a dagger and says, “Advance not, on your life! / Spite of thy cruelty, I love thee still, / Still live in hopes to charm thy savage soul, / And melt it into tenderness and love” (Act III, scene iv). This melting never occurs, and the father cannot be assimilated into the restored family that sings the praises of King
George III in the closing scene. A drama that has presented the ruling patriarch of this tiny principality as a ravenous, lustful madman concludes, then, by praising the mentally impaired George III, eliding in its public posture the irony of such a celebration. The conservative politics in many Gothic dramas have been explained by James Watt (1999), who claims that from the 1790s to the early 1800s Gothic works were written as reactions to Britain’s defeat in America because they consistently portray a proud heritage of military victory played out within an unambiguous moral and political agenda. Setting their action around a real castle in Britain, these works present a stratified yet harmonious society, use legendary and real historical figures from the British military pantheon (Arthur or Alfred were particular favorites), and consistently depict the defeat of effeminate or foreign villains. Loyalist Gothics are structurally bound to depict an act of usurpation that is always righted, often through the supernatural agency of a ghost (Watt 1999: 7).

Matthew Lewis’ *The Castle Spectre* is generally considered the most popular Gothic drama performed in England in the late 1790s and Lewis himself in his footnotes to the drama acknowledged that the “Dream of Francis in Schiller’s *Robbers*” was an important influence on his play (Evans 2006: 167). By my count, it was performed 83 times between December of 1797 and 1800, an incredible number for any stage play at the time, and it continued to be popular and produced until 1825. Lewis began writing a prose romance shortly after he first read Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto*, then he set the work aside and traveled throughout Germany, spending 1792–3 in Weimar (see [Levi, Matthew]). After moving to Paris he regularly attended the opera, and then read Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which he praised in a letter to his mother as “one of the most interesting Books that ever have been published” (quoted in Peck 1961: 208). When he sat down to finish the prose romance he had begun almost two years earlier, it became *The Castle Spectre*, a drama written under the influence of an amalgam of Gothic texts. Lewis noted in an appendix to the second edition of the play, “The Friends to whom I read my Drama, the Managers to whom I presented it, the Actors who were to perform it – all combined to persecute my Spectre, and requested me to confine my Ghost to the Green-Room” (Lewis 1992: 224).

Lewis sets his drama’s action in a contested castle on the border of Wales and England during the tenth century, and this shift is surely significant in both localizing the place and in making the Gothic more clearly a British phenomenon, a move that allowed the drama to explore British anxieties about nationhood, borders, and outsiders (women and Africans) clamoring to breach the moats that an aristocratic and male-dominated culture had so carefully constructed for itself. Angela, the besieged Gothic heroine in this drama, is aided in her struggle against her evil uncle Osmond by a group of social outcasts: a fool, a gluttonous friar, servants, and finally, the ultimate outsider, her murdered mother’s ghost. Sixteen years earlier, Osmond had devised a plan that he thought would allow him to marry his sister-in-law Evelina. Thinking that he could ambush and kill his elder brother and Evelina’s husband, Reginald, Osmond and his four African henchmen botched the job and instead Osmond accidentally murdered Evelina who died by throwing herself between the two brothers, thereby saving the life of her husband. While Osmond thinks his brother has perished, Kenric, one of Osmond’s servants, discovers that Reginald survived the attack and he decides to hide him in Castle Conway, which is now the property of Osmond, Reginald’s usurping brother. In the meantime, Angela, the daughter of Reginald and Evelina and unaware of her true identity, has been raised as a peasant by foster-parents. Osmond decides to reclaim his niece upon her sixteenth birthday and promptly lusts after her, particularly given her resemblance to her dead mother. When confronted with the incestuous overtones of the marriage that he desires with her, Osmond replies nonchalantly, “I have influence at Rome – The obstacle will be none to me” (Lewis 1992: 217). The charge of hypocrisy against the Catholic Church in matters of
marriage would not have been lost on the audience here, particularly given the legacy of dynastic chaos that erupted when King Henry VIII sought to have his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled by Rome, 1525–33. In addition to this reference, Lewis introduces an absurdly comic and superstitious priest, Father Philip, a bumbling, greedy, lecherous, and buffoonish man who functions throughout the play as a caricature of the ineffectual and flawed Catholic clergy.

The “ghost scene,” famously set to music by Michael Kelly and employing special lighting effects, occurs at the conclusion of Act IV as a salvific haunting of the beleaguered daughter by the spirit of her protective, angelic mother. Clutching for protection the same blood-stained poignard that Osmond had used to kill her mother years earlier, Angela fends off Osmond’s incestuous advances and kneels before the portrait of her dead mother, praying, “Mother! Blessed Mother! If indeed thy spirit still lingers amidst these scenes of sorrow, look on my despair with pity! Fly to my aid! Oh! Fly and save my father!” (Lewis 1992: 205). Believed to inhabit the castle’s “Oratory,” the ghost appears dressed to resemble the Bleeding Nun from *The Monk*, while stage directions make the uncanny aspects of her appearance very clear:

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The folding-doors unclose, and the Oratory is seen illuminated. In its centre stands a tall female figure, her white and flowing garments spotted with blood: her veil is thrown back, and discovers a pale and melancholy countenance; her eyes are lifted upwards; her arms extended towards heaven, and a large wound appears upon her bosom. Angela sinks upon her knees, with her eyes riveted upon the figure, which for some moments remains motionless. At length the Spectre advances slowly, to a soft and plaintive strain; she stops opposite to Reginald’s picture, and gazes upon it in silence. She then turns, approaches Angela, seems to invoke a blessing upon her, points to the picture, and retires to the Oratory. The music ceases. Angela rises with a wild look, and follows the vision, extending her arms towards it. […] The Spectre waves her hand, as bidding her farewell. Instantly the organ’s swell is heard; a full chorus of female voices chant “Jubilate!” – a blaze of light flashes through the Oratory, and the folding-doors close with a loud noise. (Lewis 1992: 206)
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The audiences who witnessed this scene were enthralled, and the musical accompaniment was considered to be particularly effective in staging the power of the scene. Boaden in his *Life of Kemble* noted that “jomelli’s Chaconne, in his celebrated overture in three flats” (1825: II, 206), was adapted by Kelly, who himself said that the music “was thought an odd choice of mine for so solemn a scene; but the effect which it produced, warranted the experiment” (1825: I, 227).

As Garlington observes, it is somewhat ironic that the music Kelly chose in order to convey the “ghostly” mother was written by an Italian composer during his German sojourn, an apt illustration of a British composer employing the foreign to convey the eruption of the transcendent Gothic on the stage (Garlington 1962: 56–8). Appearing as a visual spectacle, the maternal ministrations of the ghost of Evelina is the high point of this Gothic drama and a moment so culturally significant that it would continue to be replayed in Gothic chapbooks for the next twenty years. The fact that the scene was understood as religious can also be seen by the censorship of its language. As Jeffrey Cox points out, John Larpent’s version of the play has “Hallelujah” rather than “Jubilate,” but this is crossed out, suggesting the continuing concern about the use of religious language on stage during the period (Lewis 1992: 206, n.133).

This second appearance of Evelina, to protect her husband Reginald against the attack of Osmond, so startles Osmond that he drops his sword and Angela “suddenly springs forward and plunges her dagger into Osmond’s bosom” (Lewis 1992: 219). It is Angela who calmly steps forward and gives instructions for the care of her wounded uncle, hoping that he will “gain time to repent his crime and errors!” (Lewis 1992: 219). For all his sufferings, Reginald is also quick to forgive his brother: “Let me hasten to my expiring brother, and soften with forgiveness the pangs of death!” (Lewis 1992: 219). With an almost medieval tenor to the finale, Reginald
announces that "I knew that I was guiltless – knew that, though I suffer’d in this world, my lot would be happy in that to come!":

And, Oh thou wretch [Osmond]! Whom hopeless woes oppress,
Whose day no joys, whose night no slumbers bless!
When pale Despair alarms thy phrenzied eye,
Screams in thine ear, and bids thee Heaven deny,
Court thou Religion! Strive thy faith to save!
Bend thy fixed glance on bliss beyond the grave!
Think there’s a Power above! Nor doubt that Power is just!

(In Lewis 1992: 220)

In an earlier version of the play, the final line reads “And think there is a God! That God is just!” (Lewis 1992: 220, n.149), but it was changed in a manner that secularizes the supreme power while at the same time leaving no doubt that a conservative religious ideology is being invoked.

Lewis’ drama was popular because of its use of the unexplained supernatural, and Lewis defended his use of the ghost, arguing in his Appendix to the drama that ghosts could now safely be presented on stage:

because the belief in Ghosts no longer exists! In my opinion, that is the very reason she may be produced without danger; for there is now no fear of increasing the influence of superstition, or strengthening the prejudices of the weak-minded. I confess I cannot see any reason why Apparitions may not be as well permitted to stalk in a tragedy, as Fairies be suffered to fly in a pantomime, or Heathen Gods and Goddesses to cut capers in a grand ballet; and I should rather imagine that Oberon and Bacchus now find as little credit to the full as the Cock-lane Ghost, or the Spectre of Mrs. Veal. (Lewis 1992: 223)

But a writer for the Analytical Review in 1798 did not agree, arguing that:

The belief in the occasional disclosure of the world of departed souls is nearly coeval […] with the existence of man, and will probably continue till the dissolution of the present system. [Nearly everyone has] experienced the thrilling of fears, which the most enlightened reason, unwilling to approve, has been unable to counteract or refute. (Anon. 1798: 184)

A statement such as this reveals that bourgeois literary and cultural critics recognized all too well the seductive and lingering lure of the supernatural over the human imagination, and they sought to control its use by limiting the appearance of ghosts on stage.

Critics were also quick to point out that the ghost of the mother, Evelina, was gratuitous because she contributes nothing to the action of the drama; according to one reviewer for the Analytical Review, she “makes no discovery and promotes in no degree the progress of the drama.” In Act IV she “divulges no secret” that Angela has not already been told by Kenric, and in Act V she does not act to do anything that could not have been done “by a less insubstantial agent” (Anon. 1798: 184–5). As late as 1832, John Genest wrote about the popularity of Castle Spectre: “The great run which this piece had is a striking proof that success is a very uncertain criterion of merit – the plot is rendered contemptible by the introduction of the Ghost” (1832: 3, 332–3). As Reno points out, these objections remain “oddly rationalistic by continuing to deny a symbolic or psychological acceptance of the supernatural” (1984: 103).

But just as the ghost was a controversial figure in the drama, so were the “Negroes” who functioned as Osmond’s servants. The character of Hassan is, by Lewis’ own account, “misanthropic” because “he has lost every thing, even hope; he has no single object against which he can direct his vengeance, and he directs it at large against mankind” (Lewis 1992: 222). It is, as Lewis recognizes, an “anachronism” to have Osmond “attended by Negroes” (1992: 223, Lewis’ italics), but Lewis makes no apologies: “I thought it would give a pleasing variety to the characters and dresses, if I made my servants black; and could I have produced the same effect by making my heroine blue, blue I should have made her” (Lewis 1992: 223).
spectacularizing contortions that Lewis was willing to create in order to animate his work. It also works to equate women and blacks in ways that suggest their use as visual props in the Gothic imaginary.

In contrast to the ghostless version of Radcliffe’s novel penned by Henry Siddons, *A Sicilian Romance, Fontainville Forest* by James Boaden (1762–1839) was based on Radcliffe’s *Romance of the Forest* and makes use of a ghost who is clearly intended to represent the heroine Adeline’s murdered father. Boaden himself justified the use of the supernatural in the drama by writing that the action was set at “the beginning of the fifteenth century,” and therefore permissible because its actions are “selected from the olden time” (Boaden 1825: 2, 97). Well aware of the critical injunction against silent apparitions, Boaden had his phantom repeat three times the phrase, “Perish’d here!” in reference to his place of murder. A writer for the *Monthly Review* was so outraged by the ghost in *Fontainville Forest* that he observed, “We should ourselves be guilty were we not to pronounce this to be the most pernicious doctrine; the offspring of barbarous ages, which every writer, especially a christian writer, should make it his duty to detect and expose” (Anon. 1794: 352).

*Fontainville Forest* is prefaced in its printed text with an epigraph from *Macbeth*: “It will have blood, they say, blood will have blood. / Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak,” a passage that clearly positions the drama in the tradition of Shakespearean supernaturalism that was popularized by David Garrick’s productions of *Macbeth, Hamlet,* and *Richard III,* all of which employed ghosts. As Emma Clery has noted, earlier critics such as Addison, Dryden, and John Dennis had attempted to resuscitate the use of ghosts on the British stage, and Dennis in particular framed his defense in religious terms. For him, ghosts should be welcomed on stage because they “produced enthusiastic Terror,” and such “enthusiasm” for Dennis was defined as “a god-inspired zeal,” thereby linking terror to its religious function (quoted in Clery 1995: 35). The production of terror or fear became crucial components in the quest for the Burkean Sublime, with the appearance of a ghost on stage becoming an important part of this larger aesthetic debate.

Boaden’s *Fontainville Forest* makes no attempt to enunciate a new approach to the delineation of the sublime or to theories of a new aesthetic. It intends only to be well-received and to exploit the popularity of Radcliffe’s novel. To do so, it presents a mysterious ghost, simply called a “phantom,” who speaks three times to the heroine Adeline at the conclusion of Act III in the “secret Apartment” where Adeline has found an old manuscript that relates the history of her father’s imprisonment and murder. As she reads her dead father’s journal, Adeline hears the phantom speak on three different occasions to confirm her worst fears— that, yes, her uncle was the usurping murderer of his own brother and now, incestuously, pursues her, his niece. The phantom, dressed in armor and seen from behind a sheet of gauze, “glides across the dark part of the Chamber” (Boaden 1794: 40) and disappears, but he is clearly meant to represent the heroine’s dead father, so that the crime here is not matricide, as it becomes in Lewis, but fratricide. In fact, the play makes this explicit when the evil Marquis has a guilt-induced vision of the phantom and exclaims: “See, he unclasps his mangled breast, and points / The deadly dagger” (Boaden 1794: 41). Later, as the evil Marquis grasps the struggling Adeline, he marvels, “In vain this struggle! / How lovely is this terror!” (Boaden 1794: 50). But very quickly the discussion between victim and victimizer turns theological, and both of them begin talking about fate and God as a retributive force.

The mother’s miniature portrait that Adeline wears around her neck serves as the identifying talisman that allows the Marquis to realize that he is pursuing his own niece, and that an inexorable fate (“Dreadful certainty”) has brought them together. He asks her, “is there yet some living instrument / To punish fratricide?”, while she responds in prayer: “Amazement wraps my senses! Gracious God, / In awful sorrow I adore thy justice! / Protector of the Orphan, O direct me! / And lead the Child, miraculously sav’d / To pull down vengeance on
her father’s murd’rer” (Boaden 1794: 51). After a series of misadventures that eventually unmask his identity and crimes, the Marquis stabs himself rather than face the scaffold and the onlookers praise the “secret Providence” that has revealed the truth and returned Adeline to her name and properties (Boaden 1794: 67). Adeline, for her part, salutes “The great Avenger of perverted nature / [Who] Before us has display’d a solemn lesson, / How he dispels the cloud of mystery, / With which the sinful man surrounds his crimes; / It calls us to adore in awful wonder, / And recommend ourselves by humble virtue” (Boaden 1794: 68).

This final speech aims to produce something like the effect of an antiquated medieval religious posture as well as an anti-Sublime. The “solemn lesson” that the Godhead teaches can only be learned once the mystifications of error and sin are removed and humans return to a humble posture of virtue and adoration. The use of a ghost is congruent with this worldview, and Boaden has Mrs. Pope (in the character of Adeline) defend the appearance of the ghost in the Epilogue that concludes the play. In a mocking tone, she asks: “Think you, our friends, one modern ghost will see, / Unless, indeed, of Hamlet’s pedigree: / Know you not, Shakspeare’s petrifying pow’r / Commands alone the horror-giving hour?” (Boaden 1794: 69). Invoking the spirit of Shakespeare to sanction the phantom of this play, Adeline speaks on behalf of the condemned playwright who has been pressured to eliminate the ghost: “I come his advocate, if there be need, / And give him absolution for the deed. / You’ll not deny my spiritual power, / But let me rule at least one little hour!” (1794: 70, Boaden’s italics). Again, the use of religious language suggests that the appearance of the unexplained supernatural on the Gothic stage was a way of reviving traditional religious symbols and tropes, even if they were just being invoked as performances, one choice among many belief systems, rather than a shared or universal dogma. When Boaden tried to revise the play in order to remove the ghost, the audience’s disapproval and disappointment were strongly expressed and he reinstated the phantom.

By 1810 the Gothic drama, with its dynastic and political emphasis, gradually gave way in popularity to the more domestic and familial concerns explored in the melodrama. Certainly lingering Gothic elements can be found in Byron’s Manfred (1817), Percy Shelley’s The Cenci (1819), and Charles Maturin’s Bertram; or the Castle of St. Aldobrand (1816), but for the most part, Gothic drama’s hyperbolic supernaturalism was being slowly replaced by the trend for both melodrama and, later, realism on the stage.

SEE ALSO: Lewis, Matthew; Melodrama; Walpole, Horace.

REFERENCES

Dreams

CHRISTINE BERTHIN

The Nightmare, exhibited in 1782 at the Royal Academy, brought Fuseli immediate fame. The painting epitomizes the changing role and meaning of dreams under the influence of scientific, medical, and philosophical developments (see Medicine and the Gothic). At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the perception of the world and the self could no longer be attributed to the senses only. The boundaries of the self receded as more and more phenomena previously seen as supernatural were assigned to a new but as yet unexplored place in the psyche. The Nightmare records precisely this historical shift from a supernatural to a psychological origin and interpretation of dreams. It juxtaposes in the same space both the traditional explanation of the dream as the external visitation of a supernatural being, the incubus, lying heavily upon the dreamer’s body, with the more troubling suggestion that the dream emanates from her psyche and emerges in the figure of a mysterious, unrecognized double, the mare (see Doubles). The painting also marks a turning point in the relationship between art, literature, and dreams. If around 1782, according to Fuseli, “one of the most unexplored regions of art are dreams and what may be called the personification of sentiment” (1831: 145), the nineteenth century places dreams at the core of the Gothic literary experience.

Dream theorists traditionally disagreed on the questions of the origin and meaning of dreams. Spiritualists saw dreams as a means of access to the supernatural or as divine portents. Scientists emphasized physiological processes such as bad digestion in the emergence...
of dreams. Moralists held that the purpose of dreams was didactic or ethical. The medical discourses on dreams became gradually consensual in the course of the nineteenth century, emphasizing the interaction between body and mind and rejecting mechanical explanations of dreams: “The WILL presides not in the bower of SLEEP,” Erasmus Darwin wrote in “The Love of the Plants” apropos The Nightmare (quoted in Starobinski 1974: 135, n.2). Dreams presented a model of human consciousness trying to control forces that emerge from a subconscious inner world. But the major factor of change in the value given to dreams came with the development and growing influence of psychiatry, which saw dreams as the means of access to the individual psyche’s unexplored regions.

The conversation between fiction and medical sciences is clearly audible in the widespread occurrence of dreams in Gothic fiction. From The Monk to Dracula the use of dreams illustrates the parallel progression of a changing sense of what it means to be a person and the secularization of the interpretation of dreams. The use of dreams in early Gothic texts reveals the tension between religious and scientific interpretations of the dream experience. Yet dreams gradually leave the world of the supernatural and are seen as insights into the psychological mechanisms of an individual. Their place in the Gothic is so crucial that one could define the traditional Gothic plot as an attempt to represent the irrational experience of dreams followed by a rationalization of the unsettling images of the nightmare. Dreams also constitute an unavoidable convention of the genre. The Gothic dream often serves as an embedded narrative that shows conflicts and complexities not immediately accessible to the character, or becomes a means of foreshadowing plot developments. The dream is then a mere narrative ploy to suggest the existence of another reality and another time frame within the linear progress of the story. This is the case in The Monk (1796) where Lorenzo’s proleptic dream is reiterated by the prediction of the gypsy, indicating that dream and prophecy are the channels by which the supernatural can be approached and narrated. Similarly, the Bleeding Nun, a supernatural being, can only appear to Raymond in a dream and as a dream (see Lewis, Matthew). In her 1831 preface to Frankenstein (1818), Mary Shelley explained how the story came to her in a dream (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft). Like The Castle of Otranto (see Walpole, Horace), the writing of Frankenstein is presented as the recovering of a dream. But the original dream in turn harbors another dream, that of Victor embracing Elizabeth who is transformed into his dead mother. In Frankenstein, dreams are no longer simply the means of access to an unnatural reality. They reflect the process of internalization of “the other” and are the road that leads to Victor’s subconscious. Dreaming, in the Gothic, has become more openly linked to desire. Sheridan Le Fanu’s Carmilla (1872) is presented as a case study in which Dr. Hesselius analyzes symptoms of a disease that affects both the body and the mind of the narrator, Laura. Laura’s dreams are accounted for as part of her illness. Dreams have a hermeneutic function and invite interpretation and reconstruction. In Le Fanu’s text the priest and the doctor still appear side by side as guardians of the purity of Laura’s dreams, but the dreams have become the locus of expression of censored or illicit desires rather than the vehicles of supernatural or imaginary invasions. Dreams in Dracula (1897) are dreamed under the surveillance of doctors and neurologists eager to understand the operations of the mind at its moment of deepest obscurity, but are also used as a channel to voice the repressed sexual desires and fantasies of the Victorian subject with impunity (see Stoker, Bram). Dreaming is linked to wish-fulfillment.

The discourse of the Gothic novel in the nineteenth century was to be theorized by Freud in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) (see psychoanalysis): a dream is the veiled expression of a repressed wish. For Freud, as for Gothic writers, dreams are rooted in the language we use to express them. Taking the manifest content of the dream as the patient
consciously describes it, the analyst focuses on the dream-work, the chain of associations, the processes of condensation, and the displacement in the account to discover a latent content. The emphasis of psychoanalysis on the dream-work has durably marked the way we dream. Yet the indecipherability of dreams in the contemporary Gothic no longer simply speaks of a complex self. It has become the symptom of shattered psyches.

SEE ALSO: Doubles; Lewis, Matthew; Medicine and the Gothic; Psychoanalysis; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Stoker, Bram; Walpole, Horace.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING

**Drugs and Alcohol**

**CAROL MARGARET DAVISON**

Drugs and alcohol and the associated theme of addiction have assumed a significant place in Gothic literature since at least the 1790s. This coupling seems particularly apt given the Gothic’s fascination with altered states of consciousness, transcendence of established bodily limitations, and figuration as a type of escapist opiate, “a drug for harassed minds, a refuge for imaginations in flight from menacing reality” (Sadleir 1944: 175). As evidenced in such works as Eaton Stannard Barrett’s *The Heroine; or, The Adventures of a Fair Romance Reader* (1813), Gothic romances were themselves occasionally denounced, at the height of their popularity, as dangerous “intoxicating stimulants; that, when indulged in extremes […] incapacitate us from encountering the turmoils of active life […] and harden our hearts against living misery, by making us so refined as to feel disgust at its unpoetical accompaniments” (III 289).

The generic category of the “Gothic pharmography” – a classification coined by Carol Margaret Davison (2010) – comprises Gothic narratives that chronicle the process of drug/alcohol seduction and addiction. Gothic pharmographies share a significant point of origin in the Faust story as its protagonists, confronted by irresistible desires and the prospect of unrestricted power, literally or figuratively transact a fatal exchange for the fulfillment of their obsessions. The elixir vitae – the elusive, legendary, alchemical concoction said to provide those who ingest it with eternal life – was, notably, a transformative “drug” of sorts that was a vital ingredient in such early Faustian Gothic narratives as William Godwin’s *St. Leon* (1799) (see Godwin, William). In keeping with Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1747–8), the eighteenth century’s most memorable libertine novel, drugs also play a role in libertine-focused Gothic works, in which creatures of uncontrollable excess devoid of moral restraint stop at nothing in the pursuit of self-gratification. Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1795) (see Lewis, Matthew) and Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya; or, The Moor: A Romance of the Fifteenth Century* (1806) feature seductive, foreign-associated devils or devil-minions adept in the secret sciences who criminally employ drugs to assist their libertine masters in enslaving and violating involuntary love objects (see crime). Notably, the power dynamic in these narratives ultimately shifts,
revealing the putative masters, in their addictive dependence on their assistants, to be the actual slaves.

In the nineteenth-century Gothic pharmographies that thereafter developed, drugs and alcohol initially proffer the prospect of inner sublimity and transcendence but ultimately assume the role of a demonic, enslaving, always racialized and frequently feminized love object that is – at least initially – voluntarily consumed. This treacherous, paradoxical situation is perhaps best captured in the primary question driving Thomas de Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821), perhaps the single greatest influence on the Victorian Gothic pharmography (see de Quincey, Thomas): “How came any reasonable being to subject himself to such a yoke of misery, voluntarily to incur a captivity so servile, and knowingly to fetter himself with such a seven-fold chain?” (De Quincey 1996: 4). In nineteenth-century Gothic pharmographies, the devil is ultimately and repeatedly revealed to lie within, his internalization coinciding with that genre’s shift from focusing on the external sublime to the internal uncanny (see sublime, the; uncanny, the).

The development in Gothic fiction from drugs playing a cameo role to their assuming center stage owed much to the publication of De Quincey’s *Confessions*, a prose ode to “just, subtle, and mighty opium.” De Quincey chronicles his own descent from a paradisal, voluntary, and recreational engagement with opium to a terrifying, uncontrollable addiction. The consumption of drugs was also steadily increasing among writers and the population at large at this time. Opium, the Victorian drug of choice, topped the list. It was conservatively estimated in the mid-Victorian era that there were between 16,000 and 25,000 outlets selling opium. The use of drugs throughout Europe was so prevalent that every European had probably consumed them at some point in his/her lifetime. The concurrent social shift whereby drugs such as opium fell from the status of curative to poison and medicine throughout the course of the century – a shift contingent on both their perceived class associations and their purported use for either recreational or medicinal purposes – is evidenced in the Pharmacy Act of 1868, which involved the reclassification and stricter regulation of opiates. The antithetical associations of remedy and poison that Jacques Derrida (1993) has shown to inhere in the cultural idea of the pharmakon (drugs) in classical Western philosophy also infuse the Gothic pharmography.

This narrative subgenre registers the increasing demonization of addictive substances – based in part on their uses, perceived effects, and provenance – and articulates and coalesces several distinct debates of the era. These include the nature of the will and liberal individualism; social oppression and conformity; urban and national degeneration; and British imperialist expansion, which involved the perceived anxiety-inducing sense of Britain’s growing economic dependence on the non-Western world. In their engagement with these various concerns, nineteenth-century Gothic pharmographies drew upon three novelistic subgenres: the Oriental tale, the imperial Gothic, and the urban Gothic (see imperial gothic; urban gothic). Although more exotic in its choice of setting, the Oriental tale emerged virtually concurrently with the Gothic novel, sharing its escapist and sensational flavor along with its focus on supernatural effects and events. The imperial Gothic, first identified and defined by Patrick Brantlinger (1988), explores and expresses national apprehensions about the degeneration of British institutions (see degeneration), the threat of going native, and the invasion of Britain by demonic colonial forces. The urban Gothic, first identified and defined by Kathleen Spencer (1992) in relation to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), is set in an urban center – usually London – and effectively brings the imperial Gothic’s concerns to bear on urban issues. The preservation of boundaries, the preoccupation with degeneration, and the expulsion of foreign “pollution” are, according to Spencer, at the urban Gothic’s core. Both the imperial and the urban Gothic,
however, tap the terror associated with the elimination of boundaries between self and Other, native and foreigner, rural gentleman and urban working class, home and empire.

In such Gothic pharmographies as Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions*, Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone* (1868), Charles Dickens’ *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Marie Corelli’s *Wormwood: A Drama of Paris* (1890), Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Sign of Four* (1890), and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), drugs and drug addiction – frequently conflated with alcohol and alcoholism – function as a symbolic barometer of and/or scapegoat for various entrenched social ills and cultural anxieties. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1986) has claimed that many novelists employed drugs as a symbolic scapegoat onto which were displaced such “secret vices” as homosexuality, or transgressive interclass or premarital sexual liaisons. The former situation obtains in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the protagonists’ engagement with opium involves secrecy and disguise, and is marked, from its introduction by way of Lord Basil, with sensual and homosexual overtones. The latter concern is taken up in Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone*, in which the entrancing power of the stolen diamond is inextricably bound up with the themes of criminality and seduction (see Collins, Wilkie).

Ongoing and heated debates throughout the Victorian period relating to the moral and biological/medical nature of drug addiction are also played out in Gothic pharmographies. Questions of morality and will versus biological imperatives and socioeconomic circumstances are repeatedly evoked. Such issues strike at the very heart of the Victorian conception of self-determination and the liberal subject and generate numerous associations with other “conditions” and “behaviors” that fascinated the Victorians such as poverty, prostitution, and taboo desires and acts. Robert Louis Stevenson’s masterpiece, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, has been read as an allegory of addiction that exposes the monsters born of socially sanctioned laws of propriety, a rigorously policed class hierarchy, and the cult of professionalism (see Stevenson, Robert Louis). Stevenson’s mapping of Dr. Jekyll’s developing addiction reflects, in part, the fact that a high percentage of doctors who had the authority to dispense drugs after the Pharmacy Act became drug addicts. In Stevenson’s novella and other Gothic works, alcoholism and drug addiction function as forms of secular possession that assume the role of a threatening Gothic monster that can possibly be cast off by the addict/alcoholic.

Some historians and cultural critics have argued that drugs and alcohol were scapegoated as a means of social control and in response to wider class-based problems resulting from British industrialization. Notably, the Gothic pharmography also spilled over into other narrative domains such as social realist fiction and Condition of England novels. Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* (1848), for example, exposes the injurious impact of substance abuse, both domestically and socially, and its role in promoting various criminal behaviors. Gaskell strategically deploys Gothic imagery in that novel’s opium-smoking sequences to convey anxieties about the rise and popularity of Trade Unionism and Communism. Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) also engages with contemporary domestic issues. It combines the female Gothic (see Female Gothic) and the temperance narrative to chronicle the debilitating and destructive nature of alcoholism within a marriage and to indict Victorian laws that effectively imprisoned wives and their children in abusive family situations. Brontë courageously engages with such controversial issues as upper-middle class intemperance, children’s consumption of alcohol, and the issue of love/romance as an addiction, this last topic resonating with one of the major themes of her sister Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

One of the most significant elements in the Victorian semiotics of addiction involves the provenance of the addictive substance. Commencing with De Quincey’s opium-inspired...
Oriental dreams that tapped imperial anxieties, drugs – particularly opium and its derivatives – were racialized and racializing throughout the Victorian era, opening up a new imperial geography. Their representation frequently raised the specter of the Other, which entailed the dreaded suggestion of a national Faustian pact that was popularly thought to involve Britain’s economic dependence on China. Ironically, in the case of opium, these claims were entirely ill-conceived and even ran contrary to historical fact. Although opium was popularly associated with China, until the 1870s over eighty-five percent of the opium imported into Britain came from Turkey. Furthermore, if a costly addiction actually existed that made Britain dependent on China, it was the consumption of tea.

These realities aside, various cultural productions at the fin de siècle intimated that Sino-British trade would result in the oriental invasion and colonization of Britain. The popularly circulated image of the opium den, largely a fiction of the 1870s and 1880s whose prevalence was exaggerated, was especially charged with both Gothic and imperial associations. The most terrifying manifestation of this threat was a type of racial contagion whereby unwitting Britons could be physically transformed into Chinese. John Jasper’s description of a haggard Englishwoman in an East End opium den who appears Chinese in Charles Dickens’ *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) (see [dickens, charles]) provides the most memorable literary expression of such a fear. Opium was thus regarded as a conduit for the transmission of foreignness. It therefore fuelled a popular Gothic dread – namely, the prospect of the familiar British “brother” being converted into foreign, “Oriental” Other. These exaggerated portraits were also on exhibit in such anti-opium tracts as *The Celestial Empire* (1863), whose anonymous author describes the drug fiend as a type of living-dead creature. As Marie Corelli’s *Wormwood* (see [corelli, marie]) makes clear, a similar specter was raised at the century’s end in relation to absinthe, another foreign-associated alcoholic beverage, whose consumption was said to result in a person’s conversion to “French” habits and ideas, vilified as decadent and immoral.

Gothic pharmographies as widely divergent as Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Black Cat” (1843) and Patrick McGrath’s *Martha Peake* (2000) (see [poe, edgar allan]; [mcgrath, patrick]) stage a truly unique invasion of consciousness, alcoholism, and drug addiction being used to express and explore varying states of consciousness and abnormal psychology. In their pages, the Other (in his/her various manifestations – national, religious, ethnic, and otherwise) is often revealed to lie within. The Gothic pharmography relays the following terrifying dialectic: although ingested by the alcoholic/addict for liberating, escapist, and sometimes artistic purposes, drugs not only stymie their aims by enslaving the consumer but also force upon him/her often stark, realistic confrontations with such issues as the inescapability of death and decay and the truth behind various power dynamics. In imperial Gothic works, such representations stage an ironic reversal of the standard theory that Britons stationed in the empire turned to drugs as an escape from the horrors of imperialism. That these European and imperial geopolitical issues were extended to psychological terrain in the form of the addict’s consciousness and experiences registers a noteworthy development in the British Gothic literary tradition, especially in its treatment of the doppelganger (see [doubles]).

SEE ALSO: Collins, Wilkie; Corelli, Marie; Crime; Degeneration; De Quincey, Thomas; Dickens, Charles; Doubles; Female Gothic; Godwin, William; Imperial Gothic; Lewis, Matthew; McGrath, Patrick; Poe, Edgar Allan; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Sublime, The; Uncanny, The; Urban Gothic.

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The academic debate about Gothic that has become so prominent in the last few decades has led to the revaluation of many writers. Among these is the prolific and successful twentieth-century author Daphne du Maurier (1907–89), who produced eighteen novels, a number of memoirs and biographies, two plays, and over forty short stories. Although acknowledged for many years as a supremely successful storyteller, she was firmly relegated to the ranks of the middlebrow and not deemed a suitable subject for serious critical consideration until the mid-1980s. One of the first articles to assess her work seriously in relation to the literary canon appeared in _The Spectator_ in 1962, prompted by the Penguin reprint of seven of her novels. Its author, Ronald Bryden, dismissed her as a superficial romantic novelist,

Du Maurier, Daphne

AVRIL HORNER AND SUE ZLOSNIK

The academic debate about Gothic that has become so prominent in the last few decades has led to the revaluation of many writers. Among these is the prolific and successful twentieth-century author Daphne du Maurier (1907–89), who produced eighteen novels, a number of memoirs and biographies, two plays, and over forty short stories. Although acknowledged for many years as a supremely successful storyteller, she was firmly relegated to the ranks of the middlebrow and not deemed a suitable subject for serious critical consideration until the mid-1980s. One of the first articles to assess her work seriously in relation to the literary canon appeared in _The Spectator_ in 1962, prompted by the Penguin reprint of seven of her novels. Its author, Ronald Bryden, dismissed her as a superficial romantic novelist,
“Queen of the Wild Mullions,” who, like her father and grandfather before her, indulged in nostalgia and was capable of writing only “a glossy brand of entertaining nonsense” (1962: 514–15). Du Maurier’s artistic heritage, as the granddaughter of the famous *Punch* cartoonist and novelist George du Maurier (the author of *Trilby*, 1894) and daughter of the celebrated actor Gerald du Maurier, was to have a profound influence on her perception of herself as a writer and on her work. More recent critical appraisals have acknowledged the complex effect of this paternal lineage on her writing, recognizing the creative results of her anxieties concerning influence and identity as she struggled with the assumption that creativity itself was male. Although early academic critiques of her writing focused on femininity and class, subsequent work has recognized her debt to the Gothic tradition and identified the ways in which she adapted it for her own purposes.

Du Maurier’s reception as a romantic novelist was closely linked with her association with Cornwall (where she lived from her mid-twenties), although half of her novels are set elsewhere. There is no doubt that du Maurier herself felt a powerful affinity with her adopted county, regarding her metropolitan origins as being at odds with her “true” self. Her sense of belonging in Cornwall was bound up with her struggle for self-definition and identity as a writer as she negotiated her own family history and relationships though her writing. Du Maurier had a particularly intense relationship with her father, who appears to have made no secret of his unfulfilled desire for a son; her letters and autobiographical writing suggest that she grew up wishing that she had been born a boy. In a 1947 letter to the wife of her American publisher, Ellen Doubleday, she was to describe her reluctant sacrifice of the desire to be male as having locked the boy in a box. Taking up residence at “Ferryside” in Fowey in 1929, she attempted to find an identity as female writer that was less constrained by contemporary expectations of femininity.

The similarities between the landscapes of Yorkshire and Cornwall (both of which were already well established as a site of romantic sublimity) allowed du Maurier to draw a parallel between herself and the Brontë sisters, whom she much admired. She was to build on the Gothic element in the Brontës’ fiction to create her own narratives of intergenerational conflict and female self-determination. Her first novel, *The Loving Spirit* (1931), demonstrates the concerns of much of her early fiction. Based on the history of the Coombe family of Ferryside, this supernatural story about several generations focuses relentlessly on the individual struggle to attain a personal identity within the confines of the family. It thus reproduces the conflicts of much early Gothic fiction in its concentration on the family romance. It was her fourth novel, *Jamaica Inn* (1936), that affirmed her reputation as a Cornish novelist and enhanced her popularity. In *Jamaica Inn*, Cornwall becomes a Gothic landscape and du Maurier adapts the traditional female Gothic romance plot of the threatened heroine in order to explore the limits of freedom (see *female gothic*). The sublime aspect of Bodmin Moor offers to her heroine Mary Yellan the possibilities of transcendence while at the same time exposing Mary to the criminally abject in the shape of her villainous uncle-in-law and his cronies at the Inn. She also becomes the potential victim of an even more abject figure, the sexually and socially transgressive vicar. The plot resolution, which involves Mary leaving Cornwall with her uncle’s morally dubious (but Byronically attractive) brother, does not promise happiness beyond the ending, however. She continues to shun domesticity but nonetheless opts for sexual conformity, paying the price for this in her exile from the wild and ungovernable space of Cornwall. Her situation reflects the experiences of the author, whose Cornish freedom had initially been short-lived (though she would later return); after marrying in 1932, she had embarked on the un congenial and itinerant life of an army wife.

Du Maurier’s own exile in Egypt provided the genesis of her most famous novel, *Rebecca* (1938). Dreaming in the desert heat of a cool,
green Cornwall and remembering her discovery of a neglected mansion near Fowey (Menabilly, which she was to lease in 1943 and live in for the following twenty-four years), she conceived of Manderley and the Gothic romance, Rebecca. Manderley, like all classic Gothic buildings, is haunted by its secrets and the nameless narrator’s identity is haunted by an “other.” The plot owes much to Jane Eyre yet Rebecca is far more than just an updated version of Charlotte Brontë’s novel. Its startling success placed it in the “best seller” category and its tale of the insecure second wife of Maxim de Winter and her “haunting” by the indelible traces of the glamorous dead first wife, Rebecca, has continued to fascinate generations of readers, men as well as women. Many critics see the narrative as an exploration of the divisions in feminine subjectivity. Horner and Zlosniski in Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination draw attention to the “dynamic multivalent alterity” (1998: 126) that the Rebecca figure represents for the nameless narrator and place the narrative firmly within Gothic traditions, drawing attention to the varieties of monstrosity, including vampirism, implied by the figure of this first wife. Rebecca’s haunting presence is insistently symbolized by the continuing reappearance of her handwriting throughout the narrative, suggesting the author’s own ambivalence toward her identity as an author. In spite of the Cornish setting of Rebecca, there is very little detail about locations in the narrative (fictional name places being used, in contrast with those in Jamaica Inn) and its vagueness is suggestive of a desire to create a “dream” text rather than a realist one, a desire signaled by the novel’s famous opening line: “Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.” A house on the coast, Manderley is a Gothic space, a fictional representation of Menabilly – itself a romanticized house for du Maurier, where she believed she could occasionally open up the box in which she had placed her boyish self and release an androgynous phantom, a “disembodied spirit,” to “dance in the evening when there was no-one to see” (unpublished letter quoted in Forster 1993: 222).

Du Maurier was to draw on Menabilly’s history in her 1946 novel The King’s General, which combines Gothic and historical romance, negotiating the generic boundary between the two in a tale of the Civil War. Although sexual and familial concerns are played out dramatically through the Gothic dynamics of the text, their reciprocal relations with broader social and political structures are always apparent. Menabilly turns out to be a Gothic edifice, hiding secret fears that lie deeper even than the fear of the opposing army that pervades the novel. These fears turn on sexual ambiguity, which manifests itself most powerfully in the figure of the General’s son, whom his father believes to be homosexual. The fate of this boy – to be sealed in a secret room and left to die – makes literal du Maurier’s “boy in the box.”

Although du Maurier used Cornwall as the setting for a number of other novels, some of them (e.g., Frenchman’s Creek, 1941; The House on the Strand, 1969; and Rule Britannia, 1972) are better characterized as romance or fantasy than Gothic. The 1951 novel and instant best seller My Cousin Rachel, however, uses traditional Gothic tropes to signify the possibility of a dangerous otherness. Associated with the half-Italian Rachel, they remain ambiguous, as does she in this tale of fragile masculinity and obsessive passion. Told through the voice of an inexperienced young man, the novel never clarifies whether Rachel is a Borgia-like embodiment of “feminine” evil, a promiscuous woman who has poisoned her husband, or an innocent and maligned widow who is trying to protect her legitimate interests. Du Maurier later acknowledged that the creative drive behind the novel came from her intense relationships with Gertrude Lawrence (her father’s last lover) and Ellen Doubleday. At a crisis point in her life, she again turned to Gothic as a way of negotiating problems of identity.

Du Maurier’s affinity with Cornwall was complicated by an enduring identification with her French ancestry, which she equated with the paternal inheritance of creativity. Her 1957 novel The Scapegoat negotiates the tension between stereotypes of Frenchness and her
own sense of French identity through the classic Gothic convention of the double. Like many of her earlier novels, *The Scapegoat* employs familiar Gothic tropes; here they sit uneasily with a resolute realism of tone and a well-worked specificity of time and place to provide a new working of the theme of the double. This tale of mistaken identity is located again at the heart of the family romance. There are, however, throughout the text hints that John and Jean represent two aspects of the same man, the French Jean standing for the foreigner within the English John, his multiple transgressions and excesses portrayed in stark contrast to John’s reticence and restraint. In taking Jean’s place, John enters a family situation that has all the potential ingredients of a Gothic novel, yet the narrative remains resolutely “realist.” Family relationships are portrayed in the Gothic in threatening ways, often evoking repressed incestuous desire; in *The Scapegoat* these remain contained but (only just) within the bounds of normality. Europe was also to provide the setting for one of du Maurier’s most ambitious novels, the underrated *The Flight of the Falcon* (1965). Set in contemporary Italy, it attempts to contextualize the dynamics of familial relationships within the patriarchal cultural inheritance of Europe. In so doing, it offers the reader a text in which the conventions of Gothic fiction – ancient buildings, ancient barbarisms, and the anxiety of inheritance – are again used self-consciously within a “realist” framework. The question of the relationship between “civilization” and “barbarism” is the dominant theme in a text that constantly reminds the reader of the traumatizing effects of World War II.

Du Maurier’s Gothic imagination is clearly visible in her short stories, written over four decades. These are often characterized by the macabre and sinister and by irruptions of the uncanny (see uncanny, THE). Her best-known stories are “The Birds” (1952) and “Don’t Look Now” (1971), due in part to Hitchcock’s Americanized version of the former (which she disliked) and to Nicholas Roeg’s film of the latter (which she liked very much). “Don’t Look Now,” a story in which parents’ grief at the death of a child is linked with a catastrophic encounter with the uncanny, shows du Maurier’s ability to draw on Gothic tropes in original ways. The setting of Venice evokes the precariousness of “normality”: a holiday destination, it is nevertheless haunted by death with its labyrinth of narrow canals signaling a dark underside that invites a descent into horror. In “Don’t Look Now” there is a “doubleness” to everything; the puzzling “doubleness” of the aging twin sisters who issue warnings of impending danger gives way finally to the sinister “doubleness” of the dwarf. Du Maurier draws on the festive inversions typical of the carnival associated with Venice to create the grotesque figure of the dwarf-woman murderer who dresses as a child. Ignoring various warnings, the bereaved father follows the image of the lost child only to confront his own death at the hands of the dwarf. But the latter, with her grotesque and ancient appearance, also suggests the horror of aging itself. By this stage in du Maurier’s writing career, that was what she dreaded most of all. As with the anxieties of identity she had faced as a younger woman, she chose to confront it through the Gothic.

SEE ALSO: Female Gothic; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING


Dutch Gothic
AGNES ANDEWEG

For a long time, “Dutch Gothic” was an oxymoron. There is no contemporary Dutch equivalent to The Monk (1796), even though Matthew Lewis worked on his famous novel in The Hague; nor of Dracula (1897), despite the fact that Dr. Van Helsing is Dutch. When the Gothic novel was at its peak – around 1800 – in surrounding countries such as Britain, Germany, and France there was only a very small production of original Dutch Gothic fiction. However, this changed drastically in the twentieth century.

The Dutch word for Gothic (gotisch, gotiek) did not become a genre label. The largest Dutch historical dictionary, the Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal (Dictionary of the Dutch Language, started in 1851 and completed in 1998), testifies that the meanings of the word “gothic” are limited to the Germanic tribe, the style of architecture and, at times, to the derogatory connotation of barbarous and medieval. Unlike in English, Gothic in Dutch never acquired meaning in a political or literary context. One volume from 1815 could be considered the exception to the rule: Kleine Romans en Gothische Vertellingen (Little Novels and Gothic Tales). It is no coincidence that this book is a translation from the English.

Among the scarce examples of original Dutch Gothic fiction, one could mention the popular plays from around 1800, especially from the (Roman Catholic) Southern part of the Netherlands, which are full of gruesome, spectacular events. After 1820, writers of historical novels like Jacob van Lennep (De plevgezoon (The Adoptive Son) 1833) and Adriaan van der Hoop Jr., (La Esmeralda 1837, an adaptation of Victor Hugo’s Notre Dame de Paris), incorporated Gothic narrative elements into their work, and a number of ghost stories were published in the course of the nineteenth century (collected by Bervoets 1983 and Van Zonneveld 1983).

Several explanations have been given for the absence of original Dutch Gothic fiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. First, the organization of Dutch literary life in (noncommercial) societies was not favorable. These literary societies stressed the importance of civilizing the populace through literature and stimulated adaptations of biblical matter, which in turn led to more conservative publishing policies than, for example, in Britain.

A second explanation may lie in the different pace and phasing of modernization processes in the Netherlands. Gothic fiction has been fruitfully read as a cultural strategy for broaching the major tensions and fears that accompany modernization processes. Ever since its beginnings in the eighteenth century, Gothic has staged the tensions and conflicts generated by the often violent and abrupt onset of modernity. In some respects, the Netherlands modernized much earlier, yet in other respects later than surrounding countries, which could explain why Gothic was not really popular around the 1800s.

Nevertheless, Gothic is not completely absent in the Netherlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The significance of translations should not be underestimated in a relatively small national book market. The
English Gothic novel, the French roman noir, but especially the German Schauerroman, made their mark through several types of mediation: translations, adaptations, and imitations. Dutch literary critics describe the advent of a Gothic “rage” in 1801 as an approaching thunderstorm, rippling from Germany to Britain and France, and finally reaching the Netherlands. Due to the Dutch cultural orientation toward France at that time, and to a lesser extent toward Germany, mostly French and German Gothic fiction was translated. Among the translated authors were French authors like F. Ducray-Duminil, J. J. Regnault Warin, and Denis Diderot (La Religieuse), and German authors like H. Zschokke, Veit Weber, A. von Kotzebue, C. H. Spiess, C. Naubert, and Friedrich Schiller (Der Geisterseher and Die Räuber). British authors were hardly translated, with the exception of Ann Radcliffe, whose work was often translated into Dutch via the French. Most of these translations appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Dutch Gothic literature gained more momentum in the twentieth century. Beginning with a fine example of an imperial Gothic novel set in the Dutch East Indies, The Hidden Force (1900) by Louis Couperus exhibits the colonizer’s fear that the colonized possess supernatural powers. F. Bordewijk tried his hand at Gothic in his three volumes of Fantastische Vertellingen (Fantastic Tales, 1919–24). Seminal postwar authors such as Willem Frederik Hermans and Hella Haasse laid down the foundations of a Dutch brand of Gothic with, respectively, the volume of short stories Paranoia (1953) and the 1950 novel De verborgen bron (The Hidden Source).

This occurrence of Gothic has been connected to the postwar reconstruction of The Netherlands in the second half of the twentieth century, which went hand in hand with a strong ideology of domesticity (Buikema and Wesseling 2006). The domestic Gothic provided authors like Hermans and Haasse with the means to show the downside of this sometimes oppressive cult of the happy home. In the wake of these influential writers, the Gothic finally caught on in twentieth-century Dutch literature, developing into a trend from the 1980s onwards. In the 1990s Gothic also became extremely popular in youth fiction, in particular with the series written by Paul van Loon about a young werewolf (Dolfje Weerwolfje) and the “bus of horrors” (De griezelbus).

The growing interest in Gothic fiction in the 1980s is not only visible in the publication of numerous collections of translated popular horror fiction, and the previously mentioned collections of historical Gothic stories (Van Zonneveld, Bervoets). Another significant token is the publication of two volumes of original Dutch horror stories by leading contemporary novelists, commissioned by Robert-Henk Zuidinga (1984, 1986). In addition, leading authors such as Gerard Reve (1923–2006), Frans Kellendonk (1951–90), Thomas Rosenboom (1956–), Vonne van der Meer (1952–), Manon Uphoff (1962–), and Herman Franke (1948–2010) all write novels in the Gothic vein. Renate Dorrestein (1954–) deserves special mention; almost all of her works (several of which have been translated into English) can be classified as Gothic.

In many of these more recent novels, Gothic is a way of staging ambivalences about the emancipation movements of the 1960s. During this period, the Netherlands transitioned uncommonly fast and seemingly smoothly – compared to other European countries – from a religious, collectivist, traditionalist society into a progressive, secular, tolerant, and pluralist one. Authors like Kellendonk, Reve, and Dorrestein, whose personal lives were influenced by these transitions – Reve and Kellendonk being well-known gay men, Dorrestein an outspoken feminist – question the self-image of the Netherlands as an icon of sexual liberalization, women’s and gay emancipation, and individualization. Their Gothic novels express ambivalences about the dominance of new power relations: how firmly rooted are the new values? Have old values really become insignificant? The female protagonists
in Dorrestein’s Noorderzon (Moonlight Flit, 1986) and Perpetuum mobile van de liefde (The Perpetual Mobile Machine of Love, 1988) have to ward off the Evil Eye and vampiric doubles in order to claim their independence. In Dorrestein’s later novel Heart of Stone (1998), modern child-rearing philosophies are put to a horrific test, resulting in a family killing.

Another level of ambivalence made manifest by the Gothic refers to the value of those new societal relations: is the new really better than the old? Kellendonk’s Letter en Geest (Letter and Spirit. A Ghost Story, 1982) and Van der Meer’s Spookliefde (Ghost Love, 1995) raise doubts about the gains of, respectively, gay emancipation and secularization, which are cast in Gothic terms. A remarkable feature of these novels is how they relate to Roman Catholicism. In many of these twentieth-century Dutch Gothic novels, Catholicism appears to be a suitable vehicle for the expression of desires of fulfillment and salvation. Secularization is not the self-evident outcome of modernity.

The two levels of ambivalence are sometimes inseparable: in Gerard Reve’s De vierde man (The Fourth Man, 1981) the dominance of the new, equal gender relations is tested through parody, but “old fashioned” masculinity is simultaneously reinstalled as the ideal. The gay protagonist is driven to the brink of paranoia by his own performance as a heterosexual. Parenthetically, The Fourth Man was successfully adapted for the screen in 1983 by director Paul Verhoeven – who also directed Basic Instinct and Robocop and who gave the genre of World War II films a Gothic twist in his recent film Black Book (2006).

Most likely due to the absence of a Gothic strain in historical Dutch literature, Dutch Gothic criticism only took off in the 1990s. Now that the critical perspective of reading Gothic has finally been established, new readings have become possible. Suddenly variations on Frankenstein can be recognized, such as in The Angel Maker (2005) by Stefan Brijs, or the presence of Gothic mansions, such as in In Babylon (1997) by Marcel Möring. Class distinctions, usually regarded as trivial in postwar Dutch society, turn out to be a significant source of Gothic conflict. In Rosenboom’s Vriend van verdienste (Friend of Honor, 1985) the suggestion of class mobility in the mid-1960s is enough to spawn a burst of sadomasochistic violence to restore the existing order. Multicultural progressivism is the target of Herman Franke’s Wolfstonen (Wolf Tones, 2003). Conflicts between a group of liberal middle-class inhabitants, living in a postmodern apartment in a seedy neighborhood, and the original population surrounding them, are unavoidable. Their attempt to shut out the ugly noise (wolf tones) from outside is doomed to fail – after increasingly violent incidents, the house goes up in flames.

Post-1960s Dutch Gothic stages the tensions and contradictions between, on the one hand, a liberal national self-image and international stereotype, and, on the other, a taboo regarding persistent social inequalities and intolerance. Gothic is also a way of expressing the ambiguities accompanying the new societal relations after the 1960s, when articulations of the self in terms of gender and sexuality had to be reformulated. At such moments of insecurity the Gothic makes its appearance.

SEE ALSO: Criticism; Domestic Gothic; European Gothic; French Gothic; German Gothic; Queer Gothic.

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**FURTHER READING**


Environment

GREG GARRARD

The prefix "eco-" seems to repel the word "Gothic": it implies green, healthy, progressive, virile, and natural where the Gothic is queer and diseased, transfixed by archaic beliefs and practices, and darkly tinted like blood and bruise and tomb. Ecocriticism, or environmentalist literary criticism, once preferred Romantic epiphany to supernatural melodrama, but has now shifted its attention to the environmentality of Gothic writers from Mary Shelley to Margaret Atwood. At the same time, a queer/deconstructive turn in ecocriticism has illuminated—or, better, adumbrated—what Timothy Morton (2007) has called "dark ecology."

The anonymous protagonist of Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing* (1972), who goes in search of her missing father on the fringes of the wilderness of Quebec, is haunted by revenants: her drowning brother and its double, the fetus her boyfriend forced her to abort. She is fascinated by *loup-garou* stories, and suspects her father of having become a wolf. The novel’s Gothic narrative elicits environmentalist and feminist commitments when the protagonist loses her “humanity,” forced to escape into a wordless “wild” condition by the oppression of both women and nature by rationalism and male domination (Garrard 2011: 86). Conversely, nature-writing classics such as Thoreau’s *Walden* (1854) and Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974) evoke sublime terror and visceral disgust as well as transcendent awe at the beauties of nature. Dillard extols the gorgeous extravagance of biodiversity, but also conveys her moral horror at a frog drained of its innards by a predatory water bug (Dillard 1999: 8). The awful waste of life implicit in evolutionary theory leads her to reflect that “the sea is a cup of death and the land is a stained altar stone […] We are escapees. We wake in terror, eat in hunger, sleep with a mouthful of blood” (Dillard 1999: 177).

As Lawrence Buell suggests, environmental writing has drawn on Gothic tropes in what he calls “toxic discourse” (Buell 2001: 30–54). Among the characteristics of representations of “environmental hazard” (Buell 2001: 31) are “totalizing images of a world without refuge from toxic penetration” (Buell 2001: 38) and “Gothification” of toxic risk (Buell 2001: 42). Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) consistently draws upon Gothic imagery, from the “evil spell” cast by imperceptible pesticides in “A Fable for Tomorrow” (Carson 1999: 21) to the “death-dealing materials” Americans were encouraged to spray into every corner of their homes and every surface of their bodies (Carson 1999: 158). Sandra Steingraber’s *Living Downstream* (1997) is overtly influenced by Carson, employing both dispassionate scientific language and vivid Gothicized metaphor to sensitize the reader to carcinogenic chemicals.
However, where Gothic literature concedes to the attractions of horror, such environmental writing Gothicizes pollution in the hope of eliminating it.

Rod Giblett sets out to confront and transform the horror that pervades dominant representations of damp Gothic landscapes in Postmodern Wetlands, arguing that “Physically wetlands are bad enough but morally wetlands are the environmental demi-monde with all the feminised horrors of the half-known life which accrue to modern urban demi-monde” (Giblett 1996: 3–4). Giblett celebrates the subversive philosophical energy of sliminess (the epitome of the uncanny) but also the historical role of swamps as refuges for outlaws and the ecological importance of wetlands in hydrology and biodiversity. He hopes to revitalize the cultural tradition “which has regarded the wetland as a sacred place, a place of death and life” (Giblett 1996: 228).

Stacy Alaimo’s analysis of the representation of monsters in Hollywood movies is similarly critical of dominant Gothic representations. She argues that when films “portray nature as monstrous – as something that literally threatens human life and figuratively threatens the bounds of human subjectivity – they insist on solid divisions between nature and culture” (Alaimo 2001: 280). Ecocritics critique such “solid divisions,” emphasizing the interpenetration of culture and nature. Although human difference and superiority is always triumphantly reasserted at the end of monster films, Alaimo finds in their “muddled middles” moments of perilous identification with the monstrous creatures themselves, and speculates that “Perhaps the horrific but pleasurable sense of the ‘melting of corporeal boundaries’ [Elizabeth Grosz] […] can catalyze some sort of resistance to the desire to demarcate, discipline, and eradicate monstrous natures” (Alaimo 2001: 294).

Perhaps the most vivid example of corporeal ambivalence is Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818). Shelley’s novel is at once a Gothic classic, spawning innumerable schlock horror films, and a touchstone for popular resistance to and suspicion of science and technology. In the UK, tabloid newspapers commonly refer to genetically modified foods as “Frankenfoods,” for example. But both the horror at monstrous bodies of the Hammer films and the defense of “nature” against scientific meddling underestimate Shelley’s radicalism, according to Timothy Morton’s Ecology Without Nature:

The task becomes to love the disgusting, inert, and meaningless. Ecological politics must constantly and ruthlessly reframe our view of the “ecological”: what was “outside” yesterday will be “inside” today. We identify with the monstrous thing. We ourselves are “tackily” made of bits and pieces of stuff. The most ethical act is to love the other precisely in their artificiality, rather than seeking to prove their naturalness and authenticity. (Morton 2007: 195)

Victor Frankenstein vilifies the monster he has assembled to justify his brutal efforts to contain and destroy it, but the novel Frankenstein, far from criticizing the transgression of natural boundaries between human and nonhuman, living and dead, questions those very boundaries by having a hideous monster voice an eloquent plea for compassionate humanity.

As ecocriticism shifts from being, in Kate Soper’s terms, largely “nature-endorsing” to being more and more strongly “nature-sceptical” (Soper 1995: 4), its overlaps and affinities with the Gothic will increase. Popular denizens of the Gothic such as vampires and werewolves contribute little to environmental discourse beyond the shallow stereotyping of bats and wolves in the service of our culture’s insistence that they supply us with allegories: despised or glamorized zoomorphic figurations of the lustful, violent “Beast Within” (Midgley 2005: 50). The more sophisticated instances of the Gothic, though, question our vaunted “humanity” as well as the “nature” to which it is conventionally opposed.

SEE ALSO: Abjection; Film; Vampire Fiction; Werewolves.
The Gothic can be described as a hybrid genre and a mode of writing that seeks to destabilize paradigms of realism, rationality, and morality by using the past as a mirror for the present. Assessments of Gothic literature have considered its appeal to readers as well as its subversive potential since “it resonates as much with the anxieties and fears concerning the crises and changes in the present as with any terrors of the past” (Botting 2000: 3). Moreover, as David Punter has pointed out, “the Gothic itself […] consists of a series of texts which are always dependent on other texts,” thus deferring any classification and multiplying hermeneutic possibilities. Gothic has also been depicted as a literature of distortion (Punter 2000: x) which, by building its appeal to readers on its ability to allude to other texts, creates a plethora of intertextual references. It is precisely this complex array of both overt and indirect borrowings which generates varied patterns of reading, cutting across mixed social formations, national borders and assorted aesthetic taste, and thereby constituting what we could call the “European Gothic.”

Because of its gloomy and mysterious ambivalences, evocation of strong emotions of terror and horror, eccentricities, and extravagances in portraying both characters and settings as well as, significantly, its radical aesthetic rejection of neoclassical clarity, symmetry, and simplicity, the Gothic was a response to the crisis of the Enlightenment and became a forum for the surfacing of its contradictions and ambivalence, embodied in the descending parable of the French Revolution: from the convocation of the General States to the killings of the Reign of Terror in 1793, through to the Consulate and Napoleon’s empire. Hence the Gothic was a pan-European phenomenon, which responded to major social and cultural upheavals, leading to the crisis of “reason,” understood as a means of explaining and understanding reality as a whole, as well as a timeless aesthetic sensitivity. In this respect, the Gothic has always been at the same time a national and transnational product, for it addresses concerns shared by many countries at similar historical junctions, beginning with the French Revolution and later followed by other national unifications (see Punter 1980; Sage 1988; Botting 2008).

Despite being almost inevitably associated with Northern European atmospheres, Gothic writing has played a central role in the development of the European novel tradition since the publication of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764 and Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 (see Beckford, William). If Gothic writers were mostly from the North of Europe, the settings for the novels were instead provided by the South, principally Spain and Italy. These two countries produced far fewer Gothic novels if compared with their Northern counterparts, but they nonetheless offered some noteworthy examples of how the
genre traveled across the whole of Europe, from North to South and, in the case of Russia, from West to East.

Historically, the largest array of Gothic fiction was published and written between 1764 and 1820 with the works of Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, William Beckford, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Charles Robert Maturin, John William Polidori, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen, to culminate in the fully fledged Victorian literature of the Brontë sisters, Charles Dickens, G. W. M. Reynolds, and Sheridan Le Fanu, to name but a few. Early assessments of the Gothic can be found in Edmund Burke’s notion of the “sublime” as a mixture of pain and pleasure (A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, 1757) and Anna Laetitia Aitkin’s domesticated version of it in her essay “On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror” (1773) (see Ellis 2000: 9–10).

The Victorian fin de siècle saw the publication of several important Gothic works: Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in 1886, Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray in 1891, and Bram Stoker’s Dracula in 1897. The twentieth century turned Gothic ghosts into vampires, and outside Great Britain pure terror became a more “fantastic” form of “hesitation” (see French Gothic; German Gothic). In contrast to that of its American exponents (Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Henry James), European Gothic, because of the “displaced” and “unreal” topics presented to the reader, could speak about the “old” and talk at the same time about the “new.” Medievalism meant fears associated with the establishment of a national culture; mad women in attics raised gender issues; industrialization and education (in the Victorian novel) revealed frictions between the public and personal spheres, leading to more overt social inequality and disappointment over failed utopian political landscapes (e.g., in the historical novel, I promessi sposi (The Betrothed) 1827, 1840, by Alessandro Manzoni, or in the European Mystères). At its inception, the classic Gothic novel described exactly the dissociation between public and personal spheres that had started to emerge after the French Revolution and would be enlarged during the nineteenth century when the aristocracy would be replaced by the middle classes in the running of state affairs. The later Gothic novel explored the unresolved contradiction between an external world, now decadent and politicized, and a deceptively reassuring, homely intérieur (see Domestic Gothic).

Classic Gothic novels originated in Britain, and broadly speaking the genre has been divided into, on the one hand, the dramatic, “masculine” novels of Matthew Lewis and Charles Robert Maturin, and on the other, the domestic, “feminine” works of Ann Radcliffe, Clara Reeve, and Mary Shelley (Ferguson Ellis 1989; Ellis 2000). In the first brand of the Gothic, the male protagonist leaves the domestic place to embark on sensational adventures, while in the second the female heroine reclaims her hegemony over the territory, the personal sphere, which has been usurped by the villain (see Radcliffe, Ann). Victorian Radcliffean Gothic was indeed characterized by a keen preoccupation with fulfilling domesticity and happiness in the home. These nineteenth-century novels had to take on the task of reaching out to a growing reading public and thus "foregrounded the home as a fortress, while at the same time exposing its contradictions" (Ellis 1989: xi). Monsters, doubles, and vampires started filling the space of the Gothic, typified in Mary Shelley’s foundational Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus (1818), while toward the end of the century Robert Louis Stevenson (with Sir Walter Scott and James Hogg as Scottish precursors) and Bram Stoker (with Le Fanu and Wilde as two other notable representatives of the Irish Gothic) addressed the relationship between the stability of social and economic orders and the emergence of new sciences (see Victorian Gothic; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft). Fin-de-siècle positivist technology proposed a further dissociating and ambivalent mode of thinking with the exploration of the polymorphous self, which erratically divided its ego.
into good and evil (Hurley 1996; Smith 2004). Moreover, by breeding monsters in safe homes, Gothic overturned firmly defined certainties which were grounded in rationalistic thinking, and in the expanding, uncrossable dividing line between working and middle classes in modern, urbanized cities.

Not only did Charlotte Brontë confine the mad Bertha Rochester in the attic (Jane Eyre, 1847) but she also paved the way to modern developments in the genre: Daphne du Maurier’s Rebecca (1938) is a Gothic romance which popularized issues of identity and social and domestic conflict in the twentieth century. Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness (1902) continued with a critique of British imperialism and used Gothic tropes to address topical concerns. The revival of the Gothic Romance in the Anglo-Saxon world peaked again during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, with authors such as Phyllis A. Whitney, Joan Aiken, Dorothy Eden, Victoria Holt, Barbara Michaels, Mary Stewart, and Jill Tattersall, who were all published in paperback and all looked for inspiration to the early, sensational, and sentimental inceptors of the genre.

German Romanticism provided all the necessary ingredients for a Gothic story, though it was never pure, but always mixed with fantastic elements, and heavily sprinkled with ghosts and devils. Forerunners of German Romantic Gothic texts were Gottfried Bürger’s (1773) ballad “Lenore” (which influenced William Wordsworth Lyrical Ballads 1798), and Friedrich von Schiller’s story “The Ghost-Seer” (Der Geisterseher, a novel-fragment 1787–9, which resonated with Jacques Cazotte’s 1772 Gothic story, Le Diable amoureux). Both works thrived in Venetian settings with inquisitors, mysterious religious figures, Wandering Jews, and supernatural occurrences (Brinks 2003).

In the period before unification (January 1871), German (as well as Hungarian and Austrian) writers also produced several sagas aimed at awakening national consciousness. Sagen der Vorzeit (Legends of the Olden Days, seven volumes) by Georg Philipp Ludwig Leonhard Waechter (pseudonym Veit Weber, 1787–99), is a well-known example and its setting in the Middle Ages is populated by secret societies and filled with occultism and magic. These popular, long narratives would also influence the later fairy tales of the Grimm brothers (seventh edition 1857), where Gothic atmospheres and eccentric characters fused with supernatural spells abound. The same is true of the other national masterpiece of nineteenth-century German literature, Goethe’s Faust (1829).

E. T. A. Hoffmann, however, was the most notable emulator of the Gothic in the German Romantic tradition. Especially in his portrayal of conflicting identities and split double personalities, he achieved his most fully realized Gothic writing. Key to Hoffmann’s treatment of Gothic elements was his interest in the divide between the external and internal worlds: the latter made to be a safe refuge for mental delusions and eccentricities (see especially Die Elixiere des Teufels (The Devil’s Elixirs), his only completed novel, written in 1816).

Beckford’s seminal Vathek (1786), Oscar Wilde’s decadent play Salomé (1891), and Jan Potocki’s The Manuscript Found in Saragossa (1805–15) were all written in French, thereby marking a strong association between Gothic writing and France (Cornwell 2000: 29–30). France’s contribution to the European Gothic tradition is most visible in the works of the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814) and in twentieth-century Surrealism. As emblematic of the Gothic reception outside Great Britain, de Sade’s works borrow Gothic tropes. His interest in sadism and sadistic rituals often performed in castles and abbeys (by religious men), together with frequent, salacious episodes of incestuous affairs and murders, can easily ascribe the “Divine Marquis” to the category of Gothic followers. Most notably, these themes emerged in some of his lesser-known works, Les Infortunes de la vertu (The Misfortunes of Virtue, written in the Bastille between 1787 and 1788 and posthumously published in 1930 by Maurice Heine), and would reappear in Charlotte Dacre’s Zofloya, or the Moor (1806) (see Sade, Donatien Alphonse François,
MARQUIS DE). Other French writers who engaged with the genre were Honoré de Balzac, Charles Nodier, Victor Hugo, Jules Janin, Théophile Gautier, Alexandre Dumas père, Prosper Mérimée, Gérard de Nerval, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, and Guy de Maupassant (Cornwell 2000: 31). Often blurring the boundaries between Gothic and fantastic, these writers had a great influence over the Italian reception of the genre and contributed widely to its European appropriation in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Surrealist writers, in fact, practiced Gothic experiments, especially in their attempts at recreating oniric atmospheres. Remarkably, in the best tradition of urban late Victorian Gothic, André Breton’s avant-garde novel Nadja (1928) portrayed Paris as a labyrinthine city, a characteristic it shared in Gaston Leroux’s lower-brow, serialized novel Le Fantôme de L’Opéra (The Phantom of the Opera, 1909–10) (Horner 2002: 232).

Like the Italian, the Russian elite read French, not English, and just like Italian translations of Gothic novels, Russian ones were published only in the 1880s (Cornwell 2000: 34; Billiani 2008: 497–9). Pushkin’s The Queen of Spades (1834) anticipated some Gothic elements but the zenith of Russian Gothic fiction dates from 1830 onwards. Alexander Bestuzhev (1797–1837), Mikhail Lermontov (1814–41), Nikolai Gogol (1809–52), and Vladimir Odoevsky (1804–69) all engaged in some kind of Gothic writing. Odoevsky produced some Hoffmann-like stories and, as noted by Cornwell, “‘The Improvisator’ from Russian Nights and ‘The Sylph’ (1837) […] were plagiarised via a French translation” (Cornwell 2000: 34). For instance, in 1869 Igino Ugo Tarchetti had plagiarized the “Mortal Immortal” (1833) by Mary Shelley (Venuti 1995). In the manner of Northanger Abbey (1817), Pushkin’s The Queen of Spades is almost a parody of Gothic fiction. Indeed “peripheral” traditions in their modes of reception of Gothic writing, because of its popular appeal, felt entitled to recreate in their own works an almost postmodern pastiche of the original, which challenged both authorial identities.

Leading lights of Russian literature Fyodor Dostoevsky and Ivan Turgenev wrote Gothic tales: the former in the juvenile The Double (1846), which echoed Hoffmannesque atmospheres, and the latter in two short stories “Phantom” (1864) and “Clara Milich” (1883). Finally, Chekhov and Bulgakov devoted some brief attention to Gothic short stories under official twentieth-century realism.

The Iberian Peninsular paradoxically contributed settings and characters to the majority of classic Gothic stories, but did not produce much original writing, if any at all. Spanish censorship, until the late nineteenth century, prohibited the circulation of translations of Gothic novels, and the Catholic Church was predictably hostile to any unorthodox statement on the nature of humanity. A first attempt at mapping the presence of Gothic literature in Spain, however, is Abigail Lee Six’s recent work on contemporary Spanish female writer Adalaida García Morales (1945–) and her use of the Gothic in her fiction as a literary device to achieve a distinct “hunting effect” (Lee Six 2006).

In the late nineteenth century, Italian writers viewed the Northern European Gothic and fantastic (almost exclusively undistinguished) as literary traditions offering them alternative narrative models to the ethos and close linear narrative structure prescribed by realism, in particular the brand of historical realism practiced by Manzoni and his followers, but also the later ones of social realism and verismo. In chronological terms, the nineteenth-century Italian Gothic can be located after the political unification of the country as a nation-state and on the threshold between Romanticism and positivism. Geographically speaking, it is predominantly a Milanese phenomenon (although it also reaches as far as Piedmont and Naples), related to the growth of both the publishing industry and journalism, and strongly associated with popular culture. More significantly, the Gothic and fantastic appeared in the nineteenth century within the foundational literary tradition of the historical novel produced during the Risorgimento (Ippolito Nievo’s Confessioni d’un italiano (Confessions of an
Italian), 1864, and Massimo D’Azeglio’s *Ettore Fieramosca* 1833 (see Farnetti 2002), as well as in liminal avant-garde literary circles, such as those of the Scapigliati (Tarchetti, Arrigo, and Camillo Boito; see Del Principe 1996), at the heart of verismo (Capuana e Verga), in children’s literature (Carlo Collodi, *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (The Adventures of Pinocchio), 1883) and in less famous novels such as Antonio Fogazzaro’s first novel *Malombra* (1881) (see Billiani and Sulis 2007). In the twentieth century the Neapolitan journalist and feminist Matilde Serao wrote fully fledged Gothic novels (e.g., *La mano tagliata* (The Severed Hand), 1912), while Umberto Eco in *Il nome della rosa* (The Name of the Rose, 1980) and film director Dario Argento in *Suspiria* (1977) and *Il fantasma dell’opera* (The Phantom of the Opera, 1998), returned to the genre in the framework of postmodern meta-narrative and achieved international acclaim.

The Gothic is a hybrid mode of writing and the European Gothic is a proper transnational reflection of the complexity of its cross-referencing, intertextual assonances and dissonances, and modes of appropriation and reception. The twentieth century saw a continuation of the same patterns, while the twenty-first has complicated this situation even further. The Gothic now is a global phenomenon, which resists continental boundaries and can no longer be discussed under the umbrella of European. Vampires have undoubtedly gone global (see the website The Gothic Imagination for a plethora of examples on Gothic cinema and especially on the flourishing Asian Gothic).

SEE ALSO: Beckford, William; Domestic Gothic; Female Gothic; French Gothic; German Gothic; Radcliffe, Ann; Sade, Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Victorian Gothic.

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**FURTHER READING**

Family

REBECCA MUNFORD

From its beginnings, the Gothic has been preoccupied with questions of dynastic ambition, wrongful inheritance, and ancestral guilt. The Gothic castle is the locus for unspeakable family secrets and transgressive desires; far from being a place of safety and security, the family home is the very place from which the Gothic’s monsters emerge. Gothic narratives are concerned with the ways in which the family (as a microcosm for broader social structures of patriarchal government) regulates and unsettles human experience. In this respect, early Gothic works illuminate shifts in the way in which notions of family and family life were being defined and imagined in the late eighteenth century.

Concerned with illegitimate inheritance and aristocratic primogeniture, as well as incestuous and murderous desires, Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) introduced many of the anxieties that permeate subsequent Gothic narratives (see Walpole, Horace). The novel focuses on the attempts of Prince Manfred to secure his claims on the principality of Otranto, which came into his family as a result of his grandfather’s usurpation of Alfonso the Good (see Inheritance). After a giant helmet kills his only son, Conrad, on the day of Conrad’s marriage to Isabella, Manfred’s violent anxiety is directed toward the women in his family. Having rejected his wife, Hippolita, he turns his attentions to Isabella, his incestuous pursuit of whom leads to him stabbing his daughter, Matilda.

The restrictive gender and sexual ideologies entrenched in familial structures have been explored in Gothic narratives by women writers (see female gothic). In Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), Maria escapes her tyrannical father to find herself in an equally imprisoning marriage. Her flight from the family home leads to her incarceration in a madhouse and the loss of her daughter. The insane asylum is figured as an amplification of the maddening familial and social structures outside it: as Maria enquires, “Was not the world a vast prison, and women born slaves?” (Wollstonecraft 1994: 11). In Ann Radcliffe’s fiction, male villains – from Montoni in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) to Schedoni in *The Italian* (1797) – represent various facets of paternal authority that work to marginalize female subjectivity (see Radcliffe, Ann). Her novels are also concerned with the Gothic heroine’s negotiation of maternal relationships. In *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), Julia is haunted by mysterious noises emanating from beneath the castle, where she eventually discovers her incarcerated mother Louisa, who has been presumed dead for years. Although family secrets are revealed and often resolved, Gothic conventions expose and
destabilize the imprisoning gender ideologies at the heart of the family structure.

In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), described as the author’s “hideous progeny” in the introduction to the 1831 edition, the monster’s destructive actions can be interpreted as a Gothic projection of Victor Frankenstein’s rejection of family life and domesticity. Although the novel is ostensibly concerned with male rebellions against paternal authority, it is also about the absence of mothers. Ellen Moers proposes that *Frankenstein* is a “birth myth” in the Gothic mode, identifying “revulsion against newborn life, and the drama of guilt, dread, and flight surrounding birth and its consequences” as its “feminine” themes (Moers 1976: 93). Victor’s creation of his monster has also been read as the expression of a male fantasy of procreative power (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft).

Victorian Gothic narratives often explore the bourgeois family as a site where destructive desires and alien elements disrupt the sexual, class, and ethnic ideologies embedded in its structures. Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) deploys images of vampirism and ghostliness in its portrayal of the cruelty and violence of dysfunctional and erotically charged family structures. Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1860–1) use Gothic motifs to represent the orphan’s search for a “healthy” family structure. Family secrets and mysteries are also the material of ghost stories, from Elizabeth Gaskell’s “The Old Nurse’s Story” (1852) to Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) (see Victorian Gothic).

The Gothic’s obsession with the family is linked to its relationship to the home as an uncanny place of repressed desires (see Uncanny, the). Family secrets are often inscribed in the architecture of the Gothic home. Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) depicts Roderick Usher’s nervous malady, a hereditary disorder possibly linked to incest (see Incest), in terms of the gloomy ancestral home’s “vacant eye-lie windows” and the crack running through its middle (Poe 1986: 138). The haunted house continues to resonate as a locus of family horror in more recent literary and visual texts – from Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and Stephen King’s *The Shining* (1977) to *Beetlejuice* (1988) and *Paranormal Activity* (2007) (see Jackson, Shirley; King, Stephen).

Familial metaphors and motifs similarly inflect Gothic criticism. Leslie Fiedler reads the Gothic in terms of Freudian Oedipal structures – of conflict with a paternal figure and horror at the prospect of “the maternal blackness” that lies beneath the (“Gothic”) castle (Fiedler 1960: 112). Feminist criticism has brought to the fore an exploration of female sexuality and the mother–daughter relationship (Kahane 1985) (see Female Gothic). Attention has also been paid to the family as a “hotbed […] of sexualized brutality and nightmarish erotic tensions” (Haggerty 2006: 22). Such erotic fear is exemplified by the vampire, who, from Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) to the television series *True Blood* (2008–), represents an uncanny figure whose lawless desires and polymorphous sexuality threaten the stability of the nuclear family.

SEE ALSO: Architecture, Gothic; Blood; Female Gothic; Incest; Inheritance; Jackson, Shirley; King, Stephen; Radcliffe, Ann; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Uncanny, The; Victorian Gothic; Walpole, Horace.

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Fate is an imprecise and hence problematic term used to describe the predetermined future of both individuals and groups. The related word “fatal” indicates the connection of the term with death, the ultimate fate of all humanity. Fatalism is the belief that all events are predetermined and inevitable. However, the concept of fate is denoted by a number of different terms, each with its own nuances, because this concept exists within a variety of philosophical systems. Fate may also, therefore, be glossed as determinism, providence, retribution, predestination, destiny, fortune, doom, wyrd (or weird), and chance (though this latter is actually an antonym—it denotes chaos rather than order). Fate necessarily works in dialectic with notions of free will.

The term “determinism,” as coined in the late nineteenth century, is the most neutral synonym for “fate.” It ascribes no agency to a predetermined futurity, instead positing that all events are the result of some previous event or events (such events are merely contingent). In this sense it differs from other terms for fate that have resonances of divine/supernatural interference in human affairs. However, as with all versions of fate, determinism treats perceptions of absolute human freedom (total free will) as illusory.

Because of its innate imprecision, the term “fate” itself constitutes a sliding signifier. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus formulated the idea that “character is destiny” (frag. 135 in Graham 2010). This idea is popular because it suggests that, as character can be formed, so too can destiny or fate. However, other meanings of fate gradate from the ultraspecific to the banal and general: from “In the lap of the gods” (Homer 1999: 17: 514), as in the tradition of classical epic, to less specific, humanist predictions (often ironic) about the probable outcome of any course of events. These latter are often in the passive voice, such as “she was fated to marry a millionaire,” the agent being unstated, or reflexive, such as “she sealed her own fate.” Such instances, which imply free will, owe more to an informal register of language than to notions of divine or cosmic intervention or even contingency.

In terms of classical thought it is difficult to separate out what constitutes fate and what does not. For the gods, as arbiters of fate, intervene in human affairs in a number of unregulated ways. As Shakespeare sums it up so well, “As flies to wanton boys are we to th’ gods/ They kill us for their sport” (King Lear 4.1.36–7). The gods use humanity in their quarrels with each other; they have their human favorites and humanity can easily displease them. All of these factors can alter the fate of an individual or even a nation. But alongside these interventions runs the idea of a fixed and immutable fate, allocated to the individual even before birth (see, for example, Hesiod 2007: 211–17).

It would also seem that certain aspects of fate are avoidable rather than fixed. In the tradition of Greek tragedy, if a human subject commits hubris in its cosmic sense (that is, if he or she claims equivalence with the gods), divine retribution is certain and severe. Yet, after all, one need not claim equality with the gods. A relatively minor example of hubris that brings about dire results is when Niobe boasts...
that she has more children than Leto, mother of Artemis and Apollo. Her pride angers the gods and all her children are killed. (The Niobe of Aeschylus tells this story.) Equally “fatal” is to offend the already-capricious gods through neglect or through violating a specific code of conduct. The result can be more than personal suffering: the resultant fate may affect subsequent generations of the same family. Thus, the House of Thebes is afflicted throughout several generations, Oedipus being destined to fulfill his fate by killing his father and marrying his mother.

This conceptual framework largely carries over into popular (though not necessarily sectarian or theologically defined) Christian tradition. God’s general intervention in the fate of humanity is made evident at Romans 8:28: “all things work together for good to them that love God.” Notions of hubris may be particularly related to the fall of Lucifer from Heaven on account of him placing himself above God (Is. 14:12) while Proverbs 16:18 warns less elevated humanity that “Pride goeth before destruction.” Meanwhile, it might be easy to flout God’s law but Galatians 6:7–8 says in no uncertain terms that “God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” As well as a more direct impiety, this “mocking” might include going against the biblical injunctions in the Ten Commandments against murder, false witness, and covetousness (Ex. 20; Deut. 5). In the second Commandment a “jealous God” may be seen to outline intergenerational retribution: God “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate [Him].”

By comparison, the supposedly Christian notion of “selling one’s soul to the devil” and thereby bringing down an evil fate upon oneself is more Faustian (as per Goethe or Marlowe) than biblical, though when Jesus asks “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mk 8:36–7) this may be interpreted as the soul having some kind of exchange value. Another powerful image of fate that has no certain biblical basis is that of the Wandering Jew. According to medieval Christian legend, a Jew who insulted Jesus on the way to the cross was cursed by Jesus to wander the earth, finding no rest until the Day of Judgment. Gospel accounts of the crucifixion do not mention this particular story but the topos of the cursed perpetual wanderer is found in Genesis 4. Here is detailed the curse of Cain. Cain slew his brother, Abel, out of jealousy, because God accepted Abel’s offerings and rejected his own. Thus Cain was guilty of not only murder but also hubris and impiety. It was, thereafter, Cain’s fate to wander the earth with no one able to kill him (see curse).

Possibly the “missing link” between classical and Christian notions of fate on the one hand and Gothic fiction on the other is the Anglo-Saxon concept of “wyrd” – now spelled “weird.” The nounal form is found as early as Beowulf, where it means “fate” or “destiny.” Over the ensuing centuries “wyrd” accreted connotations of an evil fate inflicted by supernatural power, often in retribution. Eventually losing its sense of “fate” entirely, the adjective arrived at its current dominant meaning of “supernatural” or “uncanny.” The description of the three witches in Shakespeare’s play Macbeth as “weird sisters” may be seen to combine the old sense of the word, “fate,” and the new sense of “eerie” or “odd.”

Shakespeare’s “weird sisters” are graphic embodiments of an abstraction (Macbeth’s wyrd) and, most likely, descendants of the three Fates of the classical world. Known to the Greeks as the Moirai and assimilated into Roman culture under the name Parcae, the Fates also existed in Norse culture as the Norns. These three, characterized as old women spinning, are far more powerful than their historical descendants, having the power to allot (spin) and oversee the life (draw the thread) of each child born – in particular with regard to length of life (and hence cut the “thread” at the ordained moment). A reference to the Fate who spins the thread may be found at Iliad 24.209. Another powerful image and embodiment of fate found in Homer is that of Zeus...
weighing the fates of two heroes in battle on his golden scales (Homer 1999: 22.214). As ruler of the gods, he could determine or modify the fate of individuals at will.

Gothic fiction continues this tradition of exposing the workings of fate in graphic form. As critic Marshall Brown rightly observes, “The hauntings and torments of the gothic make man a plaything of higher powers” (1987: 277). Commensurately, the machinery of the Gothic – in particular Gothic from the first phase – relies on the tropes of fate. Thus, God’s intervention in the affairs of humanity is an explicit theme in Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (first published as *The Champion of Virtue* in 1776). The novel concludes with the explanation that the events told provide “a striking lesson to posterity of the over-ruling hand of Providence, and the certainty of RETRIBUTION” (Reeve 2008: 136).

The Gothic hero-villains of first-phase Gothic bear striking similarities to the tragic hero as described in Aristotle’s *Poetics* and as dramatized in Sophocles’ *Oedipus*. Each Gothic hero-villain is guilty of both hubris and other forms of wrongdoing and thus brings down a particular kind of fate upon himself. Thus Manfred, major protagonist in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), both inherits the curse against his house and commits hubris in his various attempts to avoid its consequences. For Manfred knows that he and his son Conrad constitute the third and fourth generations from the usurpation of the principality by Manfred’s grandfather. The denouement sees Conrad, Manfred’s only male heir, killed by supernatural means and the rightful heir restored. Meanwhile, the efforts Manfred makes to perpetuate his family line in defiance of his fate (divorcing his wife and attempting to marry his dead son’s fiancée) are thwarted – and indeed result in the unintentional murder of his daughter. At this stage, Manfred, repenting, tells those assembled, “I pay the price of usurpation for all” and “I question not the will of heaven” (Walpole 2002: 99; 100).

Ambrosio, the eponymous hero of *The Monk* (1796), likewise commits hubris and pays the price. Proud of his reputation for piety, he relies on his own moral strength rather than trusting in God. It is in his physical weakness and moral turpitude that he sells his soul to the devil in order to avoid death at the hands of the Inquisition. Satan (“a liar,” according to John 8: 44) tells him “Your fate is already pronounced. The Eternal has abandoned you; Mine you are marked in the book of destiny” (Lewis 1995: 434). Ambrosio yields to the greater sin of despair – and this is what turns Satan’s lies about his fate into truth.

The eponymous hero of *Frankenstein* (1818) more obviously arrogates the power belonging to God alone when he creates life in a creature he has himself constructed from parts of corpses. There is little mention of Christianity in this novel, though elements of both classical fate and sacrilege are present. Clearly not on a par with God, Frankenstein subsequently abandons his creation, which then becomes a personification of his fate, leading him across the world to death amid the ice and snow somewhere near the North Pole. He dies in despair, having obtained the same power as God but not His wisdom. Near death, he tells Walton, “my fate is nearly fulfilled […] nothing can alter my destiny; listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined” (Shelley 1996: 17).

However, perhaps the most interesting of these hubristic Gothic heroes is found in Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Melmoth sells his soul to the devil in return for an extended lifespan, on the understanding that he will be able to avoid damnation if he can find another person to take his place before that allotted span is completed. He fails in this quest and succumbs to his fate, ostensibly by supernatural means. He therefore has two relationships with fate. He unsuccessfully attempts to evade his own fate – one that is more or less certain as soon as he signs his soul away; but he is also the embodiment of fate – a potential fate for all of those whom he tries to persuade to change places with him (see Maturin, Charles Robert).
SEE ALSO: Curse; Lewis, Matthew; Maturin, Charles Robert; Reeve, Clara; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Walpole, Horace.

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Faulkner, William

CHARLES L. CROW

William Faulkner (1897–1962) defined Gothic for the first half of the twentieth century. It is not the supernatural but an oppressive sense of historical doom that haunts Faulkner’s Gothic. Most of Faulkner’s mature fiction forms a vast saga of Yoknapatawpha County, his mythical kingdom, from first European contact to the middle of the twentieth century. This is a Gothic history, dominated by racial conflict, war, violence, and the flawed ambitions of its “aristocracy,” the planters who held land and slaves before the Civil War, but lost their ascendency in the social and economic upheaval that followed (see *race*).

The decline of this class, the fall of these houses, is one of Faulkner’s great themes. Their land whittled away, the fate of the old families – the DeSpains, Sartorises, McCaslings, Compsons, Benbows, and Sutpens – is often represented by their decaying mansions, sometimes abandoned, sometimes inhabited by the family’s crazed survivors. Indeed, both *Light in August* (1932) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) had the working title “Dark House.” *Light in August* begins with the distant smoke of the burning home of the Burdens (not slaveholders, however, but hated abolitionists). In *Absalom, Absalom!* the doomed dreams of Thomas Sutpen take material form as the plantation house of Sutpen’s Hundred rises from what had been a swamp. Decades later, young Quentin Compson, whose family also lives in an old mansion, plays around the crumbling Sutpen house, now believed haunted, and reads the names on the cracked Sutpen tombstones. Still later, just before Quentin leaves for Harvard, the last act of the Sutpen dynastic tragedy is accompanied by the burning of the manor.

A smaller dark house holds secrets in the short-story masterpiece “A Rose for Emily” (1930). Only after Emily’s death do “we,” the collective voice of the townspeople, climb the stairs and force the door to the bedroom and confront its waiting horror.

Even *Sanctuary* (1931), a novel with relatively little historical reach, has key scenes set in a decaying mansion, “the old Frenchman’s place” built by planter Louis Grenier. The contrast between the mansion’s former grandeur and the criminals and mental defectives who now squat in it represents, in brief, the theme of degeneration found everywhere in Faulkner’s fiction, and the works of other writers of the modern South.

The Yoknapatawpha saga involves three peoples: whites, enslaved Africans, and Chickasaw Indians. The last years of the Chickasaw’s independence, before their bloodlines disap-
pear into the black–white binary, are briefly glimpsed in “Red Leaves” (1930) and “A Justice” (1931). Like most Southern writers, Faulkner inevitably took slavery as his subject, and saw it as the curse of the South, the just cause of the planter class’s downfall. The dark houses were built on this crime, and often conceal other crimes as well: the taboo against racial crossing so often violated by whites, and the universal taboo against incest. Many of Faulkner’s memorable characters are racially mixed, including “tragic mulattos” like Charles Bon’s son Charles Etienne in Absalom, Absalom!, and the orphan Joe Christmas in Light in August, both unable to define themselves except through acts of violence.

In Faulkner’s world, as in all Gothic, evil and good are blurred, and the same character may be both villain and hero. Thomas Sutpen, one of the author’s most compelling characters, is at once a lost boy, a great American up-by-the-bootstraps success story, and a monster, known simply as the “demon” by his sister-in-law (who survives into the novel’s present, to testify against him). Monstrous in rejecting his first wife and son, as well as his last daughter, heroic in his wartime service and in his postwar defiance of the Klan, he is a saint of a justly lost cause, who is in some ways radically innocent in his pursuit of a tainted version of the American dream. Even in Sanctuary, readers may find themselves uneasily shifting their sympathies away from the victim of the infamous corncob rape, Temple Drake (who allows an innocent man to be convicted and lynched for that crime and for the killing of Tommy), and toward the repellent murderer and impotent rapist, Popeye. This sinister figure is revealed as a victim himself, ruined physically by congenital syphilis, a weakling who gains power through force of will and his skill with a pistol. Capable of love of a sort, even of Temple, he is executed for a murder he did not commit, after being captured while traveling to visit his mother.

For Faulkner, as for many American writers, the imaginative demands of the Gothic fostered technical innovation (see AMERICAN GOTHIC). The ambiguity of Thomas Sutpen, for example, is heightened by modernist experiments in fractured timelines and shifting points of view. In The Sound and the Fury, the saga of the Compson family is told in four sections, with only the final section in objective third-person narrative. The other sections are internal monologues of the three Compson brothers, each of whom is compromised in some manner: the retarded Benjy, factually reliable but unable to understand the meaning of the fragmented memories which swirl by association through his mind; the brilliant but hysterical Quentin, on the day of his suicide; and the sardonically amusing but morally degenerate Jason. Candace (Caddy) Compson, the sister who obsesses them all, has no section of her own, and does not tell her own story. Here, as in Absalom, Absalom!, “The Bear,” and in the Yoknapatawpha cycle generally, the reader is forced to become a Gothic historian, assembling evidence of a narrative that is incomplete and ambiguous, but real and uncannily powerful.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Race.

FURTHER READING

Female Gothic
DIANA WALLACE

As first coined by Ellen Moers in 1976, the term “Female Gothic” simply referred to the work
written by women in the mode of the Gothic since the eighteenth century. However, the term has since then become increasingly contested. It is usually taken to refer to work in the tradition of Ann Radcliffe’s novels, which centralize a heroine who is threatened with imprisonment in a castle or great house by a male tyrant (often a father or father substitute), and who escapes through labyrinthine passages and sublime landscapes to marry the man she loves and, often, find her lost mother. The prototype is Radcliffe’s second novel, *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), in which Julia flees her father’s castle to avoid a forced marriage and, after a series of adventures, discovers her supposedly dead mother imprisoned by her husband in a cave-like dungeon beneath the castle so that he can remarry. The ghostly sounds that haunt the castle are thus revealed to have their source in the mother’s captivity and Julia chooses to share this if she cannot “deliver her mother to freedom” (Radcliffe 1993: 181) (see Radcliffe, Ann).

The bones of this plot are evident in Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), in which the usurper Manfred first betroths Isabella to his son Conrad and then forcibly woos her himself when Conrad dies. She escapes and finally marries the lost heir, Theodore. Radcliffe’s innovations, possibly influenced by Sophia Lee’s earlier historical-Gothic *The Recess* (1783–5) – which features the imagined twin daughters of Mary Queen of Scots hidden in the eponymous recess – were to center the text firmly on the heroine (focalizing it through her consciousness, including the sensibility she evidences through her response to sublime landscape) and to explain the supernatural events by rational means. Moreover, the fears that concern Radcliffe’s heroines are, as Moors pointed out, as often as much to do with their property rights as their virtue. In *A Sicilian Romance*, the central motif of absent mother and tyrannical father is, as Robert Miles (1995) points out, repeatedly echoed in the inset narratives in ways that foreground the issue of primogeniture and show young women struggling to achieve autonomous agency.

Developed in Radcliffe’s subsequent work, most famously *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), these conventions inspired many imitators as well as the astute parodic homage of Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* (1818), where Catherine Morland’s Gothic reading leads her to speculate that the hero’s father might have murdered his own wife. Tempering the fantasy with realism, Austen both acknowledges and critiques the association of the popular Gothic novel with women writers and a female readership, offering a powerful defense of the novel while she has fun at the expense of what had become Gothic clichés. The political potential of the form as a critique of women’s vulnerable position within male power structures was also recognized by Mary Wollstonecraft through her invocation of the key Gothic metaphor of imprisonment in the opening of *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798).

A second development of female Gothic identified by Moors was the “birth myth” of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818). This now-archetypal story of a scientist creating a monster who escapes his control brings together the Romantic and Faustian motif of the male over-reacher (more typical of what has become known as the “Male Gothic”) and the horrors of maternity. If the Radcliffeian female Gothic can be traced down through Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and the sensation fiction of writers such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon to Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938) and the modern Gothic of the 1960s, then the influence of Shelley’s version can be seen in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and the monsters and freaks of Djuna Barnes, Isak Dinesen, and Carson McCullers. Although the female Gothic is primarily a prose tradition, Moors locates Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market” (1862) and the poetry of Sylvia Plath within this latter strand.

In correcting the previously androcentric accounts of the Gothic by critics such as Leslie Fiedler, Moors’ work put the female Gothic at the center of a female literary tradition that was the focus of the feminist literary criticism emerging in the context of the...
women’s liberation movement. This coincided with the phenomenal popularity of the “modern Gothic” (also referred to as the “drugstore Gothic,” “Gothic romance,” or “popular Gothic”) written by Victoria Holt, Mary Stewart, and Phyllis Whitney. Initiated by Holt’s *Mistress of Mellyn* (1960) and read overwhelmingly by female readers, their popularity lasted until around 1972–4. The modern Gothic closely followed the formula set by Du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938), itself a re-visioning of *Jane Eyre*, including the merging of the Gothic villain with Byronic hero. The driving anxiety of these texts was aptly summarized in the title of Joanna Russ’ article “Somebody’s Trying to Kill Me and I Think it’s My Husband: The Modern Gothic” (1973), which suggested that they replayed a version of the Freudian family romance. Their highly formulaic structure was reflected in the typical cover image of a frightened girl in a vaguely “period” costume against the background of a looming castle or large house.

Initial critical accounts of the female Gothic turned to psychoanalysis, reading these structural conventions in literary and popular texts as a narrative of psychic individuation and the struggle against obliteration (through death or marriage) within patriarchal structures. Critics varied as to whether they saw the genre as a radical expression of subversive protest or as a conservative reinforcement of domestic ideology. Norman Holland and Leona Sherman’s article “Gothic Possibilities” (1977) identified the key elements that remained constant from the eighteenth century to the “modern Gothic” as “the image of woman-plus-habitation and the plot of mysterious sexual and supernatural threats in an atmosphere of dynastic mysteries” (Holland and Sherman 1977: 279). Reading the castle as a fluid “potential space” that accepts different projections of “unconscious material” and can thus symbolize both the hard/sexual father and the nurturing or sexual mother whose body is the ultimate mystery, they see the genre as ultimately conservative (see sex). Developing these ideas, Claire Kahane in “The Gothic Mirror” (1985) reads the female Gothic as a version of the Oedipal Gothic with, at its center, “the spectral presence of the dead-undead mother, archaic and all-encompassing, a ghost signifying the problematics of femininity which the heroine must confront” (Kahane 1985: 336). Drawing on the work of Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein, Kahane analyzes the Gothic as an expression of the female child’s struggle to separate from the mother as a mirror image that is both self and other (see psychoanalysis). If the maternal body is represented by the castle in earlier texts such as Radcliffe’s *Udolpho*, in more contemporary texts such as Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) the spectral mother (the original Other) becomes an embodied figure who is the heroine’s antagonist. Here the female body itself, often grotesque as in the work of Carson McCullers, is the imprisoning Gothic structure.

In contrast, another important early essay, Margaret Anne Doody’s “Deserts, Ruins, Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel” (1977), looked further back to a female Gothic tradition that she traced from *The Recess* and characterized as the evolution of the “novel of feminine radical protest” (Doody 1977: 562), a protest against the nightmare that is the social oppression of women through history. The images of imprisonment associated with the Gothic and the doubles invoked by Kahane are central to the single “secret plot” seen as underlying the wider nineteenth-century tradition of women’s writing discussed in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s hugely influential *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Identifying an anxiety of authorship common to women writers, they argue that this is expressed through mad, monstrous, and fiercely independent figures who act as the author’s double within the text, articulating their repressed desire to escape from male houses and male texts. The paradigmatic figure is Bertha Rochester, the madwoman in the attic, whom they read as Jane Eyre’s dark double (see doubles). Shelley’s *Frankenstein* as a reworking of Milton’s motherless Eve and Austen’s
Northanger Abbey as a truly “Gothic” story that describes the horrors that result when women are brought to distrust their own judgment both fit within this model. Like Doody, Gilbert and Gubar read this Gothic plot as one of subversion and radical female protest.

The recognition that there is not one Gothic but many different levels and forms is central to the collection of essays edited by Juliann Fleenor, The Female Gothic (1983), which ranges across Radcliffe, Austen, Shelley, and the Brontës to the modern Gothic and the work of Dinesen, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Christina Stead, Sylvia Plath, Doris Lessing, and Flannery O’Connor. What links these hugely various works, Fleenor suggests, is a central concern with female identity, particularly the conflict with an all-encompassing mother within a patriarchal culture where women’s bodies become prisons because women are defined as motherless and defective. The female Gothic appears in these essays as both conservative and a form of protest.

From the 1970s onward, Gothic emerged as an important element in serious literary fiction by women writers, as well as being taken increasingly seriously by literary critics. The genre also hybridized with other modes of writing. Margaret Atwood’s comic-Gothic Lady Oracle (1976) was self-consciously in the tradition of Austen’s Northanger Abbey, although Atwood’s unreliable narrator, Joan Forster, is a writer as well as reader of pulp “costume Gothics.” Atwood’s play with the conventions of the “modern Gothic” offers one of the most astute critiques of the form and its dangers for women. The title story of Angela Carter’s The Bloody Chamber (1979) returned the female Gothic plot to one of its origins by rewriting the fairy tale of Bluebeard using, among other techniques, the language of realism and pornography to expose gendered power politics. One of the most important literary interventions was Toni Morrison’s Beloved (1987), which uses the mother–daughter plot and haunted house of the female Gothic to explore the trauma of a culture haunted by the horrors of slavery.

Concerns over the potential essentialism of a simplistic association of the female Gothic with women writers and of earlier psychoanalytic accounts have been countered by a variety of sociocultural and historical-materialist accounts, as well as more nuanced accounts of “male” and “female” Gothic. Focusing on the imprisoning castle or house as an embattled site, for instance, Kate Ferguson Ellis’ The Contested Castle (1989) explores ideologies of gender and the domestic in relation to capitalism, while Eugenia DeLamotte’s Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth Century Gothic (1990) locates the heart of the Gothic in anxieties about boundaries of the self, which are nevertheless always firmly anchored in social realities. The title of E. J. Clery’s Women’s Gothic (2000) indicates her discomfort with what she sees as a reductive critical account of “female Gothic” texts as “parables of patriarchy involving the heroine’s danger from wicked father figures and her search for the absent mother” (Clery 2000: 2). Returning to the roots of the Gothic in the Romantic period, Clery’s own historical-materialist account of the Gothic work of Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee, Radcliffe, Joanna Baillie, Charlotte Dacre, and Mary Shelley reveals these women as ambitious, innovative, and, above all, successful professional writers operating in a culture in which the actress Sarah Siddons provided an important model of female genius.

Questioning the seemingly commonsense link between the gender of the writer and the genre has led to the recognition that female writers, such as Shelley, Dacre, or Reeve, may write male Gothic while male writers may appropriate elements of the female Gothic. Typically, the male Gothic, exemplified by Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796), itself a revision of Radcliffe’s work, centers on the transgressions of a male over-reacher who defies social taboos, and includes graphically detailed violence, often sexual and directed against objectified women. In her useful analysis of the differences between the male and female formulae in Art of Darkness (1995), Anne Williams suggests that they can be located at the
level of narrative technique, plot, assumptions about the supernatural, and use of horror/terror. The female version centralizes a female point of view, culminates in a happy ending, explains the supernatural, and tends toward terror, while the male version uses multiple points of view, more often has a tragic ending or resists closure, includes real ghosts, and favors horror. If the male Gothic is a version of the Oedipal plot, Williams suggests, then the myth of Psycho and Eros underpins the female version. Male writers, as Alison Milbank’s *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction* (1992) shows, may themselves appropriate elements of the female Gothic as Charles Dickens and Sheridan Le Fanu do in their work, where they use it to critique capitalism. Similarly, Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1860) can be seen as a revision of the female Gothic, with Laura Fairlie, Marion Halcombe, and Anne Catherick all versions of the Gothic heroine (see *sensation fiction*).

Attention to the ways in which women’s texts do not obviously fit the traditional paradigms of the female Gothic has proved particularly suggestive in, for instance, the case of Daphne du Maurier. While *Rebecca* and *Jamaica Inn* (1936) use the convention of the heroine confined to a mysterious house by a powerful, older man, for instance, both subvert the closure of the happy ending. Du Maurier, as Horner and Zlosnik (1998) argue, resists identification as either “male” or “female” and seems to have been attracted to the Gothic precisely because it destabilized such categories. The heterosexuality implied by the marriage ending of the female Gothic has also been challenged by work such as Paulina Palmer’s *Lesbian Gothic* (1999), which explores the links between Gothic and “queer” in their emphasis on trangressive acts and subjectivities. It is this connection that drives the theoretically informed historical novels of Sarah Waters, most obviously *Affinity* (1999) and *Fingersmith* (2002), which rework the female Gothic plots of Collins and Dickens (see *lesbian gothic*).

From the mid-1990s onwards, when Robert Miles (1994) suggested that psychoanalytic approaches had reached an impasse, the term “female Gothic” has been increasingly contested as oversimplistic and potentially essentializing (Smith and Wallace 2004). Various alternatives have been coined: Clery’s “women’s Gothic,” Diane Long Hoeveler’s “Gothic feminism” (1998), Suzanne Becker’s “Feminine Gothic” (1999), and Benjamin A. Brabon and Stéphanie Genz’s “postfeminist Gothic” (2007). Nevertheless, recent work on, for instance, Welsh and Scottish female Gothic (in Wallace and Smith 2009) suggests the continued relevance and potential flexibility of this critical category. Moreover, the female Gothic has been central not only to the development of feminist literary criticism but also to what Lauren Fitzgerald (2004) has called the “institutionalisation of Gothic studies” within the academy. As a pioneer critic, Moers is herself, Fitzgerald suggests, part of the female Gothic tradition.

SEE ALSO: Doubles; Lesbian Gothic; Psychoanalysis; Radcliffe, Ann; Sensation Fiction; Sex.

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### Film

**STEPHEN CARVER**

Gothic films are at once very easy and very difficult to categorize. Within the wider context of the “horror” genre, Gothic films are linked directly to the literary Gothic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, often adapting the original novels – for example: F. W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (Germany, 1922), Tod Browning’s *Dracula* (US, 1931), James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (US, 1931), and pretty much everything made by Hammer films following *The Curse of Frankenstein* (UK, 1957) (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Stoker, Bram).

Beyond the literal definition of Gothic films as versions of Gothic novels, however, there is a legion of horror films, fantasies, and thrillers that have some level of Gothic sensibility. Edward D. Wood’s *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (US, 1959), for example, combines vampire iconography with bargain-basement science fiction, while Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (US, 1960) and David Fincher’s *Fight Club* (US, 1999) are both doppelganger narratives. There are Faustian allegories everywhere, with deals and
demons present in, among many others, Roman Polanski’s *Rosemary’s Baby* (US, 1968), William Friedkin’s *The Exorcist* (US, 1973), and Alan Parker’s *Angel Heart* (US, 1987). Ridley Scott turned the Gothic castle into a derelict spacecraft in *Alien* (US, 1979) and explored the Miltonian subtext of *Frankenstein* in Blade Runner (US, 1982).

Following a long tradition of Romantic art and literature, phantasmagoric theater, melodrama, and expressionism, Gothic films have a recognizable mise-en-scène based around archetypal settings and characters, familiar visual signifiers, and narrative codes. The style is *Otranto*-esque (see Walpole, Horace) and uncanny, and can be either period or contemporar y with regard to setting. There are old, dark houses, sublime castles, dungeons, graveyards, and secret passages. Settings are invariably cobweb-strewn and secluded, and there is fog everywhere. Action takes place in the shadows, and soft lighting maintains misty moonlight while underlighting distorts features. Like Gothic literature, competing frames of rational and irrational explanation are often deployed to generate tension and unease. The unreal challenges the real, and moral boundaries are transgressed. Characters, meanwhile, conform to both Romantic and Victorian literary models. There are vulnerable girls and sexually menacing villains, mad scientists, melodramatic heroes (see melodrama), doppelgangers (see doubles), the undead (see vampire fiction), the walking dead (see zombies), and clowns at midnight. Shock, suspense, insanity, mystery, cruelty, sex, and violence are mixed and manipulated to create an atmosphere of brooding terror. Good Gothic should be erotic and sadistic. Setting is clichéd, but somehow expected, despite being subject to parody since Jane Austen wrote *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Abbot and Costello met Frankenstein, and Lily Munster first decorated for Halloween. Contemporary, postmodern Gothic mise-en-scène is not so much Romantic or expressionist as hyper-real.

There has been Gothic film for as long as film has existed. Before that there was Gothic theater in the form of phantasmagorias, Grand Guignol, melodrama, and magic lantern shows. Gothic, or at least horror, films tentatively began with the cinematic pioneer Georges Méliès. In short (two-to-three-minute) films such as *The House of the Devil* (France, 1896), *Bluebeard* (France, 1903), and *The Monster* (France, 1903), Méliès double-exposed bats circling, ghosts and witches rising from cauldrons, gentlewomen hanging from hooks, Egyptian princes resurrecting dead lovers (see mummies), bodies decaying, and heads exploding. The first Gothic novel to be filmed is generally considered to be *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (see Stevenson, Robert Louis) by the Selig Polyscope Company (US, 1908), although *La Esmeralda* (France, 1905) by Alice Guy-Blaché was based on Victor Hugo’s *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831), and so probably deserves that honor. The Danish company Nordisk remade Stevenson’s novel as a one-reeler a year after Selig, as well as two “premature burial” shorts, *Necklace of the Dead* (Denmark, 1910) and *Ghosts of the Vault* (Denmark, 1911). In America, Edison Studios made a sixteen-minute version of *Frankenstein* in 1910, while Carl Laemmle, founder of Universal Studios, also made *Jekyll and Hyde* (US, 1913). In 1915, D. W. Griffith filmed Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “Annabel Lee” as *The Avenging Consciousness* (see Poe, Edgar Allan), while Maurice Tourneur put Svengali (see hypnosis) on the screen in *Trilby* (Prawer 1980: 9). The Gothic film had arrived.

While the new technology of silent cinema was inventing the genre in Hollywood, its narrative and visual influences remained literary, theatrical, and essentially Romantic – the films being compressed versions of nineteenth-century Gothic stage adaptations, filmed by static cameras with high-key lighting. The next innovation was dark, German, and modernist (see modernism). Expressionism sought to represent the human experience as interior and subjective. Expressionist art therefore exaggerated the symbolic and emotional, often distorting physical reality to convey individual perception. This characteristic modernist
challenge to nineteenth-century realism in art and literature already aligned expressionism with the fantastic, transgressive, and psychological aspects of Gothic discourse, while an interest in extreme existential and emotional states inevitably led to the horror film. Expressionists celebrated the new medium as an opportunity for writers, artists, and performers to collaborate. The first significant expressionist film to explore Gothic themes was The Student of Prague (Germany, 1913), a Faustian fable codirected by Paul Wegener and Stellan Rye. Rye died in a French prisoner of war camp in 1914, but Wegener went on to play, write, and codirect the recurring movie monster the Golem – the animated clay man of Jewish legend – in three films, most notably Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam (The Golem: How He Came Into the World, Germany, 1920).

The year 1920 also saw the release of Robert Wiene’s influential and often imitated Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari (The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari). This milestone in Gothic film was originally intended to be a satire on bourgeois hypocrisy directed by Fritz Lang. The scriptwriters, Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer, were Great War veterans and admirers of Wegener’s work. Two men on a park bench discussing “spirits” frame the story. The younger of the two, Francis, tells his companion of the carnival hypnotist Dr. Caligari and the zombie-like “somnambulist,” Cesare. Cesare (the androgynous and spidery Conrad Veidt) is displayed in a coffin-like cabinet and can predict the future. Francis’ friend Alan asks Cesare how long he will live, and is told he will die before dawn. Alan is stabbed to death that night, and, although a local thug is arrested, Francis and his fiancée, Jane, suspect Cesare. Caligari orders Cesare to kill Jane, and he enters her bedroom through the window at night with a knife. Cesare resists Caligari’s control and abducts Jane, carrying her across rooftops to the mountains, pursued by an angry mob. Jane is rescued, while Cesare sleepwalks on, finally falling to his death. Francis tracks Caligari to a local asylum, where he learns that he is the hospital director (see Asylums). In the director’s office, Francis finds a treatise on somnambulism, an ancient book documenting the killing spree of “Dr. Caligari” and “Cesare” in 1703, and a diary. The diary reveals that a “true somnambulist” has been admitted, and that in order to research whether or not a sleepwalker can be compelled to act against his waking will the hospital director “must become Caligari.” The director’s growing insanity is depicted by Caligari’s name appearing (animated on screen) around him as he raves. Caligari is taken away in a strait-jacket, “And from that day on,” Francis concludes, “the madman has never left his cell.” The frame is then twisted, revealing that the men are in the grounds of the asylum and Francis, Jane, and Cesare are all inmates. Francis is restrained, while screaming that it is not he who is insane but Caligari. The film ends with the Freudian director explaining that as he now understands Francis’ mania he can cure him.

The film’s visual style is distorted and darkly carnivalesque. Shadows are painted onto sets, and the contorted streets, crooked houses, and grotesque characters (designed by art director Hermann Warm and the painters Walter Reimann and Walter Röhrig) were intended to convey the delusions of a madman. This stylized mise-en-scène was so powerful that “Caligarism” became a synonym for expressionism. With its innovative and atmospheric visual style, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari defined Gothic cinema. Its iconographic shockwaves can be felt throughout Hollywood, where mad scientists and beautiful girls carried into the night by pale, lanky monsters, pursued by rampaging villagers, were de rigueur.

F. W. Murnau’s Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens (Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror, Germany, 1922), is of equal stature. While Der Golem and Dr. Caligari anticipate Universal’s Frankenstein, Nosferatu is an unauthorized version of Stoker’s Dracula (1897) written by Wegener’s collaborator Henrik Galeen. Nosferatu is not as visually abstract as Caligari, but both films share expressionist features. Murnau, another Great War veteran, used low-key lighting and deep space
(positioning significant image elements both near and distant from the camera) to create depth and strong contrasts between light and shadow. This effect is most famously realized as the shadow of the vampire, Graf Orlok, ascends the stairs to Ellen Hutter’s bedchamber during the film’s climax. Max Schreck’s cadaverous Orlok is absurdly phallic – bald, tall, and matchstick thin, he rises from his coffin like a fascist salute or an erection, leaving us in no doubt as to the threat he represents to Ellen. Orlok’s pointed teeth, ears, and claws are rat-like, and vermin and plague follow with him. Ellen uses her feminine wiles to trick Orlok into staying past cockcrow, and he is destroyed in the dawn sunlight.

The author’s widow, Florence Stoker, successfully sued for copyright infringement, and Lugosi’s authorized Dracula (see Lugosi, Bela) soon eclipsed Schreck’s Orlok. The animalistic “Nosferatu” vampire archetype remains, however, as a contrast to the aristocratic Ruthven/Varney/Dracula model, most notably in Stephen King’s revisionist vampire novel ’Salem’s Lot (1975) and, more recently, Guillermo del Toro’s Blade II (US, 2002). Werner Herzog remade Murnau’s classic as Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht (Nosferatu the Vampyre, West Germany, 1979) starring Klaus Kinski as “Count Dracula.” Kinski loosely reprises the role in Augusto Caminito’s Nosferatu a Venezia (Vampire in Venice, Italy, 1988). E. Elias Merhige’s Shadow of the Vampire (US/UK, 2000) reconstructs the filming of Nosferatu, depicting Max Schreck as a real vampire. Other key expressionist films incorporating elements of the Gothic include Das Wachskabinett (Waxworks, Germany, 1924) directed by Paul Leni, Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (Germany, 1927), and Carl Dreyer’s Vampyr (Germany, 1932). When the Weimar Republic fell, many expressionist filmmakers fled to Hollywood.

The synergy of the literary Gothic, stage melodrama and expressionism is the foundation of Gothic film as it subsequently developed in Hollywood, most notably at Carl Laemmle’s Universal Pictures, which employed Conrad Veidt, Paul Leni, and “The Man of a Thousand Faces,” Lon Chaney Senior. Laemmle, another German immigrant, had been a nickelodeon owner who had decided to challenge the Edison monopoly by making his own films. Lon Chaney’s breakthrough was the sadistic MGM gangster film The Penalty (US, 1920), in which he played a double-amputee crime lord who plans to have the legs of his surgeon’s future son-in-law grafted on to his stumps. To play the insane gangster, Chaney strapped his calves to his thighs, foreshadowing the masochistic commitment to grotesque makeup that characterized his iconic performances in Universal’s silent Gothic classics The Hunchback of Notre Dame (US, 1923) and The Phantom of the Opera (US, 1925) and in MGM’s London After Midnight (US, 1927), the latter directed by Tod Browning. Browning and Laemmle wanted Chaney to play Dracula, but he died of lung cancer in 1930. The other notable silent Universal Gothic films were both directed by Paul Leni. The Cat and the Canary (US, 1927) is an “old dark house” mystery based on the play by John Willard, and The Man Who Laughs (US, 1928) is an adaptation of Hugo’s nasty novel of 1869. Veidt’s performance as the disfigured Gwynplaine, smile carved onto his face, inspired Bob Kane’s design of the Joker for the first issue of Batman Comics in 1940. Leni was the first choice to direct Dracula, but he died of blood poisoning in 1929.

The deaths of Leni and Chaney ushered in a new generation of talent. Rather than adapting the original novel, Universal’s Dracula (US, 1931) followed the 1927 Broadway hit by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston, the first version to be authorized by Florence Stoker. After much deliberation, the studio cast the play’s lead, the Hungarian actor Bela Lugosi, to reprise his role. Although Nosferatu was mined for plot devices – for example, Harker cutting his finger with Dracula’s reaction – Lugosi’s Byronic interpretation of the suave Carpathian aristocrat was a long way from both Schreck’s repulsive Orlok and Stoker’s original. Lugosi’s Dracula has become the definitive version, and
his flowing cape, magnetic charm, and sinister European accent are replicated and pastiched (or, in Gary Oldman’s case, both) across the history of Gothic cinema.

Carl Dreyer’s haunting Vampyr (Germany, 1932) – loosely based on Le Fanu’s Carmilla (1871) – is a near contemporary of Universal’s Dracula (see Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan). Dreyer’s film is more experimental than Browning’s, incorporating expressionist and surrealist techniques. Real and unreal blur in this pale and foggy film – shadows and reflections have a life of their own, while the hero has a waking dream of burial alive. Vampyr was the last significant expressionist Gothic work to be shot in Germany.

Universal was quick to follow up the success of Dracula with Frankenstein, which was released in November 1931. The Englishman James Whale (who had conquered the West End, Broadway, and Hollywood with Journey’s End) replaced the Frenchman Robert Florey as director, casting fellow expatriate Boris Karloff (in preference to Lugosi) to play the “monster.” (Florey’s contribution to Frankenstein remains largely unacknowledged – he and Lugosi were moved to the Murders in the Rue Morgue project by Universal.) Whale, like Florey, was heavily influenced by expressionist cinema, while his experiences as an officer in the trenches had left him with a dark gallows humor that, in common with his German counterparts, found a release in the Gothic. Colin Clive, the highly strung, alcoholic lead of Journey’s End, was cast as Henry Frankenstein. Clive played Frankenstein as a manic iconoclast, addicted to a power that both attracts and appalls him and from which he cannot escape. “Now I know what it feels like to be God!,” he shrieks, in a line hastily trimmed by Universal’s censors. Jack Pierce’s makeup and Karloff’s interpretation of the monster as a mute and child-like grotesque defined the role for generations in the same way as Lugosi’s Dracula. Like Dracula, the film’s plot is taken from stage versions rather than the original novel – the hunchback assistant, “Fritz,” for example, is a legacy from the play Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein (1823) by Richard Brinsley Peake, although the film is essentially derived from the 1927 play by Peggy Webling, adapted by Balderston. Frankenstein’s visual style blends expressionism with conventional Hollywood Gothic. Whale was a great admirer of Leni, Wegener, and Weine, and had The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari screened repeatedly during pre-production (Curtis 1998: 149).

Dracula and Frankenstein were huge hits in a period when Hollywood was suffering from the Great Depression, and a wave of sequels and copies followed. Browning prematurely wrecked his career by choosing art over commerce and making the quintessential American Gothic film Freaks for MGM in 1932, controversially casting disabled people from side-shows rather than using costumes and makeup. Back at Universal, Karloff starred as The Mummy in 1932, directed by German émigré Karl Freund (who also directed Colin Clive and Peter Lorre in Mad Love, a remake of the German silent Orlacs Hände, for MGM in 1935); Lugosi starred in Murders in the Rue Morgue (US, 1932); and both Karloff and Lugosi appeared together in The Raven (US, 1934). Lugosi also made White Zombie for United Artists in 1932 and starred in the second Hammer film, The Mystery of the Marie Celeste, in 1935. Whale directed Karloff in The Old Dark House (US, 1932) and Claude Rains as The Invisible Man in 1933. Henry Hull played The Werewolf of London for Universal in 1935, while Whale, Clive, and Karloff were reunited for The Bride of Frankenstein in the same year. British Gothic film, meanwhile, slogged along in a series of Victorian melodramas filmed by George King and starring the over-the-top Tod Slaughter, the most memorable being Maria Marten or Murder in the Red Barn (UK, 1935), Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (UK, 1936), and The Face at the Window (UK, 1939).

The Bride of Frankenstein takes the unrealized creation of the Creature’s mate from Shelley’s novel and makes her flesh. The film is darkly comic, and adds the “Bride” archetype so important to the popular Frankenstein
myth. The film is anachronistically framed by Elsa Lanchester playing Mary Shelley, telling Byron and Shelley what happened next. The monster has survived, and the evil Dr. Pretorius uses him to coerce Henry into replicating his original process with a female, also played by Lancaster, memorably swathed in bandages with lightning streaks in her hair. When the monster reaches toward her, imploring “Friend?,” the bride is horrified, and looks to Frankenstein for comfort. (This scene was recreated in Brian Yuzna’s *Bride of Re-Animator*, US, 1990.) Things do not end well, and the monster tells Pretorius and the bride that “We belong dead,” before triggering an explosion and destroying the laboratory. Colin Clive died of tuberculosis in 1937, so Basil Rathbone took over as Son of Frankenstein in 1939, with Karloff reprising the role of monster for the final time (unless we count a cameo in the TV show *Route 66*, 1960–4), acting alongside Lugosi as “Ygor.” Whale did not direct. Universal made *Dracula’s Daughter* the following year, which picks up the story at the end of the original film. Gloria Holden plays “Countess Zaleska,” and Edward Van Sloan, who developed the role under Deane and Balderston, pops up again as Van Helsing.

A series of increasingly unremarkable sequels followed, the Universal monster cycle briefly enlivened by Lon Chaney Junior’s appearance as The Wolf Man in 1941. Monsters began appearing together, as in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* starring Chaney and Lugosi (US, 1943), and *House of Dracula* (US, 1945), which stars Chaney as the Wolf Man, Glenn Strange as Frankenstein’s monster, and John Carradine as Dracula. Aside from MGM, the only serious rival to Universal’s stranglehold on Gothic film was RKO, which made *The Beast with Five Fingers*, starring Peter Lorre, in 1946. Universal finally flogged their Gothic franchises to death in a series of Abbott and Costello horror comedies, beginning with *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (with Chaney, Lugosi, and Strange) in 1948 and the clumsily named *Abbott and Costello Meet the Killer, Boris Karloff* in 1949. Et tu, Boris?

Postwar Hollywood fantasy focused on atomic and Cold War anxiety, while the audience demographic became more teenaged. Horror films moved toward science fiction and rock ’n’ roll in the 1950s, the best of them inspired by the short-lived but hugely influential EC horror comics rather than the traditional literary Gothic. The studio system also changed considerably after the war, and major studios moved away from second-feature productions (which is where the Universal monsters had washed up), creating a niche for very-low-budget independents, most notably Roger Corman. There is a distinctive postwar Gothic style in America, but it is cheap, kitsch, and comedic. American International Pictures led this new market, with titles such as *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (US, 1957), *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (US, 1957), and *The Ghost of Dragstrip Hollow* (1959). Universal rolled the dice one more time in 1954 with *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

Across the water, the seeds of a new English Gothic were sown in Ealing Studio’s *Dead of Night* (UK, 1945), a portmanteau pioneer with a framing narrative, five separate Gothic stories connected by a common theme, multiple directors, and guest stars. In the scariest episode, Michael Redgrave plays an insane ventriloquist who believes his creepy dummy, Hugo, controls him. A decade on, Hammer Film Productions returned to the influence of Universal, and the small British company’s first Gothic film was *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), directed by Terence Fisher and starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee (see *Hammer House*). This was closely followed by *Dracula* (UK, 1958). Unlike Universal, Hammer
focused on Victor Frankenstein rather than his creations, and Cushing’s interpretation of this role, alongside Christopher Lee’s Dracula, returned to the resonance of Karloff and Lugosi. The Gothic had come home.

Hammer films differ from Universal in that they are in full color, and return the Gothic to the adult realm of moral ambiguity, taboo, sexuality, and violence. Cushing’s Frankenstein is not a flawed romantic lead but a cold, obsessive, and mad genius, while Lee’s sexually magnetic Dracula both seduces and repels. Visually, Hammer films are theatrical rather than expressionist, and the influence of the Victorian stage, and the prewar revivals of George King and Tod Slaughter, are apparent in these period dramas. Universal executives were so impressed by Hammer’s interpretations of Frankenstein and Dracula that they made their entire back-catalogue available for remake. In its heyday in the 1960s, Hammer’s Gothic output equaled that of Hollywood in the 1930s and 1940s.

Hammer resurrected all the major Gothic archetypes. In addition to six Frankenstein and eight Dracula sequels, Hammer made four “Mummy” films, including an adaptation of Stoker’s The Jewel of Seven Stars (1903) as Blood from the Mummy’s Tomb (UK, 1971), as well as the remakes The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll (UK, 1960), The Curse of the Werewolf (UK, 1961), and The Phantom of the Opera (UK, 1962). Other vampire films include Countess Dracula (UK, 1971), based on the Elizabeth Báthory legend; the magically real Vampire Circus (UK, 1972); and the Le Fanu-inspired “Karnstein Trilogy” (UK, 1970–2). Hammer also adapted two novels by Dennis Wheatley: The Devil Rides Out (UK, 1968) and To the Devil a Daughter (UK, 1976) (see wheatley, dennis). The Gorgon (UK, 1964) and The Plague of the Zombies (UK, 1966) refined the Gothic aesthetic of Lewton and Tourneur, while a string of psychological thrillers nodded toward Hitchcock’s Psycho. Hammer received the Queen’s Award for Industry in 1968, in recognition of its contribution to British film and its outstanding international success. Not since MGM’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde won two Academy awards in 1931 had Gothic film achieved such establishment recognition. Gerald Thomas also paid tribute to Hammer in Carry On Screaming (UK, 1966).

The success of Hammer resuscitated the traditional Gothic. There were domestic imitators, such as Amicus Productions, which specialized in Anglicized anthology versions of EC horror comics, and Tigon British Film Productions, which made Michael Reeves’ Witchfinder General in 1968. Twentieth Century Fox, meanwhile, released a screen version of Henry James’ The Turn of the Screw (1898) as The Innocents in 1961, scaring the hell out of everyone (see james, henry). Echoing rock ‘n’ roll culture, the British had taken an American form and reinvented it. It is therefore Hammer, rather than Universal, that inspired American International Pictures to produce a full-color version of Poe’s “Fall of the House of Usher”, directed by Roger Corman, written by Richard Matheson, and starring Vincent Price, in 1960. American International Pictures’ subsequent “Poe cycle” ran to seven more films: The Pit and the Pendulum (US, 1961), The Premature Burial (US, 1962), Tales of Terror (US, 1962), The Raven (US, 1963), The Haunted Palace (US, 1963), The Masque of the Red Death (US, 1964), and The Tomb of Ligeia (US, 1964). In mainland Europe, notable period Gothic films include Mario Bava’s La maschera del demonio (The Mask of Satan, Italy, 1960) and I Tre volti della paura (Black Sabbath, Italy, 1963) and the vampire films of French filmmaker Jean Rollin. Ado Kyrou directed Le Moine (France/Italy/Germany, 1972), a version of Matthew G. Lewis’ The Monk written by Luis Buñuel (see lewis, matthew), while Masaki Kobayashi’s Kwaidan (Japan, 1964) was a period Gothic anthology based on the ghost stories of Lafcadio Hearn.

By the end of the swinging sixties, period Gothic had once more declined. Hammer’s attempts to update the form largely failed (see, for example, Dracula AD 1972, UK, 1972), while Corman sensibly moved toward “Hell’s Angel” films and Bava invented the “slasher” film with
Reazione a catena (Bay of Blood, a.k.a. Twitch of the Death Nerve, Italy, 1971). The independent American New Wave, led by directors such as Wes Craven, Tobe Hooper, and George A. Romero, also made historical Gothic appear trite and dated. It should be noted, however, that the atmospheric visual style of Night of the Living Dead (US, 1968) and the fairy-tale leitmotif of The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (US, 1974) still place such films within the Gothic tradition.

Gothic films continue to exist, but always in the shadows cast by expressionism, Universal, and Hammer. Literary archetypes remain, although films purporting to return to the original texts usually reproduce Universal plots. Francis Ford Coppola’s Bram Stoker’s Dracula (US, 1992), for example, is nothing of the sort, and uses the reincarnation device from the Universal “Mummy” cycle (itself lifted from Stoker’s Jewel of the Seven Stars). Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein by Kenneth Branagh (US, 1994) is a mix of The Bride of Frankenstein and the NBC TV special Frankenstein: The True Story (US, 1973). Only in letting the Creature speak does Branagh acknowledge the original novel. The best literary Gothic film of this period is Neil Jordan’s Interview with the Vampire (US, 1994), from the 1976 novel by Anne Rice. Ken Russell applied his unique style to the night that Byron, Polidori, and the Shelleys decided to make up a few “ghost stories” at the Villa Diodati in Gothic (UK, 1986).

Gothic iconography remains present in many hybrid and intertextual forms of horror. Gothic elements are updated and alchemically blended in, for example, Sam Raimi’s The Evil Dead (US, 1981), Tobe Hooper’s Poltergeist (US, 1982), Barry Sonnenfeld’s The Addams Family (US, 1991), and Jonathan Demme’s The Silence of the Lambs (US, 1991), Alex Proyas’ The Crow (US, 1994), Myrick and Sánchez’s The Blair Witch Project (US, 1999), and a variety of controversial “slasher” and “torture porn” bloodbaths. Purists may decry these, but the parody and pastiche of postmodernism is everywhere. Leatherface is Mr. Hyde and the Phantom of the Opera taken to their logical extremes, Jason Voorhees and Michael Myers lumber around silently like Glenn Strange playing Frankenstein’s monster, and the Eastern European Otherness of Hostel (US, 2005) is straight out of Radcliffe and Lewis.

Modern Gothic films nowadays tend to be either period and/or involve classic monsters – Universal revived The Mummy franchise in 1999, while the collective monsters of Van Helsing (US, 2004) recall the Lugosi/Chaney team-ups of the late 1940s. Vampires remain sexy, as seen in the relationship between the teenage Bella Swan and Edward Cullen – the Harry Potter of vampires – in Twilight (US, 2008) (see twilight). The spirit of the literary Gothic is presently most realized in the supernatural fantasies of Guillermo del Toro, while Tim Burton has returned to the marriage of melodrama and expressionism that epitomizes Gothic cinema. Gothic film turns full circle in Burton at his best. Edward Scissorhands (US, 1990) is a fairy-tale Frankenstein, while The Nightmare Before Christmas (US, 1993) takes the format of the Rankin/Bass seasonal television special and slams it into The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. In Batman Returns (US, 1992), Burton’s Gotham City is an expressionist metropolis, its corporations controlled by the corrupt “Max Shreck.” Burton has also acknowledged his debt to Hammer in the 1999 period Gothic Sleepy Hollow (Salisbury 2006: 169–70), and in 2007 returned Sweeney Todd to the screen, albeit in the Sondheim and Wheeler musical version.

At the time of writing, vampires are in vogue. Tomas Alfredson’s Låt den rätte komma in (Let the Right One In, Sweden, 2008) has been remade by the revived Hammer brand as Let Me In (UK/US, 2010), Burton is adapting Dan Curtis’ Gothic soap opera Dark Shadows, and 2012 saw the release of the fifth film in The Twilight Saga, Breaking Dawn, Part 2. Gothic film, like a walled-up vampire, cannot die and continues to feed upon itself.

SEE ALSO: Asylums; Doubles; Hammer House; Hypnotism; James, Henry; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Lewis, Matthew; Lugosi, Bela;
The Gothic is considered to be a minor aspect of French cinema that is rarely mentioned in books devoted to the genre. The two most famous French directors in the field, Robert Florey and Jacques Tourneur, made their careers in Hollywood, while Roman Polanski, also famous for his Gothic/horror films (The Fearless Vampire Killers (1967), Rosemary’s Baby (1968), The Tenant 1976)), is considered to be a French filmmaker, though he is of Polish origin. However, a number of French films employ Gothic settings, themes, narrative props, and images. Supernatural creatures (devils and ghosts) or phenomena that subvert natural laws are used to convey a poetic, dreamy, or horrific mood. Perceptual or intellectual uncertainty mostly prevail over explicit and horrific exhibition of monsters, hence the term fantastique, often used to define this cinema.
Georges Méliès was the first to use trick devices to stage fantasmagorias: in his films (made in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century), the devil appears or disappears in a cloud of smoke and fire; women’s heads and bodies are sawed off; and witches, supernatural entities, sea monsters (taken from Jules Verne), and selenites are conjured up. In 1914, Maurice Tourneur used for the first time the motif of the wax museum in *Figures de cire*, a short film that plays efficiently with projecting shadows and animated puppets that frighten the hero to death. Louis Feuillade made use of the vampire motif in *Les Vampires* (1915), his celebrated serial, though the dark-clothed heroine Irma Vep, a member of a criminal sect, does not drink any blood. In the 1920s, French avant-garde cinema was influenced by German expressionism and surrealism. In Jean Epstein’s adaptation of Poe, *La Chute de la Maison Usher* (1928), the sets are unmistakably Gothic, with immense empty rooms lighted with tall candelabras, wind blowing in the sable draperies, and long projected shadows (see Poe, Edgar Allan). The film mingles motifs taken from “The Fall of the House of Usher” but also “The Oval Portrait,” with Roderick Usher (Jean Debucourt) embodying the mad artist intent on conveying life on his canvas while his wife, and model, is slowly dying. The film, which also pays tribute to *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau, 1922), is famous for its use of expressive close shots of faces and objects (a hand, the pages of a manuscript being ruffled by the wind, a clock mechanism), inventive visuals with slow motion, superimposition of images, and quick editing. Poe and Epstein share a metaphysical and poetic world view that emphasizes the expressivity of the human face, the notion of the blurring of frontiers, and the sense of time.

In 1928, Buñuel and Dali created the surrealist masterpiece *Un Chien andalou*, with its shocking images of a woman’s eye being slit by a razor (while the moon is slit by a cloud), an androgynous character toying with a severed hand, and ants in the palm of someone’s hand. Other surrealist films such as *La Coquille et le clergymen* (Germaine Dulac, 1928) exploit fantastic motifs, unstable landscapes, haunting imagery, masks and mirrors, and images dissolving into one another. In *La Nuit fantastique* (1942), Marcel Lherbier, famous for his abstract plots, lavish avant-garde sets (*L’Inhumaine*, 1924), and experimental lighting effects, played with the frontiers between dream and reality.

Jean Cocteau staged beautiful surrealist images in *Le Sang d’un poète* (1931) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1946), praised for its gorgeous sets (photographed by Henri Alekan) and costumes inspired by Dutch painting, its dreamlike mood, and its sense of poetic detail (hands protruding from walls and serving as candelabra). In the early 1940s, during the German occupation, a fantastique trend developed on French screens. Marcel Carné’s *Les Visiteurs du soir* (1942) is a medieval fantasy with inspired camerawork in which Satan (played by Jules Berry with burlesque relish) sends two disguised emissaries, Dominique (Arletty) and Gilles (Alain Cuny), to spread evil and moral corruption, only for one of them, Gilles, to fall in love with his victim, Princess Ann (Marie Déa). The devil himself comes to earth and, failing to seduce Ann, turns the loving couple into statues, but their hearts go on beating. In a less overt political allegory, Maurice Tourneur offered a Faustian variation in *La Main du diable* (1943), in which a failed painter (Pierre Fresnay) is given artistic genius and the power of romantic seduction by means of a magic severed hand that has been passed on throughout the centuries. The devil is portrayed as a little man dressed in black, a banal civil servant, an image possibly of collaboration with the German occupiers. The film ends masterfully with all the successive owners of the magic hand taking off their masks to tell their stories in flashbacks. Julien Duvivier is less convincing with his 1939 remake of Sjöstrom’s *The Ghostly Chariot* (1921), but there are some memorable scenes with Louis Jouvet and a skilful use of close-ups and lighting effects. René Clair exploited a comedic vein with *Fantôme à vendre* (1938), shot in England; *Ma Femme est une sorcière* (1942); and *La Beauté du diable* (1950),
also a version of the Faust legend, in which Mephisto (Michel Simon) first gives Faust (Gérard Philippe) youth, love, and power, asking nothing in return, and then reduces him to insignificance so that he signs away his soul to regain his status. Faust refuses, having had a glimpse of a horrible future in the mirror, yet is saved by love. Serge de Poligny’s *Le Baron fantôme* (1943) resorts to Gothic settings (old ruined castles, stormy nights, deserted dark corridors), whereas his *La Fiancée des ténèbres* (1945) is set in the context of a revival of the medieval Cathar cult.

In *Les Diaboliques* (1955), H. G. Clouzot exploited a Gothic vein (long dark corridors, nightly apparitions, the living dead motif) to terrify and shock the audience with a crime thriller fraught with uncanny overtones. E. T. Greville offered, after W. F. Murnau and K. Freund (*Mad Love*, 1935), a 1961 retelling of Maurice Renard’s *Les Mains d’Orlac* with a very convincing Christopher Lee. Georges Franju’s *Les Yeux sans visage* (1959) is the story of a mad surgeon (Pierre Brasseur) intent on using skin grafts from the faces of abducted young women to restore the beauty of his daughter, whose face has been destroyed in a car crash. She wanders in the vast isolated house like a ghost, wearing a white mask, and witnesses her father peeling off the skin of one of his victims. The victimized girls are Gothic heroines pent up in an uncanny setting with secret passages (see female gothic) and beset by fear and horror at the hands of a male villain who ends up being torn apart by his hounds (an allusion to Pichel and Schoedsack’s *The Most Dangerous Game*, 1932) while his daughter runs away and vanishes into the night. This horror masterpiece deals with patriarchy performing transgressive acts with a mise-en-scène that mingles a realistic, almost documentary style and lyrical, poetic, dreamlike images. In *Judex* (1964), Franju staged an anti-Fantomas hero and played with surreal fantasmagoria (black-tight silhouettes and ominous masks). In 1959, Jean Renoir revisited the myth of Jekyll and Hyde (see Stevenson, Robert Louis) with his excellent made-for-television *Le Testament du Dr. Cordelier*, set in posh Paris suburbia. Using several cameras, Renoir’s mise-en-scène brilliantly resorts to a pseudo-documentary style and inventive use of voiceover, and J. L. Barrault in the twin part gives a very original and vivid performance of Hyde as Opale, a dancing monster, both seductive and repulsive, violent and victim.

With the advent of the Nouvelle Vague in the late 1950s, the Gothic and fantastic modes tended to decline, with Godard (*Alphaville*, 1965), Truffaut (*Fahrenheit 451*, 1966), and Resnais (*Je t’aime, je t’aime*, 1968) privileging futuristic topics. However, in *La Chambre verte* (1978), Truffaut adapts Henry James’ stories, transposing them to a post-World War I setting (see James, Henry). The main character is obsessed by memories of war and devotes a shrine to his beloved dead, forgetting about the living woman who vainly tries to express her love. With *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961), Resnais also played with uncanny situations and characters in a labyrinth-like hotel filmed with long tracking shots, while in *Provence* (1977) he paid tribute to H. P. Lovecraft in a film featuring an old ailing writer (John Gielgud) alone in his big house at night who tries to conceive his next novel based on his own relatives, yet set in a dystopian world and nourished by his fantasies and fears, including the werewolf motif and the phobia of physical decay (with obsessive images of dissection and crawling worms). All these elements merge in a more and more incoherent narrative (nevertheless carefully contrived by Resnais) as the writer gets drunk on Chablis wine (see Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips)).

There is a renewal of the vampire motif in various other films: Roger Vadim’s *Et mourir de plaisir* (1960) and Jean Rollin’s erotic horror thrillers (*Le viol du vampire*, 1967; *La vampire nue*, 1969), which imitate Hammer productions; Mario Bava’s films; and various isolated attempts such as J. D. Pollet’s low-budget short film *Le Horla* (1966), adapted from Maupassant’s famous short story of invasion of the self by an invisible other (or schizophrenia), with an excellent performance by Laurent

In the 1980s, there were some attempts at reviving the Gothic genre. J. P. Mocky in *Litan* (1981) depicts a couple who visit a village where a cult for the dead is celebrated. In 1984, Alain Jessua gave a modernized version of the Frankenstein myth in *Frankenstein 90* (with rock singer Eddie Mitchell), while René Manzor in *Le Passage* (1986) staged Alain Delon as a filmmaker struggling against Death in order to save his comatose son and mankind. After Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s *Delicatesen* (1991), the story of a butcher who kills his customers in a grim futuristic world where people have to resort to cannibalism to survive, the same directors’ *La Cité des enfants perdus* (1995) is based on a trite fairy-tale situation: a wicked monster kidnaps children and a brave hero comes to their rescue. However, Caro and Jeunet’s approach is to take this familiar theme, add some eccentric characters (the actor D. Pinon plays seven parts), and set it in a sinister postapocalyptic landscape. Both films have acquired cult status on account of their mix of humor, pathos, and the grotesque and the inventiveness of their special effects. After *Le Locataire* (1976), a story of paranoia in which Gothic space and props are prominent (an old apartment retains the traces of a crime), Polsanski dabbled with the supernatural and the occult in *The Ninth Gate* (*La Neuvième porte*) (1999), adapted from a novel by A. Perez Reverte and starring Johnny Depp.

From 2000 on, there has been a strong return of Gothic and horror movies, often combining criminal violence with transgressive sexual practices. A new generation of filmmakers, fans of 1970s American horror films, have created their own universe fraught with Gothic overtones but where violence exerted upon the body is more explicit and graphic. In *Trouble Everyday* (2001), Claire Denis combined misdirected scientific experiment, vampirism, and cannibalistic drives, offering a cinema of brutal intimacy and disturbing sensory experiences. The film, set in a suburban environment (see *Suburban Gothic*), forcefully mingles modernity and the tropes of Victorian Gothic novels (the motifs of the pent-up heroine, the staircase, the prison, sexual violence, and verticality). François Ozon developed an original universe with films bordering upon the uncanny, such as *Sitcom* (1998), *Sous le sable* (2000), *Swimming Pool* (2003), and *Ricky* (2009). Enki Bilal has attempted to transpose his own graphic novels onto the screen with uneven results (*Immortel*, 2004; *Cinemonster*, 2007), while Marina De Van with *Dans ma peau* (2002), offers an impressive and traumatic film about an intimate exploration of the body and self-mutilation. *Gothica* (Mathieu Kassowitz, 2003) is based on a complex, nightmarish, and deliberately obscure plot. Set in a hospital for the criminally insane, it involves a psychiatrist (Halle Berry) who is accused of killing her husband, a vengeful ghost, and a male psychotic criminal. It exploits various Gothic clichés (the plight of a persecuted heroine fleeing from a villain) with a spatter of slasher and splatter, but is quite remarkably filmed and edited, paying tribute to horror classics (a swimming pool scene evokes Jacques Tournier’s *Cat People*, 1942) and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (the heroine is called Miranda).

A recent trend is that of French horror directors making their films in the United States. This is the case with Christophe Gans (*Silent Hill*, 2006) and Alexandre Aja, director of the critically praised remake of *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006) and other films closer to survival movies or torture porn, such as *Haute Tension* (2003). *Malefique* (Eric Valette, 2003)
is set almost entirely within a prison in which one of the inmates discovers an occult manuscript, enabling some form of supernatural escape. A L’intérieur (J. Maury and A. Bustillo, 2007) is a gory horror film featuring a pregnant girl terrorized by an insane woman (Beatrice Dalle) who wants to (literally) cut out her baby, but it also pays tribute to such classic films as The Innocents (Jack Clayton, 1961), with the figure of the dark-clothed spectral intruder. Many films of this kind have been produced since then, launching a neohorror subgenre that is also present elsewhere in Europe (namely in Belgium, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom). In these contemporary works, which emphasize with graphic details and little ironic distance or metafilmic dimension the pains inflicted upon the human body (Sheitan, Kim Chapiron, 2006; Frontières, Xavier Gens, 2008; Martyrs, Pascal Laugier, 2008), little remains of the eerie fantastic mood or romanticized Gothicism of classic and modern French cinema.

SEE ALSO: Female Gothic; James, Henry; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Poe, Edgar Allan; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Suburban Gothic.

FURTHER READING


The term fin de siècle usually refers to the end of the nineteenth century in Europe, and to a particular cultural milieu shaped by people’s anticipation of the century’s end. Fin-de-siècle Gothic can refer both to a Gothic sensibility infusing some discourses of the time and particularly to a body of literature produced in approximately 1880 to 1900. To a lesser extent, the fin de siècle of the twentieth century produced an analogous strain of millenarian thinking. Most attention to the Gothic through the lens of fin de siècle, however, has focused on the late Victorian Gothic revival of the 1890s (see Victorian Gothic).

The fin de siècle is often characterized as a time of stimulating but competing narratives: end and continuity, anxiety and optimism, progress and decline, innovation and reaction. Debates over Decadence, art and morality, sexuality and the “New Woman,” spiritualism, the state of empire, and the implications and uses of scientific developments all interweave
in a vibrant cultural tapestry while revealing a mood of uncertainty over the future. This cultural environment inspired a rich cluster of Gothic texts in which many familiar Gothic tropes and character types re-emerged, inflected with new meanings for this historical period. The vampire, the over-reaching scientist, and the double all feature significantly in fin-de-siècle Gothic. Not all countries experienced their fin-de-siècle Gothic in the same way, however. The popularity for the Gothic evident in Malta in the 1890s, for example, owes more to a slow southward journey of reprints and translations of earlier Gothic tales than to the type of revival undergone in Britain (Hale 2002).

In British and Irish writing, much fin-de-siècle Gothic criticism focuses on the pervasiveness of theories of degeneration, an expansive term which grew to apply to a range of biological, social, and artistic contexts. Degeneration, the decline toward an inferior condition, was understood as a risk to individuals and society alike, to body, morality, and nation. It was encapsulated for the fin de siècle by Max Nordau’s influential text, Degeneration (1895). Nordau attacked the decadence and moral decline of the modern world, particularly in artists like Wilde and Ibsen; the language of his vision of the “Dusk of Nations” also captured degeneration’s wider associations with the decline of nation and empire, the implications of evolutionary theory, and thermodynamic entropy (see degeneration).

By the fin de siècle, the British Empire was challenged by economic threats from Europe and America and by domestic perceptions of national decline, even as it continued to expand its control over the globe. Imperial Gothic texts reflect the tension between these two narratives, celebrating imperialism and masculinity in colonial adventures, while also expressing fears of foreign threats and a fascination with the exotic and the occult often used for horror (Brantlinger 1988). H. Rider Haggard’s African romances, such as King Solomon’s Mines (1885) and She (1887), associate sinister powers with the female characters Gagool and Ayesha. In She, Ayesha not only represents the feminized construction of countries like Africa, but presents a demonic female threat in her plans for imperial domination. Other texts, like Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) and The Jewel of Seven Stars (1903), or Arthur Conan Doyle’s “Lot No. 249” (1892), bring back their foreign vampires and mummies to invade Britain itself (see imperial gothic).

These Gothic characters encapsulate a number of cultural concerns, as Degeneration theory linked the foreign, the feminine, and the atavistic. Stoker’s Dracula is at once decadent aristocrat, criminal degenerate, reverse colonizer, and bodily indeterminate. Richard Marsh’s The Beetle (1897) deploys another foreign threat, a shape-shifting insect of ambiguous gender, to terrorize London. Helen Vaughan of Arthur Machen’s The Great God Pan (1894) represents the degenerate potential of the New Woman, a predator among London’s young aristocrats but strongly associated with primitive and occult origins. Degeneration’s close connection with evolutionary theory contributed to a particular physicality around Gothic monstrosity. In contrast to the human villains of Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic novels, for example, fin-de-siècle villains often take a visibly monstrous and corporeal form in which degenerative tendencies are physically marked on their bodies: the shape-changing Beetle, the troglodytic yet unnamable deformity of Robert Louis Stevenson’s Edward Hyde, Dracula’s striking facial features.

Atavistic beings like Hyde and Helen Vaughan also evoke the horror of evolutionary awareness of the origins of human life in primordial shapelessness. H. G. Wells casts evolutionary Gothic in science fiction, imagining the trajectory of humans into future degenerate forms: in The Time Machine (1895), the Eloi and Morlocks both represent humanity in decline, as effeminate children and predatory cannibals. The penultimate chapter imagines a return to the primordial sea, with animal life reduced to a shapeless form hopping on the shore. This vision of physical degeneration as loss of bodily specificity and differentiation is
revisited in *The War of the Worlds* (1898), in which the Martians, suggesting another possible evolutionary future for humankind, resemble soft round heads with tentacles or feelers for limbs (see monstrosity). 

Literary and artistic movements also shaped the revival of the Gothic in literature. In Russia, the development of Symbolism contributed to a fin-de-siècle mood that encouraged some writers, such as Anton Chekhov in *The Black Monk* (1894), to turn to Gothic expression. French Decadence, too, had a strong influence over British literature. Decadence, as represented by the journal *The Yellow Book*, challenged some common cultural assumptions of the late Victorian period, such as an underlying moral purpose to art, and by the fin de siècle decadence was applied to denigrate many kinds of innovative or subversive art and literature.

Oscar Wilde stands as a prominent figure in the movements of aestheticism and decadence, influenced by French writers like Charles Baudelaire and Joris-Karl Huysmans, and singled out for attack by Nordau in *Decadence. The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) indicates how decadence could be Gothicized in literature. Dorian’s degeneration from innocent youth to dissipation is specifically connected to the unidentified book given to him by Sir Henry, evidently a copy of Huysmans’ Decadent text *À Rebours* (1884). Dorian’s depravity is reflected only in the portrait concealed in his attic, which increasingly bears the marks of the moral decline spared from his beautiful face. The portrait represents Dorian’s conscience and the monstrosity of his soul made visible on the canvas. Like Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (2003 [1886]: 2–70), *Dorian Gray* exposes the moral hypocrisy of modern life, shown through the monstrous double lives of their protagonists (see doubles).

Sexuality, in fin-de-siècle Gothic, is often repressed or occluded by the text, particularly female sexuality as suggested by the unnamed secrets revealed by Helen Vaughan in *The Great God Pan* and Kate in Doyle’s “John Barrington Cowles” (1981 [1884]: 19–40). The “New Woman” of the 1890s posed a threat to the dominance of patriarchy, but sexuality in men was also pathologized. The ambiguous gender identity of Marsh’s Beetle and its sexualized encounters with both male and female characters represents a troubling expression of sexuality both feared and desired.

Female writers at the fin de siècle often used the Gothic mode to explore and challenge assumptions and anxieties about women’s place in a patriarchal social structure. Margaret Oliphant’s “The Library Window” (1902 [1896]: 247–316) highlights women authors’ still marginal position in the literary sphere through a young female narrator on the brink of maturity. The American Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s short story, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), psychologically dramatizes the damaging effects of women’s subservient position as wife and mother. In Charlotte Mew’s “A White Night” (1903, in Showalter 1993: 118–38), the male narrator and his wife Ella witness the living entombment of a Spanish woman, presented as marginal and insignificant, leaving Ella perpetually haunted. Women writers also, however, used the supernatural to express sexuality and alternative possibilities for gender identity. Vernon Lee, in particular, coded female sexuality and subversion of Victorian gender constructions behind androgynous spectral figures in stories such as “A Wicked Voice” and “Oke of Okehurst” from *Hauntings* (1890). In Lee’s work, the Gothic formed a queer space in which alternative gender possibilities could be explored (see queer gothic).

Ghost stories were tremendously popular at the fin de siècle, both among specialists such as M. R. James and non-Gothic authors like Edith Wharton, Edith Nesbit, and Grant Allen. Henry James, in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), uses an unreliable narrator to create an atmosphere of uncertainty around the existence of the story’s ghosts that resists definitive interpretation. Readers would have been familiar with spiritualist arguments for the existence of spirits and their ability to communicate with the human
world, as well as with popular and scientific interest in hypnotism. The plots of Doyle's short stories “John Barrington Cowles” and “The Parasite” (1981 [1894]: 41–80), for example, use hypnotic suggestion while Guy de Maupassant’s “The Horla” (1997 [1887]: 1–24) features both hypnotism and demonic possession by a spiritual being perceived to originate in South America.

Recent challenges to the dominant critical models of anxiety and degeneration in fin-de-siècle Gothic suggest that the Gothic, through contemporary discourses of hypnotism and telepathy, provided an alternative space to explore new identities and states of being. George du Maurier’s Trilby (1894) deploys a sinister villain, Svengali, who appears to hold mesmeric control over the heroine, but through this Trilby also gains a hidden agency (Grimes 2008). The villains of Dracula and The Beetle exert a mesmeric influence over the heroines, Mina Harker and Marjorie Lindon, who can be read as figures of sexual anxiety in the text, tamed at the end into the submission of heterosexual marriage. However, Mina and Marjorie’s advanced mental sensitivity also reveals how hypnotism and telepathy operate as forces for progress (Luckhurst 2000) (see hypnotism; spiritualism).

Fin-de-siècle interest in occultism persisted into the 1900s. W. B. Yeats, Algernon Blackwood, and Arthur Machen were members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and other writers, including Doyle, also employed occult themes in Gothic narratives. In part a response to the perceived threats of scientific materialism to religious faith in the late nineteenth century, both spiritualism and occultism offered their participants a means of reconciling faith and spirituality with scientific laws. In Gothic hands, however, such an approach had the potential to expose the human world to unknown and often meaningless terrors. The opening experiment of Machen’s Great God Pan uses brain surgery to expose an innocent girl to the unseen occult world, driving her insane and leading to the birth of the monstrous Helen Vaughan. In Algernon Blackwood’s The Willows (1907), a river journey on the Danube leads to a near-deadly encounter with unidentified Others perceived as close to breaking through into the human world (see occultism).

SEE ALSO: Degeneration; Doubles; Hypnotism; Imperial Gothic; Monstrosity; Occultism; Queer Gothic; Science and the Gothic; Spiritualism; Urban Gothic; Victorian Gothic.

REFERENCES
Folklore broadly encompasses a range of genres, including myths, fables, legends, ballads, ghost stories, and fairy tales. Connoting something at once vaguely familiar and yet difficult to pin down, the term itself was not coined until 1846, when William John Thoms employed it as a catch-all definition that combined the closely connected fields of “popular antiquities” and “popular literature.” The channeling of the antiquated past into the popular literature of the present which defines folklore also forms one of the defining characteristics of the Gothic tradition (see popular culture). The Gothic, after all, takes its name from the ancient Goths, drawing upon the lore, and the lure, of a dark past swathed in myth and superstition. This fascination with the past manifested in the eighteenth-century field of antiquarian studies which, in turn, triggered the preoccupation with nostalgia, nationalism, and cultural roots in the literature of that period and beyond. Works such as Thomas Percy’s *The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) and James Macpherson’s *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760) were invested in preserving a cultural tradition—a concern that can also be seen in later works by Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns, for example, which draw upon Scottish folklore to establish the roots of a national ancestry. The strong association between the Grimms’ fairy tales and German cultural heritage bears testimony to the significance of folklore in constructing a sense of national identity. Wilhelm Grimm, who saw the brothers’ project as one of gathering and preserving an oral tradition, observed that fragments of a belief dating back to the most ancient times, in which spiritual things are expressed in a figurative manner, are common to all stories. The mythic element resembles small pieces of a shattered jewel which are lying strewn on the ground all overgrown with grass and flowers, and can only be discovered by the most far-seeing eye. Their significance has long been lost, but it is still felt and imparts value to the story, while satisfying the natural pleasure in the wonderful. (Thompson 1946: 369)

The writers of Gothic literature, too, eagerly gathered up the shattered jewels of folkloric myth to introduce a glint of the wonderful into their own narratives. They revived the ancient and the marvelous, transporting it into a fictional world in which the impossible coexisted with the possible. But with the integration of supernaturalism into the new genre of realism in the nineteenth century, the Gothic novel also articulated the oft-rehearsed
dispute between primitive belief and modern skepticism.

Through its deployment of folklore, the Gothic plays out contemporary tensions between disparate modes of thought, often opening up such debates by introducing a range of perspectives from different characters and different cultures. This multiplicity of voices subtly complicates any straight dichotomy between fact and folkloric fiction, as J. M. Harris observes in relation to nineteenth-century literature: “ambivalence – not credulity or skepticism – seems to be the watchword of the Victorian era” (Harris 2008: 200). But the tension between belief and disbelief are by no means the only cultural anxieties that Gothic folklore taps into: class and race are also key concerns. Traditionally, the “folk” have been equated with the lower classes, whose superstitions were regarded as naïve or “backward” in comparison to normative standards. A sense of the “folk” as culturally Other pervades certain Gothic texts; such racial anxiety is revealed, for example, in the depiction of Transylvanian mythology in vampire fiction. Vexed issues of gender and sexuality also underscore several themes and motifs recurrent in folklore. While the Grimm brothers prudishly sanitized the tales they included in their collection, other writers, such as Angela Carter, have embraced the underlying sexual elements of folktales in order to reflect upon contemporary attitudes toward sex and gender. Folklore’s main function in Gothic literature, then, has commonly been to provide a narrative framework upon which a range of modern fears can be expressed. Through its rendering of folkloric subject matter, the Gothic has contested the boundaries between sex, race, religion, and rationality, leading critics to observe that the Gothic, essentially, is invested in “questioning the boundaries of the self” (Harris 2008: 201).

The implications for self-identity in folklore narratives have been seized upon by psychoanalysts such as Freud and Jung, who intuited a latent significance lurking beneath folklore’s recurrent themes. When these are reworked into the stock motifs of Gothic literature – the haunted castle, the enchanted artifact – they comprise the matrix of symbols in psychoanalytic readings. These recurring elements also lend the Gothic an uncanny familiarity; folklore often has the sense of having been heard before without the listener’s ever knowing quite when – an echo of something one was not aware of having originally heard. And it is this quality that corresponds to the latter part of Freud’s famous definition: “an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed” (Freud 2001: 249). Through its use of recurring tropes, Gothic folklore unnervingly revives the past, suggesting to readers and listeners the possibility for their “surmounted” primitive beliefs to intrude once more into lived experience.

Folklore is also lived in an organic sense. It is always reshaping and amassing, a culture-wide game of Chinese whispers, and it still exists today in urban legends, gossip, and conspiracy theories. Owing to its multiple voices and meanings, it has often seemed to elude attempts at scholarly categorization, but Stith Thompson’s seminal Motif-Index of Folk Literature (1932–7) classified recurrent motifs and tale types into a system still used by folklorists today. Modern theorists, such as Bakhtin, have considered how folklore’s incorporation into literature provokes a rethinking of traditional hierarchies and genres (see grotesque, the). The way in which writers imitate, revise, and integrate the cultural voices of folklore into Gothic texts opens up a dialogic narrative through which competing social and literary discourses are voiced.

SEE ALSO: Grotesque, The; Popular Culture; Uncanny, The.

REFERENCES

The term “Gothic” is a peculiarly Anglocentric one which has no direct equivalent in French or, indeed, most other European languages. This was true even in the heyday of the British Gothic novel in the late eighteenth century and first two decades of the nineteenth century when the genre, which gave rise to a considerable number of French translations, adaptations, and imitations, seems to have lacked a precise appellation (though it is not inconceivable that the term roman noir was employed by one or two literary specialists). The Marquis de Sade, who published an important survey of the development of the novel in 1800, simply describes such works as English novels. Over the course of the next two decades, French readers would, no doubt, have increasingly viewed the same works as historical novels. Balzac, who published a couple of “Gothic” potboilers in his youth (notably, Le Centenaire; ou, les deux Beringheld [the Centenarian, or the two Beringheds] issued under the pseudonym Horace de Saint-Aubin in 1822), and whose later work is imbued with “Gothic” qualities, wisely avoids the issue, referring simply to works in the style of Ann Radcliffe throughout his vast opus.

Thorough the French may have been hesitant with regard to nomenclature, this should not be taken to imply that French culture has failed to explore the themes of violence and transgression in a systematic manner. In fact, the French tradition of horror writing is so vast, has been so influential (both in Britain and elsewhere in Europe), and has had such longevity (more or less from the early eighteenth century through to the 1930s), that scholars have tended to compartmentalize the subject into specific themes, disciplines, subgenres, or periods. The consequence of this is that while each key component has received considerable scholarly attention, these elements are generally perceived as isolated entities with little critical attempt being made to construct an overarching framework capable of drawing them together. The main exception to this, of course, is Mario Praz’s The Romantic Agony (first published in English in 1933), which seeks to establish a continuous thread linking Romanticism and the decadent literature of the 1890s, including works such as J.-K. Huysmans’ Là-bas (Down There) (1891), with its twin themes of black magic in contemporary Paris and fifteenth-century child murder. This short entry provides a reasonably detailed overview with regard to the eighteenth century, followed by a short discussion of the main trends that occurred during the course of the first half of the nineteenth century.
Some two hundred years after the apogee of the genre in England, the reductive British and American usage of the term “Gothic” with reference to texts or images from across the historical spectrum makes even less sense from a French perspective. The reason for this is that, unlike the situation in Britain and America, where the “Gothic” generally manifests itself as a distinct but marginalized subgenre which can be easily differentiated from mainstream cultural production, in France, the related motifs of violence and excess, transgression and taboo, seem to be encoded into the very fabric of cultural activity. French writers and journalists began chipping away at the notions of Church and State, the twin pillars of absolutist rule, almost from the start of the eighteenth century, repeatedly exposing the futility and brutality of monastic life, the absurdities or irregularities of the legal system, and the tyrannical behavior of parents, magistrates, and other figures of authority. As the century progressed, these voices became ever more strident and contradictory. Though a number of the writers involved enjoyed only a tenuous link with the Enlightenment, many of the tropes which would become central to the English “Gothic” – the values of rationalism (Radcliffe, let us recall, is remembered not for her supernaturalism but for her use of the supernatural explained); modernization (by comparison with the feudal order); and emancipation (if only from the unjust exercise of authority) – were first being articulated in France some fifty or sixty years earlier. What impact this had on the events of 1789, of course, is impossible to say; but there can be no doubt that there was an abundance of “Gothic” literature written in French, even if it was not formally recognized as such, long before the advent of Romanticism.

A good example of this concerns the theme of vampirism as developed by Benedictine monk Dom Calmet (1672–1757) in his Dissertation sur les apparitions des anges, des démons et des esprits. Et sur les revenants et vampires de Hongrie, de Bohème, de Moravie et de Silésie (Dissertation on apparitions of angels, demons, and spirits. And on the revenants of Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia) (1746). (An expanded version was published under the less ponderous title of Traité sur les apparitions et sur les vampires [Treatise on apparitions and vampires] some five years later.) Though it is tempting to view such a work as an exercise in obscurantism, the author’s intentions were diametrically opposed to such a purpose: Dom Calmet, an educated man with an inquiring mind, was, in fact, striving to protect invariable Roman Catholic doctrines, notably those concerning the existence of miracles, the efficacy of the sacraments, and the veneration of the saints (which, as a good churchman, he could not question), from becoming contaminated by association with peasant superstitions (and, thus, protect the teachings of the Church from the onslaughts of rationalists keen to point out the absurdities of such beliefs). Judged in these terms, his work can only be considered a failure as it was systematically misread by those ignorant or distrustful of his purpose. An English reviewer of the 1759 translation regretted the author’s credulity; Voltaire more or less repeated the same charge in his witty entry on “Vampires” in the Encyclopédie of Diderot and d’Alembert; while, in 1850, an English clergyman named Henry Christmas produced a new translation (as The Phantom World) more or less with the avowed intention of deriding Catholic superstition (Ellis 2000: 172). The result of this, however, is that Dom Calmet’s work on vampirism and ghosts is nowadays almost forgotten in France; in Britain and North America, often in cheap paperback reprints, it has become a minor “Gothic” classic. More importantly still, it served to popularize a subject which would eventually become one of the major themes of the Gothic.

But it is perhaps with respect to narrative fiction that French eighteenth-century “Gothic” is most in evidence. Perhaps the most important literary form in this respect was the memoir-novel, a subgenre which includes such influential texts for the future development of the British Gothic novel as Mme de Tencin’s...
Mémoires du comte de Comminge (Memoirs of the Count of Comminge) (1735) and Denis Diderot’s La Religieuse (The Nun) (written in 1760 but not published until 1796). The former concerns two lovers, cruelly separated by parental edict, who are eventually reunited in death in the somber cloisters of a monastery. Baculard d’Arnaud, who also specialized in works of heightened sensibility of this kind, especially those with lugubrious settings, rekindled interest in the novel when he transformed it into a play in 1764 under the title Les Amants malheureux (The Unhappy Lovers). Diderot’s novel, which started life as a hoax, and which deliberately eschews stylistic embellishment, is the chilling account of the ill-treatment a young novice receives when she decides to renounce her religious vows. Though British Gothic novelists as a whole would benefit from the striking images created by Mme de Tencin and Baculard d’Arnaud, Charles Maturin in particular is indebted to Diderot, adapting and developing numerous scenes from La Religieuse in his account of the struggles of Alonzo de Monçada with the ecclesiastical authorities in the 1820 novel Melmoth the Wanderer (Praz 1979).

By and large, the memoir-novel restages the narrator’s experience of the world from the moment of his or her initiation into social life, through a lengthy apprenticeship (which, almost invariably, involves a number of sexual encounters), on to the moment, some years later, when detachment and disillusionment set in. Though there were a number of successful female practitioners of the genre (notably Mme de Tencin), the most consistently influential figure throughout the late 1820s and 30s was the Abbé Prévost (1697–1763). Prévost, whose life at times reads like a Gothic novel (as a young man he had been initiated into a Benedictine order but, tiring of the austerities of a religious life, had fled, spending a number of years on the run from the authorities), became the author of an underground bestseller when the final installment of his seven-volume Mémoires et aventures d’un homme de qualité (Memoirs and Adventures of a Man of Quality) (1728–31) was banned by the French authorities. Nowadays generally known simply as Manon Lescaut, the novel tells the story of a young man of good birth who sacrifices his place in the world and his fortune in order to follow a prostitute to Louisiana (where she has been sent as part of a French colonization policy). This was followed over the course of the next few years by the eight-volume Le Philosophe anglais, ou histoire de Monsieur Cleveland, fils naturel de Cromwell (The English Philosopher, or the History of Mr Cleveland, Natural Son of Cromwell) (1731–9), a work dealing with political oppression as a source of terror.

Though these works are novels of sensibility and adventure rather than Gothic novels in the conventional sense of the term, both texts underwent considerable modification in the hands of female translators in the early 1780s which served to intensify the macabre aspects, foreground female subjectivity, and re-engineer the gender relationships in the text (Hale 2002a, 2002b). In one case, that of Le Philosophe anglais, this involved transforming the story from that of the persecution of the illegitimate son of Oliver Cromwell to that of the persecution by Elizabeth I of twin sisters, the offspring of a secret marriage between Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Duke of Norfolk.

Significantly, these two belated translations were published in the early 1780s, just as the English vogue for the Gothic was commencing, and both are the work of women writers, Charlotte Smith (whose version of Manon Lescaut appeared in 1785) and Sophia Lee (whose adaptation of Le Philosophe anglais was published as The Recess between 1783 and 1785), who would subsequently enjoy considerable success as Gothic novelists in their own right. But the French impact on the development of the British Gothic novel by no means stopped there. As Angela Wright has noted, the novels of Ann Radcliffe, not to mention other writers belonging to the first generation of Gothic novelists, are imbued with themes and ideas.
that derive from authors such as Rousseau (Wright 2008).

A number of eighteenth-century developments did not show their true potential until much later. Dystopian fantasies such as Sébastien Mercier’s *L’An deux mille quatre cent quarante* (The Year 2440) (1771) and Cousin de Grainville’s *Le Dernier homme* (The Last Man) (1805) which, though now seen as founding texts of science fiction (a term not coined until the 1930s), may also be considered as “Gothic” texts. More immediately, they also gave rise to such apocalyptic tales as Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man* (1826). Likewise, the writings of the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814), which were largely unknown to his contemporaries, have provided a focal point of research in the twentieth century. This is particularly true of the four libertine novels written in a twelve-year period between 1785 and 1797, and which in many respects form a separate entity in themselves: *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (The 120 Days of Sodom) (published posthumously in 1904); *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (Philosophy in the Bedroom) (1795); and *La Nouvelle Justine; ou, Les Malheurs de la vertu* (The New Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue) published conjointly with *L’Histoire de Juliette, sa soeur* (The History of Juliette, her Sister) (1797). On the other hand, the French *cause célèbre* (i.e., voluminous compilations of controversial or unusual trial reports such as that which Gayot de Pitavel began to assemble in 1735) had an impact not only on the development of the Gothic novel (Charlotte Smith edited one such compilation in English in 1787) but also on the development of British sensation fiction during the Victorian era. Wilkie Collins, for example, found the plot for *The Woman in White* in the eighteenth-century Douhault case (Hyder 1939).

The *roman noir*, an early sign of the long delayed arrival of Romanticism in France, was ushered into existence on the very eve of the French Revolution of 1789, reached its apogee during the period of the so-called “réaction thermidoriennne” in the mid-to-late 1790s (mainly in the form of translated or adapted British novels, though a number of French writers had already begun to hijack the form as a platform for their own anti-Republican views), and was sufficiently popular to produce an unlikely bestseller as late as 1821, the Vicomte d’Arlincourt’s *Le Solitaire* (The Solitary), arguably a veiled critique of Napoleon Bonaparte’s usurpation of power in 1802 (significantly, the latter died in captivity on Saint-Helena in the same year the novel was published).

Interestingly, unlike in Britain, the vogue for the “Gothic” intensified during the following two decades as a host of French writers, some as distinguished as Victor Hugo, vied with each other to produce ever more memorable works of fiction. Jules Janin mocked this tendency in a macabre black comedy entitled *L’Âne mort et la femme guillotinée* (1829, translated as *The Dead Donkey and the Guillotined Woman*, 1851), in which a dandified narrator traces the fate of a young courtesan from her arrival in Paris to the moment she is executed for infanticide barely two years later. Balzac, in a review, went one better and followed the dead woman’s body into the dissection-room of a medical school (see Balzac 1993). Victor Hugo’s early novel *Han d’Islande* (Hans of Iceland) (1823) likewise abounds in grotesque incident. As these writers gained assurance, however, their works began to broach more serious themes. This is particularly true of Hugo himself, whose two great prose works, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831) and *Les Misérables* (1862) deal with social injustice and human misery. Interestingly, French Romantic “Gothic” also drew inspiration from the Enlightenment period, authors such as Frédérick Soulié and Alexandre Dumas writing lengthy newspaper serials based on the careers of eighteenth-century charlatans such as Anton Mesmer and Cagliostro.

Though the most telling signs of the British fascination with French popular Romanticism are to be found in the Penny Dreadful (and especially in the works of G. W. M. Reynolds), elsewhere in Europe the movement became
the dominant literary force for the next thirty years, effectively edging out the work of British writers more or less until the end of the century.

SEE ALSO: European Gothic; Hypnotism; Penny Dreadfuls; Maturin, Charles Robert; Radcliffe, Ann; Reynolds, G. W. M. (George William MacArthur); Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft.

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FURTHER READING


Friday the 13th (1980)

LINNIE BLAKE

A low budget offering that recouped more than ten times the estimated $550,000 it cost to make in its opening weekend alone (International Movie Database), Sean S. Cunningham’s Friday the 13th (1980) spawned eleven film sequels, a television series, and a number of novels and graphic novels. Alongside extensive merchandising, these would in time make the serial killer Jason Voorhees a cult figure. He barely appears in the first film, however, having drowned at summer camp in 1957 due to the negligence of sexually promiscuous staff. This is the traumatic event that provokes his now-psychotic mother to return to the ostensibly idyllic Camp Crystal Lake to wreak her bloody revenge on a new generation of young people preparing for its 1979 reopening.

So far, so generic: most slasher movies since Halloween (1978) are driven by a predominantly off-screen protagonist who returns to a significant locale to pursue and slaughter a number of barely distinguishable young victims in increasingly inventive but invariably penetrative ways. Here several are knifed, one has her throat slashed, one gets an axe in her head, one a spear through his throat, and one is killed with arrows. Off-screen for the vast majority of the film, Mrs. Voorhees’ presence is thus signified both by spooky musical signatures and by repeated unclaimed point of view shots, which insistently align the audience’s perspective with that of the murderously sadistic voyeur. In typical slasher mode, though, we are also called upon to identify with Alice, the film’s only surviving counselor. She is given considerably more screen-time than the other victims, more close-ups and more reverse shots from her perspective, particularly as she
discovers the bodies of her coworkers and attempts to fight off her crazed assailant.

As the action builds to its murderous denouement, as Alice is chased around the camp from cabin to cabin and through rain-lashed and lightning-lit woods, a highly Gothic doubling of monster and victim becomes apparent. For in order to survive, Alice must not only appropriate the power of the killer’s gaze but the killer’s ability to commit acts of extreme violence. Such a Gothic doubling is the source of the subgenre’s cinematic interest: enabling audiences to participate in the action from both sadistic and masochistic, overtly masculine and ostensibly feminine perspectives. Thus showing herself capable of slashing, stabbing, battering, and ultimately decapitating the delusional psychopath who stalks her, Alice not only casts off the mantle of traditional Gothic heroine but repudiates the nurturing role of camp counselor in favor of something considerably more proactive. And this, itself, may be seen as monstrous given contemporary gender anxieties provoked, in Carol Clover’s words, by the rise of “the women’s movement, the entry of women into the workplace, and the rise of divorce and women-headed families” (Clover 1992: 62).

Closure in the slasher cycle as in the Gothic is both deferred and denied. And here, as in the Halloween and A Nightmare on Elm Street franchises, we are provided with several false denouements. Not only does the killer refuse to lie down and die within the film’s diegesis but he insistently returns in sequel after improbable sequel. So, not only does Mrs. Voorhees prove remarkably difficult to kill in this film, but in a postdecapitation coda the long dead Jason leaps from the tranquil waters of the lake to pull our dreaming heroine into its murky depths, returning as protagonist in a further eleven films. In a manner that evokes some of the core thematic of American Gothic, Friday the 13th thus evokes the pastoral idyll of American nature only to emphasize the existence of the serpent in the garden, the worm in the heart of the rose. And the child, traditional embodiment of national innocence and insight since Hawthorne’s Pearl of The Scarlet Letter (1852) or Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn (1876) becomes truly abject here: a decomposed and predatory avenger whose assault on Alice in her dreams deprives her of personal agency and returns her to the status of victim, trapped within the hospital bed in which she lies and the frame that now contains her.

Friday the 13th emerged in a climate of economic crisis, as the nation attempted to assimilate the traumatic events of the Vietnam War, the loss of faith in the office of the Presidency engendered by Watergate, and the perceived failure of radical challenges (such as various forms of identity politics) to the social, cultural, and economic status quo. As such, the film articulates a distrust of the older generation: the serial killer being a middle-aged, middle-class white woman. It displays a loss of faith in the efficacy of collective action: the group being slaughtered by a crazed individual. And in classic American Gothic mode, it displays profound skepticism as to the redemptive powers of American nature: something very nasty indeed lurking beneath the placid surface of the Crystal Lake (see American Gothic). Thus displaying what Jerold Hogle has called “the betwixt and between” (Hogle 2002: 17) of the Gothic, the film slips between a progressive critique of the traumatized present and a nihilistic glorification of violence, deploying a low-budget aesthetic yet undertaking a profound engagement with the present moment and its politics of gendered identity.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Halloween (1978); Monstrosity; Slasher Movies.

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International Movie Database Friday the 13th.
It might seem appropriate to blow the dust off one’s crystal ball and plumb the fortunes of Gothic studies, even though the genre is traditionally backward-looking with its presents possessed by terrors emanating from unresolved conflicts and misdemeanors of the past. But when the future collapses on the present – as in the key temporal trope of “cyberGothic” fiction – time’s chronological pattern ceases to be as much of an issue as it used to be (see cyberspace). Even so, the crystal ball may not be that helpful as a predictive tool, its misty depths revealing no mysteries other than the distorted shapes of its enthralled gazers, reflected on its surface. It might, then, be of use to indulge in some “Gothic futurology,” extrapolating, in the manner of science fiction, on some contemporary innovation to explore its consequences on a grander scale in an imagined but recognizable near future: on this basis one might suggest that the current increase in and popularity of Gothic teen fictions will extend downwards in an unrelenting infantilization that will simultaneously deliver generic global dominance, habituation, and bored obsolescence. Futurology, of course, is notable for the entertainment it provides after the fact: the invention of the calculating machine, memorably, led to predictions of a late twentieth-century future in which about five supercomputers would easily manage all the affairs of the world.

Gothic futures, then, might call for an approach more in keeping with the materialistic spirit of the age: a market analysis that plots the incomes, outturns, profits, losses, and investment potential of the many – and as-yet unthought of – commodities and derivatives associated with Gothic products. Here numerous creative economies open up, from the global production of fictions, television series, films, music, and video games to clothing, toys, interior design, foodstuffs, heritage and theme parks, all generally mining relatively limited raw materials, the resources of writings, images, and designs from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Aside from a few careers of specialist brokers of the genre and a great deal of money, there might not be a lot at stake, certainly when it comes to matters of prediction, since this market is already fully operative, already transmuting immaterial energies – the fears, anxieties, fantasies of past and future – into the economic returns of a voracious present. Speculation, which creates things out of immaterial imaginings – credit, fantasy, fear – offers a curious mirror of financial and Gothic practice and production. Indeed, if coming off the Gold Standard or the “Big Bang” that deregulated banking and credit in the 1980s is equated with the end of canon- icty, then freedoms of market and freedoms of interpretation engender (monstrous) multiplicities in which the reader-client-customer becomes the privileged figure alongside the
entrepreneur in the exploitation of new realms of consumer service and satisfaction. But there is a darker side, too, the looming of a new dark age following the dissolution of social consensus, the end of nuclear stand-off and madly reassuring political blocs, the disassembly of state power and security, a looming manifested in diverse global conflicts arising from corporate, neoliberal and neoconservative barbarism, a world order in which finance capital delimits the contours of a distinctly Sadean global law. Without apparent bounds, without an excess outside the relation of limit and transgression, this law without law can only consume itself, feeding on its own vacuity. Does this analogy suggest that the prospects of Gothic studies can be tracked toward a “crunch” of its own? Or perhaps it has already happened: a Gothic crunch, collapse following expansion, accompanying the withering of financial support for any educational activities associated with study in the Arts or Humanities, a horror show of cutting, disfiguring, hacking, and deforming, the redundancies of architectural decoration replaced by the waste of permanent unemployment.

But this is not to be very adventurous. Capitalism, since Marx, has been perceived as possessing vampiric form with a “Gothic Marxism” connoting the phantasmagorical effects of modernity. Current manifestations of vampire-capital – spectral, monstrous, cannibalistic – though often charged with the more positive or attractive intensity of a (corporate) liberatory model of free, individual consumption, extend to global formations of power and resistance as a “vampire-empire” or a “monstrous multitude.” Vampire metaphors even concretize in a striking reversal of literary tropes, dispensing with metaphoricity to assert that capitalism’s all-too real, if endlessly abstracted, terrors and horrors are best understood if one takes Gothic tropes literally: capitalism really is a vampire that sucks the life from humans, a monstrous undead mechanism that operates by exploiting living flesh. Rather than dissembling through metaphor, its tropes and figures occluding, mystifying or deflecting a brutal reality, Gothic fiction appears to tell the truth: its endless stories of violence, guilt, consumption, excess, repression, desire, fear, haunting, and dissatisfaction are precisely stories that expose the actuality of capitalism rather than dress it up and allow imaginations to escape elsewhere. Which is why zombies make such sense and seem to have such contemporary appeal: they are the effects of being saturated in repression, desire, exploitation, fear – to the point of exhaustion; reduced to almost nothing, they offer the zero-degree realization of the effects of “zombie capitalism” (and “zombie banks” and human bodies), zombie categories that, though already obsolescent in terms of economic and technological efficiency, remain institutions that senselessly, uselessly lumber on in the manner of the great mass of the undead. But zombies – drawing on different cultural histories distinct from those associated with Gothic modes – are already encroaching on Gothic studies and their future – unappealing, rotting, and exhausted as they are – will not be long-lived (like the Humanities).

The rise of zombie studies, however, does suggest one track that will have a bearing on Gothic futures: like all burgeoning areas of research, increasing specialization will subcategorize what, until relatively recently, remained a recognizable if not always coherent field identified by a set of, if not canonical, at least consensually hallucinated materials. With the discrediting of genre and its dispersal into moods, modes, and flavors, the already unstable generic and disciplinary category of Gothic will subdivide. Zombies are located in film and graphic fiction more than in literary texts, and attempts to colonize them for Gothic studies (the imperative to “Gothicize” has been one critical description) will run up against the resistances of other disciplinary practices and assumptions: “Horror,” for instance, forms one category whereby popular film is historicized, analyzed, examined, and digested; “Fantasy” serves as a different popular marker of fictional aspirations, reception, and conventions. Crossings will proliferate amid subdivisions and
(this is a “transdisciplinary” as much as “transnational” period) uncertainties and frustrations will accompany productive divergences in use, definition, and evaluation, relative independencies becoming the order of the day. Along these lines, further specters and hauntings will be found in the pixilations of cinema, with or without recourse to Gothic critical tropes. Science fiction, already generating multiple dark crossings and gloomy futures passed (from terminating “tech noir” to Heath Robinsonian “steampunk”), will perhaps inoculate itself from the fear, desires, and anxieties of terror and horror, to find other terms for discussions of biopower’s viral threats, alien possession, or the monstrosity of posthuman networks. Art history may seek out new practitioners following in the footsteps of those most Gothic of Britart brothers, the Chapmans. Cultural studies, too, may reassert itself to reclaim one of its most enduring subcultures from literary, film, fashion, and media scholars, its future, of course, now based on an appreciation of the role and effects of aging among stalwart Goths. Musicology, too, will have to investigate the techniques and styles composing Goth sound, a necessary enterprise given that so much criticism is able only to describe it as “dark” before proceeding to quote lyrics. National literatures and postcolonial criticism will save different cultural traditions, their respective folklores and supernatures, from the bloody maw of a global Western zombie Gothic criticism assimilating everything in its path even as, through multiple media, Gothic becomes increasingly globalized. But the process of disciplinary liberation, specialization, and diversification need not be one way: will philosophy, so ready to conjure up specters, vampires, monsters, and phantasms, be a site for Gothic critical studies, in the manner that has already permitted Marx to be seen as a Gothic thinker and psychoanalysis to be read as Gothic fiction? Along with disciplinary diversification, internal subcategorizations will abound in processes – once associated with monstrosity – of hybridization, hyphenation, or adjectivization (of the adjective now commonly misused as a noun). Already the process of hybridization–hyphenation is well underway, conjoining other styles, periods, locales, or themes to Gothic, and more will emerge (“desert-Gothic,” “arctic-Gothic,” “jungle-Gothic,” “high-rise Gothic,” “culinary Gothic,” “interplanetary Gothic,” “homely Gothic,” “friendly Gothic”?). A dissemination and pluralization on the one hand, it manifests an effort of assimilation and dominance on the other, a black hole drawing all cultural fragments and practices within its event horizon. As with the predominance of the vampire (and, on the basis of glossy TV series and a tide of teen fictions, there are no doubt many, many more studies of popular vampires to come), the absorption of Gothic into the general fabric of culture will be divested of any residual or even critical differences, becoming familiar, friendly, normative, hegemonic, and comfortable. There will be cries – one or two perhaps – happily iterating clichés like “what is at stake?” Pulse–repulsion, reaction–counterreaction: there should be returns to the eighteenth century, to scholarly studies of archives, histories, to early texts beyond those by Walpole and Radcliffe (though there is so much more to be done there). But by the time the issue of stakes are raised criticism will already be content with its catalogues, themes, and characters, ticking its boxes as it would tick off items on a shopping list while it submits another futile grant proposal ripe with claims about impact. The stakeholder society is, precisely, stakeless. Like the uncanny, poorly understood and ill-defined despite so many citations, looseness and oversaturation leads to uncritical contempt rather than critical argument or cultural engagement. Without tensions, critical stakes, or some idea of an outside (call it a politics different from the axis which subordinates value to economic performance, the viciously rehearsed thematics of identity politics, the transparencies of access or empowerment, or a consumption in excess of the expenditures of consumerism) the doubles of Gothic have to be increasingly – and tenuously – manufactured, constructed so that self and
other maintain some meaning-in-relation, inventing prohibitions so that resistances can be celebrated, constructing norms for the sake of deviance, recovering repression for the sake of freedom. Expansion–collapse, fear–anticipation, horror–excitement, familiarity–surprise: these are the very formulations of generic mechanism transferred to consumer logic of desire, sameness injected with just enough difference to preserve the idea of innovation, change, and interest. And all to stave off implosion.

Diversification–assimilation, commodification–domestication, co-branding, centripetal self-assessment, hybridize-hyphenate, adjectivize; “early modern Gothic” is already on the shelves, oddly manifesting a belated critical return of an artificial and retrospective aesthetic to a site of its imagined and fabricated pro-generation. Will “medieval Gothic” be next? To return a fabricated modern genre to the site of its own fantasized pre(modern) history tells a strangely contemporary, which is to say, postmodern, story, one of inverted and counterinverted hierarchies of literature, value, and canon. It also suggests a vacuity (called “Shakespeare”) at the heart of literary culture that now needs to feed off what was little more than a trashy popular genre that romantically imagined a bard, and of which the belated criticism, through terms like repression, resistance, subversion, and otherness, could claim value as the voice of subalterns, minors, and the oppressed. Curious – and curiouser. Inverted hierarchies inverted: perhaps there is a real horror that will reveal itself in the near future. Not the horror that the apex and center of culture is empty or that canons no longer hold in the freely dispersed spaces of postliterary creative industries, performance management, global markets, and consumer cultures, but something worse for intemperate, irresponsible, and indisciplined times: not the absence of canons, traditions, values, and history, but their all-too palpable, if still somewhat shadowy, presence. The horror that there is something like a canon, that assumes the place of a canon, that is even taught in schools; the horror that Gothic inversions of value turn again and, despite its replacing of judgment with pleasure, it offers intimations of an otherness that could be misconstrued as something sacred; that it begins to work like a canon. This horror calls up a hitherto discarded sense of a responsibility toward (literary) culture and will raise all sorts of questions along with the hairs on the back of the neck. No longer happily enjoying the cool freedoms of marginalization, darkness, or the outsider, the responsibility recalls an old (paternal) specter of criticism, scholarship, value, judgment. It will not, necessarily, be a specter that will have to addressed in conventional vein, but is one against which other approaches might need – even want – to be measured.
Games
TANYA KRZYWINSKA

Videogames may rely on computing technology, but that does not mean they are immune to the dark touch of the Gothic – far from it. Gothic themes, characters, stories, and environments can be found across a wide range of games, from puzzle games to multiplayer online games and from shoot-em-ups to strategy games. Given that the Gothic is strongly thematic and often regarded as traversing and playing with boundaries, we should not be surprised by its propensity toward transmediality and its proliferation across and through generic divides.

It is rewarding to scope out some of the forms, uses, and implications of the Gothic in videogames. Through this process different definitions of the Gothic are encountered, providing a means of ascertaining how formations of the Gothic lend themselves to, and indeed are shaped by, the particular formal characteristics of games. A survey of the types of representational and storytelling elements that can be termed Gothic in games affords a sharper understanding of the peculiar affinities and, conversely, the discomforts between games and the Gothic. To ascertain some chief features of their relationships with the Gothic, it is necessary to begin by outlining the major, and indeed unique, formal characteristics of games.

While the stories and iconography used in games often have a lot in common with articulations of the Gothic in other media, it is highly important to grasp the notion that games have specific formal characteristics not found elsewhere. What constitutes a game, as opposed to other forms of fiction, is the presence of certain systemic mechanics used to define and manage a ludic-led experience. These mechanics are games-distinct and they must be accounted for when analyzing games’ formal characteristics and when inquiring into the ways in which games express the Gothic. It is not just what is seen, read, or heard that requires consideration but also the types of tasks required of the player by a game’s design. Most videogames are composed of rules, progress arcs, and winning conditions, and have an interface – each game tailoring these mechanics according to its own design logic. Therefore, to progress within a game, a player must actively engage with the particular demands set for him/her by the design of a game’s mechanics.

Videogames have an important difference from games played with cards or on boards. When board or card games are played, the rules – a knowledge of which is required to play the game – are very apparent to players. In the case of videogames, rules are embedded in the machinations of an invisible computational layer. Players see the effects of those rules but not often the rules themselves. More generally, and as a constituent of their unique character,
videogames act as complex feedback systems: a player’s actions produce feedback from the computational system and vice-versa. This reciprocity is often termed the “cybernetic” dimension of games and it is the basis of interactivity. However, the occulted rule systems of a game, which determine a player’s experience and shape his/her actions, have a secondary but important and evocative textual function when regarded in a Gothic context. This resonant fallout might further help to explain the popularity of the Gothic in games. Under the Gothic aegis, a game’s algorithmic system acquires a mysterious, deterministic, and godlike power, shaping behaviors and steering morality through positive or negative reinforcements. The potency of this mix of power and determinism, agency and its limits, provides a key for understanding the unique relationship between videogame form and the Gothic.

Ornamentation, disease, the sinister, transgression, and sensationalism are terms that recur when surveying the literature that seeks to characterize the defining features of the Gothic. Definition is not a simple task considering that the Gothic has spanned such a breadth of time and media. As Botting notes, “The diffusion of Gothic forms and figures [...] makes the definition of a homogeneous generic category very difficult” (1996: 14). From twelfth-century religious architecture (see Architecture, Gothic) through to schlocky incarnations of Grand Guignol; from the sublime to the ridiculous; from the spiritual to the sensational; and from pulp fiction to Art with a capital A – in an attempt to encompass the acute tangents and perplexing ambiguities of the Gothic, it is tempting to see it as opposed to the quotidian. But caution is required. The Gothic is messy, not easily contained. Platonic ideals may well serve us badly in trying to understand its manifold nature. The Gothic’s capacity for constant and definition-bruising reinvention is evident when we look at its present games. It can be found in games that seek the status of art and pursue the sublime, such as The Path (Tale of Tales, 2009), as well as in those that make use of the sensationalism of the supernatural (see Supernatural, The) to provoke vivid emotional color, such as the Silent Hill series (KCET/Konami, 1999–present), Fatal Frame (Tecmo/Wanadoo, 2002), and Dead Space (EA Redwood/EA, 2008). Equally, Gothic tropes can appear in games that do not seek to discomfort players, instead providing images best defined as cute, as with A Vampyre Story (Crimson Cow/Autumn Moon, 2008) or the Burtonesque MediEvil (SCEE, 1988). Some games span across these categories; for example, Drawn: Dark Flight (Big Fish, 2010). In some games in which Gothic themes encompass story, gameplay, and representational style, the Gothic is best regarded as operating as a mode. In other games, representation and iconography might draw directly on the Gothic but cannot be said to inform gameplay and/or story. The articulation of the Gothic in games is then no different from other media in the sense that it appears in a host of differently mediated and handled ways, and ranging in intensity.

Before going on to look in more depth at particular games as examples of prevailing trends, it is useful to point out the specific ways that genre designations operate in videogames, as these lean on some principles not employed to classify genre in other media. Looking into this in a little more depth also serves as a means of underlining the formal particularities of videogames that in turn shape their engagement with the Gothic.

The genre of a game is generally defined around either the point of view taken by the player in a game (third person, first person) or the types of activities that define gameplay (real time strategy game, point-and-click adventure, role-playing game, puzzle, tower defense, and so forth). It may also be defined on the basis of a mix of these features (a first-person tactical shooter, for example). These labels have been established mainly by the game industry as marketing tools and are disseminated within games journalism. Over the past few years and due to their increasing commercial success, genre designations have started to develop around a target market. The
nomenclature “casual games” describes those games made for non-traditional players, as opposed to “hardcore games” designed for consumption by regular or enthusiastic gamers. Many games do, however, also draw on genres established in other media (Western, horror, sci-fi, soap, fantasy). For the sake of clarity, then, these transmedial genre labels can be termed “milieu” (King and Krzywinska 2002: 27). We are then able to speak of a first-person shooter such as *Doom 3* (id/Activision, 2004) as having a science fiction/Gothic milieu. Milieu encompasses character design, narrative, atmosphere, and iconography, while genre is defined mainly by aspects of gameplay type. It is important to note that the Gothic in this definitional schema is not just found in milieu but is also found in gameplay mechanics that produce ludic actions. The co-presence of both might then help to identify games that are most pervasively Gothic in character.

To put a little more flesh on the bones of the Gothic in games, some indicative manifestations follow.

*Midnight Mysteries: Salem Witch Trials* (MumboJumbo/Avanquest, 2010) is a recent example of a well-established format, the point-and-click game, in this case given renewed life from development for the iPad. In drawing on witchcraft in American history and fiction (see *witchcraft*), the title signals strongly the Gothic nature of the game. Acting as a detective, the player seeks to resolve the mystery surrounding the unexpected death of Nathaniel Hawthorne in a snowstorm. As such, the game makes use of events and places in Hawthorne’s life (see *Hawthorne, Nathaniel*). Its artwork is characterized by a murky color palette punctuated by the sharp, glowing outlines of ghostly characters, often accompanied by clichéd yet still spooky inchoate whispering voices. In classic Gothic style, these ghosts, alongside time travel, serve to blur boundaries that normally anchor space and time sequentially, as well as life and death. Mostly two-dimensional (occasionally three-dimensional) animations mark out and enliven key events (a wolf attacking the player or a door knocker changing form, for example); some of these are designed to startle the player. Unlike many more-cartoonish and humorous point-and-click games, this game pays attention to graphical detail, showing off the graphics capabilities of the iPad and in gameplay terms helping to make the activity of find-the-hidden-object more tricky. This level of visual detail chimes with the ornamentation often said to characterize the Gothic, offering the visual equivalent perhaps of Poe’s adjective-encrusted prose. Games such as this do not depend on combat for their attraction; rather, their pleasures are more analytical. Deductive reasoning and observation underlie the main tasks set by the game, the player taking up the role of a Dupin or Sherlock Holmes. Rationality and logic are valued over carefully timed actions or manic button-bashing. Where games such as this are well designed, the puzzles are contextualized in such a way that a player should not have to guess or trial solutions. Careful observation is what the game asks of the player. Rationalism as a driver for gameplay may well, though, have little place in the traditional milieu of the Gothic and this is something that will be returned to below when agency, resolution, and containment in games are addressed.

In the same genre but with a far weaker relation to the Gothic is *A Vampyre Story*. Ostensibly occupying conventional Gothic grounds in terms of narrative trajectory and character, a vampire tries to escape from her maker’s castle to follow her dream of becoming an opera singer. However, this scenario is not cloaked in the gloom of existential melancholy or the vibrancy of the grotesque; instead, it is all played for laughs. The graphics are cartoonish and the accents incongruous (a bat helper with a Brooklyn accent, for example). The game’s verbs (the use of objects employed to solve puzzles; for example, fruit and nuts collected earlier have to be crushed in a torture device to make oil, used to help open a lock) are often comic and wacky. The game is fun, but only faintly Gothic. Boundary crossing here is not meant to disturb or act as a
metaphor for existential transgression; instead it brings the Gothic to earth, making its artifice plain to see, pricking the bubble of its magic circle. Comedy undermines the seductive, immersive purpose of the Gothic.

Another point-and-click puzzle game, *Drawn: Dark Flight*, presents an illuminating contrast to *A Vampyre Story* and *Midnight Mysteries* because it is set in a tightly contained fantasy world. The real world is not signified by a real place or by a historical time or figure as it is in *Midnight Mysteries*, nor as a parodic counterweight to fantasy as in *A Vampyre Story*. Located as a faraway place, it is a land falling through lifeless shadow into darkness. To restore color and vitality, puzzles must be solved, the solutions to which are presented as a creative act on the part of the player—drawing objects, for example. As such, emphasis is placed on making changes through gameplay to the graphical and textural surfaces of the game, rather than opening doors or other ordinary tasks. Therein the game as creative artifice is underlined, and this in turn deepens the game’s kinship with the Gothic, reaching beyond the use of familiar iconography. The creative colorization of the puzzle-solving also shifts emphasis away from the deductive reasoning that characterizes many such games. The puzzle-solving here is, therefore, referential within the game’s system (rather than drawing on real-world knowledge as in *A Vampyre Story*), accruing thereby a whimsical ethereal quality well suited to the sensibilities of the Gothic palette.

Videogames are often emblematized by the first-person shooter (FPS) for those who have only a limited knowledge of games and their diverse forms. Rather than the gentle and observational mode taken by point-and-click games, these noisy, frenetic games are characterized by action and combat. This mode has an important effect on the meanings produced by the use of Gothic tropes. The FPS *Doom 3*, for example, demands deft, timely reactions from players if they are to avoid being “fragged” by monsters (see [*monstrosity*]). Here, as with other horror-based games using similar game mechanics, the gameplay “verbs” are located more firmly in the strident sphere of action-adventure. Nonetheless, in seeking to unnerve the player, and in using the game space as a kind of haunted house, the Gothic is apparent, coloring the use of a staple science-fiction “alien invasion” narrative. Rather than etiolated grey-eyes, the game’s aliens are wrought into the guise of demons, as in earlier *Doom* games. The game’s adjectives color its “verbs.”

Moving through a darkened spaceship with limited vision, finger on trigger but aware of limited ammunition supplies, proves a tense and suspenseful business. Even if a player repeating a section of the game knows what is around the corner, he/she still has the pressure of making sure he/she acts correctly this time around, providing a strong source of suspense of a type only imagined in other media. Noise of upcoming threats also create a sense of dread. Such devices, working alongside the grimy textures and brown-red-black color palette, certainly call on the fear mechanics of Victorian Gothic (see [*victorian gothic*]) and Grand Guignol, even if the accent of the activity is geared by mastery of technology, space, and threat.

Not all horror-based games pass easily into the category of the Gothic. The on-rails shooter series *House of the Dead* (Sega, 1996–present), for example, has the player shooting hordes of zombies that pop up somewhat as one might expect of a shooting gallery in a fairground. There is no free-form exploration, just hair-trigger gunplay at a pace set by the game. *Dead Rising* (Capcom, 2006), a shooter that draws heavily on Romero’s zombie films, does allow the player some degree of freedom to roam and solve puzzles, as punctuation between bouts of shooting hordes of zombies in and around a shopping mall. This game bears similarities to *Left 4 Dead* (Valve/EA, 2008), where the format is extended into small-group multiplayer game mode played over the internet. Games such as these, where the player is afforded a sense of immediacy and quick victory despite the presence of zombies and a survival mechanic, make for a gameplay experience that is not so easily
described as Gothic. In many respects these games have more in common with action genres and, in the case of Left 4 Dead, squad-based shooters. The effortless action of mowing down hordes of zombies, aliens, or demons plays against their iconographic heritage in Gothic terms. Gameplay is largely a mechanical and guilt-free operation unhampered by complex characterizations, ambiguous morality, or narrative. Through their use of tropes established within popular fiction, these games can be regarded as providing a more-than-symbolic means of mastery over that which represents the Other or the return of the repressed.

Survival horror, a name coined by game designers, stands in contrast to such games. The difference might be characterized as that between a cautious minor and a confident major key. This does not make survival horror any less emotionally geared, however: “People playing survival horror remain thrillseekers” (Perron 2009: 141). In these games, a character – often hapless rather than heroic – stumbles from the sphere of normality into nightmare. He/she struggles to survive rather than exhibiting flamboyant and superhuman skills of strength, agility, or expert weapon use. In Silent Hill, for example, the main character seeks out his wife in a town twisted and possessed by the return of the repressed; puzzles must be solved and clues looked for, and where fighting occurs it is often clumsy and limited by the lack of plentiful ammunition. Sedgwick has argued that the Gothic is emblematized by claustrophobia, often channeled through metaphors around live burial (1986: 5). Survival horror games use and amplify this metaphor in ways that action-based horrors do not. And here the metaphor is present in gameplay as well as representational or thematic dimensions. In games that might most aptly be called Gothic, it extends into the player’s capacity to act through his/her character and through the game’s interface. Such a metaphor is found, for example, in the blinding and disorienting fog that cloaks the eponymous Silent Hill and its restrictive effect on the player-character’s sphere of agency. This fog reduces the capacity to act in and on the game world. Unable to see more than a few feet, players are forced to rely on the presence of white noise emitted from a portable radio to indicate that a monster is close by. But the radio does not indicate the direction from which a monster is coming. The player must swing the in-game camera around, looking left, right, up, and down, to engage effectively with a monster. This activity is also accompanied by discordant and unnerving sounds that serve to signify the town’s disturbance. There is no raucous heavy metal music to inflate a sense of power, as in Painkiller (People Can Fly/Dreamcatcher, 2004). Escape-the-room games and Silent Hill 4: The Room (Konami, 2004) also work the claustrophobia metaphor into the organization of space and gameplay. In other games, timed puzzles can produce a similar sense of panic, and in all cases panic reduces the player’s control and thereby reduces agency. In the multiplayer online game The Lord of the Rings Online (Turbine/Codemasters, 2007–present), for example, in keeping with the franchise’s close relationship to horror, player-characters are often stricken with dread when encountering evil and become unable to move; formalized into a statistical game mechanic, this connects strongly to the Gothic even if the franchise draws on other traditions and genres.

“To act” (and to act in a timely and correct manner) is the leading currency of interactive games and “to be unable to act” is the Gothic articulation, or perversion perhaps, of this currency in games. In Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth (Headfirst/Ubisoft, 2006), the player-character must often run from situations rather than stand and fight. There is no gun provided early in the game, no chance to prove a hero. Following Lovecraft’s pessimistic ethos, the game places the player-character as subject to events rather than their master, and inevitably this is symbolized by periods of madness and fear that interfere with the ability to act. Akin to claustrophobia, vulnerability is core to the Gothic. In games the opposite is often true; for many their pleasure is the sense
of invulnerability they promote. In the gendered economics of popular culture, vulnerability is often represented by a female character, which Clover argues provides a means of allowing men to experience fear safely at one remove (1992). In some Gothic games, female characters are played against gender trope, as capable and resourceful: for example, Alice in American McGee’s Alice (Rogue/EA, 2000); Jen in Primal (SCEE, 2003), who develops demonic attributes in her quest to save her kidnapped boyfriend; and even some of the playable characters in the art-based Gothic fairy-tale game The Path (Tale of Tales, 2009). In many of the Gothic games addressed here, the player-character is not unproblematically an embodiment of power, as is the case in more testosterone-fuelled games. Nonetheless, some discomfort persists between the action-based propensity of games, which are often sold as affording the player agency and skill, and elements such as existential dread, claustrophobia, paralyzing fear, and an inability to act that are constitutive of the Gothic.

The Gothic has had a special relationship with technology (see technologies) – from that used to build a medieval cathedral through to Frankenstein’s monster and that used to defeat the arch-vampire Dracula. Gothic games too involve technology in their diegetic content. Fatal Frame, for example, shifts the normative rhetoric of shooting to photography – a camera made by an occultist becomes a weapon with which to dispense with ghosts. Typing of the Dead (Sega, 2000), in every way a zombie shoot-em-up, has the player type words above zombies’ heads to kill them (a Goth typing trainer). Both these games use technology as a means of dispensing with that which represents the irrational, the out-of-order, the imps of the perverse – a trope that is so heavily overdetermined that it acquires the status of mise-en-abîme. The distancing cameras of Fatal Frame and Dead Rising provide for players symbolic mastery through disavowal – and it should not be forgotten that the screen itself is a kind of camera in games. In this way, threats that arise through the rhetorical flourishes of the Gothic become a means for a player to manage fear. In these games, technology reflects how games of fear might be regarded more generally in terms of their psycho-dynamics: a means of extending the reach of human agency and supporting the ego. This can be contrasted with the fearful technologies of other Gothic fictions, in which technology becomes a portal for the unnameable to pass into the rational world or to provoke hubris. Games rarely demonize technology; perhaps it is an Oedipal/genetic maneuver, as such games have an anti-Gothic, rationalist motor.

Being killed in a game often means for the player-character that they are returned to an earlier save point. This raises a question around the nature of death in the Gothic: has it to be signified as “real” for any returns from that state to be meaningful? The ghost of Hawthorne, for example, in Midnight Mysteries is the result of a real death – underpinned by historical fact. The player-character cannot die, however. In combat-based games, being “killed” is essentially a movement back in time, so that the player can attempt that section of the game again, as is the case for the player-character in Doom 3. Painkiller gets around this trope because the player’s character is already dead and is doomed to return like Prometheus to his task. In these games, a lack of progression is constitutive of death, illustrating how game death is tied to the tension between action and inaction (Krzywinska 2002, 2009). The way in which death is realized and how it is tied to the game mechanics has then an impact on the realization of the Gothic: the more meaning assigned to a game in terms of story and gameplay, the more Gothic in intention a game can be deemed to be.

The Gothic in games is far from easy to pin down. Undeniably mutable, its purpose is at times frightful fun and frolic, but at the same time questions some of the very basic truths, assumptions, and fictions that we use to shore up and solidify our existence. In some games, the Gothic becomes a mode through which the very borders and capabilities of this new medium can be explored. Kirkland suggests
that videogames are “developing new modes of storytelling, combining modes and media” (2009: 76). Games and the Gothic share a protean quality. While the Gothic pulls in a different direction from some fundamental characteristics of games, the tension between action and inaction is often exploited to produce a powerful hands-on experience of the Gothic that extends beyond the bonds of representation into the plane of action or the very palpable lack of it.

SEE ALSO: Architecture, Gothic; Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Monstrosity; Supernatural, The; Technologies; Victorian Gothic; Witchcraft.

REFERENCES

German Expressionism
RICHARD J. HAND

Expressionism is a term that developed in the visual arts in Germany shortly before World War I. In effect, Expressionism was an avant-garde movement under the broad umbrella of cultural modernity that aligned itself in opposition to traditional “realism,” especially as embodied in Impressionism. Impressionist art, centrally associated with French painting, strove to capture vividly the surface reality of the world. In contrast, the Expressionist artist is less interested in the veracity of objective perception than in the exploration of subjective emotions and in the revelation of inner reality. Consequently, Expressionist art does not present a fixed style and, unlike other modernist movements like Surrealism or Futurism, it does not adhere to a specific manifesto. Expressionism is more of an attitude or even a spirit: it utilizes styles that can be distorted and alienating, juxtaposing formal techniques and jettisoning conventional colors and composition in order to locate a more profound “truth.” Expressionism may have begun in the visual arts but it extended its influence across culture more broadly and the term can be used in relation to literature, theater, architecture, and music. To this end, the definitions of the movement, let alone its characteristics, are often opaque and even misleading.

German Expressionism’s contribution to the Gothic is most evident in the field of cinema. However, before exploring the cinema of German Expressionism, a succinct consideration of Expressionist theater is useful (see DRAMA). Expressionist plays are typically disjointed and episodic and characterized by a mood that is dreamy, if not completely nightmarish. The plays typically explore the place of an unremarkable individual (often caricature-like or stereotypical) within a wider context of angst and social alienation. The narratives are often parables of modern humanity in a disrupted universe told with humor, nihilism, or radicalism. The Expressionist theater might use set designs that are stark yet ambitious – often on a vast scale – sometimes using bold colors and bizarre shapes and angles. The Expressionist actor typically performs with antirealist strategies such as an exaggerated acting style or with puppet-like simplicity while wearing a mask or extreme makeup. German playwrights such as Georg Kaiser, Paul
Kornfeld, and Ernst Toller are regarded as key exponents of Expressionism and yet the influences on the form extend far and wide with writers such as Frank Wedekind, Georg Büchner, and Sweden’s August Strindberg frequently cited as antecedents. Similarly, the impact of theatrical Expressionism itself was diverse and, arguably, it proved more significant in its subsequent influence than in its own achievements. Certainly, it was a key influence on movements such as Epic theater (most famously the work of Bertolt Brecht) and on international playwrights from Eugene O’Neill to Sean O’Casey. Expressionist theater also had a key influence on a younger cultural form, namely film (see film).

German Expressionist cinema is closely associated with the Weimar Republic (1918–33), in particular a clutch of films produced between 1919 and 1924. But just as theatrical Expressionism has extended its parameters, cinematic Expressionism has been applied to earlier films such as Stellan Rye and Paul Wegener’s The Student of Prague (1913) and the extant fragments of Henrik Galeen and Paul Wegener’s The Golem (1915). Cinematic Expressionism has continued to be influential – and applied as a term – far beyond its formal ending. Although all Expressionist films are distinct, typical features can include an abstract style that resists realism in its use of lighting, design and acting style. The fantasy world created in Expressionist cinema can be dreamlike and unsettling with themes that explore emotional crisis and sexuality. The style is aesthetically ambitious, including an experimental use of chiaroscuro and shadows.

The quintessential film of German Expressionism is The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene, 1920). The film enjoyed an international popular and critical success and it proved so influential that the term “Caligarism” was coined. The screenplay was written by Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer and is a carefully crafted “framed narrative.” The narrator, Francis (Friedrich Feher), recounts the story of the traveling carnival act of Dr. Caligari (Emil Jennings) and his somnambulist “exhibit” Cesare (Conrad Veidt) who, despite being in a state of unconsciousness, can answer any question asked of him. Francis’ friend asks when he will die and Cesare replies that he will be dead by the next dawn. This proves to be true and Francis and his fiancée Jane (Lil Dagover) investigate Caligari. The malevolent doctor commands Cesare to murder Jane but he abducts her instead. The local citizens join in the pursuit of the somnambulist, which comes to an end with Cesare’s death. Caligari, however, escapes justice. Francis then reveals that he has located Caligari: he is the director of a lunatic asylum. The final revelation is not only a superb use of the framed narrative device, it is also one of the earliest, and most effective, “twists” in Gothic cinema. At the end of the film we discover that Francis is himself an inmate of the asylum in the care of Dr. Caligari along with fellow patients Jane and Cesare. Although the ending seems to offer a clear-cut explanation, the spectator can still be left feeling doubtful and unnerved.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari is an abiding masterpiece of style and design. The elaborately constructed and decorated sets represent a milestone in cinema art. The distorted angles and viewpoints capture the unhinged universe as seen through the eyes of a madman. It is not, however, a chaotic vision: the meticulous design of the film means that there are repeated shapes, lines, and patterns. The film breaks with numerous conventions and, remarkably, remains to the contemporary viewer a radical and experimental example of cinematic fantasy. There is no pretense of realism, including in the heightened acting style, especially in the central performances of Veidt and Jennings.

Janowitz and Mayer’s script was originally more political than the final film version could permit and yet it remains a potent allegory of its era. Released shortly after World War I, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari reflects the crises of postwar Germany: Dr. Caligari is an emblem of authority and the older generation, gulling the young “sleepwalking” Cesare into murder and destruction. In many respects, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari is a unique film, impossible and
pointless to emulate, and yet the film has remained irresistible. In 1925 the Grand-Guignol, the French theater of horror, produced a stage version of it written by André de Lorde and Henri Bauche. There have been many other remakes on stage and screen and it continues to be a popular source for reference and allusion. This can often be playful in nature as in the 1991 BBC radio comedy show The Cabaret of Dr. Caligari while the Brothers Quay named a stop-motion animation film The Cabinet of Jan Švankmajer (1984), thus conjoining Caligari with Czech surrealist animation.

Another abiding example of Gothic cinema in German Expressionism is Nosferatu – A Symphony of Horror (F. W. Murnau, 1922). It was developed as an adaptation of Dracula by the scriptwriter Henrik Galeen, but Murnau was forced to change the names of the characters and any references to “vampires” when Bram Stoker’s widow claimed copyright infringement. Not satisfied with the alterations, she pressed on with legal action after the release of the film and won the case, which ruled that all copies of Nosferatu be destroyed. Happily for posterity, Nosferatu proved to be as difficult to destroy as the most formidable undead. Some copies survived and so we still have a film which is not merely the first screen adaptation of Dracula but one of the most distinctive and memorable. Count Orlok (Max Schreck) is not the aristocratic charmer who will later grace the screen in the form of Bela Lugosi or Christopher Lee. Schreck’s vampire is thoroughly uncanny: he is a skeletal image of death and pestilence, complete with rat-like incisors (see Lugosi, Bela). He is emaciated and hairless, a tall phallic figure, variously moving with inexorable slowness, alarming speed, or supernatural impossibility (such as when he springs up from his coffin). Although Nosferatu does not utilize the elaborate set construction and design to be found in The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (indeed, it uses several real-life locations), there are still moments of groundbreaking technique. When the Jonathan Harker character, Thomas Hutter (Gustav von Wangenheim), travels to visit Orlok, there is a sequence filmed in negative to create an other-worldliness. At other moments, action is speeded-up or basic stop-motion animation is used. One of Nosferatu’s special effects is extremely simple to achieve and yet it remains one of the film’s – and the horror genre’s – most powerful moments: Orlok’s shadow creeping up the stairs and reaching for the bedroom door handle.

Just as The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari reflects postwar angst, Nosferatu is evidently a stark reflection of its troubled times. Orlok represents death sweeping across Europe like a plague, leaving despair and ruin, emblematic of the war that had recently wiped out millions of lives. Nosferatu – above all the body and astonishing performance of Max Schreck – is an icon of Expressionism and Gothic cinema. Nosferatu is a cornerstone of German cinema and even one of the leading figures of New German Cinema, Werner Herzog, could not resist the allure of the film when he made Nosferatu the Vampyre (1979). This version features Klaus Kinski with an image closely modeled on Orlok yet named, at last, Count Dracula. Although a film with considerable merits in its own right, Herzog’s film cannot match Murnau’s visionary Expressionist nightmare. Another noteworthy homage to the original film is E. Elias Merhige’s Shadow of the Vampire (2000). This film recounts the making of Nosferatu with fascinating period detail before embarking on a playful fantasy whereby Max Schreck (Willem Dafoe) is revealed as a genuine vampire.

Perhaps the other most noteworthy example of the Gothic in German Expressionist cinema is Carl Boese and Paul Wegener’s The Golem (1920) which is, in fact, the prequel to the 1915 film that Wegener coproduced. The legend of the giant man of clay animated through sorcery is, ironically, more of an influence on many screen versions of Frankenstein than Mary Shelley’s original novel (see Jewish Gothic). The lumbering, powerful golem (played by Wegener himself) is one of the earliest and most definitive screen monsters. The fact that
the story can be traced back to folklore demonstrates an important influence on Expressionism. Folktales, including the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, provide a vibrant and deep-seated source for the visions of German Expressionism. After all, many of Expressionist cinema’s most Gothic examples function as unsettling modern parables.

Other German Expressionist films of significance in relation to the Gothic include Murnau’s version of the frequently adapted Faust (1926), Leo Birinsky and Paul Leni’s Waxworks (1924), and Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (1927). Although very different in genre, all these examples feature major achievements in design and style while still presenting core themes of Expressionism such as the individual and alienation. Significantly, the director Paul Leni emigrated to the US and brought with him an element of Expressionism when he made paradigmatic Gothic films such as The Cat and the Canary (1927), and Karl Freund (cinematographer on The Golem and Metropolis) directed the Hollywood classics The Mummy (1932) and Mad Love (1935). Similarly, Fritz Lang would be a key inventor of film noir in Hollywood, a form of modern Gothic heavily influenced by Expressionism, frequently echoing its sense of isolation and paranoia within a society of anxiety and despair.

The masterpieces of German Expressionist cinema continue to be appreciated and studied, not least through a wide array of digitally restored versions. They even continue to grace cinema screens: in recent years, there have been numerous musicians who have explored experimental soundtracks to the flickering nightmares of German Expressionist cinema. For example, Gary Lucas – formerly a guitarist with Captain Beefheart – toured internationally for several years with his one-man improvised accompaniment to The Golem.

Although far from being prolific, German Expressionism – as embodied in the abject worlds of Orlok, the Golem, Caligari, and Cesare – can be seen as a remarkable cluster of achievement with an indelible influence on subsequent Gothic cinema.

SEE ALSO: Drama Film; Jewish Gothic; Lugosi, Bela.

FURTHER READING

German Gothic
BARRY MURNAU

Since the “spirited exchange” (Horner 2002) between different national literatures that produced the Gothic in the 1780s and 1790s, Germany and its Schauerroman have occupied a privileged, albeit vilified position. For earliest critics, such as Jane Austen or the Anti-Jacobin, Gothic fiction was synonymous with an image of Germany as the depraved site of necromancy, secret societies, and wanton violence. Through writers such as E. T. A. Hoffmann, this continued to be the case well into the nineteenth century, as Poe’s famous dictum in his preface to Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque (“Terror is not of Germany but of the soul”) suggests. Despite a renaissance around 1900, the Expressionist film is the last example of German Gothic that can claim real international relevance.

The Schauerroman is generally referred to as the equivalent of the “Gothic novel”; however, in contradistinction to the unifying and homogenizing tendencies of Gothic as a term, German distinguishes between different forms of sensational and affect-driven fiction – the Ritter-, Räuber-, and Schauerromane, or novels of chivalry, brigands, and “shudder” novels (Appel 1859). Indeed it is significant that the first use of the term Schauerroman occurred in relation to an English novel and not to a
home-grown product at all (Hadley 1978: 147). Dominant English conceptions of German Gothic are even today more the result of English misconceptions than real German tastes (Murnane 2009). This is not to suggest that these various generic terms are themselves unproblematic, however; closer scrutiny has shown how these seemingly solid borders are in fact blurred by common motifs, plots, and preoccupations (Müller-Dyes 1965: 5–6). Thus the secret tribunals central to the plots of Ritterromane since Benedikte Naubert’s Hermann of Unna (1788, English translation 1794) follow similar patterns and fulfill similar functions as the secret societies in Schauerromane such as Friedrich Schiller’s The Ghost-Seer (1887–9, English translation 1795) or Carl Gross’s Horrid Mysteries (1791–4, English translation 1796).

Apart from these caveats, the development of German and English writing in the Gothic mode follows similar patterns, although a direct influence of English writing – as previously assumed – has been ruled out (Hall 2005: 50–2). Both develop as a result of a change in mentality in the course of the Enlightenment. First, the frisson of the supernatural emerges as a result of the rational banishment of all things uncanny and ghostly from a logically ordered world as irrational impossibilities (in differentiation to popular pre-Enlightenment ghost stories). The Ritter-, Räuber-, and Schauerromane emerge in the 1780s as further developments of core components of Germany’s sentimentalism-discourse (affective poetics, dangers of rapturous imagination) and the storm and stress movement (medieval settings, the criminal as noble outsider). Secondly, the predominant focus in German works on the psychological uncertainty pertaining to the uncanny points toward their position within the dominant anthropological paradigm of Germany’s late-Enlightenment aesthetics and philosophy. Insofar as these works focus on areas of social life and individual motivation that remained unaccounted for in earlier, more optimistic Enlightenment accounts of personality and reality, these works take on an important role in anthropology’s “self-Enlightenment” of the Enlightenment.

Schiller’s Ghost-Seer, as prototype of the Schauerroman, draws most obviously on these debates, as the unfinished novel documents the fallibility of a prince to fall prey to the opaque plot of the Armenian, a mysterious figure seemingly supported by a secret society aiming to overthrow Protestant rule in the prince’s homeland. The two key themes of German Gothic (insofar as they are to be found in all its variants), the secret society and necromancy, are best understood in these terms. In Schiller, as in more popular authors such as Grosse, Naubert, Lorenz Flammenberg (i.e., K. F. Kahlert), Ignaz F. Arnold, or Josef A. Gleich, these themes seem to take on the status of fictional media for real epistemological problems: namely the sense that the powers of reason are limited in assessing human intentions and social interaction. The most disturbing aspect of Schiller’s novel is that the powers of reason are ultimately of little or no use in overcoming these threats: the prince is aware of the fake séances in the novel and still succumbs to the Armenian’s machinations (Barkhoff 2011).

That these works emerge from a field of popular journals fixated with instances of the occult and secret societies (Voges 1987) merely underlines these widespread social fears. That German writing in the Gothic mode is to be located in this anthropological tradition is visible in the very term Schauerroman. The German version of the Gothic novel displays its affective poetics of shocking/shuddering in this most prominent of its names, drawing deliberately on discussions of the mind–body dualism with the shudder being understood as a bodily manifestation of mental or nervous horror (Zelle 1987: 342–9). Although recent commentators have questioned whether Schauer as an affective poetics based on the delightful horror (angenehmes Grauen) of eighteenth-century debates on the aesthetics of the sublime is of heuristic value (Sangmeister 2010), it is certainly present in the form of an implied poetics in most works (SCHÖNERT 1977: 30–5). As an experience thematized in all
variants of the Ritter-, Räuber-, and Schauerroman, Schauer is deployed as an emotional signal linking the reader with the experiences of the protagonists in these novels.

Identifying German Gothic in these terms raises the question as to the fate of the Schauerroman after the 1790s. Some commentators have claimed that German Gothic ceases to exist altogether (Trotha 1999: 293–359), which ignores the fact that for many readers German Gothic is synonymous with E. T. A. Hoffmann’s “black Romanticism.” Indeed a continuity in themes and preoccupations links Romantic authors directly with earlier Gothic writing, even if the formal presentation of these themes is more complex. Ludwig Tieck occupies a key position in this transition, with his novels (e.g., William Lovell) drawing heavily on earlier psychological themes of epistemological unreliability (Sage 2011). His shorter texts such as Der Runenberg (Rune Mountain) or Der blonde Eckbert (Blond Eckbert) introduced a signature motif of German Romanticism in the conflict of the bourgeois quotidian with an alternative, marvelous world that is Gothic insofar as it is initially experienced as a shocking dissociation of the protagonist’s psyche.

Such a derangement of the supposedly solid enlightened subject remains at the heart of German Romantic writing in the Gothic mode – as illustrated in Hoffmann’s novels and novellas such as The Devil’s Elixirs or The Sandman. The horror in The Devil’s Elixirs, an influential text for the development of the literary double, revolves around questioning under which conditions the subject can say “I” at all. The monk Medardus experiences a corporeal, passion-driven side to his personality that unravels any semblance of decency he has (Kremer 1993: 233–44). This horrific dichotomy in Medardus’ personality is heightened through Hoffmann’s complex narrative structure, making it impossible to determine whether or not Medardus’ double is a marvelous figure or merely his half-brother Viktorin. This heightened reflexivity of the Romantic Gothic – Hoffmann’s figures are at times even aware of their fictional status and intertextual predecessors – coupled with the introduction of complex narrative structures as the medium of moving the reader to a state of Schauer, is the central Romantic innovation in German Gothic.

This formal complexity is also one of the paths of transmission through the nineteenth century, as may be seen in the Realist works of Theodor Storm or Theodor Fontane (Bickensbach 2012). Here memories of reading and listening to ghost stories become an instance of “citing” ghosts within the realist mimetic model, an instance of Derrida’s spectrality effect of fiction for which Storm’s Der Schimmelreiter (The Horse-rider) is the most prominent example. Other less highbrow traditions of the Gothic can also be found continuously throughout the course of the nineteenth century, however, in such popular forms as the Nachtstück (Night Stories) (Nickel 2010: 189–97). At the close of the century, Fontane’s Effi Briest features the eponymous, belated Gothic heroine in a supposedly haunted house, frightened by the ghosts of a Chinese man and Prussia’s patron ghost, the “lady in white.”

The period around 1900 saw a renaissance in German Gothic, particularly in Austro-Hungary, with writers such as Gustav Meyrink, Alfred Kubin, and Franz Kafka (Cersowsky 1983). For many, Kafka’s horrific scenarios of bureaucratized modernity (The Trial, In the Penal Colony), morphing landscapes (The Castle), monstrous corporeality (The Metamorphosis), and ghostly visions are the epitome of Gothic modernity (Murnane 2008: 63–133). Other works of the period are notable for their occultist content and are more obviously located toward the fantastic pole of Gothic writing, with authors such as Meyrink (The Golem), Hans Heinz Ewers (Alraune, Vampir), and Karl Hans Strobl (Heliogabel Kuperus) drawing heavily on contemporary esoteric, spiritist theory (Wünsch 1991). Strobl’s and Ewers’ reputations are tainted by their populist forms of nationalism and vulgarized Nietzschean Superman theories, later leading to their involvement with National Socialism.
Ewers’ involvement in the development of the Expressionist film, including cowriting Stellan Rye’s *The Student of Prague* (1913), however, mark him as an important innovator in German modernist aesthetics. Indeed, Gothic production in this period is marked by fruitful collaboration between fiction and film, resulting in cinematic milestones such as Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and Lang’s *Dr. Mabuse* (1922). In Expressionism, film became an important medium for articulating modernism’s discontent with modernity itself, focusing on fragile identities in the form of countless doppelganger fantasies and hypnotic mind-control (Andriopoulos 2008). Gothic tropes may have become so central to Expressionism because the new medium was itself central in unsettling traditional concepts of identity, seemingly doubling one’s image (Webber 1996: 317–56). The culmination of this Expressionist tradition is undoubtedly Fritz Lang’s chilling depiction of modern industrial production and mass society in *Metropolis*. Despite a continuing fascination with Gothic tropes (e.g., GDR playwright Heiner Müller or filmmakers Christoph Schlingensief and Michael Haneke), postwar German Gothic has failed to have a similar international impact.

SEE ALSO: Doubles; European Gothic; Hoffman, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus).

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Ghost Stories
NICK FREEMAN
Tales in which the spirits of the dead encounter the living emerge from almost every culture, but it was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that Europeans began to construct ghost stories as they would be categorized today. These fictions were designed to be pleasurably frightening in themselves, rather than using ghosts to warn, to counsel, to instigate vengeance, or to guard or reveal treasure, and placed the encounter with the ghost, and the experience of haunting, at the center of their narratives. Since then, ghost stories have remained enduringly popular, and their writers have often displayed a sophisticated awareness of the genre’s conventions, history, and key texts.

First-generation Gothic frequently used the specter (see spectrality) as a discrete episode in a longer narrative rather than as the basis of a novel’s plot – the appearance of the Bleeding Nun in Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796), or the lengthier and more sophisticated “Wandering Willie’s Tale” from Walter Scott’s Redgauntlet (1824) are typical examples. Writers quickly grasped that lengthy ghost stories were challenging to sustain, as the intervals between the ghost’s appearances often lapsed into padding, though there are exceptions: Stephen King extends W. W. Jacobs’ 3,000 word vignette “The Monkey’s Paw” (1902) to 480 pages in Pet Sematary (1985) (see King, Stephen). By the late 1820s, the ghostly was starting to focus on a single incident – stories were shorter,
concentrating their effect by being readable at a single sitting (preferably by candlelight) and excising subplots and other extraneous material. From the beginning, the ghost story typically deployed realist description, attempting to make the intrusion of the supernatural (see supernatural, the) into the everyday all the more startling by detailing settings readers could visualize, but its most sophisticated exponents combined this attention to exteriority with a corresponding interest in the psychological consequences of exposure to the supernatural. Walter Scott’s “The Tapestried Chamber” (1828) is a classic example of the former approach, with a paradigmatic plot in which a character spends a night in a haunted chamber, while Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843, rev. 1845) sacrifices quotidian scene-setting in order to extract maximum capital from dramatizing the protagonist’s traumatized condition (see poe, edgar allan). The two approaches were by no means mutually exclusive – Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Margaret Oliphant, and Henry James offered masterful fusions of them in late Victorian works such as “Green Tea” (1874), “The Library Window” (1896), and The Turn of the Screw (1898) – but they determined the shape and focus of almost every ghostly tale for the best part of a century. It was only when later modernism began to excavate the Gothic past in brief, poetic sketches such as Virginia Woolf’s “A Haunted House” (1921) or the stories of Mary Butts that a serious alternative to them emerged, and even then it has not proved especially influential.

The ghost story was a central aspect of Victorian culture, being, as Darryl Jones says, “a reaction to the secular, materialist, industrial modernity that animated the dominant, progressivist Victorian utilitarian ideology” (Jones 2011: xviii). Its most famous practitioner was probably Charles Dickens, who wedded Gothic shock effects (a doorknocker transforming into a hideous face) to Christian homily in A Christmas Carol (1843) and also recognized the opportunities offered by industry and technology in “The Signalman” (1866), in which a railway worker is haunted both by precognitive visions and his own sense of duty in a life governed by the telegraph and mechanical signals (see dickens, charles). Dickens’ contemporary, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, offered a different approach, detaching the ghostly tale from a Christian, providential framework in “Schalken the Painter” (1839) and mapping the traumatized protagonists of Poe onto settings such as the Victorian country house and, more subversively, the modern city (see le fanu, joseph sheridan). Le Fanu exploited the properties of Gothic and sensation fiction – frame stories, embedded narratives in the form of letters and other documents, historical settings – but he added to them a fascination with the workings of conscience, sexual uncertainty, and a post-Darwinian anxiety about humanity’s place in the order of things. He was also prepared to leave the supernatural content of his fiction ambiguous on occasion, and as such proved a significant influence on M. R. James.

The Victorian ghost story took a variety of different forms. Edward Bulwer Lytton dramatized an attempt to investigate, rather than simply visit, a haunted house in “The Haunters and the Haunted” (1859) (see bulwer lytton, edward). Elizabeth Gaskell combined the detailed settings familiar from her realist novels with an increasing psychological sophistication in tales such as “The Old Nurse’s Story” (1852), while Rhoda Broughton, a niece by marriage of Le Fanu, brought out the genre’s sexual undertones in “The Man with the Nose” in Twilight Stories (1879). Amelia Edwards, Mary Braddon, and Mrs. J. H. (Charlotte) Riddell added to the roster of female ghost story writers, with Riddell especially interested in the violation of domestic spaces often strikingly akin to those inhabited by her readers. Rather than clearly signaling her ghost stories as fantasy, Riddell gave a vivid sense of supernatural entities lurking around the edges of everyday life, an approach many later writers would exploit to striking effect.

All of these writers drew on a body of generic conventions which they refined and developed, but by the late 1880s newer voices
were demonstrating how “ghostly fiction, like other literary modes, typically follows a cycle of innovation, imitation, decline, burlesque and revival” (Freeman 2012: 150). Oscar Wilde spoofed many older tropes in “The Canterville Ghost” (1887) but at the same time offered a ghost who is as developed as, perhaps more developed than, the story’s other characters; Wilde’s Sir Simon is a focus of sympathy not simply because of what has happened to him in the past, but for how he now “lives.” Jerome K. Jerome satirized Dickensian Yuletide ghosts in his Told After Supper (1891), a witty compendium of exhausted Gothic tropes. H. G. Wells offered a new version of the disembodied spirit in “Under the Knife” (1896), the story of an experience under general anesthetic; revisited the haunted chamber motif in “The Red Room” (1896), a story which at once ridicules cliché and conjures terror; and, like Wilde, showed how difficult life as a ghost could be in “The Story of the Inexperienced Ghost” (1902) (see wells, h. g. (herbert george)). Ghostly spirits had long sought peace through the laying of a curse or a Christian burial, but Wilde and Wells began a trend that led, eventually, to the ghostly lovers of Peter Beagle’s 1960 novel A Fine and Private Place (its title an allusion to Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress”), the murdered narrator of Alice Sebold’s The Lovely Bones (2002), and, inadvertently, to the twenty-first century vogue for “supernatural romance.”

With the wells of the “traditional” ghost story running dry in the 1890s, the balance between realism and psychology began to tip in favor of the latter, not least because writers such as Henry James were anticipating devices that would soon become associated with early modernism (see james, henry; modernism). Le Fanu had used indeterminacy and ambiguity in a number of his stories, but Henry and M. R. James, along with Rudyard Kipling, Vernon Lee, May Sinclair, Oliver Onions, and Edith Wharton, recognized that relationships between readers and authors were changing, and that the reactions of the reader were vital in constructing the meaning and effect of a story. Subtlety and obliqueness were the keynotes of the fiction that this prompted, qualities that were taken to extremes first by Walter de la Mare, and then by Elizabeth Bowen and Robert Aickman, writers in whose stories it is often impossible to say not only whether there is a ghost at work but also to understand exactly what has happened. In Something of Myself (1937), Kipling told his readers that no text could ever be edited sufficiently – whatever was written could always be filed down further (see kipling, rudyard). This led him to produce the profoundly ambiguous “Mrs. Bathurst” (1904), in which a man is haunted by the image of a former lover he has seen in a cinema newsreel, and “They” (1904), a moving account of a blind woman who can “see” the spirits of dead children as a result of her own bereavements. It is left for us to realize why the narrator is able to hear the children too.

Although the ghost story is rarely recognized as an aspect of modernism, its early and mid-twentieth century practitioners in Britain and the United States were often remarkably innovative in both its subject matter and its representation. Henry James, whose brother, William, was a significant figure in the Society for Psychical Research, remarked that “the whole of anything is never told” (James 1955: 18), a maxim that was applied to telling effect in uneasily ambiguous stories such as “The Friends of the Friends” (1896) and his masterpiece, The Turn of the Screw. M. R. James littered his stories with pastiche documents that destabilize the neat compartmentalization of past and present (see james, m. r. (montague rhodes)). Oliver Onions made masterful use of free indirect style in “The Beckoning Fair One” (1911) to make it increasingly unclear where the boundaries between the narrator and the possessed protagonist might be drawn. “Roumm,” another story from Onions’ Widdershins (1911), offered a ghost that could seemingly penetrate solid matter in a tale made all the more effective by the protagonist’s inadequate vocabulary – how can he explain something which lies outside his experience and perhaps even beyond language itself? Some practitioners worried that the ghost would have
no place in the world of the electric light, but
haunted or possessed machinery soon became
a significant presence in the ghost stories of an
increasingly technological twentieth century,
from the motor vehicle of E. Nesbit’s “The
Violet Car” (1910) to the incarnation of malign
metropolitan energies of Fritz Leiber’s “Smoke
Ghost” (1941). Telephones, televisions, com-
puters, radios, even the industrial laundromat
of Stephen King’s “The Mangler” (1972): all
have exemplified what M. R. James called “The
Malice of Inanimate Objects.”

Another strand of the fin-de-siècle ghost,
especially after the Oscar Wilde trials of 1895,
was a sense of (homo)sexual transgression,
something that, like the ghost in “Roumm,”
defied linguistic utterance. John Meade
Falkner’s The Lost Stradivarius (1895) seems
haunted as much by the presence of Lord
Alfred Douglas as it does by the evil spirit
of Adrian Temple, the seventeenth-century
occultist whose rediscovered violin has such
terrible consequences for its finder; there is a
notably “queer” atmosphere to many of the
fictions of Henry and M. R. James; while dis-
creetly homosexual writers who had known
Wilde, such as E. F. Benson and Robert Hichens,
produced either misogynistic fantasies or,
as in Hichens’ “How Love Came to Professor
Guildea” (1900), explored themes of masculinity,
celibacy, and sexual secrets (see queer
gothic). When Guildea sits on a bench over-
looking Hyde Park one night, smoking and
staring into the darkness, he is unwise to leave
his front door open. These fictions were not as
technically innovative as those of Kipling or
Lee, but they did reflect the uncertainties
of their time where sexuality was concerned.
Religious uncertainty too came to light, notably
in the natural world (”The Willows” 1907,
“The Wendigo” 1910). Blackwood’s ghosts
were not always human – in “Onandonandon”
(1921) a feverish man is haunted by a dog’s
repetitive barking, while in “The Man Whom
the Trees Loved” (1912), the spirit of the forest
comes to possess a man living on its border. His
ghosts were not always malign in their inten-
tions and much of his fiction represents an
attempt to understand the otherness of a world
as yet unexplained by science. His John Silence,
Physician Extraordinary (1908) is a remarkable
fusion of the ghost story, the work of psychic
investigators, and a suggestion of psychiatry as
traumatized patients such as Arthur Vezin in
“Ancient Sorceries” recount their extraordi-

During and especially after World War I, the
ghost story took a number of paths. It was, on
occasion, consolatory (as in Arthur Machen’s
“The Bowmen” (1914) and “The Happy Chil-
dren,” written in the aftermath of the Lusita-
nia’s sinking), but elsewhere it fed off the
growing cultural visibility of psychoanalysis as
a response to wartime trauma, and the uncer-
tainty of newspaper accounts of the confl ict,
with their columns marked “Missing.” The
missing, those deemed neither alive nor dead
but lost and unaccounted for, return to dra-
matic effect in Elizabeth Bowen’s “The Demon
Lover” (1941) and Robert Aickman’s “A Roman
Question” (1966), but their unresolved absence
helps to accentuate the increasing tendency
of writers to reject explanation or analysis.
Aickman (see aickman, robert), who argued
that the ghost story’s workings were akin to
poetry, termed his fiction “strange stories,”
while Bowen located the essence of the genre
as being “a series of happenings whose horror
lies in their being just, just out of the true” (Cox
and Gilbert 1986: ix–x). Edith Wharton’s
“Pomegranate Seed” (1930) seems to feature a
series of letters from the dead summoning the
living to join them; the stories of L. P. Hartley
offer similarly open-ended accounts of mysteri-

These fictions were rarely explicitly horrific,
relying on subtle suggestion to play on their
readers’ imaginations, and these tactics have remained of central importance to the genre. Some writers, such as M. R. James, are chiefly remembered as writers of ghost stories; others, Bowen, for instance, or Vernon Lee, are regarded as writers who wrote ghost stories alongside other fiction – in such cases, it can be difficult to distinguish whether a story such as Bowen’s “The Happy Autumn Fields” (1945) is a ghost story or not. This generic ambiguity tends to be the preserve of more self-consciously literary fiction, since modern Gothic novelists such as Peter Straub or James Herbert openly admit their generic affiliations in Ghost Story (1974) or The Ghosts of Sleath (1994). Nevertheless, even stories which declare their ghostliness from the outset remain interested in the experience of being haunted rather than just showing encounters with supernatural entities, and although Julia Briggs suggested in 1977 that the ghost story had become “a vehicle for nostalgia” and “a formulaic exercise” (Briggs 1977: 14), her pessimism seems misplaced. Ghosts are still alive and well on both sides of the Atlantic in, for example, the continued popularity of Susan Hill’s The Woman in Black (1983) and its 1987 stage adaptation, the best-selling The Lovely Bones, the dark comedy of Hilary Mantel’s Beyond Black (2005), and in the work of writers such as Mark Samuels, Reggie Oliver, D. P. Watt, and others associated with small presses such as Tartarus and Inkerman specializing in supernatural fiction.

SEE ALSO: Aickman, Robert; Blackwood, Algernon; Bulwer Lytton, Edward; Dickens, Charles; James, Henry; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); King, Stephen; Kipling, Rudyard; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Modernism; Poe, Edgar Allan; Queer Gothic; Spectrality; Supernatural, The; Wells, H. G. (Herbert George).

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Godwin, William
SIOBHÁN NÍ CHONAÍLL

William Godwin (1756–1836) was a prominent English philosopher, novelist, and political theorist. Although he is most remembered for his political philosophical writings, primarily the radical treatise An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793), Godwin also made a significant contribution to the Gothic literary tradition with his novels Caleb Williams; or, Things as they Are (1794) and St. Leon (1799). Godwin married the feminist theorist Mary Wollstonecraft, author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), with whom he had one daughter, Mary, who was the author of Frankenstein (1818, 1831) and the wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft). Godwin’s greatest literary success came early in his career with the publication of Political Justice and Caleb Williams. Both works were enormously successful and Godwin became an overnight celebrity, feted in London society for his radical views and anarchist vision.

Godwin was born in Wisbech, England, the seventh of thirteen children. His father was a Presbyterian minister and Godwin’s early life was shaped by his strict Puritan upbringing. It
was expected that Godwin would follow his father into the ministry. Godwin's radical views had their early roots in his education at the dissenting academy of Hoxton. After graduating, Godwin took up a position as a dissenting minister. However, Godwin's discussions with the rational dissenters Joseph Priestley and Richard Price and his friend Thomas Holcroft, and his reading of the work of d'Holbach and Helvetius (among others) led to a crisis of faith and in 1788 he left the Church to pursue a literary career. Godwin would subsequently become an outspoken advocate for atheism.

Godwin's politics permeate his writings, from his political essays and nonfiction works to his novels and plays. In Political Justice, Godwin identifies the exercise of human reason – and its liberation from the restrictions imposed upon it by government, private property, and marriage – as essential to the perfectibility of man and society. By removing those obstacles to the advancement of human reason – such as the inaccessibility of education, the controlling effects of Church authority, and the inequalities within society – Godwin believed that mankind could achieve an age of unprecedented human progress and happiness. Although the critical response to Political Justice was mixed, the treatise made Godwin an instant celebrity and, in the years after its publication, he enjoyed renown as one of the most celebrated men of letters in English society.

Godwin's next publication, Caleb Williams, is his most celebrated contribution to the Gothic literary tradition. The novel, a didactic tale about the evils of government and institutional control, dramatizes many of the radical arguments put forward in Political Justice. Godwin also employs many of the conventions of the Gothic literature of the day. The novel is framed as a pursuit narrative; the plot relies on the Gothic devices of accident and uncanny coincidence (see uncanny, the), and the central relationship between the eponymous Caleb and his alter-ego, the darkly mysterious Falkland, is characteristically Gothic in its psychological complexity.

Godwin first met Mary Wollstonecraft on November 13, 1791 at a dinner given by his publisher, Joseph Johnson. Although Godwin's diaries reveal that he was initially irritated by the outspoken Wollstonecraft, upon meeting again in later years they quickly became attached. In early 1797, Wollstonecraft became pregnant and, despite their avowed opposition to the institution of marriage, the two were married on March 27, 1797, primarily to protect the rights of their unborn child. Their daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, was born on August 30, 1797, but there were complications following the birth and Wollstonecraft died ten days later.

Following Wollstonecraft's death, Godwin published his candid memoir of her life, Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1798), a book that was very poorly received by critics and the public alike. As a widower, Godwin found himself as the sole guardian of his daughter Mary and also of Wollstonecraft's daughter from her previous union, Fanny. He dedicated himself to the task of finding a mother for the children and, after a number of unsuccessful pursuits, his second marriage, to Mary Jane Clairmont, took place in 1801.

Godwin's second novel, St. Leon, was published in 1799 and is perhaps his most overtly Gothic work. The novel registers its Gothic heritage most obviously in the theme of a Rosicrucian immortal (see Rosicrucianism), while the Gothic devices of obsession and pursuit are again utilized in the narrative. Despite this novel's success, Godwin's literary profile had at this point started to decline. Although he continued to write and to make a reasonable living from his publications, Godwin always struggled financially. In 1812, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (see Shelley, Percy Bysshe), a fervent admirer of both Godwin and the late Wollstonecraft, wrote to Godwin for the first time. The two established a regular correspondence and Shelley became a frequent visitor to the Godwin household. Despite his outspoken liberalism, Godwin was horrified when his daughter Mary eloped with Shelley in 1814.
Although he was not a prolific writer of Gothic works, Godwin nonetheless made a significant contribution to the development of a political, radical branch of Gothic literature that subsequently influenced the work of writers from Mary Shelley and Percy Bysshe Shelley to Edward Bulwer Lytton (see Bulwer Lytton, Edward). Percy Bysshe Shelley’s novel St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian (1811) inscribes its debt to Godwin in both its title (a deliberate allusion to St. Leon) and its theme of the pursuit of a clandestine immortality. Mary Shelley also explored the theme of the reluctant immortal in her short story “The Mortal Immortal” (1833), while in Frankenstein the character of Victor demonstrates that same desire to intervene in the operation of life and death that is so central to the motivations of St. Leon. The influence of Caleb Williams is registered by Mary Shelley’s reworking of the theme of an obsessive pursuit and the doppelganger relationship of Frankenstein and the Monster, while the Gothic horror of the novel, the themes of secrecy and the occult, are all echoes of St. Leon.

Although Godwin continued to write and publish for the rest of his life, he never again regained the fame and renown that he enjoyed in the aftermath of the publication of Political Justice and Caleb Williams. He died in London on April 7, 1836 and was buried next to Mary Wollstonecraft at Old St. Pancras Churchyard, before being moved in later years to Bournemouth, where Mary Shelley is also buried.

SEE ALSO: Bulwer Lytton, Edward; Rosicrucianism; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Shelley, Percy Bysshe; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING


Goth

DIANE MASON

The original “Goths” were a warlike, Teutonic tribe who cut a swathe across Western Europe in the fourth century. Their actions not only proved to be instrumental in the collapse of a Roman Empire that was already in decline but also heralded the beginning of the Dark Ages, a tempestuous period of conflict and unrest. As a result, “Goth” became a byword for all that was savage and uncouth. One Edwardian dictionary defines a “Goth” as “a rude or uncivilized person; a barbarian; [and] one defective in taste” (Ogilvie and Annandale 1903: 325). In
the later twentieth century, though, the epithet was more popularly applied to what Bess Lovejoy describes as “a subculture borne of the ashes of punk, with its heart ripped open and lots of eyeliner on” (Lovejoy 1997: 12). Goth subculture, as Lovejoy’s words suggest, is an uncompromising celebration of style over substance based around music; fashion; a fascination with all things dark, morbid, and supernatural; and, for some, an interest in sexual fetishism and alternative sexual practices.

The Goth look is synonymous with contemporary Goth rock, born out of postpunk in the late 1970s, seminally with the Bauhaus song Bela Lugosi’s Dead, released in 1979. Aside from Bauhaus, influential first-generation Goth bands include The Birthday Party, The Cure, The Damned, Joy Division, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and The Sisters of Mercy. Although there is no single “Goth sound,” the music emphasizes excess – typified by The Sisters of Mercy’s overblown and operatic 1987 single This Corrosion, produced by Jim Steinman (the creative force behind Bat out of Hell by Meat Loaf) – and/or emotionally intense lyrics with a focus on the shadow side, exemplified by the raw and introspective songs of Joy Division. In the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Goth rock incorporates the industrial sound of Nine Inch Nails and subgenres such as Goth metal, prototypically bands including Type O Negative and Moonspell.

There is much debate on Goth websites as to whether the controversial figure of Marilyn Manson, inextricably linked with the subculture in popular consciousness, can be considered Goth at all.

The Goth scene was established in clubs such as The Batcave in London, which opened in 1982. In the beginning, Goth fashion was very heavily influenced by the looks and styles of Goth musicians. The “melancholy marionette appearance” of Robert Smith, singer and guitarist with The Cure – “white-faced, ugly scar of scarlet lipstick, [and] unruly mushroom cloud of black hair” – provided a template for many male Goths (Baddeley 2002: 206). For female Goths, the dark diva chic of Siouxsie Sioux and The Sisters of Mercy’s Patricia Morison was the style of choice. In the twenty-first century, as Catherine Spooner asserts, “Goth style has many variations, varying both regionally and according to musical taste”; to those outside the subculture, though, the fashion “appears fairly consistent, with a predilection for black clothing in a combination of faux-period, Punk and fetish styles, elaborate jewellery, ‘vamp’ make-up for both sexes, and dyed hair, also frequently black” (Spooner 2006: 96).

Although Goths are popularly associated with depression, and a fixation with death – and undeath – in the form of vampires, it is an oversimplification to assume that they all share the same interests. The appeal of vampires encompasses not only the intimate act of blood-drinking but also the hedonistic nature of a creature who can party all night; stay young and good-looking, like the “beautiful” Zillah in Poppy Z. Brite’s 1992 novel Lost Souls; and live forever (Brite 1994: 5). In the main, though, Goths favor cerebral and introspective activities over physical education and the pursuit of sporting excellence. To borrow from American slang, Goths tend to be “geeks” rather than “jocks.”

Goth subculture continues to evolve in the twenty-first century. In August 2006, the Daily Mail carried a controversial story that bore the legend “EMO cult warning for parents.” According to reporter Sarah Sands, the Emos, “short for Emotional – regard themselves as a cool, young sub-set of the Goths” (2006). These trendy young pretenders are, however, demonized as a “dangerous teenage cult” due to their alleged “celebration of self-harm” (Sands 2006). Adult Goths are largely disdainful of Emos, referring to them “as ‘the spooky kids’ or ‘moshers’” (Sands 2006). The Emo look, although predominantly dark in tone, is more industrial than spectacular or overtly sexual, and incorporates elements of grunge and skater fashion. The skull is a common decorative motif, as is the pentagram, both upright and inverted. Bands favored by Emos include My Chemical Romance and Green Day.
In Goth subculture, the “look” is all. The vast majority of Goths do not subscribe to or promote any particular cause or political agenda, despite their unconventional, sometimes forbidding, appearance. As Sara Martin asserts, “Goth subculture is not aggressively anti-social” even though “Goths may strongly oppose some tenets of contemporary society” (Martin 2002: 40). According to the website www.goth.net, however, “Goths often revel in the fear given to them by society as a whole,” though, in the main, any threat they pose to the wider world is perceived rather than actual (Elder 2000–1). This alleged enjoyment of societal discomfort has, however, tended to militate against the largely innocent participants in Goth subculture. The violent events at Columbine High School in April 1999, when seventeen-year-old Dylan Klebold and eighteen-year-old Eric Harris shot thirteen of their schoolfellows before turning the guns on themselves, was expressly related to the perpetrators’ interest in “Gothic metal” music and their adoption of distinctive black trenchcoats (possibly to help them conceal weapons) on the day of the atrocity (Martin 2002: 40). The long, black trenchcoat, a staple of Goth style, was associated with a thirteen-strong group of “loners” within the school known as the “Trenchcoat Mafia” who were allegedly “obsessed” with “rock singer Marilyn Manson and goth-rock culture” (BBC News 1999). However, aside from their similar musical tastes and appropriation of the same garment, there is no clear evidence to confirm that Harris and Klebold were themselves Goths or linked to the subculture in any way.

In the aftermath of the Columbine massacre, “the anti-Gothic campaign [in the United States] reached unprecedented heights” (Martin 2002: 40). A search of the internet reveals a number of bogus “anti-Goth” websites that satirize the scaremongering perpetrated by right-wing fundamentalist Christian groups and worried citizens in general. Among the most vehement of these counterfeit curmudgeons is the allegedly Christian organization Parents Against Goth, whose website, www.godhatesgoths.com, is a locus for extreme right-wing, fundamentalist views and hyperbolic ranting reinforced with Biblical quotations. For example, concerned parents are encouraged to “make a stand” against Marilyn Manson, warning them, “If we don’t do something now we will be facing Global terrorism by black-clad Satanic youths with Satan in their hearts” (God Hates Goths n.d.). Although these claims may appear to be outlandish, it is pertinent to note that the Youth Outreach Unit in Blue Springs, Missouri, received a $273 000 grant from the US government in 2002 “to ‘combat’ the Goth culture” in their young people (Howard 2004). Instrumental in securing the grant for the city was US Republican Senator Sam Graves whose “office trumpeted the news proudly in press releases” (Howard 2004). Ironically, Blue Springs “returned $132 000 of the money unused” in 2004, conceding that “they never found much of a ‘problem’ at all associated with the Goth culture, and instead have developed a new understanding and acceptance” (Howard 2004).

Despite the happy ending in Blue Springs, fear and ignorance about Goth subculture continue to persist, and this lack of awareness and, more importantly perhaps, toleration may have contributed to the tragic murder of twenty-year-old Sophie Lancaster in Bacup, Lancashire, UK, in August 2007. Sophie and her boyfriend, Robert Maltby, both Goths, were set upon by a gang of five teenagers in a display of what the trial judge, Anthony Russell QC, described as “feral thuggery” (Williams 2008). Indeed, the couple’s injuries “were so severe paramedics could not tell whether the victims were male or female” (Williams 2008). The only motive for these sadistic and “totally unprovoked” assaults was that “the pair looked different from their attackers” (Williams 2008). In his summing-up, Judge Russell condemned the perpetrators’ behavior as an act “that degrades humanity itself” and “described Goths as ‘peaceful law-abiding people who pose no threat to anybody’” (Williams 2008). It is to be hoped that the widespread publicity
generated by this appalling crime will lead to a more enlightened attitude toward Goths in the future.

Despite the level of misunderstanding about it, Goth subculture is indeed “undead.” It endures and thrives, not only on the streets and in the clubs but also in broader cultural production. The Goth is increasingly becoming a ubiquitous and recognizable figure in mainstream popular fiction. Aside from cult/horror novels such as Lost Souls, in which the proto-vampire Nothing and his youthful coterie in Missing Mile affect “black eyeliner and smudged red lipstick” (Brite 1994: 33), the crime novels of Mark Billingham feature the explicitly identified “Queer as fuck” and “gregarious goth pathologist” Dr. Phil Hendricks, typified by his “pony-tail” (later, a shaved head), a “dark sense of humour,” “tattoos,” a “pencil for extravagant headgear,” “dark clothes,” and “a startling collection of facial piercings” (Billingham 2002a: 310, 63, 62, 63; 2002b: 14). In his professional role, Hendricks enjoys “cosy chats about death and dismemberment” with his friend and colleague Detective Inspector Tom Thorne (Billingham 2007: 54). As a Goth, the pathologist’s interest in the darker side of human nature and experience is legitimized in his capacity as “the civilian member” of “Team 3, Serious Crime Group (West)” (Billingham 2002b: 14, 13). Within the context of Billingham’s novels, Hendricks is a fascinating figure inasmuch as he represents a positive portrayal of a much-maligned group. He is “an imposing, even aggressive”-looking subcultural Other, working for the ultra-establishment Metropolitan Police, whose macabre interests and clinical expertise benefit wider, conventional society (Billingham 2007: 53). In the performance of his duties, Hendricks identifies the signatures and homicidal modes that help the police to capture and convict individuals that pose a genuine danger to the public, in stark contrast to the (largely unsubstantiated) perceptions of threat encapsulated by the “floor-length black leather coat” that he wears (Billingham 2002b: 31).

SEE ALSO: Brite, Poppy Z.; Crime; Music; Popular Culture; Vampire Fiction.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING

Gothic 1900 to 1950

MATT FOLEY

A consideration of how the Gothic literary mode manifests itself between 1900 and 1950 involves a number of threads that challenge, question, complement, overlap, and oppose each other. Strangely, it is the work of a writer often thought of as beyond categorization that provides a way into untangling these threads. In *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1935), H. P. Lovecraft dedicates his final chapter to eulogizing the “masters” of the contemporary tale of horror. He begins by suggesting that the best horror-tales of today, profiting by the long evolution of the type, possess a naturalness, convincingness, artistic smoothness, and skilful intensity of appeal quite beyond comparison with anything in the Gothic work of a century or more ago. Technique, craftsmanship, experience, and psychological knowledge have advanced tremendously with the passing years, so that much of the older work seems naïve and artificial. (Lovecraft 1973: 87)

As evocative as this argument may be, it is not a matter here of agreeing with Lovecraft, but rather of highlighting his focus on “artistic smoothness” and its achievement through “technique, craftsmanship, experience, and psychological knowledge.” Discussing Gothic 1900–50 in terms of “technique,” “craftsmanship,” and “psychological knowledge” helps bring together some of the central literary issues of the age and allows us to consider the literary attempts of the era to refine the received Gothic heritage and not simply to regurgitate it. Lovecraft’s highlighting of “experience” remains, however, somewhat problematic. Henry James, Bram Stoker, and Vernon Lee were all experienced writers by the turn of the twentieth century, but all published their standout works of terror and mystery in the final decade of the nineteenth: James’ *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), and Lee’s collection *Hauntings* (1890). The exception to this is perhaps the prolific Arthur Machen’s much lauded later work *The Hill of Dreams* (1907) and, indeed, Lovecraft held Machen in high regard as one of the “masters” of the weird tale.

In recent scholarly work there has been an increased focus on the Gothic’s relationship to a literary mode that often made grand claims regarding its high “new” artistry: modernism (see modernism). Attempts to understand the intersections of modernism and the Gothic are still in their infancy. Headway has been made in two essay collections (Smith and Wallace 2001; Riquelme, 2008) and these studies make clear that initial assumptions that the Gothic and modernism do not share concerns are now somewhat redundant. The work of the American writer Djuna Barnes provides one of the clearest modernist appropriations of a dark and macabre Gothic language. Barnes found and polished her creative voice in her late teens and twenties through experimentation with short Gothic poems. Her first published poem, “The Dreamer” (1911), depicts “ever-darkening shades” of night that “grope, with eerie fingers for the window” (2005: 23) and there is a creeping, effective terror at work. However, it is in her much later and more accomplished poem “Six Songs of Khalidine” (2005: 86) that Barnes’ signature merging of the macabre (see macabre, the) and the sexual becomes prominent. The poem employs Gothic imagery, in this case the vampiric and the somnambulistic, as an expression of lesbian desire but also to figure the impossibility of ever satiating such excessive, consuming longing. Her darkly decadent novella *Nightwood* (1938) is her most sustained and accomplished rendering of this approach. *Nightwood* figures not only a cyclic frustration of the
fulfillment of desire but combines this with a melancholic and macabre existentialism in the prevalence of the despair and melancholia of the dismayed protagonists. These modernist concerns are rendered in a darkly poetic style that gained the approval of T. S. Eliot, who published and penned a foreword for Barnes.

Through its aesthetic and thematic concerns, Barnes’ work provides a meeting point between the modernist and Gothic. Joseph Conrad is another writer whose work disrupts any supposed absolute opposition between these modes. Although traditionally canonized as an early modernist, he has been read through both a Gothic lens and as a purveyor of Imperial Gothic (see imperial gothic). In particular, the unnerving journey into the field of the Other staged in *Heart of Darkness* (1902) indicates the propensity of a Gothic language to emerge in descriptions of explorations of the unknown. His contemporaries, too, noted Conrad’s skill for staging different registers of disorientation and anxiety. Edith Birkhead, in her 1921 pioneering study *The Tale of Terror*, cites Conrad’s novella *The Shadow Line* (1917) as demonstrating “his supreme mastery over inexpressible mystery and nameless terror” (2008: 215). Birkhead goes on to finish her analysis of Conrad with a flourish: “Conrad touches unfathomable depths of human feelings, and in his hands the tale of terror becomes a finished work of art.” This recalls Lovecraft’s claim that the weird tale is capable of being taken seriously as “art” and yet also suggests that modernist artistry can enhance the tale of terror, rendering it in shades and tones that resist formalistic repetition.

However, in spite of this complicating of the differences between modernism and the Gothic it is clear that certain writers did promote an antagonism between the respective camps. The supposed opposition between the two modes has its roots in the attitude of Woolf, on the modernist side, and Lovecraft on the other. Lovecraft’s writing consciously positions itself outside modernism (Spooner 2007: 38) and his work remains testament to the artistic force the weird tale is capable of without the modernist focus on the everyday and stream of consciousness. However unfairly, the Gothic mode in general has been accused of relying upon, and shabbily reworking, a series of tropes (for example, the haunted castle, the vampire, the werewolf, the Radcliffean heroine, and more) in a lowbrow, sensationalist way. Taking this view it would seem that the Gothic goes against the modernist desire to “make new” and to produce a highbrow literature focused upon an intricately rendered interiority that is part of a more general aim to produce a literature somehow “truer” than what went before. Virginia Woolf maintains this distinction with particular force. In a review of Edith Birkhead’s 1921 study, quoted above, Woolf writes that

the skull-headed lady, the vampire gentleman, the whole troop of monks and monsters who once froze and terrified now gibber in some dark cupboard of the servant’s hall. In our day we flatter ourselves that the effect is produced by subtler means. It is at the ghosts within we shudder, and not at the decaying bodies of barons or the subterranean activities of ghouls. Yet the desire to widen our boundaries, to feel excitement without danger, and to escape as far as possible from the facts of life drives us perpetually to trifle with the risky ingredients of the mysterious and the unknown. (Woolf 1971a: 306–7)

A fault line is certainly drawn here between the Gothic and modernism. Woolf, though, as if blind to how the Gothic may be appropriated or reworked, focuses her attacks on Gothic romance and sweeps over Birkhead’s canonizing of a more modern Gothic movement. She is not, however, dismissive entirely of the “mysterious” and the “unknown,” and her fiction does stage both the supernatural and the terrifying. Her novella *Orlando* (1928) figures not only an immortal being as its protagonist but one that also magically transgresses gender. In addition, in spite of Woolf’s complaint over the seemingly overworked tropes of the Gothic mode, she figures her own “modern” version of the Gothic ghost of the quotidian in her short story “A Haunted House” (1921) (see ghost
The dizzying myriad of perspectives creates a narrative of dislocation and, in turn, undermines the certainty of subjectivity in readers themselves.

The ghost stories of Henry James had a particular influence over Woolf and she judged at least some of them highly. In spite of her exaggerated comment that James' “The Great Good Place” (1900) was to her, writing in 1921, a failure (1971b: 320), she was complimentary of his attempts to find a new point to exploit in the armor of the modern reader in order to frighten and disorientate. James was a central figure of the American literary movement and one of his many close correspondents was the American short story writer and novelist Edith Wharton (see wharton, edith). Wharton is one of the most accomplished purveyors of the ghost story of her generation and published several short stories and novels from the turn of the century until her death in 1937. Indeed, her 1937 short story collection *Ghosts* is perhaps her most notable. In her preface she argues that the continuing appeal of the medium of the ghost story, in spite of its refinement, was in danger because “the faculty required for their enjoyment has become almost atrophied in modern man” (1973: 8). This perhaps provides an explanation as to why Wharton’s standout novels *The House of Mirth* (1905) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920), and not her ghost stories, have become her best known works in the modern American literary context.

In attempting coherently to canonize a particularly American Gothic in the first half of the twentieth century any scholar comes up against the problem of categorizing the work of H. P. Lovecraft (see lovecraft, h. p. (howard phillips)). Lovecraft’s stories are testament to the possible power of an embattled and insulated imagination. His unfettered flights of fancy gave birth to an entire mythology that has been employed and expanded upon by a legion of writers, including Robert Bloch, the author of *Psycho* (1959). Indeed, Bloch at an early age corresponded with the older, established Lovecraft and, in spite of Lovecraft’s dislike for much of what humanity had to offer him, he responded in detail to his youthful apprentice. The French author Michel Houellebecq (2006) claims that Lovecraft penned eight “great texts”: “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926), “The Colour Out of Space” (1927), “The Dunwich Horror” (1928), “The Whisper of Darkness” (1930), “At the Mountains of Madness” (1931), “The Dreams in the Witch House” (1932), “The Shadow Over Innsmouth” (1932), and “The Shadow Out of Time” (1934). Stephen King endorses this list (Houellebecq 2006: 12) and, while other works are available, these give new readers of Lovecraft an introduction to his intoxicating style and mythology.

One of the writers Lovecraft most admired was English spiritualist Algernon Blackwood (see blackwood, algernon). Blackwood’s work is indicative of the fact that the short tale of terror did not simply survive in the first half of the twentieth century but was a medium through which many of the most accomplished writers of the supernatural and the strange excelled. In particular, “The Man Whom The Trees Loved” and “The Willows” (Blackwood 2009) exemplify Blackwood’s ability to render the uncanny through exposing, and bringing to the fore, the unfathomable in nature (Punter 1996). His works often foreground a menacing, nonverbal relationship between speaking human beings, who both rely on the edifice of language and are restricted by it, and the unintelligible natural world. Blackwood’s trick is to personify nature so as to foreground its animalistic and primary attributes in order to reflect this back upon humanity and confront the subject with its own inhumanity and barbarianism. There is at work a throwing away of the veil of language and an exposure of the anxieties that this engenders. In “The Willows” we are placed in the register of exploration, and parallels can be drawn with the uncharted terror of Conrad’s work that embodies the concerns of Imperial Gothic. However, “The Willows” does not so much stage a colonizing or recolonizing of an area already explored but the narrator breaks new ground into a realm
of complete Otherness – an isolated island on the Danube. Creatures that resemble humanity inhabit this environment but there is something in their shape, practices, and physical appearance that problematizes and infects any identification of them as being purely human. This recalls Kelly Hurley’s theory of the “abhuman,” in which she argues that the Gothic of the Victorian period, the fin de siècle, and early twentieth century often figures a monstrosity that operates in the liminal space between what it means to be human and inhuman. In turn, “this confounds one’s ability to make sense of the world” (Hurley 2002: 190). In much of the work of Blackwood, as Punter (1996) has noted, nature is only a threat if it is somehow disturbed or infringed upon. In “The Man Whom The Trees Loved,” becoming one with nature as an alternative to marital stagnation is almost irresistible for the protagonist David Bittacy. The story renders a Freudian understanding of the uncanny where the home space, the domestic environment, is made unhomely through invasion, and as a result becomes an unfamiliar space of terror. Blackwood makes nature the vehicle for the invasion of domesticity by once more combining its unfathomableness with a personification technique that foregrounds instinctive aspects of the human, aspects that escape language and resist meaning.

Some of Blackwood’s work seems to “make new” the tale of terror or at least push its psychological and conceptual boundaries and, as noted, the unsettling short story had many accomplished writers between 1900 and 1950 including May Sinclair, in Uncanny Stories (1923), and Walter de la Mare, in The Connoisseur and Other Stories (1926). However, the work of M. R. James (see James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes)), one of the most prominent ghost story writers of his genre, has been critiqued in some academic circles because of its formalistic nature (Punter 1996), although his ability to surprise has also been noted (Smith 2007: 124). Many of James’ short stories do, however, follow a similar pattern and involve characters, usually academics or antiquarians, that we are given very little psychological access to as readers. There is no doubt that James’ tales unsettle and his influence at Cambridge University where he studied certainly impacted upon other writers such as E. F. Benson. Perhaps a more varied take on the ghost story can be seen in Cynthia Asquith’s Ghost Book collections. Asquith, secretary to J. M. Barrie and an accomplished short story writer in her own right, edited and organized three volumes of her Ghost Book. The first volume was published in 1927 and the entire series includes contributions from De La Mare, Elizabeth Bowen, and Asquith herself.

The Anglo-Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen’s own collection The Demon Lovers, and Other Stories (1945) is notable for its staging of the “hallucinatory strangeness engendered by war” (Punter and Byron 2004: 93) and contains the stories that perhaps form her clearest contribution to any notion of a Gothic canon. However, Bowen was also an accomplished novelist and, in particular, The House in Paris (1935) and The Death of the Heart (1938) are rendered in a haunting, unhomely atmosphere that works to resurrect the link between Gothic and the love story. In The House in Paris there is also a rendering of a Freudian mother, or at least mother figure, who acts as an overbearing superego that restricts the uncertain heroine’s desires for physical expressions of her love. The British and Irish literary community was all too aware of the work of Sigmund Freud in the early twentieth century: Freud was published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press, and his influence persists in Gothic scholarly circles today. In particular his essays on “Mourning and Melancholia” (1915) and “The Uncanny” (1919) still provide a way, often in revised form, of understanding some of the Gothic’s key concerns: the hysteric subject, the rendering of unhomely and disorientating atmospheres, and an intrinsic inability to mourn.

With Bowen, though, we begin to move away from the short story of the era into the troublesome question of how the motifs, tropes, and concerns of the early Gothic novel,
having already morphed through Victorian appropriations, find an altered form and voice in a kind of “new” Gothic novel in the period 1900–50. It may be possible to read something like Arnold Bennett’s Hugo (1906) as a close reproduction of the concerns of the Gothic romance, albeit updated into a contemporary setting. Edith Birkhead suggests that Hugo may be read as a modernised version of the Gothic romance. Instead of subterranean vaults in a deserted abbey, we have the strong rooms of an enterprising Sloane Street emporium. The coffin, containing an image of the heroine, is buried not in a mouldering chapel, but in a suburban cemetery. (Birkhead 2008: 214)

The problem is that Hugo suffers from many of the technical faults that Lovecraft identified in some of the early Gothic, in spite of his admiration for Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis, and it certainly cannot be read as a refinement of the Gothic novel. However, in the work of Daphne Du Maurier, Djuna Barnes, Mervyn Peake, and William Faulkner there is an aesthetic of terror so highly stylized that it cannot be said to mirror the Gothic romance, and yet these texts do employ a number of Gothic tropes and fictional devices familiar to terror. Faulkner’s pioneering Southern Gothic (see Faulkner, William) exposes a lurid, violent, and macabre underbelly of American life and finds its voice with particular force in his novels Sanctuary (1931) and Absalom! Absalom! (1936). Faulkner also produced a number of Gothic short stories, perhaps most notably “A Rose for Emily” (1930), which exposes the prejudices of Southern life (see Southern Gothic) through relating the haunting story of an elderly spinster Emily Giersen. While Faulkner’s work is seen as emblematic, the novels of Mervyn Peake, particularly his Gormenghast trilogy, are somewhat harder to categorize. The trilogy’s first two installments, Titus Groan (1946) and Gormenghast (1950), are generally regarded as Peake’s most accomplished works. However, they remain brilliant oddities in their highly visual and imaginative mixing of Tolkienesque fantasy, Gothic spaces, and poetic prose. Gormenghast, the castle where much of the narrative unfolds, is rendered in strokes both delicate and bold, and personifications are redoubled: “Autumn returned to Gormenghast like a dark spirit re-entering its stronghold. Its breath could be felt in forgotten corridors, Gormenghast had itself become autumn [...] The crumbling castle, looming among the mists, exhaled the season, and every cold stone breathed it out” (1972: 196). There is a clear sense that the imaginative architecture of Gormenghast relies upon a carefully crafted rendering of the trope of the haunted castle that was first figured in Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764).

In Daphne Du Maurier’s Rebecca (1938) there can be found the echo of more than just Gothic spaces (see Du Maurier, Daphne). There is a resemblance to the tyrannical Gothic villain in the antagonistic character of Maximilian De Winter, and Du Maurier’s plot also, on some levels, recalls the Gothic elements of Brontë in Jane Eyre. The narrator of Rebecca, who remains unnamed, is whisked away by De Winter from her employment as companion to a conceited American socialite to De Winter’s alluring country estate Manderley. The heroine hears of the legacy of De Winter’s deceased first wife Rebecca and is indoctrinated into a forced doubling by De Winter through his attempts to fashion her as the deceased. In spite of their obvious effect, it is not just the appropriation and reworking of a Gothic plot or tropes that makes Rebecca such a powerful read. It is Du Maurier’s skill in rendering a stylized aesthetic that allows Rebecca to approach the definition of artistry Lovecraft puts forward. Rebecca endures because it is a clever complication and contemporization of Gothic staples delivered with craft and suspense. Alfred Hitchcock, giant of suspenseful cinema, filmed Rebecca (1940) to much critical acclaim, winning an Oscar for Best Picture. A year earlier he made a lesser-known version (1939) of Du Maurier’s novel Jamaica Inn (1936). The final film in his
trilogy of Du Maurier adaptations is *The Birds* (1963), a reimagining of Du Maurier’s novella of the same name that she included in her collection *The Apple Tree* (1952).

Staying in the first half of the twentieth century, however, the Gothic literary mode clearly spawned a number of adaptations, often not wholly faithful to the plot of the original stories, which worked to canonize a distinct set of iconic images in the popular imagination. The two directorial giants of the cinematic tale of terror in the 1930s, a time when cinema cemented its place in the mainstream, were James Whale and Tod Browning. Whale’s version of *Frankenstein* (1931), which differs vastly from Mary Shelley’s original novel, cemented the image of Boris Karloff’s lumbering yet sympathetic monster into pop culture. Whale made a number of films with Universal Studios, including the sequel *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). His works are partly derivative of experimental German Expressionism, a standout influence being Robert Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), which, through its use of embedded narrative and staging of somnambulism, certainly has Gothic credentials of its own. Whale’s contemporary Tod Browning also experimented within his medium, particularly in *Freaks* (1932), which plays upon the horror of the freakish body in order to distort any supposed links between outer beauty and inner morality. Browning’s best known film is his version of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1931) starring Bela Lugosi as the Count, and also notable is his earlier work *London After Midnight* (1927), which has become a cult classic. However, it is his version of *Dracula* and Whale’s *Frankenstein* that have had the most significant influence over the popular imagination, alongside films such as F. W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922), Rupert Julian’s *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), Robert Mamoulian’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), Victor Halperin’s *White Zombie* (1932), and George Waggoner’s *The Wolf Man* (1941). Particularly recognizable in this list from a modern perspective are Mamoulian’s reworking of Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), which has had the most screen adaptations of any literary work, and Julian’s take on Gaston Leroux’s *The Phantom of the Opera* (1910). Leroux’s tale of monstrosity, possession, and love has flourished in the popular imagination since it was first serialized in the French newspaper *Le Gaulois* between 1909 and 1910. To date, Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical adaptation remains its best known incarnation.

One film that has slipped under any popular canonization, but is of interest here for its staging of a return of the dead, is Abel Gance’s poignant World War I piece *J’accuse* (1919). In the closing scenes of the film the hero Jean Diaz, a poet-soldier wounded in the fighting, escapes the confines of a hospital to tell his fellow villagers of a haunting dream. In staging Diaz’s dream Gance visualizes a cacophony of soldiers’ corpses rising from a series of graves that are located in a battlefield cemetery and engulfed by tumultuous black cloud. Historian and critic Jay Winter argues that the scene’s “force is made even more poignant when we realize that most of the men we see on the screen were actually French soldiers lent to Gance” (2009: 15). An important issue is raised in Winter’s reading. The problem of discussing examples of Great War art as Gothic is located in this tension between realism and artifice. Winter suggests that the fictional is made more poignant by its proximity to reality, but does canonizing war art as Gothic somehow undermine its power? Not, perhaps, as long as a clear distinction is made between the atrocities of World War I and the more subjective artistic imaginings of it. In the trench sketches of Otto Dix, particularly in the likes of “The Skull,” “The Soldier,” and “Corpse in Barbed Wire,” all collected in his 1924 portfolio *Der Krieg* (War) (1924), there is certainly a Gothic imagination at work in the exaggerated rendering of decaying skulls and zombified soldiers. What Dix provides is not so much reportage but a fusion of imagination and memory that creates a distinctly terrifying piece of art. Taking this line leads even toward a consideration of a section of the best known of all war
poems, “Dulce et Decorum Est” (1917) by Wilfred Owen:

Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

(Owen 1990: 117)

This shift in register in the poem from an atrocious event to this imagined but terrifying dream perhaps suggests the field where a Gothic imagination works in relation to the war. It is a haunting of the subject through memory that may find its vent in an expressionist art that is more concerned with the exaggerated spaces and images of a traumatized mind than rendering exactly the real, traumatically overwhelming event itself.

Gothic, in its many literary manifestations, is clearly a literature of trauma and excess. However, some of the most accomplished works of the first half of the twentieth century employ a sustained Gothic language in a way that shows that the overwhelming can be crafted. In the most refined work of Barnes, Blackwood, Conrad, Bowen, and Du Maurier there is an appropriation of Gothic language and tropes, influenced more by their Victorian precursors than by the original period of the Gothic romance, which delivers suspense, terror, and the uncanny. Even Woolf, critical as she was of the Gothic, does “make new” the ghost story in “A Haunted House” and in spite of the seeming opposition between her and Lovecraft they both aim, in vastly different ways, to create a form of artistry delivered in a stylized aesthetic. The Gothic tradition of the ghost story is one that perhaps remains formalistic in the work of M. R. James but writers in the genre who attempt to incorporate contemporary understandings of psychology, like Wharton and Bowen, in spite of an element of predictability in plot, do show that it is possible to be progressive in even the most worked-in of genres. Perhaps Gothic 1900–50 lacks a prolific Gothic literary superstar – an Ann Radcliffe, an Edgar Allan Poe, or a Stephen King – but there is clearly a rich vein of work waiting to be found by the reader willing to explore the era and all its complexities. To quote Lovecraft once more, there are Gothic stories of “technique,” “craftsmanship,” and “psychological knowledge” to be enjoyed.

SEE ALSO: Blackwood, Algernon; du Maurier, Daphne; Faulkner, William; Ghost Stories; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); Imperial Gothic; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Macabre, The; Modernism; Southern Gothic; Wharton, Edith.

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**Gothic 1950 to the Present**

**CATHERINE SPOONER**

“We live in Gothic times,” asserted Angela Carter in 1974, a much-quoted statement that has come to define the postwar era (Carter 1995: 460). Gothic has become incrementally more prevalent in Western culture as the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have gone on. By the end of the twentieth century it was arguably more popular, and certainly more diverse, than it had ever been since the peak of the Gothic novel’s production in the 1790s. As a result it is difficult to impose a single narrative on postwar Gothic: rather, it has developed in a multitude of different and sometimes overlapping directions. The main distinguishing features of Gothic in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, however, are extreme generic hybridity, hermeneutical self-awareness, and globalization.

The story of Gothic fiction in the postwar period is in many ways the story of postmodernism: the reclaiming of popular genres, and their incorporation into the literary (see contemporary gothic). Gothic has always been a hybrid genre – what Horace Walpole called a blend of “the two kinds of romance: the ancient and the modern” (Walpole 1968: 43). As the twentieth century wore on, however,
Gothic texts became increasingly hybridized with romance, science fiction, crime fiction, and a plethora of other genres, to the point that the term Gothic became progressively more difficult to pin down. Gothic discourses were increasingly mobile and dispersed, leaving traces on a range of texts, media, and artifacts that challenged conventional definitions of the genre. New subgenres such as Cyberpunk, Splatterpunk, Steampunk, and the New Weird were not always recognized as Gothic by critics and fans but had clear thematic or stylistic links to established generic conventions. Simultaneously, the shift across media from literature and film to television, music, fashion, art, and lifestyle products meant that the definition of Gothic was continually stretched and expanded in new ways. Echoing Carter’s observation, some critics observed that Gothic narratives were played out in Western culture itself. Mark Edmundson suggested that:

Gothic is alive [...] in media renderings of the O. J. Simpson case, in our political discourse, in our modes of therapy, on TV news, on talk shows like Oprah, in our discussions of AIDS and of the environment. American culture at large has become suffused with Gothic assumptions, with Gothic characters and plots. (Edmundson 1999: xii)

The pre-eminence of Gothic in the later twentieth century was also reflected by the rise of Gothic Studies within the academy. Prior to the 1970s, Gothic had remained a highly specialized and marginalized area of study, discussed in isolated works such as Devendra Varma’s The Gothic Flame (1957) and Maurice Lévy’s Le Roman Gothique anglais (1968) (see criticism). With the emergence of literary feminism and the restoration of previously overlooked women writers to the canon, the “female Gothic” became a wider object of concern within the academy, with key works including Ellen Moers’ Literary Women (1976), Coral Ann Howells’ Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction (1978), and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s The Madwoman in the Attic (1979) (see female gothic). The process of legitimization was consolidated by the publication of David Punter’s The Literature of Terror in 1980: Punter’s scholarly survey of Gothic from its origins in graveyard poetry and sentimental fiction to the modern horror film demonstrated the breadth and seriousness of the field and opened it up for a new generation of critics. Early approaches to Gothic were mainly feminist and/or psychoanalytic. In the 1990s, there was a return to historicism influenced by the ascent of Foucault; in the 2000s, “hauntologies” derived from Derrida’s Specters of Marx (1993) were increasingly pre-eminent, as was an interest in trauma theory derived from Cathy Caruth among others (see theory). Of course, such broad strokes cannot do justice to the wealth of critical writing on the Gothic produced in the period. Importantly, however, authors were no longer writing in a critical vacuum, and in many cases showed vivid self-awareness of both the Gothic literary tradition, and its theoretical subtexts.

This self-consciousness of its own nature has led to one of the most persistent critical debates concerning contemporary Gothic: whether Gothic writing has reached a dead end and is doomed to mindlessly repeat its conventions to increasingly diminished returns, or whether it continues to be a vital and meaningful force in contemporary culture. Fred Botting has repeatedly declared the exhaustion of Gothic, arguing that “Gothic fiction, which served as earlier modernity’s black hole and has served up a range of objects and figures crystallizing anxiety into fear, has become too familiar after two centuries of repetitive mutation and seems incapable of shocking anew” (Botting 2002: 298). For Botting, Gothic once served to convey specific cultural anxieties linked to the emergence of capitalism and bourgeois identity but now can only reveal generalized anxiety linked to the endless recycling of images and the absence of meaning that underlies it. He argues that Gothic fictions can no longer offer us a progressive vision of the future once the shackles of the barbaric past have been thrown off, as no future can be imagined beyond this morbid recirculation of images and effects. In some respects, however,
Botting’s position reiterates critical assessments of Gothic’s redundancy from the 1790s onwards, which have only been rendered invalid with the benefit of hindsight.

Finally, in the twenty-first century, postcolonial and transcultural theory increasingly drew attention to uses of the Gothic in non-Anglophone traditions, as well as by English-speaking writers outside of Britain and the USA. The mediation of Gothic through global distribution networks, or what Glennis Byron has termed the “global Gothic” (Byron 2008), has led to the emergence of new Gothic modes, as well as the recirculation and repackaging of many of the old. Although the current entry focuses on Anglophone writing, it is implicitly shaped by the diversification and globalization of the Gothic impulse since the 1950s, and should be understood in that context.

Perhaps the key transitional text from prewar to postwar Gothic is Mervyn Peake’s *Gormenghast* trilogy, comprising *Titus Groan* (1946), *Gormenghast* (1950), and *Titus Alone* (1959). The first two novels are set in a fantastic, decaying castle in which an eccentric ruling family follow antiquated, baroque customs, until scheming parvenu Steerpike and rebellious heir Titus contribute in their respective ways to the collapse of the ancient regime. *Gormenghast* simultaneously looks back at the Victorian novel with its Dickensian prose and intricate, multilayered picture of a social world, and forward toward postmodernism and fantasy writing. Peake’s childhood in China influenced his view of an intensely hierarchical and ritualized society, while his experiences as one of the first visitors to Belsen in his role as an official war artist imbued the text with a muted sense of trauma.

Despite the significance of Peake and the publication of important texts by Daphne du Maurier including *My Cousin Rachel* (1951) and the short story “The Birds” (1952), the 1950s was not a key time for Gothic writing in Britain. During the so-called age of austerity, the dominant genre was realism, and Gothic failed to match the prevailing mood. In America, on the other hand, the “Southern Gothic” tradition established earlier in the century was still vital. William Faulkner continued publishing until his death in 1962, and other classics from the decade include Carson McCullers’ *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1951), Flannery O’Connor’s *Wise Blood* (1952) and *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (1955), Davis Grubb’s *Night of the Hunter* (1953), Tennessee Williams’ *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), and William March’s pulp shoker *The Bad Seed* (1954). These texts characteristically explored racial tensions, dysfunctional families, and other kinds of oppressive inheritances amid a heightened atmosphere of sex, death, madness, and grotesquerie. Southern Gothic remains a recognizable subgenre with recent examples including Nick Cave’s *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (1989) and Donna Tartt’s *The Little Friend* (2002) (see *southern gothic*).

Other American texts evoked the different sensibilities of New England and the mid-West. Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible* (1952) used the Salem witch trials as a metaphor for the contemporary moral panic concerning Communism. Although not conventionally read as a Gothic text, it clearly drew on an American Gothic preoccupied with historic traumas, persecution, and claustrophobic small communities, established by the likes of Nathaniel Hawthorne in the nineteenth century (see *american gothic; new england gothic*). Shirley Jackson reworked similar concerns in fiction in *The Lottery* (1949), *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962). Finally, Robert Bloch’s *Psycho* (1959), adapted into the classic film by Alfred Hitchcock a year later, drew on the infamous case of serial killer Ed Gein and played a large part in cementing the place of the serial killer in the American popular imagination. Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* (1966), an early example of the nonfiction novel, trod similar territory. Its account of the bloody and apparently motiveless murder of a Kansas farming family captured the national preoccupation with violated families, excessive crime, and small town isolation for a new generation.
Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, “Gothic Romance” novels by the likes of Victoria Holt (the pseudonym of Eleanor Hibbert) flourished. These novels replayed the conventions of female Gothic, particularly as written by the Brontës, for a mass-market audience. Elsewhere, female Gothic was given a literary reworking in John Fowles’ *The Collector* (1963), in which a working-class man abducts and imprisons a middle-class art school student, and in Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), a prequel to *Jane Eyre* telling the story of the first Mrs. Rochester. Rhys’ novel was remarkable for its Caribbean setting, making it one of the earliest examples of postcolonial Gothic as well as a precursor of neo-Victorian fiction (see postcolonial gothic).

The later 1960s marked the beginning of the writing careers of Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood, feminist writers who have had an immeasurable influence on the subsequent development of Gothic fiction. In *Shadow Dance* (1966) and *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), Carter portrayed a contemporary urban landscape suffused with dark eroticism, macabre imagery, and a hallucinogenic intensity. *Love* (1971) ended this first cycle of her work with its brutal exposure of the dark side of 1960s idealism. In *The Edible Woman* (1969), Atwood also relocated female Gothic to the present, exploring its heroine Marian’s identity crisis through her resistance to food.

In an entirely different register, Ira Levin’s *Rosemary’s Baby* (1967), a best-selling novel of next-door Satanism subsequently filmed by Roman Polanski (1968), conferred respectability on the horror novel. The 1970s was a period of blockbuster horror, with landmark texts including William Peter Blatty’s *The Exorcist* (1971), filmed by William Friedkin in 1973, and numerous texts by Stephen King including *Carrie* (1974), ’Salem’s Lot (1975), and *The Shining* (1978), all given an afterlife by successful film adaptations. King was to top best-seller lists throughout subsequent decades, becoming America’s most successful living author. His success was almost matched, however, by Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles*, the first of which, *Interview With the Vampire*, was published in 1976. Rice’s epic (and increasingly bombastic) saga irrevocably altered both the popular representation of vampires, who became increasingly portrayed as sympathetic or aspirational figures, and the horror market, paving the way for what was to become known as urban fantasy. The other major best-selling writer of note from this period is Virginia Andrews, whose *Flowers in the Attic* (1979) and its sequels told the Gothic family saga of the incestuous Dollanganger children. In exemplary Gothic fashion, novels by Andrews have continued to appear since her death from breast cancer in 1986, ghost-written by Andrew Neiderman (see horror fiction).

Feminist reworkings of the Gothic grew in prominence throughout the 1970s. Carter’s *Fireworks* (1974) included an influential manifesto for the modern Gothic which claimed “its only moral responsibility is to provoke unease” (Carter 1995: 459), while *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffmann* (1972) and *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) saw her experimenting with generic hybridity, merging Gothic with fantasy and science fiction. Her most influential work from this period, however, was *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), which rewrote traditional fairy tales in order to deconstruct their pernicious sexual politics. Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing* (1972) dramatized a confrontation with the wilderness and personal past that sends its protagonist spiraling into madness. Emma Tennant’s *The Bad Sister* (1978) rewrote James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) from a feminist perspective, a strategy she was to repeat in 1989 with *Two Women of London*, a retelling of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). By 1983, Fay Weldon’s *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* could be described as postfeminist, in its story of an ugly and ill-treated wife who reconstructs her identity via plastic surgery and sexual manipulation in order to destroy her husband and his mistress’ lives.

Gothic in the 1980s went several ways. On the one hand, the best-selling novels of King,
Rice, Andrews, and their peers continued to be big business. The range of horror fiction was extended by Clive Barker's *The Hellbound Heart* (1986), with its invention of the infernal world of the Cenobites and accompanying sadomasochistic imagery. Barker's work heralded a new explicitness in horror fiction, and was central to the Splatterpunk movement, which mixed extreme violence and gore with subcultural sensibilities. On the other hand, Gothic began to attain major literary acclaim with the publication of several award-winning novels that drew on Gothic imagery and conventions in order to depict the effects of historical trauma. Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (1984), which is rooted in Maori culture, was awarded the Booker Prize in 1985. Salman Rushdie's *Shame* was shortlisted for the same prize in 1983; it is his most overtly Gothic novel, set in a thinly fictionalized Pakistan, terrorized by a monstrous female figure who represents the return of the repressed and the oppressed. Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) also wove Gothic into its dazzling tapestry of literary references and has been described by Maria Beville as an example of what she calls "Gothic-postmodernism," a distinct mode from postmodern Gothic, organized around a shared concern with "terror and with encountering the unrepresentable in sublime experience" (Beville 2009: 9). However, the novel that perhaps had the most impact on the development of literary Gothic was Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1988, and a contributing factor in Morrison's receipt of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. *Beloved* was based on the true story of Margaret Garner, an escaped slave who murdered her own baby daughter rather than have her recaptured into slavery. Morrison depicts her protagonist, Sethe, as haunted by both the remembered traumas of slavery and the ghost of her daughter, who returns first as a spiteful poltergeist, and then as a strange young woman of the age her daughter would have been, who infiltrates Sethe's family and takes over her life. This young woman additionally embodies the traumas of the middle passage, the fragmented scraps of her first-person narrative appearing to recall horrific images of imprisonment on a slave ship.

The 1980s also saw the development of a type of Gothic that was literary but not respectable; complex and sophisticated but liable either to cause offence or simply pass under the radar of the literary establishment. Carter's wildly carnivalesque *Nights at the Circus* infamously failed to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1984, despite being subsequently recognized as one of the key British novels of the 1980s in any genre. Its mixture of Gothic excess, baroque overwriting, and earthy humor was the antithesis of that year's winner, Anita Brookner's tastefully elegiac *Hotel du Lac*. Similarly, Scottish novelist Iain Banks' *The Wasp Factory* created critical outrage on its publication in 1984, with the *Irish Times* describing it as "a work of unparalleled depravity" and the *Sunday Express* as "the lurid literary equivalent of a video nasty" (Banks 1990: cited in end matter). Banks' novel is a rewrite of *Frankenstein* (1818, 1831) in which the protagonist, Frank, is the result of his father's radical gender experiments, playing out a gruesomely violent, hypermasculine identity on a remote Scottish island. Like Carter, Banks is a wickedly funny and irreverent writer, and the mix of horror and humor appeared to be one element in critics' unease with the novel. American versions of the comic Gothic appeared in Joyce Carol Oates' *Bellefleur* (1980) and *A Bloodsmoor Romance* (1982), and Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* (1989), the hyperbolically grotesque tale of a family of traveling sideshow freaks, which became a cult classic.

The other important trend in the 1980s was the increasing Gothicism of science fiction. William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) is credited, along with Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* (1982), with launching the subgenre of "Cyberpunk," in which dystopian urban environments, an accelerated consumer culture, augmented human bodies, and advanced digital technologies replay Gothic themes such as artificial creation, doubles, and haunting from a science fiction perspective. Gibson was
also responsible, along with Bruce Sterling, for *The Difference Engine* (1990), a less overtly Gothic novel that has nevertheless been credited as one of the major influences on “Steampunk.” In Steampunk fiction, an alternative nineteenth century is imagined in which science fictional technologies of the period are literally true. Although not necessarily Gothic, many classics of the genre such as Alan Moore and Kevin O’Neill’s comic *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (from 1999) draws explicitly on Victorian Gothic narratives to help fashion their fantasy world. Since 2000, another prominent hybrid of Gothic and science fiction is “the New Weird,” a mode influenced by H. P. Lovecraft, and whose most celebrated proponent is China Miéville. Miéville reads the Weird as a kind of anti-Gothic that resists the return of the repressed, arguing that “The Weird […] is starkly opposed to the hauntological. […] The Weird is if anything ab-, not un-, canny” (Miéville 2008: 112–13). In works like *Perdido Street Station* (2000), *The City and the City* (2009), and *Kraken* (2010), Miéville mixed high concept science fiction with grotesque fantasy monsters and claustrophobic urban settings.

Crime fiction, too, became increasingly Gothicized in the 1980s and 1990s, with a wave of transgressor-centered fictions shifting the attention away from the detective process to the criminal mind itself. Thomas Harris’ Hannibal Lecter novels were illustrative, with the charismatic cannibal moving from the fringes of *Red Dragon* (1981) to a progressively larger role in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and *Hannibal* (1999) before himself becoming the traumatized Gothic subject of *Hannibal Rising* (2006). Of all transgressor fictions of this period the most infamous, and influential, was Bret Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho* (1991). Ellis’ depiction of Patrick Bateman, a successful Wall Street investment banker by day and brutal serial killer by night, alternated graphic descriptions of sex, violence, and torture with excessive repetition of brand names, designer labels, and other signifiers of material success, each apparently equally drained of affect. The novel elicited praise and scandal in equal measures, its marketing as “literary” fiction, according to David J. Skal, at least partly responsible for the public outrage, as the novel could not be dismissed under the “genre” label (Skal 1993: 375–6). Other novels in the same vein included Dennis Cooper’s *Frisk* (1991), Patrick McCabe’s *The Butcher Boy* (1992), Joyce Carol Oates’ *Zombie* (1995), and Poppy Z. Brite’s *Exquisite Corpse* (1996). All of these texts were remarkable for a more or less explicit concern with homosexuality, and, in some cases, child sexual abuse. A different angle on extreme violence was provided by Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club* (1996), in which a contemporary crisis in bourgeois masculinity is enacted through both the psychological splitting of the protagonist, and an underground society in which men reconnect with their masculinity through bare-knuckle fighting.

Patrick McGrath and Bradford Morrow announced “The New Gothic” in an anthology of the same title of 1991, arguing for the secularization and psychologization of Gothic fiction: “Now hell is decidedly on earth, located within the vaults and chambers of our own minds” (McGrath and Morrow 1993: xiv). Perhaps the most important Gothic writer of the 1990s to be included in the anthology, however, was McGrath himself. With novels such as *Spider* (1990), *Asylum* (1996), and *Martha Peake* (2000), McGrath created a calculatedly Gothic aesthetic with a pronounced interest in extreme mental illness, a relic of his own upbringing in the grounds of the infamous British hospital for the criminally insane, Broadmoor, where his father was a doctor. Certainly McGrath’s career coincided with an increased interest in Gothic in the wider culture, attributed by many to fin-de-siècle or premillennial unease.

Some of the most important Gothic works of the 1990s were graphic novels. Early into the run of the second series of the horror title *Swamp Thing* (1982–96), DC Comics introduced the “Suggested for mature readers” label, in response to writer Alan Moore’s exploration of adult themes. This led to a renaissance in
Gothic and horror comics, many following Moore’s lead and taking a newly sophisticated literary approach. Neil Gaiman’s *The Sandman* (1989–96) created an epic saga around a family of mythic beings named The Endless, including main protagonist Dream and his cheerful sister Death, both of whom were styled as Goth. *The Sandman* was notable for its complex intertextuality and metafictional games with narrative (see intertext). Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell’s *From Hell* (1991–6) retold the story of fin-de-siècle killer Jack the Ripper as occult conspiracy. Moore’s preoccupation with London’s “psychogeography,” particularly the mystical alignment of Nicholas Hawksmoor’s churches in the East End, drew on Peter Ackroyd’s novel *Hawksmoor* (1985) and Iain Sinclair’s poem sequence *Lud Heat* (1975). Sinclair is often regarded as the foremost contemporary proponent of psychogeography, in which the excavation of the social and psychic histories of predominantly urban spaces has obvious resonance with Gothic. His novel *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings* (1987) also returned to the Ripper narrative, while the nonfictional *Lights Out For the Territory* (1997) and *London Orbital* (2002) uncovered a secret history of London and thus mapped out a new kind of urban Gothic.

Jack the Ripper also played a key role in Kim Newman’s *Anno Dracula* (1992), which describes an alternate history where Van Helsing fails to defeat Dracula, who marries Queen Victoria and founds a (literally) bloodsucking aristocracy. Both *From Hell* and *Anno Dracula* participated in the 1990s boom in neo-Victorian fiction. Although by no means unique to the decade, fiction that revisited the form and subject-matter of the Victorian novel became increasingly Gothic in this period, something that Spooner, after Robert Miles, attributes to the positioning of the Victorian period as a new “Gothic cusp,” expressing “the struggle between incipient modernity and an unenlightened past” (Spooner 2007: 44). Neo-Victorian Gothic characteristically took the form of what Linda Hutcheon has called “historiographic metafiction,” or fiction which is self-conscious of both its own fictional nature and the processes of writing history (Hutcheon 1998). Influenced particularly by Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and the sensation novel, it revolved in uncovering a seedy Victorian underworld of criminals, lunatics, prostitutes, grifters, and showmen, reimagining the occluded voices of excluded Victorian others. Margaret Atwood’s *Alias Grace* (1995) and Sarah Waters’ *Affinity* (1999) and *Fingersmith* (2002) shared an interest in female imprisonment, interrogating the production of historical narratives via feminism, queer theory, and Foucault. Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things* (1992) is a comic rewriting of *Frankenstein* with a female “monster,” in which medical diagrams and portraits jostle with an assortment of found manuscripts. Valerie Martin’s *Mary Reilly* (1990) took the point of view of Dr. Jekyll’s servant, while Peter Carey’s *Jack Maggs* (1998) brought a postcolonial perspective to *Great Expectations*. Other notable texts included Peter Ackroyd’s *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994), Charles Palliser’s *The Quincunx* (1997), and Dan Simmons’ *Drood* (2009).

The 1990s was also distinguished by a renewal of the vampire narrative, stimulated by the box office success of Francis Ford Coppola’s adaptation of *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992) and Neil Jordan’s version of *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). Jewelle Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories* (1991) portrayed a vampire who is an escaped slave and is notable for its black lesbian feminist politics. Poppy Z. Brite’s *Lost Souls* (1992) became a cult success for its graphic depiction of gay, incestuous sex among Goth vampires. Laurell K. Hamilton’s *Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter* series (from 1993) anticipated the explosive success of “urban fantasy” a decade or so later. Urban fantasy novels, sometimes also referred to as paranormal romance, imagine vampires, werewolves, and other supernatural creatures living in contemporary society, and frequently deploy popular romance conventions alongside those of horror and fantasy. Charlaine Harris’ *Southern Vampire Mysteries* (from 2001) portrayed vampires attempting to assimilate into mainstream...
society following the invention and marketing of synthetic blood; the series was adapted for television with great success by Alan Ball as *True Blood* (from 2008). Kelley Armstrong’s *Women of the Otherworld* series (from 2008) focused on werewolves. Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight Saga* (2005–8) brought paranormal romance to a teen readership with its tale of star-crossed lovers Bella Swann and vampire Edward Cullen. Fans of *Twilight* were devoted, with the novels selling over 100 million copies worldwide and spawning a massive film and merchandising franchise. Nevertheless the books attracted criticism for their conservative values and questionable sexual politics, or for diluting Gothic horror with romance – the latter criticism losing sight of Gothic’s origins in romance and its historical association with a disparaged female readership (see *vampire fiction*).

Spurred by the success of *Twilight* and J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series (1997–2007), Gothic themes became increasingly prominent in twenty-first-century children’s and young adult fiction. Although Gothic had always been present in the works of classic postwar children’s writers such as Joan Aiken and Roald Dahl, in the twenty-first century it became aggressively marketed as such, and consumed not only by children but also by a “crossover” adult readership. The market was dominated by series fiction such as Lemony Snicket’s *Series of Unfortunate Events* (1999–2006). Stand-alone works by celebrated authors, such as Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline* (2003) and *The Graveyard Book* (2008) and Anne Fine’s *The Devil Walks* (2011), were rarer but received widespread critical acclaim. The influence of American writer and illustrator Edward Gorey pervaded the presentation of many of these texts, with the combination of the whimsical and the sinister found in works like *The Gashly-crumb Tinies* (1963) replicated through book covers, illustrations, and the matter of the texts themselves.

Gothic in the 1990s and 2000s had an increasingly global reach as authors invoked trauma, hauntings, and other uncanny returns in order to explore the troubled identities of postcolonial subjects. Notable titles included Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997), Nalo Hopkinson’s *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1999), Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* (2000), and Raj Khamal Jha’s *Fireproof* (2006–7). The hauntings induced by historical trauma also surfaced in a surge of books about ghosts and spirit mediums. Susan Hill’s *The Woman in Black* (1983) set the pattern for the neo-Victorian ghost story in the model of M. R. James, and she returned to the genre with *The Small Hand* in 2009. Kate Mosse’s *Winter Ghosts* (2009), Sarah Waters’ *The Little Stranger* (2009), and Michelle Paver’s *Dark Matter* (2010) confirmed this trend. Hilary Mantel’s *Beyond Black* (2005) took a different approach, in its darkly comic tale of a spirit medium working the suburban wasteland of London’s outer commuter belt. Asking the question of what it means to haunt in a culture that has no history, it presented a scathing indictment of the vapid consumerism of contemporary Britain.

Fears of social, economic, and environmental breakdown were fictionalized in a number of novels that merged dystopian fiction and the road narrative with Gothic in order to evoke the aftermath of global apocalypse. Max Brooks’ *World War Z* (2006) used a collage of interview fragments to describe the events leading up to the destruction of civilization by zombies. Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) presented a father and son traveling through a postapocalyptic America peopled with roving bands of cannibals. Finally Justin Cronin’s *The Passage* (2010) recalled Richard Matheson’s landmark Gothic science fiction novel *I Am Legend* (1955) in its narrative of a military-engineered virus that decimates the American population, converting the majority into vampire-like creatures preying on isolated pockets of humanity. Cronin’s novel, which blended the conventions of *X-Files*-style paranormal thriller, science fiction, Western, road narrative, postapocalyptic fiction and Holocaust survivor narrative, and bore traces of classic American writers from Thoreau to...
Hemingway, demonstrated a new scope and ambition for horror fiction. The single most ambitious work of twenty-first century Gothic, however, was indisputably Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000). Danielewski’s 700-page novel presented multiple embedded narratives, fake scholarly commentary, footnotes, and appendices, telling the story of an uncanny suburban house that is bigger on the outside than the inside. The text is constructed out of different typefaces and uses tricks borrowed from concrete poetry to recreate the labyrinth in textual form – the reader is required to turn the book upside-down, flick back and forth between pages, and decipher sections written in code, musical score, or Braille. *House of Leaves* was an ambivalent product of the digital age – though it would not have been possible to write it without the aid of a word processor, it nevertheless asserts the importance of the book as artifact, and is virtually impossible to read on an e-book reader. Its metafictional properties were recalled in a number of high concept novels including Bret Easton Ellis’ *Lunar Park* (2005), a fake autobiography in which the “writer” is haunted by his most famous creation, Patrick Bateman; Chuck Palahniuk’s *Haunted* (2005), in which a group of would-be writers on a retreat tell each other stories with increasingly lurid consequences; Scarlett Thomas’ *The End of Mr. Y* (2006), in which a PhD student reads a cursed book and enters a realm called the “Troposphere” where she inhabits other people’s minds; and Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007), a thriller in which the protagonist finds himself being pursued by a conceptual shark.

One of the strangest developments in twenty-first century Gothic, however, was the rise of what might be called “middlebrow Gothic.” These novels appealed to the market served by televised book clubs, like Oprah Winfrey in the US and Richard and Judy in the UK. Alice Sebold’s *The Lovely Bones* (2004), Kate Mosse’s *Labyrinth* (2005), Elizabeth Kostova’s *The Historian* (2005), Diane Setterfield’s *The Thirteenth Tale* (2006), and Audrey Niffenegger’s *Her Fearful Symmetry* (2009) were among a range of novels that, despite their overtly Gothic subject matter, seldom overstepped the boundaries of good taste. It is these novels, rather than the likes of *Twilight*, that do most to contradict Fred Botting’s assertion that “Gothic signifies a writing of excess” (Botting 1997: 1). Offering neither the intellectual challenge of Gothic-postmodernism, nor the sensational thrills of mainstream horror and paranormal romance, these texts placed Gothic fiction in a position it had never quite inhabited before: that of mainstream respectability.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Contemporary Gothic; Criticism; Female Gothic; Horror Fiction; Intertext; New England Gothic; Postcolonial Gothic; Southern Gothic; Theory; Vampire Fiction.

REFERENCES

Graveyard Poetry

JACK G. VOLLER

The Graveyard School is a somewhat controversial label applied by Victorian and later scholars to a group of eighteenth-century writers, primarily poets, seen as having a shared interest in a moral, didactic poetics of melancholic musings featuring “graveyard” and other macabre or supernaturalist imagery. Recent scholarship has questioned the utility or legitimacy of such a label, though the continued persistence of the term suggests it possesses some cultural value. Certainly, the writers often grouped together under the term were collectively a significant influence on the Gothic.

Some critics, such as James Means (1973) and Robert L. Mack (2004), find little value in the idea of a “Graveyard School” label, arguing that it lumps together works too disparate to form a meaningful group; to support his argument Means points to four of the most prominent early Graveyard works: Parnell’s “A Night-Piece on Death” (1721), Blair’s “The Grave” (1743), Young’s Night Thoughts (1742–6), and Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751). While it is certainly true that these poems have unique identities and character, they also have meaningful points of commonality, and the fact that so many works sharing (or imitating) those same or similar points were produced in a relatively short span of time suggests that the sticking point in this debate may not be that there never was a “Graveyard School,” but that scholarship has been insisting on too strict a definition of such a school for us to see that there was something happening that does indeed merit recognition as a distinct, if somewhat amorphous, cultural movement.

If we consider a “school” a marker of general tendencies and imagistic similarity as perceived by contemporary or subsequent readers, the term begins to acquire some historical and cultural value. For this reason “Graveyard School” may be regarded as a legitimate cultural construct and even a useful scholarly apparatus, perhaps not always capable of finely nuanced differentiations between various poets and their canons but valuable as a meaningful shorthand for a shared poetic mode of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and, from that, for understanding the channels by which that mode may have been influential for subsequent poets and writers, particularly those in the Gothic tradition. For what matters most for the Gothic is not whether writers lumped together in a “Graveyard School” had a shared purpose or a unifying vision of poetic practice; what matters is that they shared, and validated, an imagistic vocabulary of death and (quite often) the supernatural and did so in close conjunction with powerful appeals to strong feeling, the very materials from which the Gothic took shape.

The Graveyard School is generally identified as beginning with Thomas Parnell’s “A Night-Piece on Death,” and while earlier works such as Milton’s “Il Penseroso” (1645) and
Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) made melancholy a valid literary subject, Parnell “repurposed” it in a way that was both subversive and reassuring. It was subversive in that Parnell’s speaker abandons his Enlightenment/rationalist studies for a surer path to “wisdom” – a path that leads him not to the library or to the classical ruin but to the graveyard, where he encounters not a traditional *memento mori* vignette but a powerful vision of Death, the “King of Fears” speaking “from among the bones.” The poem ultimately is reassuring to its early Augustan audience, for it harnesses the dark sublime energy of this encounter to generate a vision of spiritual rapture and Christian reassurance. Yet Parnell’s purpose was not to obviate the power of sepulchral imagery, but to reveal and exploit the considerable literary value of emotional energy, an energy readily and copiously generated by the imagery that would come to be known as “Gothic.” Kept in subservience to Christian didacticism, Parnell’s literary experiment proved successful, and so the imitators and extenders came.

Robert Blair’s “The Grave” is the first prominent highlight of the tradition after Parnell, though David Mallet (*The Excursion*, “A Funeral Hymn”) and Elizabeth Carter (“Ode to Melancholy,” “Thoughts at Midnight”) were exploring different aspects of Parnell’s experiment in the 1720s and 1730s. Blair’s work follows Parnell’s general paradigm – catch the reader’s attention with dramatic horrors, then close with a soaring vision of Christian illumination and consolation – but does so with the intensity and drama of a passionate preacher.

The 1740s saw the publication of two other works often closely associated with Blair’s, works which also shared the extreme popularity, decades-long, that Blair’s poem enjoyed – over half a decade after their original publications both Blair’s “The Grave” and Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts* were being engraved, for expensive editions, by William Blake – and which were also written by clergymen. James Hervey’s prose *Meditations Among the Tombs* (1745) and Young’s lengthy poem *The Complaint, and the Consolation; or, Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742–6) are high-water marks of the Graveyard School tradition, and together with Blair’s and Parnell’s poems indeed seem poised to be the nucleus of a “school,” a possibility furthered by the fact that Hervey, Young, and Parnell were Oxbridge-educated clergymen (Blair was educated at the University of Edinburgh and in Holland), and their religious purpose and the sermon-influenced rhetoric of Blair, Hervey, and Young certainly do create some sense of coherence and unity in these works. And it is precisely that similarity which leads other “Graveyard School” works to seem to be on the other side of some generic or modal boundary. Yet the same decade saw the publication of a large number of significant works that did not share the evangelical fervor of Young and Hervey yet were just as interested in the emotional and psychological power of the imagery of death, superstition, and the macabre. William Collins’ “Ode to Fear” and “An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland” manage their Gothic machinery in such a way as to lead no less a critic than Patricia Meyer Spacks to remark that “Few of his contemporaries [...] succeeded like Collins in projecting rather than merely asserting the imaginative value of the supernatural” (Spacks 1962: 74).

Joseph and Thomas Wharton further extended the literary validation of melancholy in conjunction with dark sublimity and, at times, Gothic imagery. And this is the point of connection with the evangelical strain of “Graveyardism” in Blair, Hervey, and even Young: the shared interest in the literary value of emotion generated by carefully handled Gothic imagery. Well before “Gothic” became a positive term for a popular genre, the yews, ghosts, crypts, ruins, and owls of these early Graveyard School writers were fully established in the reading public’s mind as a powerful symbolic vocabulary capable of lending itself to diverse purpose.

The stunning success of Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” may well be seen as a challenge to the very idea of a cohesive “Graveyard School,” for the work eschews the Gothic in favor of a calmly
graveyard poetry

meditative tone. Yet although this work does not lead, in any direct sense, to the Gothic of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – and thus may seem less a Graveyard School work than many of its predecessors, which relied heavily on Gothic imagery – Gray’s poem helps mark an important step in the gradual evolution of the graveyard tradition. The enduring popularity of the evangelical mode of Graveyard School literature (Young, Blair, Hervey) may well have served to close off that particular avenue of literary expression; Gray’s achievement was to meld the melancholic with the graveyard while subjugating (not eliminating) the spiritual to the social. Gray’s work turns the memento mori inside out, for his speaker looks at graves and sees the living, looks at the evidence of death and sees human lives. And those lives remain human, not spiritual object lessons or illustrations of divine retribution and justice. Gray’s achievement is to humanize the Graveyard School, and point the way to the later vein of Graveyard School literature exemplified by William Wordsworth’s “Churchyard Among the Mountains” sections of The Excursion or Caroline Bowles Southey’s “Chapters on Churchyards.”

Gray’s example created a veritable cottage industry of elegies on ruins and contemplative strolls through graveyards; imitations ranged in tone from the satiric to the honorific, and some were written seventy years after the original publication of Gray’s poem. Yet while many of these works privileged “Gothic” locales – graveyards and ruins, primarily – there was another strain of Graveyard School poetry that developed in the later decades of the eighteenth century, one that owed more to the Blair/Hervey/Young vein of Graveyardism than to Gray’s, yet one which simultaneously moved away from the didactic intentions of those earlier writers. Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that in the early 1760s Bishop Hurd and others begin celebrating the supernatural in poetry because poetry is about giving pleasure, not necessarily about utility. Such a stricture allows for more emotion and less didacticism, thus opening greater possibilities, a move away from the clerical mode of Parnell, Blair, Hervey, and Young toward more emotional, even sensationalist purposes – sensibility for sensibility’s sake and, in some cases, Gothic and horrific thrills.

The Gothic and macabre aspects that must naturally be implicated in anything associated with graveyards came to the forefront as they became more loosely linked to Christian didacticism (see macabre, the). William Shenstone invokes one of the more disturbing postinterment possibilities in his “Elegy XXII: Written in the Year – When the Rights of Sepulture were so Frequently Violated” – violated by the medical-school-supplying grave robbers that Shenstone characterizes as “human wolves.” Robert Southey’s “The Crossroads” features superstition about suicides and strong hints of abuse and murder. Charlotte Smith’s “Sonnet XLIV: Written in the Churchyard at Middleton in Sussex” gives us bones washed out of a graveyard by the encroaching sea, while David Macbeth Moir paints the graveyard as a scene of cultural and emotional desolation in “The Deserted Churchyard” and, in “The Dream,” imagines with graphic vividness and detail the burial and decay of a still-sentient corpse.

What emerges from this larger view of the Graveyard School is the striking sense that in various ways it was a vitally important precursor to the Gothic. Graveyard School poetry (and prose) demonstrated a multivalent character that appealed to writers as diverse in their attitudes as Elizabeth Carter and David Macbeth Moir – or Ann Radcliffe and Matthew G. Lewis (see lewis, matthew; radcliffe, ann). The founding works of the Graveyard School dramatically and irrevocably linked the supernatural and the macabre with emotionally intense literary experience, and while subsequent adopters of that linking may have had a dramatically different purpose, they clearly had learned something of great value from the “Graveyard School.” It helped prepare the ground for Romanticism and the Gothic by validating a poetry of isolation, self-scrutiny, and solipsistic exploration of the
The grotesque deals with distorted or unnatural forms set in an extravagant arrangement aiming at a disturbing comic effect. The historical development of the term, however, shows that the word has had different uses. A noun from the Italian *grotto*, which means “small cavern,” the word dates back to the fifteenth century and was first used of paintings found in Roman ruins of the Christian era. The discovery of Nero’s villa, the Domus Aurea, revealed the existence of ornamental paintings that decorated the walls of the rooms; because they were completely buried, it was necessary to create holes in the ceilings in order to have access to the underground grottoes. The grotesque artistic mode of the Roman period referred to a decorative technique that combined interwoven human, animal, and vegetable elements in a way that infringed the usual picture of the natural world. The murals, which were called *grottesche*, were copied and reinvented by Raphael and his pupils in their decoration of the Vatican loggias. Vasari (1511–74) condemned the fashion of covering walls with monsters following Vitruvius (circa 80–15 BCE), who had criticized the style as it disregarded the realistic reproduction of the familiar world, transgressed proportion, and neglected the laws of nature. The discovery, the technique, and the judgment of the grotesque have much in common with the Gothic, a genre that is similarly characterized by unearthing mysterious secrets, representing hybrid creatures, and generating controversial appraisals.

The word “grotesque” started to be used in literature in France in the sixteenth century. Whereas in François Rabelais’ *Pantagruel and Gargantua* (1534) it referred to parts of the
body and its horrifying traits, in the Italian *commedia dell’arte* (from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries) and in the comedies of Molière (1622–73) the grotesque became related to the ridiculous and the bizarre. In the seventeenth century it was connected with the ritual, spectacular, and carnival forms of folk culture (see folklore). From the meanings “fanciful” and “fantastic” the sense became pejorative after the mid-eighteenth century, when the genre was questioned as a form of art and the exaggeration of the bodily element was considered a condemnable deviation from aesthetic norms. The negative connotations of the grotesque continued until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, even when not criticized, the grotesque was treated as a lower and vulgar variety of the comic, associated with burlesque and caricature. Those who objected to this view of exaggerated buffoonery admired the grotesque for combining both the ludicrous with the monstrous and the disgusting with the horrifying, as in the paintings of H. Bosch (1453–1516), P. Brueghel (1525–69), and Arcimboldo (1527–93).

The grotesque is a protean form that joins tragic, trivial, and serious elements in such a way that it can be monstrous, absurd, humorous, and contradictory. From Greek mythological figures to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (8 ce), transformations and composite beings have been popular in literature, including the Gothic, a genre that abounds in physical and psychological alterations generating a variety of hybrid creatures that cover a wide range of grotesque representations. From monsters and vampires to ghosts, mummies, and zombies, Gothic’s deformed versions of human beings represent a way to deal with the fanciful and the sinister, evoking at the same time pleasure and fear, horror and terror.

A revival (which in some circumstances became an obsession) of the grotesque took place in the pre-Romantic and Romantic periods (see romanticism). Among the Romantics who emphasized the play element in the grotesque was the German theorist Friedrich Schlegel, who praised the grotesque as well as the “arabesque,” the ironic, the paradoxical, and the fantastic and celebrated the works of E. T. A. Hoffmann, whose “The Sandman” (1816) and its automaton Olympia is one of the earliest examples of the Gothic admixture of the human and the nonhuman (see hoffmann, e. t. a. (ernst theodor amadeus)). For Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* (1968), the Gothic novel represented a “variety of the new grotesque” within the Romantics’ reaction against the cold rationalism of the Enlightenment. Bakhtin’s study of the grotesque image of the human body underlines how “the body is not separated from the rest of the world,” nor is it a closed complete unit but instead “outgrows itself” and “transgresses its own limits” (1968: 26). Just as Bakhtin’s grotesque is related to the carnival, a time and opportunity for freedom in which social and economic differences are overcome, similarly the Gothic transgresses the limits, deals with the excess, and explores the most imaginary combinations of beings, both dead and alive, human and nonhuman.

Among the Romantic works that combine the Gothic and the grotesque is S. T. Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798), whose supernatural journey to unexplored territories leads to the encounter with the spectral figures of Death and Life-in-Death and the tribute to the beauty of the “slimy things” (l. 239). In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), the Creature is the “horrid contrast” (2003: 56) made of parts of dead bodies, both human and animal, whose alleged monstrosity challenges the humanity of his creator (see shelley, mary wollstonecraft). “The Fall of the House of Usher,” in Edgar Allan Poe’s *Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque* (1840), questions the category of physical individuality and blurs the definition of death, bringing back to life the corpse of Madeline, who falls dead on the body of her twin brother, Roderick (see poe, edgar allan). In the same collection, “Loss of Breath” shows the disorienting and disturbing effects upon the main character’s familiar world when he is suddenly deprived of his voice. Most probably Poe’s usage of the word “grotesque” came...
from Walter Scott’s essay “On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition” (1827), which criticized the grotesque in Hoffmann for being so much like the arabesque in painting, which includes “the most strange and complicated monsters, resembling centaurs, griffins, sphinxes, chimera, rocs and all other creatures of romantic imagination” (Scott 1968: 335). Scott also disapproved of the grotesque for its “natural alliance with the horrible; for that which is out of nature can be with difficulty reconciled to the beautiful” (349).

The transgression of natural boundaries is one of the main traits of the Gothic, which constantly challenges the ideas of nature and beauty. Victor Hugo wrote of the grotesque as the characteristic mode of modern art. In opposition to the beautiful and the sublime, he stressed that the grotesque could variously be manifested in the comic, the horrible, and the ugly and claimed that the grotesque is realistic and not fantastic, since as an artistic mode it exists in nature and in our surrounding world (Hugo 2004: 29). Hugo, who acclaimed Shakespeare as an artist of the grotesque, wrote The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1831), the melodramatic story of Quasimodo, a deformed hunchback whose grotesque features make him appear monstrous to others. Whereas the Parisian cathedral evokes the gargoyles of much Gothic architecture (the grotesque waterspouts, representing animal or human figures, projecting from the gutter of the building), the French capital is also the setting of the modern Gothic and grotesque musical The Phantom of the Opera (1986), based on the French novel of the same title by Gaston Leroux (1910).

Among the nineteenth-century writers who emphasized the serious and powerful transgressive nature of the grotesque was John Ruskin, whose chapter “Grotesque Renaissance” in The Stones of Venice (1853) distinguishes between “noble” or “true” grotesque and “ignoble” and “false” grotesque. For Ruskin, some types of grotesque in the hands of noble men (e.g., Dante) are great and are qualified to be called art.

Charles Dickens’ numerous grotesque characters (Ebenezer Scrooge, Fagin, Gradgrind) populate his Gothic narratives of mysteries and secrets (see Dickens, Charles). Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland (1865) shows how it is possible for animals and nonhumans to disrupt the human idea of time and space. Many renowned Gothic novels, such as R. L. Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891), deal with fascination with and the threat of evil and prove the disastrous effects of the grotesque attempt to live a double life.

In Franz Kafka’s Metamorphosis (1915), Gregor’s partial transformation is grotesque, as it pictures a hybrid creature that is half human and half insect (see Kafka, Franz). For Thomas Mann, whose Death in Venice (1912) dwells on both the main character, Aschenbach, and the city’s grotesque decaying features, the prevalence of the grotesque in modern literature was a reaction to superficial bourgeois customs and habits.

Among those who combined their Gothic stories with the grotesque are twentieth-century so-called Southern Gothic writers such as Sherwood Anderson (Winesburg, Ohio, 1919), William Faulkner (“A Rose for Emily,” 1930), Carson McCullers (“The Ballad of the Sad Café,” 1951), and Flannery O’Connor (“A Good Man is Hard to Find,” 1955). O’Connor explained in her essay “Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction” that in grotesque works the writer makes alive “some experience which we are not accustomed to observe every day, or which the ordinary man may not experience in his ordinary life” (1960: 40). H. P. Lovecraft’s cosmic terror and his emphasis on alienation, subjectivity, and absurdity (“The Haunter of the Dark”) shows the connection of the grotesque with modernist literature. Contemporary writer Patrick McGrath’s The Grotesque (1989) is a social comedy on a master–butler relationship and the nature of evil.

The grotesque deals with the physically abnormal, questions the border between
normality and abnormality, and pauses on the “ambivalently abnormal.” The representation of otherness can be so extreme as to turn humans into freaks, provoking both a repulsive and a comic effect. After the joyful attitude of the Renaissance, madness in the Romantic and Victorian grotesque became a tragic aspect of individual isolation, from the disturbing laughter of the protagonist of Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) to the mental insanity of the “zoophagous” Renfield in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). At the end of the century, both the grotesque and the Gothic represent the need to distinguish between normal and abnormal and the wish to redefine clear-cut categories such as the “civilized” and the “primitive,” which Darwinian speculation about bodily mutations had blurred.

Constant and disquieting mutability of the mysterious creature’s features and gender is one of the main traits of Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897), a story that Kelly Hurley defines as being of “the abhuman” (1996: 129). As well as the Gothic, the grotesque is associated with the “abject,” which for Julia Kristeva is “the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (1982: 4), a reminder of a disturbing identity that disrupts order and the given system. As much as the grotesque deforms what is familiar, it is related to the uncanny.

The recurring concepts used to define the word “grotesque” can well be applied to the Gothic. The unresolved clash of opposites characterized by disharmony based on extravagance and exaggeration that critic Philip Thomas refers to in his *The Grotesque* (1972) is what most Gothic stories deal with. The emphasis on hyperbolism and excessiveness typical of the genre confirm how the Gothic often overlaps with the grotesque. Not only are there various terms and modes with which both the grotesque and the Gothic are associated (the absurd, the bizarre, caricature, the comic, irony, the macabre, parody, satire) but also there are various functions and purposes they both serve: aggressiveness and alienation; a liberating or inhibiting effect; and extreme anxiety, tension, and unresolvability.

If James Gillray’s nineteenth-century caricature *Tales of Wonder* (1802), showing a group of ladies reading Lewis’ novel *The Monk*, contributed to the representation of the playful grotesque, not only did T. Rowlandson’s (1756–1827) drawings explore the various aspects of grotesque physiognomy but also his hybrids showed how the traits of the beast are incorporated in the human form.

“The Theatre of the Grotesque” is a term used for the group of Italian plays written between 1910 and 1920 in which passions and tragedies of life are shockingly distorted. The stories deal with contradictions, absurdities, vanity, and hypocrisy, and normally leave the protagonists in unresolved conflicts.

Among the films that qualify as grotesque are Tod Browning’s *Freaks* (1932), a display of disquieting human beings whose deformed bodies represent an extreme spectacularization of the grotesque, and Peter Greenaway’s *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989), whose grotesque bodies surrounded by sumptuous banquet imagery recall Gargantua in his Rabelaisian excess.

SEE ALSO: Dickens, Charles; Folklore; Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); Kafka, Franz; Poe, Edgar Allan; Romanticism; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING
Halloween (1978)
LINNIE BLAKE

Shot in April 1978 for a paltry $320,000, John Carpenter’s Halloween would gross an astonishing $60,000,000 in the year of its release alone (IMDb n.d.). Not only did this success result in a series of sequels, remakes, and merchandising opportunities that would shape the history of the slasher movie subgenre, but the film’s knife-wielding mask-wearing slayer, Michael Myers, would himself attain totemic status, spawning a host of imitators – including the masked Jason of Friday the 13th (1980) and the claw-handed burns victim Freddy Kruger of A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984) – that would stalk the youthful imagination of filmgoers for more than two decades (see Friday the 13th (1980); Nightmare on Elm Street, A (1984)).

Halloween was released as the “stagflationary” United States, locked in conflict with OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) over the price of oil, grappled with the traumatic legacies of the Vietnam War and the loss of faith in the machinery of government engendered by the Watergate crisis. It is unsurprising, then, that this tale of suburban slaughter is premised on a horrific and unassimilated event that refuses to stay buried in the narrative’s past: the 1963 murder of Judith Myers, a middle-class, white fifteen-year-old hacked to death in her bedroom in her comfortable family home. Depicted in a continuous, unclaimed hand-held point-of-view flashback at the film’s opening, Judith’s stabbing with a ten-inch butcher’s knife, in punishment it seems for her unapologetic sexuality, culminates in the unmasking of the murderer: her blonde and beautiful six-year-old brother, Michael. He was, of course, one of many monstrous children that emerged during the 1970s, as events such as the My Lai massacre and the Kent State shootings stripped the nation of any pretence at innocence, and the guileless transparency of the child as an icon of national innocence was transformed into the diabolically possessed Regan MacNeil of The Exorcist (1973), the mutated babies of The Brood (1979), the slaughtered Grady sisters of The Shining (1980), and the antichrist himself, Damien Thorn in The Omen (1976).

But Michael Myers is not a child for long. Escaping the maximum-security mental hospital in which he has been incarcerated for fifteen years, our suburban slayer returns to his now-abandoned home for Halloween 1978. He robs a hardware store for weapons and a mask and proceeds to slaughter two babysitters and a visiting boyfriend while remaining, for much of the time, off-screen. Aligning the audience’s perspective in part with Michael (invariably introduced through spooky musical phrases of the director’s own composition and a suspenseful use of off-screen space), Carpenter
also calls upon us to identify with Laurie, the sexually chaste intellectual resourceful enough to evade his attempts to kill her. As is generically conventional, she is given considerably more screen time than any other character: more close-ups and more point-of-view reverse shots, particularly in moments of maximum horror—such as when she discovers the bodies of her murdered friends or engages in increasingly violent attempts to fight off her crazed assailant. Thus splitting our identification between the murderously sadistic psychologically-motivated voyeur and his proposed victim (who stabs him in the neck with a knitting needle and gouges him in the eye with a coat hanger), Carpenter both implicates the viewer in the sadistic viewing practices of slasher cinema, in which the deaths of women are often depicted in considerably more graphic ways than those of men, and produces a powerful rendering of female agency; an intriguing modern doubling that has engendered extensive critical debate.

Most disturbing, though, is the decidedly Gothic vision of American life evoked by the underpopulated daytime streets and cavernously dark sidewalks of the mid-Western every-town of Haddenfield, Illinois. This is a decidedly suburban form of Gothic, whereby the atomized communities of the silent majority commuter belt play host to far more terrifying events, desires, and practices than their manicured lawns and taupe soft furnishings might imply (see suburban Gothic). Such horrors include the killer-rapists of Last House on the Left (1972), the murderously misogynistic husbands of The Stepford Wives (1972), the angry dead of Poltergeist (1982), the eponymous cannibals of The Parents (1989), and the haute bourgeois aliens of Society (1991). As Laurie is first stalked from school to home to babysitting job and then pursued by the killer from room to room and from house to street, there is a pervasive sense of her utter isolation, which is confirmed when she screams for help outside a large house only to have the blinds closed upon her. That the wounded Michael Myers disappears from the front lawn to which he has fallen is hardly surprising. This repudiation of closure would become typical of the slasher film, leaving the road open for future sequels while reminding us of the inevitable return of the abject, which, however forcibly cast off, will one day inevitably return.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Friday the 13th (1980); Monstrosity; Nightmare on Elm Street, A (1984); Suburban Gothic.

REFERENCE


FURTHER READING

Hammer House

STEPHEN CARVER

Hammer House (Hammer Film Productions Ltd.) was a small, family-run British film production company that once dominated the global horror market and remains hugely influential. Hammer resurrected the Gothic icons discarded by Hollywood in stylish, sexy, and violent films that captured the essence of the original literary form and functioned as dark reflections of the conventional costume drama in much the same way that Gothic narratives inverted nineteenth-century realist discourse. Although the golden age of Hammer ended in the early 1970s, the brand remains synonymous with horror.

Will Hammer was the stage name of William Hinds, who cofounded the film distribution company Exclusive with cinema owner Enrique Carreras in 1934. Hammer Productions Ltd. was a symbiotic offshoot. The first Hammer film was The Public Life of Henry the Ninth (Bernard Mainwaring, 1935), a rags-to-riches comedy. Hammer followed this with The Mystery of the Marie Celeste (1936), a tale of insanity, revenge, and murder starring Bela Lugosi. Hammer made only three more films before going bankrupt during the British film industry slump of 1937. Exclusive, however, survived.

After the war, Exclusive cut a deal to supply low-budget supporting features to the ABC cinema chain and Hammer was reformed as a production subsidiary in 1947. The first project was River Patrol (1948), a thriller about nylon smugglers. Hammer next adopted the astute formula of adapting established radio serials, for example Dick Barton, Special Agent (1948) and The Adventures of P. C. 49 (1949). Exclusive registered “Hammer Film Productions Ltd.” in 1949 with the father-and-son teams of Enrique and James Carreras and William and Tony Hinds as company directors. Hammer moved into the Exclusive offices in Wardour Street, renaming the building “Hammer House.” In 1951, the company purchased Down Place (one of the best-known buildings in Gothic cinema), later expanding the house into Bray Studios. Hammer worked like a small studio, building a repertory company of domestic talent at Bray.

Filming Nigel Kneale’s popular BBC sci-fi shocker The Quatermass Experiment in 1955 was an obvious next move. The Quatermass Experiment is a very British combination of Edwardian science fiction and Hollywood “monster movies.” Professor Quatermass puts Britain’s first rocket into space, and it returns with one traumatized survivor infected by an alien force that slowly transforms him into a monster. Richard Wordsworth plays the tragic astronaut with the kind of pathos and dignity that Karloff had brought to Frankenstein (1931). The film grossed almost £1,000,000 worldwide. Maurice Sellar has argued that Hammer moved toward horror in this period because of the competition with television, which did not offer enough sex and violence (Sellar 1987: 134), while Adkinson, Eyles, and Fry cite Hammer’s own market research, that audiences preferred humanoid monsters over outer-space blobs (Eyles et al. 1981: 29). Hammer therefore made the monumental move toward the Gothic.

British Gothic cinema was not without precedent. Ealing’s anthology horror film Dead of Night (1945) had been a major success, while the United Kingdom was the cradle of the Gothic novel. There was also a gap in the international market after the collapse into self-parody of Universal Studios’ monsters, while smaller companies, meanwhile, were targeting a new teenage demographic, and dumbing down accordingly. The world was far from prepared for Hammer’s adult, violent, bleak, and morally complex reinvention of The Curse of Frankenstein in 1957. Terence Fisher directed,
and the British character actor Peter Cushing was cast as Baron Victor von Frankenstein, with the relatively unknown, but very tall, Christopher Lee playing his Creation. Universal denied Hammer the right to use Jack Pierce’s design for Karloff’s monster, and the critical orthodoxy is that this represents a lack, although it could equally be argued that further distance from the stereotype was an advantage. Whereas Karloff played it with the soul of a troubled child, Lee’s Creature is agile, brutal, and animalistic. Cushing’s baron is cultured, brilliant, arrogant, and utterly ruthless. He murders Professor Bernstein for his brain, and uses his Creature to dispose of his pregnant maid, Justine. The Creature is finally destroyed with acid, and only Victor’s assistant, Paul Krempe, knows the truth. The film is framed by Victor’s confession from the condemned cell. Although made for a mere £65 000, the film is beautifully shot in Eastmancolor with convincing sets, costumes, and effects, and a rich musical score. The acting is impeccable – Cushing’s dignified performance, in particular, gave the film a gravitas rarely seen in the genre before or since. The film still outraged domestic reviewers, with C. A. Lejeune of The Observer describing it as “among the half-dozen most repulsive films I have ever encountered” (McCarty 1984: 20). Audiences, however, queued around the block and The Curse of Frankenstein was the most successful British film of the year.

Hammer were quick to follow up using the same principal cast and crew, releasing Dracula the next year, with Lee as the Count and Cushing as Van Helsing. Scriptwriter Jimmy Sangster’s Dracula has more in common with Polidori’s Ruthven than Stoker’s savage immortal – Lee’s Byronic vampire was handsome and sexually magnetic, and, when he bit, his victim closed her eyes in obvious ecstasy. Cushing’s edgy and driven Van Helsing was the perfect nemesis, and the film’s climax – as Van Helsing hurls himself at ancient drapes and drives Dracula into the corrosive sunlight with crossed candlesticks – is an iconic moment in cinema. The visual style is perfect, and this Gothic mise-en-scène became Hammer’s signature style. Domestic critics hated Dracula even more than Frankenstein, with Lejeune famously apologizing on behalf of British culture to “all decent Americans for sending them a work in such sickening bad taste” (McCarty 1984: 20). A minor moral panic erupted, and it became trendy for journalists to denounce Hammer as “For Sadists Only” (Hutchinson 1974: 44). Sadism sold, however, and Dracula was a huge international success. Impressed Universal executives made their entire back catalogue available to Hammer.

This was the beginning of Hammer’s Gothic golden age. Victor returned in The Revenge of Frankenstein (1958), his priest beheaded and buried in his place. The Mummy followed in 1959 (again starring Cushing and Lee and directed by Fisher). Fisher directed The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll and The Brides of Dracula in 1960; Oliver Reed moved from supporting actor to star in The Curse of the Werewolf in 1961; while Herbert Lom became The Phantom of the Opera in 1962. Traditional Gothic themes continued to be reworked in the 1960s, alongside a steady stream of second features in other genres, from comedy to war to psychological thrillers. There were three Frankenstein sequels starring Cushing – The Evil of Frankenstein (1964), Frankenstein Created Woman (1967), and Frankenstein Must be Destroyed (1969) – while Lee reprised his role in Dracula: Prince of Darkness (1966), Dracula Has Risen from the Grave (1968), and Taste the Blood of Dracula (1969). The Mummy also returned, twice, and Fisher directed the Gothic fairy tale The Gorgon in 1964. The Gorgon took a magical realist turn that can also be seen in John Gilling’s The Plague of the Zombies in 1966, which is period and surreal, and looks back to Tourneur and Lewton rather than forward to Romero. The dream sequence in which the zombies rise from their graves has been endlessly copied. In characteristic “Rep” style, the Hammer team made fifty-nine films between 1960 and 1969, so Cushing also starred in Captain Clegg (1962) and She (1965), while Lee can be seen in two
pirate films, four Fu Manchu films, Rasputin: The Mad Monk (1966), and The Devil Rides Out (1968). In 1966, Hammer worked with Ray Harryhausen on One Million Years B.C., starring Raquel Welch and a bunch of stop-motion dinosaurs. Hammer moved to Elstree Studios in 1967, and received the Queen’s Award for Industry the following year.

The 1960s saw competition and change. American International Pictures’ “Poe Cycle” (from The Fall of the House of Usher in 1960 to The Tomb of Ligeia in 1964), starring Vincent Price and directed by Roger Corman, were a direct challenge, while in the United Kingdom Tigon coproduced Michael Reeves’ seminal Witchfinder General with AIP (1968), while Amicus were specializing in EC comics-inspired portmanteau horror, often using Hammer talent – Dr. Terror’s House of Horrors (1964), for example, starred Cushing and Lee and was directed by Freddie Francis. Next to Romero’s eerily postmodern Night of the Living Dead (1968), the traditional Gothic of Hammer suddenly looked dated. In the 1970s Hammer was compelled to respond to market changes, updating settings, which usually didn’t work, and sexing-up, which did. Lee began the decade with Scars of Dracula (1970) but was transported to a contemporary setting for Dracula AD 1972 (1972) and the apocalyptic The Satanic Rites of Dracula (1973), scenarios to which he objected, refusing to play the Count again. The Horror of Frankenstein (1970) stars Ralph Bates instead of Peter Cushing, and is a black comedy. The series ended with Frankensteins and the Monster from Hell in 1974. Cushing’s Baron by then completely mad, the film is set in an asylum. Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde (1971) combined elements of Jack the Ripper with Burke and Hare, and the moment when Ralph Bates turns into Martine Beswick is certainly memorable. The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires (1974) is a curious kung fu collaboration with Shaw Brothers that might have worked ten years later, while Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter (1974) was a pilot for a TV show that never was. The last truly Gothic Hammer films were the so-called “Karnstein Trilogy”: The Vampire Lovers (1970), Lust for a Vampire (1971), and Twins of Evil (1972), all loosely based on Le Fanu’s Carmilla with an emphasis on the lesbian possibilities of the story. Both Gothic and erotic, these films look great and remain very popular within contemporary Goth fashion circles. To the Devil a Daughter (UK, 1976) had an international cast and high production values but was too late to catch The Exorcist (1973) wave, and The Lady Vanishes (1979) flopped so badly it almost bankrupted the studio.

Down, but not yet out, Hammer produced two TV horror series in the 1980s before finally ceasing production: Hammer House of Horror and Hammer House of Mystery and Suspense. Each series comprised thirteen self-contained horror stories with contemporary settings, Hammer stalwarts, and American guest stars. Some were garden variety; others, such as “The House that Bled to Death” (1980), traumatized a generation.

The Dutch consortium Cyrte Investments acquired the company in 2007, and Hammer presently has a coproduction credit on Let Me In (2010), with a further two films in production. However this turns out, Hammer’s original Gothic style remains a cultural and semiotic classic, and, although Branagh and Coppola both claimed to return to the original texts in their interpretations of Dracula (1992) and Frankenstein (1994), they had “Hammer” scrawled all over them in blue light, black lace, and blood.

SEE ALSO: Film; Monster Movies; Polidori, John; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Stoker, Bram.

REFERENCES

Hawthorne, Nathaniel

CHIUNG-YING HUANG

Nathaniel Hawthorne (born Nathaniel Hathorne) (1804–64) was an American novelist and short story writer in the Romantic period in the United States (1828–65), known also as the American Renaissance. Born in the city of Salem, Massachusetts, Hawthorne was a descendant of Puritan immigrants. One of his Salem ancestors, John Hathorne, had been a judge in the seventeenth-century Salem witchcraft trials, which involved a series of witch hunts and prosecutions of people charged with witchcraft. The notorious history of the Puritan past in colonial Massachusetts had a significant impact on Hawthorne’s writing. Using local historical materials, Hawthorne set many of his stories in Massachusetts. In developing an interest in colonial history and Puritan culture, Hawthorne also had a lifelong obsession with crime narratives (see crime). Hawthorne’s notebook and letters of 1830s are scattered with his comments on criminal cases and scandals reported in the press (Reynolds 1989: 250). Hawthorne’s fascination with crime reports surfaced in many of his tales, as well as The Scarlet Letter (1850). Dealing with issues of guilt, hypocrisy, and perversion, Hawthorne imposed his sensibility of popular sensational news upon the Puritan past, imbuing his fiction with profound psychological depth. Like his contemporary writer Edgar Allan Poe, Hawthorne frames his romances with Gothicism and symbolism, moving away from realist fiction (see Poe, Edgar Allan). For this reason, Hawthorne considered his works of fiction romances rather than novels. Yet, compared to Poe, whose Gothic environments are often unclear and unspecific, Hawthorne was more attuned to explore dark themes in the political and social context of the nineteenth-century world in which he lived (Punter and Byron 2004: 123).

Much Hawthorne scholarship has been established upon Marxist and feminist theories, exploring the intersection of class, gender, and sexuality in Hawthorne’s texts, involving a New Historicism focus on the connections between Hawthorne’s writing and nineteenth-century social issues. Hawthorne’s approach to the Gothic is twofold. One strategy is the revival of the past, to bring the past back to his nineteenth-century world, to construe history as the undead, or as a return of the repressed, never distinct from the present. Its second function is to provide a prism to see historical evils and injustice, raising awareness of moral fluidity and universal sinfulness. Hawthorne’s exploration of the Puritan concept of evil – best featured in “Young Goodman Brown” (1835) – is associated with Gothic imagery of the dark wilderness or the haunted forest. The wilderness experience is revealed as a journey into hell, yet it generates a spiritual transformation, or an awakening consciousness that all human beings are sinners. In other texts such as The House of the Seven Gables (1851) and “The Prophetic Pictures” (1837), Hawthorne
located the power of Gothic terror in the topos of the haunted portrait, one of the Gothic conventions rooted in Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) (see Walpole, Horace). Understood as an agent of seduction, the supernatural portrait is invested with uncanny strength, oscillating between life and death. Sharing certain similarities to Poe’s “The Oval Portrait” (1842), Hawthorne’s “The Prophetic Pictures” is also considered the prototype of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Williams 1997: 188–9). More recent studies of Hawthorne have analyzed his interest in nineteenth-century science and visual arts – mesmerism, daguerreotype, photography, and portraiture (see portraits). The theme of media in relation to nineteenth-century American culture and knowledge, particularly the functions the visual arts have in Hawthorne’s Gothic imagination, offers potential area for valuable research, producing new angles of vision on Hawthorne studies.

SEE ALSO: Crime; Poe, Edgar Allan; Portraits; Walpole, Horace.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Herbert, James

NICK FREEMAN

James Herbert (1943–) has been the best-selling British horror writer since the 1970s, and his influence on the field has been considerable (see gothic 1950 to the present). His first novel, *The Rats* (1974), depicted London under siege from mutant, disease-carrying rodents, and combined the visceral detail increasingly associated with Herbert van Thal’s *Pan Horror Stories* series (1959–89), with a
strong narrative drive and subversive political critique in identifying the role of self-interest in the city’s postwar redevelopment. Rather than offering Dennis Wheatley’s clubland Satanism and mumbo-jumbo, Herbert was relentlessly up-to-date, and the novel blends the London depicted in contemporaneous pulp fiction such as Richard Allen’s Skinhead (1970) with exciting set-pieces and explicit sexual description. The effect of Herbert’s novel on older writers was roughly analogous to that which punk rock would have on the music industry several years later, and led to a slew of imitators such as Guy N. Smith, Nick Sharman, and Richard Lewis. The most commercially successful of these has been Shaun Hutson.

Although Herbert wrote two sequels to The Rats, he did not stand still. His next novel, The Fog (1975), placed Britain under the influence of an accidentally released gas which caused homicidal mania; less compelling than The Rats, it boasted many memorably gory scenes. After this, however, his writing revealed growing signs of sophistication and ambition, albeit built on the foundations of repetitive plotting and characterization. The Survivor (1976) was a ghost story of sorts dealing with the aftermath of an airliner crash; Fluke (1977) was a reincarnation fantasy reminiscent of Lord Dunsany’s My Talks with Dean Spanley (1936), while The Spear (1978) was an example of “Nazi Gothic,” depicting a conspiracy to steal the Spear of Longinus and reanimate Heinrich Himmler. A thriller with Gothic elements, it showed Herbert’s eye for topical plot ingredients. His later novel, ’48 (1996) was an alternative history thriller set in a London ravaged by Nazi biological weapons.

The Spear was a watershed for Herbert, as it involved him in a plagiarism case brought by the occult historian Trevor Ravenscroft (see Jones 1992; Freeman 2006), and his subsequent fiction took a number of different paths. The Dark (1980) begins dramatically with a mass suicide in a London house, but it petered out into an inferior version of The Fog with parapsychological trimmings. The Jonah (1981) combined a suspenseful undercover police investigation into drug smuggling with supernatural elements (the lead character is a magnet for bad luck), and Shrine (1983) saw Herbert addressing his Catholic background in the story of a malign miracle. Moon (1985) involved a psychic link between a serial killer and the man investigating his crimes, and showed again Herbert’s willingness to mix and match popular genres. This has allowed him to outlast his initial competitors as well as reflecting the Gothic’s identity as a mutable, even viral mode of writing.

The Magic Cottage (1986) was a gentler tale which homaged earlier ghost stories (the young couple whose pastoral bliss is disrupted by the supernatural are reminiscent of the pair in E. Nesbit’s “Man-Size in Marble” 1893), but some found the book’s humorous elements jarring. Nevertheless, the ghost story would prove to be fertile territory for Herbert with The Secret of Crickley Hall (2006), in which a house is haunted by the ghosts of orphaned children evacuated to it in World War II, and Haunted (1988) and its sequel The Ghosts of Sleath (1994) tackling the challenges of extending the form to novel length. David Ash, the protagonist of the latter two works, is a psychic investigator, Herbert adapting figures such as Algernon Blackwood’s John Silence and the real-life Harry Price to the contemporary world, and offering a parallel of sorts to the then popular television series, The X-Files. Nobody True (2003) opens with a man whose body is murdered while he is astrally travelling, the type of plotline one might have found in a Dion Fortune story from the 1920s. As these novels suggest, Herbert has a respect for the Gothic’s history, but he refuses to marmorealize it and is always keen to invigorate Gothic structures with contemporary concerns. Portent (1992) is a good example in its dramatizing of premillennial anxieties alongside eco-consciousness and an interest (somewhat unsympathetic, it must be said) in modern paganism and Goddess-worship.

Landscape and place are key elements of Herbert’s work, and his 1993 book, James
Herbert’s Dark Places, was a collection of photographs of “typically” Gothic locales – graveyards, lonely seashores, abandoned country houses – accompanied by his comments about his novels and extracts from them. Herbert’s social conscience, notable in The Rats, was still evident in the section “Capital Places,” which depicted London’s derelict canals and forgotten byways as well as the crumbling statues of Westminster Abbey.

Herbert’s early novels offer vivid evidence of the ways in which Gothic writing was changing in the early 1970s – The Rats and Stephen King’s first novel, Carrie (1974), were published in the same year. Inspired by “new” Gothic cinema, such as George Romero’s Night of the Living Dead (1968), William Friedkin’s The Exorcist (1973), and Tobe Hooper’s The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974), Herbert’s work was fast-moving, vivid, explicit, and set in a determinedly modern world. Later fiction tended to be more self-conscious in its generic experiment, more determinedly “literary” and sometimes bloated in length – The Ghosts of Sleath and Crickley Hall both topped 400 pages in paperback. Herbert has nonetheless remained a significant presence in British Gothic, both in terms of his continued commercial success and in the blueprint his work provides for other writers.

SEE ALSO: Gothic 1950 to the Present.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING

Hill, Susan

VAL SCULLION

Susan Hill (1942–) has published twenty or more novels and novellas and numerous collections of short stories since the 1960s. Her oeuvre covers many genres, including radio plays, children’s fiction, reviews, autobiography, nonfiction, crime fiction, Gothic novels, and ghost stories. Born in Scarborough and shaped by an isolated, bookish childhood, her fiction is permeated with images of the sea, its tidal reach, and death by drowning. Slimy things dug or dredged up from the past and the
dank smells of confined spaces recur frequently, creating a sense of eeriness, the macabre, or psychological disturbance. Hill studied English at King’s College, London, and had published two seminal novels, *The Enclosure* (1961) and *Do Me a Favour* (1963), before finishing her degree. The burgeoning of her professional career as a writer was much influenced by the music of Benjamin Britten, especially the “Sea Interludes” from his opera *Peter Grimes* (Scullion 2005: 53–4). Novels and short stories, mostly written in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, proliferated until 1975. *I’m the King of the Castle* (1970) won the Somerset Maugham Award; *The Albatross and Other Stories* (1971) won the Rhys Memorial Prize; and *The Bird of Night* (1972) won the Whitbread Award. Literary echoes of Dickens, Henry James, Crabbe, Coleridge, and many others were, and still are, creatively present in Hill’s work (see *dickens*, charles; *james*, henry). Critics have persistently praised her elegant, spare style, social observation, ability to dramatize a wide range of characters, and atmospheric evocation of place (Muir 1982: 274; Lee 2003: paras. 7–8). Initially, however, nascent Gothic motifs went largely unnoted or were considered an aberration (Hofer 1993: 144–5). The primarily realist fiction of Hill’s early phase was distinctive in its use of menacing locations, domestic constraints, and marginalized characters.

In 1975 Hill married Shakespeare scholar Stanley Wells, shortly after which she announced a loss of any desire to continue writing fiction (Hill 1978: 154–5). The couple’s first daughter was born in 1977. Their second, arriving prematurely at twenty-five weeks, did not survive long. After many miscarriages, Hill gave birth to a third daughter in 1985. These traumas hugely influenced her undiluted use of Gothic settings, plot, and framed structure in *The Woman in Black* (1983). The book was written intensively over six weeks, as described in Hill’s autobiographical work *Family*, during her prolonged attempts to have another child (1989: 114). Prior to *The Woman in Black*, Gothic motifs had brought the shock of incongruity or an unexpected element of the grotesque to Hill’s work. In *Gentleman and Ladies* (1968), for example, Isabel Lavender isolates herself in an attic, leaving her sister to die. In “Somerville” (1971), the reclusive Somerville, damaged by war and its aftermath, is terrified of letters, repulsed by residues of human flesh and hair, and fearful of human ingress into his personal space. A young, pregnant woman seeks him out, forays his house, lake, and surroundings, and later leaves her dead baby on the margins of the lake, anticipating correctly that he will sink the tiny corpse in the water for her. Images of decaying flesh, hair, or feathers frequently disrupt familiar and ordinary situations. Enclosed spaces, such as caves, cellars, sheds, vacant rooms, and attics offer both escape and confinement for Hill’s characters. In comparison to “Somerville,” *The Woman in Black* is full-blooded Gothic, imbued with an outpouring of personal misery, grief, and anger. The ghost of the woman in black, a virago unlimited by space and time, repeatedly avenges the confinement and drowning of her own child by causing the deaths of more children. A dramatization of this novel has been playing to great acclaim in London since 1988 and has been staged in New York, and a film adapted from the novel was released in 2012. *The Woman in Black* encapsulates all the Gothic aspects of Hill’s writing. Horror in her fiction always resonates with the homely (see *european gothic; ghost stories*).

Since the early 1990s, with her writing block completely lifted, Hill’s work has been as productive and generically varied as during her early career. *The Shadows in the Street* (2010) is the fifth in her crime novel series featuring the detective Simon Serrailler, and continues her exploration of the psychopathology of contemporary human rage (Scullion 2008: para. 5) (see *crime*). During the last two decades, Gothic and ghost stories have appeared in equal measure in realist fiction such as *Air and Angels* (1991), which takes its title from John Donne’s poem; the short story collection “The Boy Who Taught the Beekeeper to Read” (2003); and the novellas *The Beacon* (2008).
and *A Kind Man* (2011). On the Gothic side, *The Mist in the Mirror* (1992) features an inherited curse and the ghost of a murdered boy (see curse). *Mrs. de Winter* (1993) comprises a sequel to Du Maurier’s Gothic novel *Rebecca* (1938). *The Man in the Picture* (2007) makes metafictional references to the stories of Henry James and Edith Wharton, but is also patently influenced by M. R. James’ “The Mezzotint” and the macabre aspects of Venetian carnival and *commedia dell’arte*. The ghost story *The Small Hand* (2010) reworks the Gothic motif of a bodiless hand from the past that takes hold of someone or something in the present, as occurs (for example) in Lockwood’s dream in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Hill’s variant displays her individual signature. With regard to *The Small Hand*, Hill testifies to the shaping influence of grief over the death of her second daughter, which is “woven into the fabric of [my] being” (Hill 2010). Here, as in *The Woman in Black*, the spectral intruder has a corporeal effect on the living. The hand, which belongs to a dead boy, comes freighted with family history; as the owner gradually emerges, it takes firmer grip and exacts a haunting retribution.

The thematic continuity of Hill’s writing throughout half a century is plain to see. In whichever fictional genre this versatile author works (with the exception of children’s stories), she invariably focuses on cruelty and kindness within family and community; the vulnerability of the weak; and the unarguable power of good, evil, and death. Hill uses Gothic as a medium, whether in the foreground or background of her writing, to express these major concerns.

SEE ALSO: Crime; Curse; Dickens, Charles; European Gothic; Family; Ghost Stories; James, Henry.

REFERENCES


Hodgson, William Hope

EMILY ALDER

William Hope Hodgson (1877–1918) eludes neat classification; in a time when now-familiar genres were still developing, Hodgson’s weird fiction blends elements of Gothic, science fiction, horror, mystery, and the supernatural, most successfully in his cosmic horror and his sea fiction. Despite not achieving great fame in his lifetime, a revival of interest in Gothic and horror fiction of the period over the past four decades has contributed to an increase in attention paid to Hodgson by readers and critics. While drawing criticism for stylistic and structural flaws in his writing, Hodgson is acclaimed for his powerful visions of monstrosity, the horrors of the sea, and the terrors of a dark cosmological future.

Hodgson was born in Essex in 1877, the son of a clergyman, and the family led a peripatetic
Hodgson, William Hope

life, including a spell in Ireland, before settling in Blackburn, Lancashire. Hodgson spent his teenage years in the Merchant Navy, sailing three times around the world. His relationship with the sea is ambivalent; although criticizing the living conditions at sea and especially the apprentice system, his writing and photography reveal his appreciation and sense of wonder for the marine environment (Frank 2005). His sea fiction captures the sublime power of ocean storms, for example, but also dwells on the horrors of the unknown lurking on or beneath the surface, and the isolation of extended periods at sea.

In 1898, Hodgson rejoined his family in Blackburn. A keen body-builder, having adopted the sport as an apprentice sailor in response to bullying, Hodgson opened a School of Physical Culture in Blackburn in 1899. By 1902, the business had failed, and he turned seriously to writing for a living. From 1904, he published some seventy short stories in Britain and America, and four novels: The Boats of the “Glen Carrig” (1907), The House on the Borderland (1908), The Ghost Pirates (1909), and The Night Land (1912). Hodgson married Bessie Farnworth in 1913. They moved to France, but returned to England on the outbreak of World War I. Although in his late thirties, Hodgson signed up; not, however, as a sailor, but with Royal Field Artillery. He died in April 1918, killed on active duty near Ypres.

A fascination with monstrosity pervades Hodgson’s sea fiction. The Boats of the “Glen Carrig,” recounting the adventures of survivors adrift in the ship’s boats, draws on the evolutionary possibilities for monsters generated by Darwinism. Monsters populate the hostile environment of the Sargasso Sea: anthropophagous trees, giant cuttlefish, and tentacled “weed-men” suggesting an unsettling parallel to human evolution (see degeneration). In “The Voice in the Night” (1912), two castaways are compelled to eat a peculiar fungus, which gradually transforms them into shapeless creatures; the narrator can only describe an indistinct glimpse of a “thing.” In “The Derelict,” a drifting hulk develops monstrous material life, consuming one of the investigating sailors who board it. These two stories explore the meanings of boundaries: those defining living creatures from inanimate objects, and those distinguishing “proper” human beings from monsters (see monstrosity). Kelly Hurley’s study The Gothic Body (1996) draws on Julia Kristeva to read the chaotic shapes of Hodgson’s monsters as abject, reviled as threats to human bodily specificity, in texts which nonetheless revel in the proliferation of monstrous forms.

In other texts, Hodgson focuses on the instability of the boundary between worlds. In The Ghost Pirates, a ship crossing the Atlantic slips in and out of another dimension, doubled by underwater shadows until it is finally dragged into the ocean by the eponymous invaders. In some stories, the encounter with ghosts is benign, pointing to a strong spiritualist influence on Hodgson’s imagination. More usually, the breach between worlds allows terrible beings and forces to pass. One or two stories verge on science fiction; in “Eloi Eloi Lama Sabachthani” a scientist recreates the conditions of Christ’s agony on the cross, apparently enabling a demonic force to possess and kill him. Hodgson’s short story collection Carnacki the Ghost-Finder (1914) follows a tradition of Victorian and Edwardian psychic doctors, although Carnacki is more accurately described as an occult detective (see occultism). Some of Carnacki’s mysteries have genuinely preternatural causes, such as the monstrous hand of “The Gateway of the Monster” (the “gateway” is an ancient ring); some are tricks perpetrated by a human character.

The House on the Borderland is the most obviously Gothic and perhaps the best known of Hodgson’s novels. It employs a conventional Gothic framing structure to generate layers of distance and authenticity to the text. Its primary narrative, a manuscript purportedly written by an old “Recluse” living in rural Ireland, is discovered in the house’s ruins by two young men on a fishing holiday, and the whole is further introduced by an “editor,”
Hodgson. The story, through the Recluse's eyes, recounts his battles against swine-like creatures attacking his home, interpolated with his experiences of astral journeys which culminate in a journey through time and space to the central suns of the universe. The “borderland” imagery of the text lends itself to psychoanalytic readings, as repressed desires are displaced to the margins of the text (Boulter 1993), while the Recluse's struggle with the swine-creatures can be seen as a reflection of colonized Ireland, in which English fears of Irish peasants are refracted through these hybrid monsters (Jones 2009).

The Night Land offers an extraordinary vision of a distant future human civilization, drawing on late nineteenth-century calculations about the limits of the sun's remaining energy and on the speculations about biological and geological entropy that gripped the fin-de-siècle imagination (see Wells, H. G. (Herbert George)). Spiritualist, psychical research, and Theosophist concepts also shape Hodgson's vision (Alder 2009): eternal souls, the psychical evolution of humanity, mechanical instruments interpreting the vibrations of the ether (see spiritualism). The narrator dreams of his reincarnation millions of years after the death of the sun; the human race lives protected in a giant metal pyramid, menaced by the degenerate monsters and immaterial forces populating the sunless world. In the narrator's journey across the “Night Land” he battles monsters and nameless “Things,” is beset by invisible terrors on perceptual limits, and discovers a volcanic land in which primitive Humped Men and giant herbivores replay the evolutionary drama.

Hodgson considered his final novel his best, and while it is easy to see from The Night Land’s epic scope and imaginative power why he thought so, readers have not necessarily agreed. It is written in a mock archaic style, in keeping, perhaps, with a futuristic language translated by a medieval narrator, but as a result the novel is notorious for being difficult to read. The novel's sentimental love relationship, too, has drawn criticism for its “sickly” perpetuation of Victorian gender types (Stableford 1985), although more recent critics have offered persuasive alternative interpretations of Hodgson’s remarkable text (Sawyer 1995; Hurley 2001).

SEE ALSO: Degeneration; Horror Fiction; Irish Gothic; Monstrosity; Occultism; Spiritualism; Wells, H. G. (Herbert George).

REFERENCES
Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus)

Val Scullion

E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) was born in Königsberg, Eastern Prussia. His professional life was shaped by the advance and retreat of Napoleon’s armies across Germany. He forfeited his position in the Prussian Civil Service by refusing to sign an oath of allegiance to Napoleon in 1807. Loss of income forced him to scrape a living in Berlin from music, which he much preferred to law. From 1808 to 1813 he became a music reviewer, teacher, published composer, and conductor in Bamberg, Southern Germany, and latterly a music director and theater factotum in Dresden and Leipzig. Troop movements, culminating in the Battle of Dresden and the final French retreat in 1813, which he witnessed from the roof of a Dresden church, adversely affected his work in the theater. His famous review (1810) of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony (Hoffmann 1989: 234) and his own opera Undine (1816) testify to his musical insight and talent. His unreliable income prompted him to write fiction as well as compose. His oeuvre includes numerous tales, short fiction, fairy stories, and two novels, The Devil’s Elixirs (1815–16), and the unfinished The Life and Opinions of Tomcat Murr (1819–22). In 1816 Hoffmann was offered the post of judge at the Supreme Court of Justice in Berlin. He proved himself to be meticulously fair, but his habit of lampooning self-aggrandizement caused him to face an uncompleted prosecution for libel just before his death from spinal paralysis in 1822. Like his contemporaries Novalis, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, Ludwig Tieck, and Friedrich Schlegel, Hoffmann was preoccupied with the power of the artistic imagination to transform sensory responses to a material world into something mystical; unusually for a Romantic writer, he perceived this creative transformation with a mischievous sense of humor and a skeptical eye (see German gothic).

The Devil’s Elixirs is conventionally Gothic in its preoccupation with found manuscripts, doubles, monasteries, and mysteries, while Kater Murr’s interwoven dual narration, one strand of which is told by a tomcat, initially appears rather lightweight, but its satiric tone soon emerges. In addition to the novels, Hoffmann’s main publications are a series of anecdotes and observations titled Kreisleriana (1814–15) and collections of stories, many of which were first published singly. These comprise Fantasy Pieces in the Style of Callot (1814–15), Night Pieces (1816–17), and The Serapion Brothers (1819–21). The latter collection is distinctive in using dialogue between the stories in which the narrators discuss the aesthetics of storytelling. They develop the Serapiontic principle, which advocates the complementary inclusion of seriousness with frivolity, and the real with the imagined or the fantastic (Brown 2006: 119–34). The brothers gauge the success, or otherwise, of each others’ narratives accordingly. This inclusive device, together with broad, eclectic reading, gave Hoffmann scope to draw
from German folklore; contemporary ghost and horror stories (Schauerroman in Hale 2002: 66); Gothic and grotesque motifs; Italian carnival; musical compositions; paintings and engravings. In keeping with his taste for burlesque, two of his favorite authors were Sterne and Swift (Sahlin 1977: 305). Hoffmann frequently shows the true Romantic artist, whether poet, composer, or painter, as reaching a transcendent state of consciousness that could be termed genius, but also needing a corrective sense of irony. Without self-mockery his artist figures invariably fail to bring concrete form to what they imagine and often become insane (Scullion 2009: 16).

The Gothic aspects of his writing hugely informed the work of Polevoy, Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Odoevsky in Russia (Cornwell 2002: 113), Baudelaire in France (see Baudelaire, Charles), and Edgar Allan Poe in America (see Poe, Edgar Allan). His influence on British Gothic was muted during the nineteenth century, partially owing to a damning review by Walter Scott (1827: 74, 97). Although Scott praised Hoffmann’s characterization in the Gothic tale, “The Entail” (1817), he attributed the fantastic effects of “The Sandman” to the author’s diseased mind, debilitated by wine and opiates. “The Sandman” (1816) is now interpreted as a substantial study of psychological disturbance in the main character, the poet Nathanael, and it plainly contains a satire of contemporary society, as much deceived into believing an automaton to be a real woman as Nathanael. Critics continued to judge the quality of Hoffmann’s writing in the light of his sociable habits and often conflated the author with his characters, especially ecstatic artists wild with inspiration rather than inebriation (Scullion and Treby 2010: 244). Hoffmann’s reputation in Britain was re-evaluated after Freud’s essay “The ‘Uncanny’” (1919) was published in English (1925). Freud described Hoffmann as “the unrivalled master of the uncanny in literature” (1955: 233), praising repetition and doubling in The Devil’s Elixir and “unparalleled” uncanny effects in “The Sandman” (1955: 227) (see uncanny, the). He interpreted its motif of excised eyeballs as signifying the castration complex and repressed memory. This Freudian reading, although setting the pattern for future psychoanalytic criticism of Gothic texts, excluded spectral interpretation of ghosts, vampires, and devilish external forces which should be taken literally in many of Hoffmann’s tales. Sometimes what is mysterious isrationally explained at the end of a story, but just as often the explanation is incomplete or the fantastic status of events and characters is confirmed. The whole gamut of the literary uncanny is covered.

Hoffmann is superb at sustaining uncertainty. In “Don Juan” (1813) it is never resolved whether Donna Anna from Mozart’s opera actually visits the narrator’s theater box as a specter or whether he is hallucinating. However, uncanny effects end abruptly in the tale “Vampirismus” (1821), when the penultimate sentence confirms that the protagonist’s wife is a vampire. In the story of the sisters, Adelgunda and Augusta (preceding “The Automata,” 1814), the hovering plate and the visitation of a specter are confirmed as paranormal. In “The Automata,” Professor X (a composite figure based on Franz Anton Mesmer and automata-maker, Jacques de Vaucanson) has a menacing, psychic influence on the young man, Ferdinand. The storyteller does not conclude the tale, causing another Serapion brother to request an explanation. On the other hand, the reader is made aware that Master Abraham in Kater Murr uses sophisticated mirrors, fireworks, and apparatus to achieve his magical performances. By contrast, the visitor in “The Uncanny Guest” (1819) uses malevolent, mesmeric powers to subjugate women for dubious purposes, and also appears to have a Faustian pact with dark forces which finally take his life before the abduction of his last victim. Hoffmann’s blending of the ordinary with the fantastic not only fulfills his own Serapiontic principle, but also persistently creates a sense of Gothic uncanniness. His hybrid mode of writing is readily acceptable to twenty-first-century readers familiar
with mixed-genre literature. Hoffmann's reputation is unarguably in the ascendant today, having influenced modern writers as varied as Roald Dahl, whose Oompa-Loompas come from Hoffmann's "Nutcracker" fairy story, and Angela Carter (see Carter, Angela).

SEE ALSO: Baudelaire, Charles; Carter, Angela; European Gothic; German Gothic; Poe, Edgar Allan; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING


Hogg, James

MURRAY PITTOCK

In recent years, the Gothic has become a genre which has migrated to cultural studies, subdivided itself in terms of gender politics, and reassembled its status as a literature of terror in the contexts of a national consciousness not at ease with itself over the repressions of history, or one seeking to create a history from a locus amoenus – or horribilis – beyond the reach of historiography and the rational superstructures of imperial or state modernity. This last is the national inflection in Gothic, which has been recently applied to Scottish and Irish writing in such books as Luke Gibbons’ Gaelic Gothic (2004) and Murray Pittock’s Scottish and Irish Romanticism (2008) (see Irish Gothic; Scottish Gothic).

The Gothic of James Hogg (1770–1835) has already been recognized (for example, by Peter Garside in his 2002 edition of Confessions) as not just a space where rationality is contested, but a synecdoche for the national space. Just as those dimensions of Scottish culture incompatible with Britishness were aestheticized as picturesque in the generation after they had been defeated or dismissed as barbaric, so their survival in terms of threat rather than regret is
a feature of Scottish Gothic, the violation of the expected in British space by remaining traces of the lost national other.

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) remains by far Hogg’s most famous book. The story of the seduction of Robert Wringhim by the Devil is complicated on a number of levels, chiefly by the multiplication of narrators. The Editor of Wringhim’s memoirs discusses events from the standpoint of an Enlightenment stadial historian who believes that “in this day, and with the present generation, it will not go down, that a man should be daily tempted by the devil, in the semblance of a fellow-creature.” The Editor, however, right from the first page of his narrative, has himself appealed to “tradition” as opposed to “history,” humanly inconsistent despite his intellectual commitment to the latter; he clearly favors the Colwans, Wringhim’s ostensible family, over the Wringhims, despite the presence of counterevidence in the text he presents; and it turns out that the confessions which he is editing are not in fact discovered until the end of the book (Hogg 2002: 3, 43, 175). The Editor provides not so much an edition, as an alternate fiction to Wringhim’s own text, which follows on from the Editor’s version. The third narrative is a visit of the Editor’s in company to find Wringhim’s grave, toward which a character called James Hogg guides them. Hogg speaks Scots, a language which throughout both the Editor’s narrative and Wringhim’s has been used as a touchstone of autochthonous integrity, in spite of the English of both Wringhim and the editor. Hogg’s text is in a sense a parallel national tale of Scotland and the traditions it protects.

In The Three Perils of Man (1821), Hogg incorporates the Gothic into history by challenging the claim to accuracy of the Scottian historical novel, and satirizing the elements of “chivalry and romance” with which it is intertwined, both by presenting the siege of Roxburgh Castle as a brutal affair, and also by offering a parallel to it in the imprisonment of some of the characters in Michael Scott the magician’s tower. Michael Scott’s art presents supernaturalism (whether the human one of meaningless ideals such as “chivalry and romance” or the demonic one of the competition to tell the best tale) in a manner disconnected from the real life of Scotland, a contrast between inner identity and outward picturesque:

Save when the English marauders were abroad, all was quietness [...] The land was the abode of
the genii of the woods, the rocks and the rivers; and of this the inhabitants were well aware [...] They knew that their green and solitary glens were the nightly haunts of the fairies [...] The mermaid sung her sweet and alluring strains by the shore of the mountain lake, and the kelpie sat moping and dripping by his frightsome pool [...] these were the natural residents in the wilds of the woodland, the aboriginal inhabitants of the country [...] but ever since Master Michael Scott came from the colleges abroad to reside at the castle of Aikwood, the nature of demonology in the forest glades was altogether changed. (Hogg 1996: 375–6)

This is a landscape charged with the reality of the supernatural, well known to the Scots who live there, part of the familiar landscape of home. By contrast, Scott’s demonic domain of high magic is a brutal and alien wonder. The supernature of art, sensibility, and demonic glamour are part of the picturesque qualities of his tower at Aikwood: they are distinct from the acknowledged supernaturalism of autochthonous Scotland.

Similar strategies in the conflation of the national self with the qualities of a locus amoenus can be found in The Brownie of Bodsbeck (1818), where the supernatural is revealed as the hidden and repressed identity of the ordinary Scottish Covenanters. In “The Brownie of the Black Haggs,” the Covenanting tale of the brownie itself acts as a cover for a tale of murder occluded from the eyes of the narrating editor who cannot tell the difference between the historicized romance and the dehistoricized tradition, which, as it turns out, may actually reveal the historical truth. In both cases the autochthonous self protects itself from history by manifesting itself outside the bounds of the rational model under which the Enlightenment had constructed it: the hidden self, deterritorialized by British power into the margin, like Tam o’Shanter’s witches in the ruined Kirk Alloway. Hogg’s Gothic is the reinscription of native speech and practices on the margins of landscape and society: the recapture of Scotland’s “mountain and fairy” picturesque status from the spectator’s and traveler’s gaze by asserting that it was in these very clefts, “heuchs” of bogle and rock, that the reality that counted lived.

SEE ALSO: Irish Gothic; Scottish Gothic; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING

Horror Fiction
GINA WISKER

Horror in one form or other is at least as old as storytelling itself and appears in a wide range of written, oral, filmic, and other forms. It is an essential troubling accompaniment to the complacencies and mundanity of the everyday, reminding us that behind artifices of comfort and rules, order and stability, wholeness and righteousness, lie the flip sides of these: discomfort, terror, violence, disgust. Freud’s use of the term unheimlich (1919) theorized this disturbance at the unfamiliar, building on Hoffmann’s short story “The
The destabilizing energies of horror offer a thrill of disturbance and of radicalism, which is why the horror comics of the 1950s were seen as so dangerous, so politically and morally questionable (see Barker 1984). They also offer a disquieting peek behind the curtains of the everyday and the normal, the familiar, and the complacently secure, revealing that this is an artifice, a front. Much conventional horror has always been conservative, and merely entertaining. Mark Jancovich defines its role, and its pleasures:

The structures of horror narratives are said to set out from a situation of order, move through a period of disorder caused by the eruption of horrifying or monstrous forces, and finally reach a point of closure and completion in which disruptive, monstrous elements are contained or destroyed and the original order is re-established. (Jancovich 1992: 9)

However, it also exposes our deepest fears: “The good horror tale will dance its way to the center of your life and find the secret door to the room you believed no one but you knew of” (King 1981: 149).

One of the earliest theorists, the great horror author H. P. Lovecraft, reminds us in Supernatural Horror in Literature (1927) that our ancestors turned their backs to the terrifying forest and faced the comforting fire, knowing the stirrings in the dark were evidence of dangers, rational or irrational. Comfortably in front of our TV, we see genocide, everyday mutations, college kids gunning down their classmates, serial killers, parents who murder their own infants, or children who murder their parents. We see epidemics, Ebola, and AIDS, and we hear lies and the uncovering of genocide based on deceit and oppression. This is the news and the documentary programs, and it is replayed with irony, with elements of the supernatural, and with critical insight when we also read horror fiction or watch horror films. Indeed, horror is dangerous, as is all Gothic, of which it is a major strain, because it explicitly demonstrates the dark side, it enacts the fears and twitches the net curtains of the suburban compliance and conformity that keeps out the night outside and the night inside our minds.

Horror deploys many Gothic formulas but is more likely to use violence, terror, and bodily harm. Those who teach horror are very aware of its power to engage the critical, insightful reading practices that lead to citizenship, an ethical awareness of the need to expose the undersides of conformity, enabling clarity and an imaginative capacity to see beyond what is presented as everyday and comforting. The horror “turn” is not merely to titillate, disgust, or shock, although much schlock (visceral, brutal, deliberately offensive) horror does only that. It exposes falsity, reveals alternatives, enables an imaginative embodiment and working through of the worst terrors and fears, facing or avoiding the most destructive. Horror fictions, whether written or film text, enable this embodiment, since much horror is about the real, about the body, and catharsis results through the deployment of imagery and symbol. Horror can be realistic, even historically verifiable, and it can be psychological, supernatural, riddled with imagery and symbols, or a disturbing mix of both. Historical accounts of cannibalism and serial killing inform horror. Serial killer Ed Geins is the basis for Thomas Harris’ Silence of the Lambs (1988) and Robert Bloch’s Psycho (1959). Horror is also spliced with speculative fiction, the fantastic, science fiction, the supernatural with alien invasions, as in the Alien trilogy (dir. Ridley Scott, 1979; James Cameron, 1986; David Fincher, 1992); the scourge of flesh-eating zombies (Dawn of the Dead, dir. George A. Romero, 1978); vampires transcending time, space, death, and the fixity of bodily shape (Bram Stoker’s Dracula, 1897; Anne Rice’s Interview with the Vampire, 1976; and Poppy Z. Brite’s Lost Souls, 1992).

Horror comes in several forms: psychological, supernatural, physical, and a mix of these. The great texts that established the genre appeared in the nineteenth century. Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) is frequently seen as...
the first horror fiction. The main figure is the monster put together by the first mad scientist, Dr. Victor Frankenstein, who plays God and constructs a human being from the body parts of what is available—dead criminals. This example of hubris, an arrogant act mimicking human procreation and the creation of humankind by God, leads to tragedy. It is an astonishing narrative of the dangers of scientific hubris in a post-Enlightenment age, and also a birth trauma, where the “mother,” Victor Frankenstein, is disgusted and repelled by his offspring and rejects it, with disastrous consequences. Later works influenced by this novel emphasize the dehumanized, dangerous, monster or automaton let loose. Android and robot films including \textit{Blade Runner} (dir. Alex Proyas, 1982) and \textit{I, Robot} (dir. Ridley Scott, 2004) question the nature of what it means to be human. The monster’s lack of social development leads it to internalize a sense of its own Otherness, to abject itself. Here we find one of the key theories of horror—that of Otherizing and abjection. Lacanian psychoanalytic theory argues that in the “mirror” phase (Lacan 1977) identity development is accompanied by construction, then abjection (rejection with disgust) of the “Other.” Contemporary feminist theorist Julia Kristeva (1982) and critic Barbara Creed (1993) recognize this Otherizing as gendered. The nonself—that is, women, aliens, the culturally different, monsters—is abjected. With a psychological turn, we construct and reject the strange, terrifying potential, all that we fear and desire. As Kristeva (1991) points out, the Other is a construct of our own minds.

\textit{Frankenstein} establishes a popular model for horror: monstrosity as social construction, the inappropriate use of science and technology, science in the hands of immoral intentions, lack of social care and responsibility, and the inability to escape the errors of your past, as the monster follows Victor across the Arctic wastes. The genre of horror is thought to start with the dark tales of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49), each of which sets off a formula repeated in later authors: demonic pledges (“Never Bet the Devil Your Head,” 1984 [1850]: 458–67), walled-in corpses (“The Cask of Amontillado,” 1984 [1846]: 848–54); living death, curses, body horror, and contagion (“The Masque of the Red Death,” 1984 [1850]: 485–90); the natural made weird (“A Descent into the Maelstrom,” 1984 [1841]: 432–48), and returns from death (“Ligeia,” 1984 [1838]: 262–77). Poe’s tales represent time and history as disintegration and loss, and some stories replay the past, returning to stasis, embracing death (see \textit{poe, edgar allan}). Many of his tales were filmed by “Hammer Horror” in the 1960s, including \textit{The Masque of the Red Death} (dir. Roger Corman, 1964), where Death gatecrashes a lavish party to bring infection and retribution to those who have ignored the dying poor (see film).

Abjection, the construction of the monstrous, the Other, feeds fears. Robert Louis Stevenson’s \textit{The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde} (1886) develops Gothic tropes of the doppelganger, the split self and humankind’s dual nature, whose dark sides hide behind respectability and are ignored at our peril. The novella takes the mad scientist a stage further, exposing both the dangerous pursuit of science and logic, and the duplicity and hypocrisies of social conformity, the outward show of respectable Victorian professional gentlemanly behavior that hides violence (see \textit{science and the gothic}). Deviant forces emerge in the form of Mr. Hyde, Doctor Jekyll’s evil alter ego, who violently brutalizes children and old gentlemen. Hyde’s coming and going through the back entrance to Jekyll’s lab hints at homosexuality. The transforming potion eventually permanently turns Jekyll into Hyde, exposing the seeming progress of science and respectability as complacency. Neither uses the supernatural—there are no ghosts.

\textit{Dracula} (1897), Bram Stoker’s masterpiece, presents supernatural creatures—the vampire Count Dracula, and his three blood-drinking, child-draining, seductive, vampire women. The threat Dracula poses combines foreign invasion, a fear of loss of ownership of women, and undermining certainty about paternity, purity, ownership, power, and heredity. As
imperial power spread, invasion from Transylvania (or anywhere East) was terrifying. Dracula literally tries to buy up parts of London and England to spread his vampire taint and grow his vampire hordes. In the period of “the angel in the house,” with its alignment of domestic bliss, women’s purity, religious observation, and domestic peace, the sexualized invasion of the blood and bodies of young women was terrifying: women could become monstrous, sexually active predators, Britain could be invaded and warped. The supernatural figure of the vampire is the main vehicle of that powerful weapon of horror: metamorphosis. We are not what we seem, cannot be trusted and nothing is safe. Investment and commitment are undermined (see Fin-de-siècle gothic).

H. P. Lovecraft developed the full range of unspeakable, indescribable nightmare horrors, strange threats, monstrous and alien people, and civilizations from the sea depths, in “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928). His language is terrifying, visceral, and demonic:

Madness rides the star-wind . . . claws and teeth sharpened on centuries of corpses . . . dripping death astride a bacchanale of bats from night-black ruins of buried temples of Belial . . . Now, as the baying of that dead fleshless monstrosity grows louder and louder, and the stealthy whirring and flapping of those accursed web-wings circles closer and closer [...] (Lovecraft 1971: 38)

Lovecraft’s four “modern masters” of supernatural horror are Arthur Machen (1863–1947), Algernon Blackwood (1869–1951), Lord Dunsany (1878–1957), and M. R. James (1862–1936). Machen, known for cosmic fear in a lyrical “artistic pitch,” wrote supernatural horror, The Great God Pan (1894), and The Terror (1917). Blackwood wrote fantasy and horror, more than 200 short stories, twelve novels, plays, poems, autobiography, and children’s books. James’ ghost stories are well known (see ghost stories).

Shapeshifting werewolves and other were-creatures reveal the dangerous Other within the complacent conformist outside. Dorian Gray’s picture contains his ravages until the last minutes. Fears of disease and invasion of the blood continue with the many vampire narratives, and also with the fascination with epidemics, such as in 28 Days Later (dir. Danny Boyle, 2002). One of the greatest taboos that horror faces is that of not merely destroying the Other but eating them. Cannibalism represents the ultimate inhuman act. In Cormac McCarthy’s postapocalyptic America in The Road (2006), marauding scavenging hordes hunt survivors and, in one particularly unpleasant moment, the traveling father and son find a baby roasted by a roadside.

William Friedkin’s The Exorcist (1973) terrified and sickened viewers, and religious leaders found it blasphemous, banning it after the 1980s “video nasties” scandal. The ten-year-old murderers of the British toddler James Bulger had watched Child’s Play 3 (dir. Jack Bender, 1991), so video nasties and brutality and abuse were seen as connected. Many found The Exorcist’s scene of masturbation with a crucifix disgusting. However, the actualization of powers of religious good and evil and the representation of demonic possession briefly increased attendance numbers in the Catholic Church, according to Mark Kermode’s BBC documentary The Fear of God: 25 years of The Exorcist (1988).

Feminist horror rewrites myths, fairy tales, and abject representations of women. Angela Carter, in “The Company of Wolves” (1981), retells “Little Red Riding Hood,” exposing its base in patriarchal power relations. Historical accuracy of werewolf encounters underpins a realistic style, while the terrors and resolutions of the original are critiqued as ways of controlling young women’s sexuality (see female gothic). Carter’s Rosaleen reveals herself as an equal partner in the werewolf’s sexual games. Nalo Hopkinson’s Creolized “Riding the Red” (2001) celebrates women’s interest in “wolfe” during youth. Pam Keeseys’s lesbian vampire tales, Daughters of Darkness (1993), helped establish a lesbian literary history that had begun with Sheridan le Fanu’s (demonized) Carmilla (1872).
Vampires have remained the most malleable figure of horror. Vampires can exist in a liminal state, neither living nor dead, creature or human, destabilizing seemingly fixed categories upon which our sense of reality rests. They also represent disease of the blood. Anne Rice (Interview with the Vampire, 1976), Sherry Gottlieb (Love Bite, 1994), Poppy Z. Brite (Lost Souls, 1992), Jewelle Gomez (The Gilda Stories, 1992), and others reinterpret the vampire to their own radical ends, investing the figure with all the disruptive power of the erotic, troubling gender roles. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro’s historical horror novel Hotel Transylvania (1978) introduced the vampire romance subgenre with Count Saint-Germain, an ancient, ethical time-traveling vampire. Vampire romances return the vampire to a more conventional romantic role. In Stephanie Meyer’s high school series for young adults, starting with Twilight (2005), sexy, dangerous Edward Cullen, protective of Bella, brings her into his vampire family. Laurell K. Hamilton’s “Anita Blake” series (starting with Guilty Pleasures, 1993) use urban crime fantasy, and Charlaine Harris’ “Southern Vampire” mysteries (starting with Dead Until Dark, 2001, and dramatized in the True Blood TV series, HBO, 2008) and the vampire next door offer an alternate USA with a commentary on tolerance and xenophobia.

In Our Vampires Ourselves (1995) Nina Auerbach recognizes the proximity of horror figures to ourselves – they grow from our feelings and everyday concerns. Teaching horror engages the imagination with irony, the Gothic, and ethical issues (Wisker and Bernard 2011). From Japanese folktale-based horror (e.g., The Ring, dir. Hideo Nakata, 1998, The Grudge, dir. Takashi Shimizu, 2004), comic books, games, and comic or game-inspired films (Hellboy, dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2004) horror entertains and problematizes that which we take for granted, a complacent normality. It uses the uncanny and the defamiliarized, and expresses radicalism, recognizing our construction of the Other – monster, were-creature, zombie, and alien – within ourselves. Its deeply troubling nature might just remind us of our lack of control of nature and life, and it might offer insights.

SEE ALSO: Female Gothic; Film; Fin-de-Siècle Gothic; Ghost Stories; Poe, Edgar Allan; Postcolonial Gothic; Science and the Gothic; Terror; Uncanny, The.

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Hypnotism

WILLIAM HUGHES

Hypnotism is but one of several names that may be applied to a closely related range of ostensibly abnormal mental states associated for the most part with altered consciousness and the apparent abnegation of will. These analogous states include mental abstraction, lucid dreaming, induced trance (or deep relaxation), voluntary or induced somnambulism (commonly called sleepwalking), and certain
varieties of catalepsy and epilepsy. When deployed within Gothic fiction, these states are usually enhanced further through a customary (though scientifically dubious) association with occult phenomena such as prescience and clairvoyance, and with suggestions of personal and sexual violations of the entranced self, the origins of which can be traced to the earliest days of systematic hypnotism in Europe.

The term “hypnotism” (from the Greek, hypnos, meaning sleep) is of comparatively recent provenance. Initially termed “neuro-hypnotism” by the British physician James Braid in 1842, this description of so-called “nervous sleep” was shortened to the single word “hypnotism” in 1843 (Braid 1843: 13). Braid’s term replaced two earlier descriptions of similar phenomena – mesmerism and animal magnetism – and its deployment was no doubt in part motivated by Braid’s desire to distance his own practice from the discredited actions of his Continental forebears. Mesmerism, the first systematic system of hypnotic practice, was so named by its founder, Franz Anton Mesmer, a physician who moved from Vienna to Paris in 1778 in order to improve his professional prospects. This was the age of nascent science, and recent discoveries in electricity and magnetism in particular were such as to lend themselves to application to Mesmer’s own beliefs in the planetary (or gravitational) variations that might periodically influence the wellbeing of the human body. However earnest Mesmer’s interest in the work of Galvani and his contemporaries, he was to combine his theoretical physics with a degree of showmanship sufficient to brand him a charlatan in the eyes of the Parisian medical and scientific elite.

Mesmer’s theory was simple enough. Taking the contemporary wisdom that magnetism operated through an unseen field of power, and an iron magnet was capable of charging other ferrous substances into which it was brought in contact, Mesmer suggested that a similar “animal magnetism” was vested in certain charged individuals. Mesmer proposed that this unseen though natural force could be transferred from person to person, and in an ingenious revision of Galenic medicine, that disease was in most cases associated with an excess or a depletion of the magnetic “fluid.” In his private curative salons or séances, Mesmer directed his own personal magnetism by way of an iron rod, pointed at the afflicted body parts of his paying patients, though these were also accommodated during his absence at a “baquet” or wooden tub, filled with mesmerically charged iron filings and bottles of similarly enhanced water, and studded round with iron bars and chains which the afflicted might apply to their extremities.

The atmosphere in these salons was theatrical in the extreme – soft light, music, and incense contributing to a heightened state of feeling rendered climactic by the entry of Mesmer himself, clad in a suitably striking robe. It is on the entry of Mesmer, or else at the point at which his latent energy became applied to a subject via his iron rod or else his imperious eyes, that the other significant aspect of his curative doctrine became apparent. The individuals who came into contact with this powerful presence were apt to fall into fits (or crises) that were sometimes spectacular, characterized by erratic breathing, spasmodic or indecorous movement, and ultimately collapse. They were borne away by attendants to a recovery room, or else were given the further attention of Mesmer in private, and tended to pronounce themselves cured of their earlier affliction or neuralgia. This did not, however, preclude their return to subsequent salons, and indeed their displaying similar symptoms upon receipt of magnetic influence. Other phenomena were noted by Mesmer and his followers. These include the apparent ability of those in, or recovering from, a mesmeric crisis to perceive disease or disorder in their own body or that of another; the apparent abnegation of the patient’s will, and their susceptibility to commands issued by the magnetizer (even when absent); and the existence of clairvoyant, clairaudient, and clairsentient capabilities which permitted those so afflicted to mentally traverse geographical space.
Mesmerism, and indeed the alleged existence of any force corresponding to animal magnetism, was widely disputed in France, and the appointment of an official investigating body, which numbered Benjamin Franklin among its members, comprehensively refuted and discredited Mesmer’s doctrine in a 1784 report. This, and a second investigation published in the same year, also raised explicitly for the first time the suggestions of sexual misconduct that were to dog magnetic practice in both medicine and fiction for the remainder of the century. Mesmer retired into obscurity, and though others maintained variants of his magnetic practice in provincial France the great days of animal magnetism on the European continent were essentially over, barring a brief Parisian revival under Jean-Martin Charcot at the end of the nineteenth century.

If the United Kingdom was not unduly infected by the Continental “Mesmeric mania” of the 1780s, the nineteenth century was to bring a revival of animal magnetism in the British public eye. At University College Hospital, London, in the late 1830s, Dr. John Elliotson routinely performed mesmeric experiments on the wards. Despite an initial intrigued sympathy from the medical establishment, Elliotson was ultimately subjected to a hostile campaign in the pages of The Lancet, the leading professional clinical journal of the day, and finally was forced to resign his post at the hospital. Newspaper reports at the time depicted him as the dupe of foreign impostors, and portrayed these in lurid terms, emphasizing the lingering touch of the magnetist’s hands upon his prone and almost invariably female patient. Clinical hypnotism, however, was elsewhere pursued seriously rather than polemically. In India, in the mid-1840s, James Esdaile utilized trance as a rudimentary anesthetic when undertaking surgical operations on native men. Such a function for mesmeric or hypnotic practice, however, became redundant upon the invention of reliable chemical anesthetics. James Braid is possibly the most influential of mid-century British physicians working with the legacy of trance bequeathed by Mesmer and his successors, however. Braid, it must be asserted, discounted unequivocally the role of the alleged magnetic fluid, and in its place suggested that the patient’s mind itself is paramount in the induction of trance, the patient effectively falling into trance through intense concentration upon a fixed object rather than being commanded to submit by a superior will. Charcot’s revival of hypnotism as a variety of neurological therapy in Paris from 1862 differs theoretically from the earlier practice of Braid, though it is likewise characteristically induced by the contemplation of a bright light rather than through the “passes” or hand movements favored by Mesmer and his associates. That said, Charcot’s hospital demonstrations frequently resulted in spectacular crisis exhibitions by the female patients in particular, the trance state becoming associated with hysteria in consequence.

Mesmerism made an early entry into fiction, though not necessarily into Gothic. Lampooned on the stage in late eighteenth-century France, it became the subject of a 1788 farce by the British dramatist Elizabeth Inchbald, entitled simply Animal Magnetism. If Gothic, in its earliest years, is influenced at all by mesmerism, it is in the spectacular use of piercing eyes by Gothic heroes as diverse as Ann Radcliffe’s Montoni and Schedoni (in The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian respectively) and Matthew Lewis’ Ambrosio, titular hero of The Monk. If these works fail to actually deploy the manual techniques of early mesmerism, later Gothic fictions are more inclined to dwell upon the induction as well as the implications of trance. Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” (1845) is well known, and is likely to have been influenced by the popular reporting of analogous phenomena in the United States. In this ultimately abject excursion into abnormal psychology, a dying man is deliberately entranced and so enters into a state of suspended animation. The soul is evidently an issue here, for the entranced man begs to be released from his condition, proclaiming his own death as justification. This death, it might be added, must have
occurred some time previously, and without the knowledge of the patient’s attendants, for upon release from his mental thrall the subject’s body dissolves into liquid putridity. This short story, with its emphasis upon liquid and communication, would seem to be quite orthodox in mesmeric terms, the more so as trance is induced and disrupted by passes of the hands in front of the face of the prone patient. Mesmer’s techniques, in other words, as well as his philosophy, were evocative in fiction (and popular culture more generally) long after they became discredited in medicine. Poe was to make reference to mesmerism in “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains” (1844), and the ironic tale “Some Words with a Mummy” (1845) deploys electricity in an analogous way, and mischievously suggests that the then fashionable practices of animal magnetism and phrenology were surpassed in ancient Egypt.

The rise of a fearful science of racial and physical degeneration in Victorian Britain in particular brought new currency to the trance state. Its presence might be regarded as a signifier of the degenerate nature of those susceptible to its imposition, and those apparently capable of its misuse might be viewed in terms of a threat to both individual and nation. Dickens is a pioneer in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), though his magnetic predator fascinates by the eyes rather than with mobile hands. More extensive is the later *Trilby* (1895) by George du Maurier, where an eastern-European Jewish mesmerist preys both financially and sexually upon Trilby, the Franco-Irish heroine, whom he meets in Paris. Du Maurier’s illustrations for the volume depict clearly a technique of passes that recalls Mesmer’s own practice, and though a trance is initially induced in Trilby so as to cure her neuralgia, her submission to Svengali’s will leaves her open to subsequent exploitation at his hands. The then-topical curative practice of Charcot is surely a context here, though the narrative draws also upon the enduring topicality of crimes supposedly committed under hypnotic duress, no doubt gleaned from the French newspapers habitually perused by the bilingual author. Sexual exploitation is not a matter committed exclusively by male protagonists, however. Arthur Conan Doyle’s 1894 novella *The Parasite* depicts the lustful (but unsuccessful) predation of a female magnetizer upon a young and attractive engaged man.

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) is explicitly associated with the work of Charcot, though its use of techniques is confused and conflicting. The magisterial Van Helsing induces trance in Mina Harker by way of manual passes, and makes a clairsentient contact with Count Dracula by way of a sort of psychic osmosis. The Count, though, has previously entranced Mina by way of a bright red point of light – his eyes, in fact – in a dark room (something he does earlier with her friend, Lucy Westenra, when she has sleepwalked to the Whitby churchyard in which she is ultimately attacked). Yet this Charcotian technique is superseded by his forcing her to drink his blood, thus initiating – in both directions – a fluid connection between the two. Elsewhere in the novel, incidentally, Van Helsing draws a lengthy comparison between the apparently clinically acceptable practice of fin de siècle hypnotism and less scientifically tenable psychic phenomena such as “corporeal transference [...] materialisation [...] astral bodies [...] the reading of thought” (Stoker 2007: 235).

*Dracula*, in a sense, brings the whole issue of mesmerism/hypnotism conclusively back to its original controversial richness. With the passing of the fin de siècle and the rise of a more corporeal style of medicine, following the physiological carnage of World War I, mesmerism quietly slipped away from generic topicality. Its revival in recent years has primarily come through works that evoke the high-days of nineteenth-century pseudoscience, often with a nod toward charlatanism: *The Mesmerist* (2007) by Barbara Ewing is a supreme example.

SEE ALSO: Dickens, Charles; Medicine and the Gothic; Poe, Edgar Allan; Stoker, Bram; Victorian Gothic.
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FURTHER READING
Imperial Gothic

ALEXANDRA WARWICK

The term “imperial Gothic” is first explored by Patrick Brantlinger in his Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914, published in 1988. He suggests that the span of the genre might be from Henry Rider Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines (1885) to at least John Buchan’s Greenmantle (1916), and that it is marked by a combination of Darwinism, imperialism, and an interest in the occult. In unpacking the idea, he indicates the functions of both imperialism and occultism as partial substitutes for declining religious faith, and asserts that it is also possible to distinguish clear concerns about questions of civilization and progress that make imperial Gothic specific to the culture of late-Victorian and early-Edwardian Britain. Brantlinger identifies the three principal themes of imperial Gothic as an individual regression, or what was called “going native”; an invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism or demonism; and the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world. Subsequent critical works on the Gothic and the fin de siècle have largely confirmed Brantlinger’s assertion that there is an identifiable knot of issues in late-nineteenth century and prewar fiction, the representations of which can be read in relation to the production of an imperialist national identity (see fin-de-siècle gothic).

Although Britain had acquired control of many territories overseas before the nineteenth century, the rate of acquisition begins to accelerate after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and reached its most intense pitch in the last decades of Victoria’s reign. Britain annexed forty or so new territories between 1870 and 1900, bringing four million square miles of land and people under its rule. By the end of the century the Empire had become central to Britain’s idea of itself as a nation in ways that reached beyond issues of trade and political power. The expansion of newspapers coupled with the rise of cheap popular fiction provided ways in which Empire could be reported and invented and while for millions of people across the globe the effects of imperial rule were lived experiences, for the British public theirs was largely an empire of the imagination. Gothic fictions of the fin de siècle both draw upon and contribute to that imagined Empire.

Identification of a period roughly spanning 1880–1914 enables a separation of imperial from colonial Gothic. One distinction is that imperial Gothic is a British, perhaps even English, form, while it is possible to see colonial concerns in, for example, American writing and postcolonial concerns in many other literatures. Postcolonial criticism has been important in pointing out the occluded in
familiar early and mid-Victorian texts: in *Jane Eyre* (1847), for example, or the works of Dickens (see postcolonial gothic). Although some elements are common to both colonial and imperial Gothic, the latter is strongly marked by some of the specific issues of the late-nineteenth century, such as degeneration, decadence, the New Woman, and the crisis of masculinity.

One of the important concepts that intersects with imperialism is degeneration (see degeneration). The notion of degeneration is itself a loose conglomeration of ideas that in some part emerges from biology after Darwin and is rapidly translated into social analysis. In the simplest terms, theories of degeneration suggest that there are cycles of progress and decline in which organisms and social structures evolve at different rates, becoming increasingly complex, sophisticated, and successful, but are always vulnerable to regression and reversion to less advanced conditions. Human and social sciences were much concerned with the question of evolution as it related both to the individual and to larger societies, and degeneration is often expressed in terms of a fall from civilization to barbarism or even to the lowest level of savagery. In the individual, such cultural or moral degeneration is frequently accompanied by what Kelly Hurley has called “the ruination of the human subject” (1996: 3), signaled by the spectacle of the repulsively mutated, abject, not-quite-human body.

There are two theaters for the narratives of imperial Gothic: “here” and “there” – at home and abroad. One of the central tenets of imperialism was the superiority of the Englishman and his culture, and the danger to the Englishman abroad is the loss of his connection to his culture and the breaching of the boundary of his individual self. He can be assaulted in a number of ways: by food or drugs, by the temptations of women (and sometimes men), but most frequently by the mystical or religious practices of other countries and peoples. In Rudyard Kipling’s story “The Mark of the Beast” (1890), set in India, the Englishman Fleete, already showing signs of degeneracy in his drunkenness, desecrates a Hindu temple. The priest bites Fleete, who then gradually begins to behave like an animal and only recovers when Fleete’s companions torture the priest into lifting the curse. It is not a simple morality tale, however, as Kipling expresses very ambiguous confidence in the civilized nature of the Englishmen and the dismissal of “primitive” belief systems.

A second strain of imperial Gothic abroad is the adventure story, a hybrid of older genres of travelers’ tales and quest narratives and contemporary reportage of the deeds of explorers, soldiers, and entrepreneurs. Henry Rider Haggard’s prodigious output provides many examples. His early novel *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) gives an account of a group of men moving across Africa, ostensibly in search of a lost brother, asserting themselves by exercising their technological superiority and exploiting the animistic beliefs of the Africans. The physical danger in warfare is overcome by British military tactics and weapons, but the greater danger is represented in various versions of the feminine. The group of male adventurers represents different models of masculinity and there is a forceful assertion that the qualities of the warrior and the gentleman are not limited to white men. Women, however, endanger all the men’s lives, first in the chivalric rescue of the beautiful Foulata and then in their entrapment by the witch figure Gagool. Crucially too, it is the feminized landscape of Africa that almost kills the adventurers. Deploying familiar gender binaries, Africa is associated with the feminine and hence with darkness and the nonrational. The map drawn in the text clearly figures the landscape as a female body and the caves where the men are trapped is in the place of the genitalia. Sigmund Freud’s later characterization of female sexuality as “the dark continent” very obviously draws on this imperial imaginary. In Haggard’s 1887 novel, *She*, the character of Ayesha is the white queen of a strange Arabic-speaking people living in the ruins of an older civilization on the east coast of Africa. Ayesha is in the tradition of the
powerful sorceress and the femme fatale, but tellingly she also has political ambitions, suggesting that she might move to England and extend her empire there. The disturbance of gender roles is familiar in Gothic fiction, but Ayesha, like many of the female figures of imperial Gothic, indicates some of the particular late-Victorian anxieties about the loss of distinction between men and women, the appearance of the New Woman and the decadent man and the associated threat to the propagation of the strong imperial race.

The popularity of Africa as a location for adventure stories reflected the real “scramble for Africa” that took place between the European powers after the Berlin Conference of 1885, but also a perception that it was one of the last mysterious places left on earth. Haggard himself asks where writers of future generations will find a safe location for their plots. The answer, in the later years of the century, is in the purely imagined landscapes of the future and in the more apparently prosaic: at home, in Britain.

The work of H. G. Wells exploits all of these possible “safe and secret” places. The novels he called his “scientific romances” show almost the whole range of imperial Gothic: *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) features a vivisectionist on a nameless Pacific island, performing surgical experiments of accelerated evolution that turn animals into human form. The substitution of species difference for racial difference in that novel is also present in *The War of the Worlds* (1898), where the Martians are the technologically superior invading force and the British are the helpless colonized people. The Martians are vulnerable to the primitive, however, as through their vampiric feeding on human blood they are killed by a simple virus long eradicated in their own society. In *The Time Machine* (1895), the Time Traveler effectively acts as a colonizer of the future world, but here the journey is not spatial but chronological. The action only moves a few yards around its starting point in the suburbs of London and in doing so indicates the most chilling message of imperial Gothic, that the most mysterious and least known spaces of the Empire lie right in its heart, in the imperial city itself (see Wells, H. G. (Herbert George)).

As Sherlock Holmes’ companion Dr. Watson describes it in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), London is “that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained” (Doyle 2001a: 8). Watson’s description encapsulates the anxiety of the nature of imperial interactions. The idea of imperial Britain depends upon the image of it as a source or a center from which civilized people and values move outward with the imperial center in control of the direction and nature of the flow. The scenarios represented in domestic imperial Gothic narratives are ones in which the flow is reversed or out of control and the center is invaded and undermined. Watson is a man damaged by imperial adventure, bringing his physical wound back home, but what more often returns is the metaphorical wound, the consequences of crimes committed abroad and finding resolution only in London, as happens conspicuously in *The Sign of Four* (1890). In that novel, as in many others like *Dracula* (1897) or *The Beetle* (1897), the return is embodied in a person or an object. Foreign objects displaced from their proper locations on the periphery of Empire or entering Britain in a fashion unregulated by commerce function as portals through which the undesirable influence flows. Further, the influence is figured as virulently contagious, easily infecting the domestic population.

Worse still than the infiltration of the contagious foreigner is the degeneration of the British themselves. During the course of the nineteenth century, the very poor and socially marginal had become increasingly Other and increasingly gothicized. Their world is a mysterious labyrinth that exists alongside the life of middle class, its effects leaking out in uncontainable ways. By the end of the nineteenth century anthropology provided ways of seeing the underclass as belonging almost to a separate and more primitive form of existence. The philanthropist William Booth’s nonfictional text *In Darkest London* (1890) demonstrates this in the
clearest of ways. His title deliberately echoes Henry Morton Stanley’s best-selling account of his travels, In Darkest Africa (1890), and Booth’s book makes an extended analogy between the peoples and practices of Africa and those of the poor in London. He effectively maps the Empire on to London, with the East End sharing all the “othered” qualities of its distant territories.

Booth’s hardly-human underclass inhabit a thoroughly Gothic London. Alongside Dracula and Dorian Gray, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and the similarly abject shape-shifters of Richard Marsh’s The Beetle (1897) and Arthur Machen’s The Great God Pan (1894) move freely about the streets and homes of the Empire’s capital. In these texts almost all distinctions are collapsed: between human and nonhuman, male and female, past and present, self and other. Fantasies of imperial order and control are undermined by what seems to be the easily accomplished invasion of every corner of the most powerful city in the world.

It is often difficult to discern attitudes to imperialism in Gothic texts. In some works, such as those of Wells, there appears to be at least a partial critique while others, like Dracula, manifest more explicit warnings about the need to defend the civilized values of the imperial race. Even what could be seen as the high-water mark of imperial Gothic, Conrad’s Heart of Darkness (1902) has been read as both confirming and subverting the ideology of imperialism. It is perhaps a measure of the instability of the ideology itself that it could be so powerfully exploited in fictional forms, and the fact that so many of its figures, such as Dracula or Dr. Jekyll, remain familiar in contemporary culture suggests ways in which Britain is still haunted by the legacy of its imperial century.

SEE ALSO: Degeneration; Fin-de-Siècle Gothic; Postcolonial Gothic; Wells, H. G. (Herbert George).

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FURTHER READING


Incest

JEFFREY KAHAN

In Horace Walpole’s Gothic play *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), the widowed Countess of Narbonne slips into bed with her son – who thinks he is sleeping with yet another woman. Years later, he ends up marrying Adeliza, the child of his union with his mother. The author thought that this plot was so horrid that he limited the print run to just fifty copies and distributed it only to close friends: “I thought it [the subject matter] would shock, rather than give satisfaction, to an audience” (Walpole 2003: 251). The reader, however, can quickly discern that Walpole does not see incest as merely aesthetically unpleasant; the fact that he shared the play among a close/incestuous circle suggests that incest can also be a stand-in for other activities – including, in the case of the play’s cautious distribution, an inner circle that rejects widely accepted social norms. Indeed, as Karl Zender explains in his essay on Faulkner, incest can be linked not only to an oedipal anxiety – a son’s love for his mother – but also to any number of antiauthoritarian acts (2002: 175). As a further example of oedipal anxiety, we may turn to Donatien Alphonse François’ (the Marquis de Sade) “Eugénie de Franval: A Tragic Tale” (1800), in which a father raises his daughter as his spiritual and sexual partner but demands that she refer to him as “brother,” and “would not have his daughter call him by any other names” (Sade 2005: 246). Monsieur de Franval’s demand suggests that sibling incest is somehow less egregious than parent–sibling coupling. The opposite is true in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818): Victor’s creation of life without sexual union can be read as an attempt to avoid incestuous contact with both his betrothed Elizabeth (his cousin in the 1818 edition; his adopted sister in the 1831 edition) and, symbolically, his mother – Victor’s mother dies from the scarlet fever she contracts while nursing Elizabeth through the same; before she dies, she holds both Victor and Elizabeth by the hand and makes them swear they will marry each other: “Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my place” (Shelley 1994: 26).

A variant of this incest motif can be traced to Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796), in which Ambrosio expresses an incestuous love for his sister, Antonia. While he is initially ignorant of his biological connection, the novel makes clear that his love for his sister is related to a form of self-love, which, in turn, stems from a lack of maternal love. Thus, before raping his sister he fixes on the milky, maternal splendor of Antonia’s bosom: “these swelling breasts, round, full, and elastic!” (Lewis 1995: 383).
Similarly to de Sade’s aforementioned tale, Antonia calls her brother “father” – although she is referring to him as a priest, not as her direct progenitor. More importantly, the father/priest here represents the weighty authority of organized religion. The ensuing destruction of the monastery by the townsfolk suggests that their fury is not directed at an individual but at the entire authoritarian structure of the Church: “the populace besieged the building with persevering rage: they battered the walls, threw lighted torches in at the windows, and swore that by break of day not a Nun of St. Clare’s order should be left alive” (Lewis 1995: 357).

Lewis uses incest to discuss religion; the theme of incest has also been used to suggest political and cultural degeneracy. The title of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) echoes the royal Houses of Europe – the present House of Windsor, for example, derives from the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Within the tale, we learn that the local “peasantry” associate the various maladies of the blue-blood/aristocratic Roderick (“He suffered,” the narrator informs us, “much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odours of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light”) with his obsession with the family’s “undeviating transmission from sire to son”(Poe 1889: 3, 7, 3). Roderick’s sole companion is his twin sister, Madeline, with whom, according to Poe critic Daniel Hoffman, he displays an “incestuous attachment” (1985: 297). Whereas Poe links incestuous degeneracy to the aristocratic culture of inbreeding and urbanity – Roderick spends his time fawning over his sister, playing the violin, and reading old German, Italian, and Latin texts – H. P. Lovecraft, with whom Poe is so often matched, connects genetic inbreeding to cultural degeneracy. In his “The Lurking Fear” (1923), the members of the Martense clan mate with each other over a series of generations. As a result, they devolve into mindless and predatory monstrosities: “there was hardly a squeal” when one of the Martense, “with the skill of long practice,” killed and ate one of its siblings. “Others snapped up what it left and ate with slavering relish” (Lovecraft 1965: 185).

A more nuanced version of incest as cultural anxiety can be found in Faulkner’s novel The Sound and Fury (1929), in which Quentin, who has sexual feelings for his sister Caddy, is not horrified by her promiscuity but by her disregard for racial and social class distinctions: “Why must you do like nigger women do in the pasture the ditches the dark woods hot hidden furious in the dark woods”; “It’s not for kissing I slapped you [...] It’s for letting it be some darn town squirt” (Faulkner 1990: 92, 133–4).

SEE ALSO: Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Poe, Edgar Allan; Sade, Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de; Sex; Southern Gothic; Walpole, Horace.

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Inheritance

ANTHONY MANDAL

Inheritance is one of the central motifs of Gothic literature, recurring from the earliest days of the mode to the present. It is no coincidence that the Gothic emerged during a period of massive transformation in the dispensation of wealth across social structures and within families. Property and legitimacy were fundamental to the construction of identity in Western society, and, despite a changing focus of transmission, this remained the case during both the feudal and capitalist eras. Changes in legislation during the nineteenth century went some way toward addressing certain inequalities in society, particularly with regard to women’s rights to property, but it would not be until the twentieth century that some measure of balance would be achieved.

The first Anglophone Gothic novel, Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764), is driven by the obsession of Manfred, Prince of Otranto, with continuing his dynasty in spite of a prophecy that the eponymous castle will pass out of his family’s hands. Following the grisly death of his son, Manfred decides to produce another heir by pursuing his son’s intended (Isabella) with pathological intensity, wreaking havoc upon his own family in the process. Isabella is rescued by Theodore, a peasant later revealed as the true prince, whose inheritance had been usurped by Manfred’s grandfather (see Walpole, Horace).

The problematic manner in which property succession is imbricated with gender politics in eighteenth-century literature reaches its apogee with the romances of Ann Radcliffe. In The Romance of the Forest (1791), the orphaned heroine is passed from one family to another as a chattel while being continually threatened with murder, before discovering her true identity as the daughter of a marquis. Radcliffe’s next and most popular novel, The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), inverts this dynamic with the heroine Emily being incarcerated by the villainous bandit Montoni, who tries to pressure her into signing over her inheritance to him. Repeatedly, Radcliffe’s fiction confronts its readers with young, vulnerable women whose inheritances are forcibly sequestered and bodies oppressed by tyrannical male villains (see Radcliffe, Ann).

Although these early Gothics use the feudal society of medieval Europe as their settings, the underlying concerns being voiced are clearly those of the eighteenth century. Women were becoming increasingly marginalized as the division between the sexes became orthodoxy, and legally a wife lost her identity upon marriage: “the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during marriage, or at least is incorporated or consolidated into that of her husband” (Blackstone 1765: 430).

A different reading of “inheritance” can be found in Edgar Allan Poe’s lurid Gothic tales, which seem more preoccupied with the cultural legacy bequeathed to their protagonists by the Old World, leaving them suspended within the New. In “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), the quasi-incestuous twins Roderick and Madeline Usher are presented as pathologically enervated figures, whose bloodline is tainted by insanity and degeneracy (see degeneration; incest; Poe, Edgar Allan). Such considerations recur in later narratives, such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891), both noticeably influenced by the evolutionary discourses of the Darwinian era (see Stevenson, Robert Louis).

Other Victorian Gothics associated inheritance with criminality in various ways. Charles Dickens’ novels, for example, repeatedly trouble the connection between property and morality, before finally establishing his protagonists as successful bourgeois figures who typically generate their own property, despite impecunious origins or chimerical legacies. In the baroque Bleak House (1853), Dickens attacks the convoluted Court of Chancery through the fictional case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce, the multiple wills of which preside over the fates of various characters in the novel, leading to insanity and
death. In *Great Expectations* (1861), the mysterious legacy received by the orphaned Pip forms a central mystery in the novel, before the benefactor is revealed to be the criminal Magwitch. The novel ends with Magwitch’s capture by the authorities and death and the confiscation of Pip’s inheritance by the Crown, prior to his return some years later as a successful entrepreneur (see *dickens, charles*).

In the sensation novels of the mid-Victorian period, inheritance, criminality, and legitimacy intertwine insistently, challenging Victorian notions of social identity and bourgeois rectitude. Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1859) details the plot contrived by the illegitimate Sir Percival Glyde to pay off his debts by marrying the heiress Laura Fairlie and then confining her to an asylum, while trying to pass her off as dead (see *collins, wilkie; sensation fiction*). Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas* (1865) offers a more Gothic variant, in which the eponymous villain attempts to acquire his orphaned niece’s property by resorting to various distasteful means. Once again, these fictions reflect the vulnerability of women, whose social existence remained subsumed by those of the men around them, and it was not until the Married Women’s Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 that the inequalities of coverture began to be addressed. Class politics and the dispersion of family wealth form the basis of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), in which Sherlock Holmes uncovers a plot to acquire Sir Henry Baskerville’s fortune by a cousin, who disguises his identity and employs a superstitious legend to cloak his murderous intentions. M. R. James’ stories often feature an inheritance that itself forms the source of the supernatural irruption, with tales such as “The Tractate Middoth” and “Mr Humphreys and his Inheritance” (both 1911) linked to or parts of cursed legacies (see *james, m. r. (montague rhodes)*).

Echoing earlier Gothic appropriations of the feudal settings to comment upon contemporary society, recent novels have attempted to conjure up Victorian inheritances. John Harwood’s *The Ghost Writer* (2004) and *The Séance* (2009) offer archetypal Gothic narratives of confused identities, hidden fortunes, and haunted houses, while Michael Cox’s neo-Victorian *The Meaning of Night* (2005) features a long-lost heir cheated of his legacy, who will employ any means – including murder – to recuperate his rightful dues. Adam Nevill’s *Apartment 16* (2010) revolves around the inheritance of a fashionable Bayswater apartment by a young American woman, whose destiny becomes disturbingly intertwined with that of a diabolical artist, whose murder generations earlier condemned the building and its occupants to a horrific curse.

Such works demonstrate that, from its inception to the present day, the Gothic’s varying configurations of inheritance – as property, as genealogy, as supernatural disturbance – have arrested our attention as lenses upon our relationship with the past. Beyond this, the Gothic preoccupation with inheritance of one form or another can remind readers about their own, often ambivalent, relationship with the present, articulating concerns about the world in which we find ourselves, as well as our legacy to the generations yet to come.

SEE ALSO: Asylums; Collins, Wilkie; Counterfeit; Crime; Curse; Degeneration; Dickens, Charles; Domestic Gothic; Family; Female Gothic; Incest; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); Poe, Edgar Allan; Postcolonial Gothic; Race; Radcliffe, Ann; Sensation Fiction; Slavery and the Gothic; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Walpole, Horace.

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FURTHER READING


Inquisition, The

MARIA PURVES

The Inquisition came into being in or around 1233 in response to the growth of Catharism, a mystical religious movement in France that for some time had been presenting a very real threat to the Roman Catholic Church and a perceived threat to Christian society. Throughout the second half of the twelfth century, the Cathars had been persecuted for their beliefs. In pursuit of an alternative to violence, Dominic de Guzman had in 1215 set up an order of itinerant ascetic friars, skilled in theology, to persuade the Cathars to return to orthodoxy through the example of good Christian practice and debate. However, as the Cathar threat increased, Pope Gregory IX made the decision to send Dominicans into Central and Western Europe with formal authorization to “proceed against” suspected heretics “without appeal.” In this way, the Inquisition was born.

Gregory appointed Dominicans for their scholarly and pastoral skills and strong moral sense, and ability to work full-time for the new tribunal. However, wherever an Inquisitional tribunal came heavily under the influence of civil authority or certain (now infamous, probably homicidal) Inquisitors, it became a tool of extreme violence and injustice, reaching the zenith of its delinquency in Spain in the fifteenth century. The Spanish Inquisition answered to the monarchy rather than to the Pope.

The targets of the early or Medieval Inquisition included other mystical sects such as the Waldensians and, from 1300 onwards, free-thinkers and orthodox Catholics: those whose wealth was coveted by the monarchy, such as the Knights Templar, and ascetic sects such as the fraticelli in Italy, whose spiritual teachings competed with those of Rome. The Spanish Inquisition focused its activities on Jews and Moslems. There were Inquisitions all over Europe and in the New World.

In France and Italy – the two main centers of Catharism – the Inquisition went into decline in the fourteenth century and by the end of the fifteenth century the tribunals in these countries had very little authority or money. The Spanish Inquisition, however, properly began with the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. It served to combat Protestantism in the sixteenth century but failed to stem the spread of Enlightenment ideas in the eighteenth century: it was abolished by the Progressista government following the revolution of 1820.

The techniques used by the Inquisition to elicit a confession of heresy or force a witness to give evidence are well known. In deference to early Church teachings that declared that the Church should not for any cause shed blood, Inquisitions employed tortures such as racking and water torture. Those who confessed to heresy were accepted back into the Church and punished by lengthy penances that could be physical or financial, or both. When the so-called heretic would not budge from his or her heretical beliefs, the death sentence was passed and this usually meant burning. The Spanish Inquisition, like other Inquisitions, would conduct trials on public feast days. Its name for this type of religious festival, auto-da-fé or “act of faith,” has come to mean public burning at the stake.

Three of the most famous early Gothic novels – Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796), Ann Radcliffe’s The Italian (1797), and Charles Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) – feature scenes in the dungeons of the Inquisition, which was still in operation when the novels were being written. All three writers furnish their scenes with gory props, dramatic décor, tormented cries from distant cells, hooded attendants, and other voyeuristic signifiers of Inquisitorial corruption and cruelty.
Equally, all three representations justify the Inquisition’s existence. Radcliffe’s Dominican tribunal in *The Italian*, set in 1758, functions much like an English courtroom. It is likely that Radcliffe was influenced by Pierre Jean Grosley’s (correct) report that since the 1600s the Italian Inquisition had been involved in nothing more horrible than the handing out of spiritual and pecuniary penalties. Radcliffe’s Grand Inquisitor is a liberal and “just judge,” his candor exciting “powerful sensations of esteem and admiration” (Radcliffe 1968: 352) in the novel’s hero, Vivaldi. Lewis’ Inquisition in *The Monk* rightly accuses Matilda and Ambrosio of black magic, torturing yet ultimately pardoning the erring monk (who has by then fled with Satan).

Maturin, a Protestant clergyman and writer of aggressively anti-Catholic sermons who later wrote a historical novel set among the Cathars (*The Albigenses*, 1824), is surprisingly restrained when it comes to the Inquisition. His tribunal turns out to be much less “artful” than the narrator suspects, and “the terrors of the Inquisition” are not shown to us (except in a grisly nightmare sequence in which the narrator Monçada dreams that he is being burned in an auto-da-fé with the king and queen of Spain looking on). Maturin’s Inquisition correctly suspects Monçada of consorting with Satan and sentences him accordingly; and, when Satan burns down the Inquisitorial prison, allowing Monçada to escape, Monçada acknowledges that the prisoners were “treated with great humanity and consideration” (Maturin 1993: 224) by their captors.

Other representations of fair Inquisitions and Inquisitors can be found in *The Inquisition* (1797) and *The Abbess of Valtiera* by Agnes Lancaster (1816). William Ireland’s 1799 novel *The Abbess* gives a more horrific portrayal of the Inquisition. Ireland’s vision (clearly influenced by the visual aspects of Radcliffe’s scene in *The Italian*) is splendidly theatrical, with a black-velvet-festooned courtroom, cadaverous ecclesiastics in black robes emblazoned with scarlet silk crosses, and a life-size crucifix. The hero is tortured briefly on the rack. It is likely, argues Benjamin Franklin Fisher (1974: xxiii), that Ireland’s representation influenced Edgar Allan Poe’s famous Victorian Gothic terror-tale set in the dungeons of the Inquisition, “The Pit and the Pendulum” (1842).

The Inquisition as a motif in the Gothic was acknowledged by twentieth-century scholarship to be symptomatic of Protestant abomination for the Catholic Church, feeding into an anti-Catholic/anti-Church bias inherent in the genre. A few scholars (Tuite 1997; Whitlark 1997; Canuel 2002; Purves 2009) have in recent years questioned this supposed bias, however, and, with reference to representations of the Inquisition in Gothic novels, there is often a certain amount of ambiguity and complexity that complicates readings of straightforward antagonism.

SEE ALSO: Lewis, Matthew; Maturin, Charles Robert; Poe, Edgar Allan; Protestantism; Radcliffe, Ann; Roman Catholicism.

REFERENCES
International Gothic Association, The

AVRIL HORNER AND SUE ZLOSNIK

The International Gothic Association (IGA) brings together teachers, scholars, students, artists, writers, and performers from around the world who are interested in any aspect of Gothic culture: fiction, drama, poetry, art, film, music, dance, architecture, popular culture, and technology. It promotes the study and dissemination of information on Gothic culture from the mid-eighteenth century to the contemporary moment. Its purpose is to exchange and expand knowledge of and research into the Gothic as widely and effectively as possible. It also aims to encourage and support new and young scholars in the area of Gothic studies.

The Annual General Meeting of the IGA is held once a year (electronically in alternate years when there is no IGA conference). Potential presidents of the IGA are proposed by the Advisory Board and future presidents are elected by members who vote during the IGA conference AGM. The presidency is for two years, although this is often extended to a four-year period of office by mutual agreement. The founding president of the IGA was Allan Lloyd Smith, of the University of East Anglia, where the inaugural conference of the International Gothic Association was held in 1991. As a memorial to Allan, who died in 2010, the IGA set up The Allan Lloyd Smith Memorial Prize for Gothic Criticism. This biennial prize of £100 is awarded to the author of a scholarly publication which has considerably advanced the field of Gothic studies. Other past presidents include Robert Miles, Jerrold E. Hogle, Steven Bruhm, Jerrold E. Hogle, Victor Sage, Andrew Smith, Dennis Mellier, Marina Warner, Christopher Grunenberg, Elisabeth Bronfen, Tanya Krzwinska, David Punter, and Diane Long Hoeveler. Conference-related events have included a Masque Ball, a tour round Horace Walpole’s house at Strawberry Hill, a Goth disco, Mervyn Heard’s Magic Lantern Show, and a midnight tour round the Schloss at Heidelberg.

The conference for 2013 will be held at the University of Surrey, UK. Past plenary speakers have included Nancy Armstrong, Ken Gelder, Anne McGillivray, William Veeder, Steven Bruhm, Jerrold E. Hogle, Victor Sage, Andrew Smith, Dennis Mellier, Marina Warner, Christopher Grunenberg, Elisabeth Bronfen, Tanya Krzwinska, David Punter, and Diane Long Hoeveler. Conference-related events have included a Masque Ball, a tour round Horace Walpole’s house at Strawberry Hill, a Goth disco, Mervyn Heard’s Magic Lantern Show, and a midnight tour round the Schloss at Heidelberg.

At each IGA conference AGM offers to host future IGA conferences are invited so that the Association can plan ahead. When considering such offers, the Executive Committee takes into consideration suitability of location, support to be offered by the host university in terms of administration and financial contribution to the cost of running the conference,
A membership history of the potential host, cost of transport and residence for delegates. Members of the biennial Conference Committee are appointed as appropriate in advance of each international conference. The Association provides financial help for postgraduates giving papers at the conference in the form of three bursaries for which interested participants can compete. In addition, the IGA sponsors joint sessions with other academic associations, such as BARS (British Association for Romantic Studies), NASSR (North American Society for the Study of Romanticism), ACCUTE (Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English), and ALA (American Literature Association). Individuals organizing small one-day conferences that have a significant Gothic content can apply for assistance in underwriting the cost of the conference: successful applicants receive up to £100.

The work of the Association is carried out by three committees, the members of which are all members of the IGA. The day-to-day work of the Association is managed by the Executive Committee, consisting of the President(s), the Executive Officer, the Chair of the IGA Advisory Committee, and the editor of Gothic Studies. The Executive Committee consults with and is subject to review by the larger Association Advisory Committee, which consists of all Executive Committee members plus Past Presidents, the review editors for the journal, and 15–20 members-at-large, who serve for two-year periods and who may be re nominated. The Advisory Committee also acts as the Editorial Advisory Board for the journal Gothic Studies. Information about current members of the Executive Committee and the Advisory Committee can be accessed via the IGA website, which also provides details of the full constitution of the IGA. The Association has three categories of membership: institutional, full individual membership, and associate individual membership. Full membership of the Association includes a discounted subscription to the journal Gothic Studies.

First published in 1999, Gothic Studies (published by Manchester University Press) is the refereed journal of the International Gothic Association and includes articles by postgraduate students and independent scholars as well as senior academics and established figures in Gothic studies. The journal currently appears twice each year, in May and November, and publishes a mixture of general issues and guest-edited specials. The founding editor, William Hughes, remains in post as Managing Editor, supported by Emily Alder, Assistant Editor, and the two Reviews Editors, Ben Brabon and Anne Williams. In addition to important and ground-breaking essays, Gothic Studies includes a regular reviews feature, occasional interviews with significant figures in the field, calls for papers, and conference announcements. The journal also commissions special issues from qualified guest editors, who are responsible for drafting a call for papers, moderating submissions, writing an introduction and editing the whole issue. Previous special issues have included considerations of Gothic in contemporary popular culture, the Female Gothic, Material Gothic, the Gothic and Theory, Edgar Allan Poe, and Scottish Gothic. In association with the IGA, Manchester University Press has recently instituted a new book series of edited essays, entitled “International Gothic,” in recognition of the global reach of Gothic studies in the twenty-first century.

The IGA maintains an informative website, currently hosted by Stirling University (www.iga.stir.ac.uk). This provides information about current and future events related to study of the Gothic, including conferences, previous events in Gothic studies, publications inviting contributions from Gothic scholars, contact information for major figures in the field of Gothic studies, the constitution of the IGA, and how to become a member. It also includes a postgraduate forum and a Directory, which offers links to other Gothic-related resources, including websites, relevant publishers, and undergraduate courses in Gothic studies.

SEE ALSO: Criticism.
Intertext

ANTHONY MANDAL

From its inception, the Gothic has been an intrinsically intertextual genre, reflecting a sophisticated and at times bewildering relationship to the written word. This intertextuality manifests itself in a variety of forms, including reference and allusion to antecedent works, pastiche or parody of literary traditions, and the use of stylistic and structural mechanisms, such as interpolated documents, discovered manuscripts, letters, and diegetic apparatus. This abundance of intertextual energy has granted the Gothic much of its richness, power, and longevity while accentuating its tendency toward ambiguity and excess.

The first Anglophone Gothic novel, Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764), can be seen as a hybrid between two fictional forms, caught within a transitional moment in British literary history (see walpole, horace). In his preface to the second edition, Walpole states that the novel “was an attempt to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern”: the former relies on “imagination and improbability” while the latter aims for a mimetic representation from “nature” (1765: vi). Citing Shakespeare as his model, Walpole’s attempt at textual weaving was a bilateral act of intertextuality, both invoking earlier literary traditions and generating its own allusive framework. Otranto can be seen as part of a larger aesthetic movement during the mid-eighteenth century that marked a shift away from the dominant neoclassicism of the post-Enlightenment age in favor of earlier, “primitive” literary forms. Works such as Richard Hurd’s Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762) and Thomas Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765) argued for an escape from the artificiality of contemporary literature by a return to the simpler, more authentic accounts of human experience found in folklore and native ballads. This attempt to negotiate between the two fictional forms of romance and novel forms the crux of Gothic novelist Clara Reeve’s history of prose fiction, The Progress of Romance (1785), which endeavors “to trace the progress of this species of composition, through all its successive stages and variations, to point out its most striking effects and influence upon the manners” (1785: iv). Reeve had earlier attempted to put these theories into narrative form with her popular novel, The Old English Baron (1777), which itself sought to rewrite Walpole’s Otranto from a more naturalistic perspective (see reeve, clara). This blending of supernatural romance with rationalism would achieve best-selling results in the fiction of Ann Radcliffe, who prefaced each chapter of her later novels with epigraphs drawn from native poets such as Beattie, Shakespeare, Thomson, and the Graveyard Poets (see graveyard poetry; radcliffe, ann).

Any history of the Gothic would be incomplete without an acknowledgment of the role played by the dominant literary aesthetic of the eighteenth century: sensibility (see sensibility). The novel of sensibility (or sentimental romance) gained prominence in Britain in the wake of Samuel Richardson’s Clarissa (1748), was reshaped mid-century by the continental narratives of Rousseau and Goethe, before being given a radically subversive edge from the 1780s onward through the works of writers such as Eliza Fenwick, Mary Robinson, and Charlotte Smith. The darker elements of sentimental romance prefigure many of the paradigmatic aspects of the Gothic: orphaned protagonists (typically, young heroines) often feature as the innocent victims of tyrannical patriarchs; remote and picturesque locations form fitting backdrops to the action; doomed or persecuted love generates scenes of emotional conflict and an excess of suffering. In many ways, it is hard to draw a line between works of dark sensibility such as Smith’s The Old Manor House (1793) and Fenwick’s Secrecy (1795) and romantic Gothic novels such as Radcliffe’s Sicilian Romance (1790) and Regina Maria Roche’s Clermont (1798).

The Gothic does not restrict its engagement solely to literary texts: in fact, it is driven
relentlessly by its own intermediality, interacting with myriad eclectic discourses in rich and dynamic ways: religion, myth, science, philosophy, art, music. Key biblical episodes such as the temptation in the Garden and the fall of Lucifer are played out in Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796) and Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya* (1806), as well as in J. W. von Goethe’s tragedy *Faust* (1808, 1832) (see Lewis, Matthew). Both S. T. Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) and Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) supply complex narratives that draw abundantly upon Christian mythography, particularly the motifs of the Wandering Jew and salvation through Christ (McGann 1985) (see Maturin, Charles Robert). The entirety of James Hogg’s *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) hinges on two contradictory narratives depicting the same murder: the rationalistic narrative of the “Editor” and the portentously Calvinistic, brimstone-laden account of the murderous “Sinner” himself (see Hogg, James). More recently, Umberto Eco’s heavily allusive monastic Gothic novel, *The Name of the Rose* (1980), draws upon the Book of Revelation to depict a series of horrific murders that echo scenes from the Apocalypse.

Folklore and mythology have offered powerful intertextual sources for the Gothic from its earliest days to more recent works (see Folklore). The folk myth of the lamia, a serpentine female demon from ancient Greece, forms the basis for poems such as Goethe’s *Bride of Corinth* (1797), Coleridge’s *Christabel* (1816), and Keats’ “La Belle Dame sans Merci” and *Lamia* (both 1820). The vampire of Gothic literature, accoutered in the vestments of antiquity, is itself a fundamentally intertextual construction that reflects modern anxieties (see Vampire Fiction). The most sustained early study of vampirism in Western Europe was Dom Augustin Calmet’s pseudo-anthropological *Traité sur les apparitions et des esprits et sur les vampires* (Treatise on Apparitions of Spirits and on Vampires, 1746). Calmet’s volume formed a key source for Bram Stoker while he was composing *Dracula* (1897), which itself offers a colorful interpretation of Eastern European folklore (see Stoker, Bram). A contemporary of Stoker, Arthur Machen, melds occultism and mysticism with decadent modernity in his fin-de-siècle fictions, *The Great God Pan* (1894) and *The Hill of Dreams* (1904) (see Machen, Arthur). Fritz Lang’s film noir of 1948, *Secret Beyond the Door*, offers a modern interpretation of the Bluebeard legend in which a newlywed woman begins to suspect her husband’s sanity. More recently, works such as Robert Coover’s *Pricksongs and Descants* (1969), Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), and Tanith Lee’s *Red as Blood: Tales from the Sisters Grimmer* (1983) offer potent reinscriptions of gendered roles in fairy tales, particularly Beauty and the Beast, Bluebeard, Snow White, and Little Red Riding Hood (see Carter, Angela).

The Gothic engages powerful with art, so much so that the aesthetic–philosophical paradigms of the sublime postulated by Burke and Kant form a foundational discourse in first-wave Gothic (see Sublime, The). Radcliffe’s works offer a significant interpretation of sublimity, through her extended use of landscape to convey specific tonalities and impressions from her heroines’ perspectives – what Rictor Norton terms “iconic mood-words and aesthetic terms rather than genuine descriptions of scenery” (1998: 97). Not having personally encountered the locales she describes prior to publishing her novels, Radcliffe also made extensive use of the artwork of painters such as Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, and Salvator Rosa. The function of art preoccupies Gothic writers throughout the nineteenth century, most notably in Oscar Wilde’s *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), which delineates the Gothic fall of its protagonist in his quest to experience the ultimate aesthetic stimuli. Taking much of its inspiration from Walter Pater’s scholarly study, *The Renaissance* (1872), Wilde’s novel proffers scene after scene of overloaded sensory vignettes to the reader.

From the nineteenth century onward, science functioned as a key discourse of the Gothic (see Science and the Gothic). Mary
Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) represents one of the earliest engagements with science in a post-Enlightenment context, demonstrating how the loftiest aspirations can degenerate into murderous destruction and domestic tragedy (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft). Shelley’s Gothic dispatches the usual supernatural apparatus of earlier Gothic fictions to engage with the alchemical works of Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus, alongside more modern “natural philosophers” such as Luigi Galvani and surgeons such as John Abernethy and Sir William Lawrence. It was during the later nineteenth century that Gothic and science would intermingle to form a potent compound, particularly in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and H. G. Wells’ *Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), which used recent scientific developments to consider issues about human subjectivity, evolutionary degeneration, and medical ethics (see Stevenson, Robert Louis; Wells, H. G. (Herbert George)). Medicine also came under the Gothic lens in works such as Wilkie Collins’ *Heart and Science* (1883), Mary Braddon’s “Good Lady Ducayne” (1896), and Edith Nesbit’s “The Three Drugs” (1908), all of which underscore anxieties about the ways in which scientific advances intended to improve the condition of humanity could often be abused (see Braddon, Mary Elizabeth; Collins, Wilkie). Gothic narratives explore the hinterland between science and mysticism, often making use of heterodox discourses. Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas* (1864) and “Green Tea” (1872), for instance, both make heavy reference to the writings of the Swedish mystic and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg, and his visions of a parallel world to ours. Other pseudoscientific staples invoked in the Gothic include mesmerism (Nicholas Salaman’s *The Grimace*, 1991) and spiritualism (Sarah Waters’ *Affinity*, 1999; John Harwood’s *The Séance*, 2008) (see Mediumship; Spiritualism).

Considering its preoccupation with inheritance, tyranny, and illegitimacy, it is unsurprising that the Gothic draws a great deal of intertextual energy from the tension between law and crime (see Crime; Law and the Gothic). Novels such as *Things as They Are; or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1795) by William Godwin are preoccupied with the ways in which legislation can be exploited or distorted to enact all sorts of tyranny, in order to overthrow justice (see Godwin, William). Any number of Charles Dickens’ novels use the law as an intertextual discourse, but nowhere is this more central than in *Bleak House* (1853), which circles around the convoluted machinations that surround litigation over an inheritance within the Jardyce family (see Dickens, Charles). Wilkie Collins masterfully exploits legalistic mechanisms to construct his narrative in *The Woman in White* (1859), which is presented as a series of testimonies by the novel’s various protagonists. Marie Belloc Lowndes’ *The Lodger* (1913) draws upon the urban legend of Jack the Ripper for its narrative, and itself formed the basis of a suspenseful adaptation directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1927).

With such a rich tapestry of intertextual sources and its own baroque allusiveness, the Gothic itself functions as a powerful intertext to be mined. Lewis, one of the Gothic pioneers of the first wave, drew so extensively on the German Schauerroman (“shudder novels”) works of writers such as Bürger, Gleich, and Schiller that he was accused of plagiarism (see Bürger, Gottfried; German Gothic). Walter Scott’s historical novels are seen as inaugurating a new epoch for the novel, which maintained the grandeur of the earlier romance form while eschewing many of its excesses. Nevertheless, Scott made use of Gothic in his novel-writing career to uncanny effect through his interpolated tales, especially “The Fortunes of Martin Waldeck” (*The Antiquary*, 1815) and “Wandering Willie’s Tale” (*Red Gauntlet*, 1824). Perhaps the most notable of Scott’s flirtations with the Gothic is his brooding *Bride of Lammermoor* (1818), a tale characterized by paradigmatic Gothic machinery (a family curse, a doomed hero, the heroine’s insanity). Freud’s new science of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century owed much to the explorations of
repression and violence articulated by Gothicism (see psychoanalysis). In fact, he used E. T. A. Hoffmann’s disturbing tale “The Sandman” (1816) as a case study in his foundational account of “The Uncanny” (1919) (see Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); uncanny, the). Psychoanalysis itself inaugurated a new era in the Gothic, informed by the language and ideas of Freudian theory. One notable early response is May Sinclair’s self-consciously-titled collection Uncanny Stories (1923), which also adds a good dose of Kantianism (see Sinclair, May). Recent Gothic narratives play heavily with readers’ familiarity with and expectations of the mode, creating a complex chain of metatextual associations. Hogg’s Confessions forms a central intertext for James Robertson’s Scottish Gothic work The Testament of Gideon Mack (2006), which deals with similar issues of personal damnation and the disintegration of personal identity. Elizabeth Kostova’s The Historian (2005) reinflects the Dracula myth as a bibliographic mystery only to be solved by deciphering various textual fragments scattered across the Old World’s libraries. Adam Nevill’s Banquet for the Damned (2004) consciously takes inspiration from M. R. James’ Edwardian ghost stories, while a significant number of neo-Victorian Gothics continue to enjoy popular success, among them Susan Hill’s The Woman in Black (1983) and Michael Cox’s The Meaning of Night (2005) (see Hill, Susan; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes)).

In fact, such is the excessive nature of Gothic intertextuality that its baroque allusiveness is always in danger of slipping into self-parody (see comic gothic). As Leslie Fiedler notes, “the Gothic mode is essentially a form of parody, a way of assailing clichés by exaggerating them to the limit of grotesqueness” (1966: 33). It is precisely this grotesqueness that is picked up by novelists such as Jane Austen, whose Northanger Abbey (1818) satirizes its quixotic heroine’s readiness to believe in the veracity of Gothic discourse. E. S. Barrett’s The heroine (1814) similarly deconstructs the Gothic’s proclivity for sentimental heroines who perpetually seek “incident” in its empty-headed protagonist, Cherubina. Nevertheless, as much as these novels parody the Gothic, they also acknowledge its potency, and at times its accuracy: Northanger’s Catherine ultimately learns that contemporary Bath may itself, after all, be home to tyranny and incivility not too far removed from the world of Udolpho. As Linda Hutcheon observes, “Parody [...] is a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text” (1985: 6). In fact, less obvious responses challenge readers’ understanding about the demarcation between pastiche and parody. Edgar Allan Poe’s skit “How to Write a Blackwood Article” (1839) pokes fun at the extravagances of the early-nineteenth-century “Tale of Terror” popularized in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine; yet, these narratives clearly inform Poe’s own macabre brand of Gothic (see Poe, Edgar Allan; tales of terror). Recent examples include the Scream film franchise (1996–2011), which self-referentially delineates the “rules” that protagonists must follow to survive horror movies, while the most recent, Scream 4 (2011), repeatedly invokes the “meta” commentaries that analyze those rules themselves. Similarly, the hybridity that characterizes the best-selling Pride and Prejudice and Zombies (2009), by Seth Grahame-Smith, inversely reflects Austin’s own approach to Gothic in Northanger Abbey, reinscribing Regency social comedy as a battle for survival in a post-apocalyptic world (see zombies).

The Gothic is not only discursively and formally shaped by intertextual dynamics: it is often replete with “embodied” texts that drive their praxis, from discovered manuscripts to dangerous books that derange their readers. Repeatedly, textuality becomes reified as an object of palpably supernatural power. Walpole’s Otranto commences such literary sleight of hand by announcing itself on its first-edition title page as an authentic manuscript recently discovered, “translated by Wiliam Marshall, Gent. From the Original Italian of
Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto” (see counterfeit). Subsequent Gothic narratives such as The Mysteries of Udolpho, Frankenstein, Confessions of a Justified Sinner, and Jekyll and Hyde continued to make use of disembodied textual fragments, intercepted correspondences, and recovered documents. The early-twentieth-century short stories of M. R. James and H. P. Lovecraft in particular supply a plethora of books, pamphlets, and journals that threaten to destroy their protagonists (see lovecraft, h. p. (howard phillips)). In Eco’s The Name of the Rose, the anxiety of intertextuality generates the Gothic moment itself, in a novel that abounds with poisonous books, treacherous libraries, and murderous librarians. Clive Barker takes the concept of intertextuality to an altogether more disturbing level in his Books of Blood series (1984–6), in which the skin of one character becomes the textual surface for the constituent stories of the damned souls that haunt Barker’s collection (see barker, clive). In Arturo Pérez-Reverte’s diabolical Dumas Club (1993), the mind of the protagonist (a book dealer) finds that “after so many books, films and TV shows, after reading on so many different possible levels, it was difficult to tell if one was seeing a real image, an inverted image, or both, in a hall of mirrors” (2003: 207). Kostova’s The Historian is populated with antique books that reveal themselves as undead objects, reeking of decay, threatening to vampirically steal the souls of their readers. Such is the fecundity of the Gothic – its intertextuality spiraling into decadent excess – that reading itself is ultimately shown to be a Gothic experience.

SEE ALSO: Barker, Clive; Braddon, Mary Elizabeth; Bürger, Gottfried; Carter, Angela; Collins, Wilkie; Comic Gothic; Counterfeit; Crime; Dickens, Charles; Folklore; German Gothic; Godwin, William; Graveyard Poetry; Hill, Susan; Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); Hogg, James; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); Law and the Gothic; Lewis, Matthew; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Machen, Arthur; Maturin, Charles Robert; Mediumship; Poe, Edgar Allan; Psychoanalysis; Radcliffe, Ann; Reeve, Clara; Science and the Gothic; Sensibility; Sinclair, May; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Spiritualism; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Stoker, Bram; Sublime, The; Tales of Terror; Uncanny, The; Vampire Fiction; Walpole, Horace; Wells, H. G. (Herbert George); Zombies.

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FURTHER READING
Ireland, William Henry

JEFFREY KAHAN

William Henry Ireland (1775–1835), English novelist and poet, will forever be known as the boy who forged Shakespeare. In late 1794, Ireland, then only nineteen years old, claimed he had discovered a trunk of Shakespearean documents, which included legal papers, love letters, lost poems, portraits, correspondences, and a series of lost plays—among them, Vortigern, which was staged at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane on April 2, 1796. Much of the audience was openly hostile; heckling and hissing broke out in the fifth act, and, at final curtain, further performances were immediately canceled. Soon after, Ireland stepped forward, admitting that he had authored the play and the documents. Rather than being hailed as a genius, Ireland was blacklisted from the theater.

In 1799, William Henry Ireland, or “Shakespeare Ireland,” as he was dubbed, published his first Gothic work, The Abbess. Appropriately, the novel was modeled upon the recent work of yet another teenage genius, the eighteen-year-old Matthew Lewis, author of The Monk (1796). The Abbess was a success, initially in England and then, two years later, in America, where a second edition was issued in 1802. The novel was translated into Spanish in 1822, another Spanish edition followed in 1836; a German edition was published in 1824; another British edition was published in 1834—all proof of the novel’s sustained international popularity.

In his foreword to a recent, modern edition of The Abbess, Benjamin F. Fisher mapped out some of Ireland’s influence upon the Gothic; Fisher has even suggested that the master of the macabre, Edgar Allan Poe, was familiar with The Abbess (Fisher 2006: 13). Contemporary critics, however, dismissed Ireland as second rate. The Monthly Review, for example, did little more than list the conventionality of Ireland’s work:

Unnatural parents, —persecuted lovers, —murders, —haunted apartments, —winding sheets, and winding stair-cases, —subterraneous passages, —lamps that are dim and perverse, and that always go out when they should not, —monasteries, —caves, —monks, tall, thin, and withered, with lank abstemious cheeks, —dreams, —groans, and spectres. (Review of Rimualdo 1801: 203)

Still, Ireland’s publishers were pleased with the success of his first Gothic fiction, so much so that, when Ireland wrote yet another Gothic novel a year later, they made sure that readers now associated Ireland’s name with The Abbess, rather than Vortigern: the work was formally entitled Rimualdo: or the Castle of Badajos. A Romance. By W. H. Ireland, author of “The Abbess.”

Rimualdo (1800) sold less well, though a French translation was issued in 1823 and a second English edition was published in 1834. The novel revolves around the adventures of the titular character and his highly eroticized relationship with his male friend Cesario. It’s difficult to read of Ireland’s Cesario without recalling Viola’s alter ego in Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night. However, this Cesario, while adopting a secret identity, is not a woman in man’s clothes. Clearly, Ireland’s appropriation of the name is part of his attempt to create “male” characters with “female” sensibilities. Rejecting Ireland’s attempt to skew gendered prose, the Monthly Review concluded that the book produced “a medley of heterogeneous language totally destructive of good writing, by


violating those principles of harmonious congruity which form the basis of a correct and uncontaminated diction” (Review of Rimualdo 1801: 204).

Many of Ireland’s novels play upon fears of Roman Catholic emancipation, a topic of great concern from the Act of Union in 1800 to the Catholic Relief Act of 1829. Ireland’s novel Gondez the Monk (1805) concerns King Bruce and a small band of loyal followers, who, after a military defeat by Edward I, seek refuge in Gondez’s windswept Catholic monastery on the Isle of Oronza. Slowly, they come to realize that this refuge is a prison of unspeakable Gothic horrors: subterranean torture chambers, demon consorts, sexual slavery, and necromancy. In The Catholic (1807), Moor O’Mara, a religious zealot implicated in the Gunpowder Plot, is captured and is taken to a room where “new devices were to be resorted to in order that a full confession might be drawn from me” (Ireland 1807, III: 294). But, due to O’Mara’s religious constancy, he does not break and remains “in full belief of redemption” (Ireland 1807, III: 303). Second and third editions of The Catholic were issued, respectively, in 1826 and 1839. Yet another novel was edited by G. P. R. James and published as Rizzio, or, Scenes in Europe during the Sixteenth Century by the Late Mr. Ireland (ed. G. P. R. James) (1849). Rizzio is a non-fiction concerning the murder of David Rizzio by Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, husband of Mary, Queen of Scots. A second edition followed in 1859. Montague Summers’ study The Gothic Quest cited another “novel of terror” by Ireland, Bruno; Or, The Sepulchral Summons (Summers 1938: 346), but no copy has ever been located.

SEE ALSO: European Gothic; Lewis, Matthew; Poe, Edgar Allan.

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Irish Gothic
JARLATH KILLEEN

“Irish Gothic” is a nebulous term that covers a very large amount of writing emanating from, relating to, written in and/or about Ireland in the modern period. There is much debate over when Irish Gothic “emerged” (if that is the right word – see McCormack 1991, Backus 1999, Killeen 2005 for different approaches to the question of beginnings); what texts should be included in an examination of the area; and even whether Irish Gothic is a “tradition,” “genre,” or “mode” (see McCormack, 1991; Killeen 2006; Haslam 2007a, 2007b). Irish literary history is still a rather underdeveloped field. Although the masterpieces of Irish modernism (see MODERNISM) have received a great deal of critical attention, the fame of W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett have rather distracted consideration away from other writers and areas in serious need of detailed socioliterary mapping. Irish realism has, perhaps, suffered most seriously from neglect (see John Wilson Foster 2008 for a rectifying of this gap; for a good indication of the
amount of realism published in this period, see Loeber and Loeber 2006). In tandem with – and probably contributing to – the disregard of Irish realism, there has been a relatively strong interest in Irish “nonrealism,” of which tradition the Gothic is a major component, although this attention has mostly been directed toward a few major practitioners such as Charles Maturin, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (see Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan), Oscar Wilde, and Bram Stoker (see Stoker, Bram), ignoring “minor” figures such as Regina Maria Roche, Stephen Cullen, or Anne Fuller. In fact, Irish Gothic may be the one area of Irish fiction, besides modernism, to have received due attention, and this needs some explaining.

Interest in Irish Gothic stems from its ability to satisfy or at least address the problem believed to be caused by a deficiency in Irish realism. It has gained its most important theoretical attention from those who feel that the existence of an Irish Gothic tradition, or a general tendency toward the Gothic mode in much Irish fiction explains the previously embarrassing anemia of Irish literature until the literary revival. The problem has often been posed in a crude fashion: there is no Irish Middlemarch (1872–3). Ireland appears to lack a fully developed, sustained, dynamic realist tradition, and certainly lacks any masterpiece of realism, and it has been felt that this absence or gap had to be explained, although this is not a problem or gap unique to Irish literary history (see Moretti 2000). Given the canonical standard set by nineteenth-century English realism, celebrated by F. R. Leavis in The Great Tradition (1948), Irish literature until modernism appeared anomalous and relatively insignificant. Given the normative (and normalizing) tendency of much general literary history, where the literary traditions of most geographical zones are forced into a comparison with an Anglophone and England-based tradition, against which they are judged deficient and abnormal, Irish critics have been acutely aware of the difficulties of asserting that Irish writing before Ulysses (1917–22) is worth attending to. As Joe Cleary points out: there has been a distinct tendency in some quarters at least to identify realism with Englishness, and to identify the Irish novel tradition – as it extends from Swiftian satire, the popular folk-tale, and Ascendancy Gothic through to the glories of Irish modernism – as inherently “fantastic” or “anti-realist” in its essential line of development. (Cleary 2007: 49)

Given the relative disdain with which nonrealism and the Gothic were held in the early and middle twentieth century, this meant that Irish literature was seen as both underdeveloped and distinctly second class in comparison with that of its former colonial master.

The critical shift of the 1970s and 1980s came to the rescue of Irish literary history and the reputation of Irish literature before Joyce. With the advent of poststructuralist and postmodernist reconfigurations of the critical landscape, the previous canonical value placed in realism was “outed” as a political maneuver rather than a purely aesthetic judgment, and, especially in the writings of Roland Barthes and Catherine Belsey, realism itself was convicted of attempting to naturalize as commonsensical a thoroughly ideological version of reality, whereby “a pseudo-objective version of reality (a version that will be found to depend, finally, on a particular phase of history, or on a particular set of relationships between men and things) is passed off as reality” (Williams 1976: 219–20). With realism thoroughly problematized, the path was clear for genres supposedly “marginalized” and maligned by the realist tradition to take their rightful place. Enter Gothic stage left. In the seminal studies of Rosemary Jackson, David Punter, and others, Gothic was rehabilitated. Whereas previously it had been seen as an aesthetic mess, populated by one-dimensional characters, motored by creaky plots dependent on unbelievable contrivances, and written in poor, cliché-ridden prose (see Napier 1987), now it was hailed as articulating a dark undercurrent of Enlightenment rationalism, exploring taboos of a conservative society, and undermining the “depth model” of realist literature. Realism was the mode of a fearful, conservative, rationalist
middle class keen to insist that its view of reality was true. Gothic was the voice of the repressed, protesting the hegemony of the middle-class real. It was as politically rebellious as the critics whose attention it now attracted.

This critical development came just in time to restore the self-respect of critics reviewing Irish literary history. Given the sustained attack on literary realism, and the concomitant privileging of the Gothic and other nonrealist genres as in some respects superior (because they were seen as supporting antibourgeois, antiestablishment values), the fact that Irish writing was apparently dominated by nonrealism now began to seem like a cause for celebration and pride rather than mourning and shame. Moreover, if the sheer extent of American Gothic remains to some degree a critical mystery — given that Gothic appears at face value to be a contradiction of American values — then there is no such mystery about the existence of an Irish Gothic. Since Ireland had been, because of its colonial relation to Britain, repressed and suppressed, it made complete sense that its writers would choose to excel in a form considered second-rate and highly suspicious in the mother country. If England excelled in realism, Irish writers would have to explore the nonreal and the Gothic. As Julian Moynahan put it in an influential formulation: “The Gothic seems to flourish in disrupted, oppressed, or underdeveloped societies, to give a voice to the powerless and unenfranchised” (Moynahan 1994: 111). Suddenly there existed a critical discourse to understand (and implicitly defend) the Irish tradition against accusations of belatedness or insignificance. The gap caused by the apparent nonexistence of an Irish Middlemarch was now more than adequately filled by Charles Robert Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820).

The attraction of an argument like this can hardly be overstated, and it was expanded so that Irish writing as a whole could be seen as composed of variations on a nonrealist theme, or as comprising a robust challenge to the realist mode of thought. Ironically, of course, this version of Irish literary history has deep colonial roots. It was Matthew Arnold who initially lent academic respectability to this kind of thinking when he characterized the Irish as being distinguished by their unwillingness to bend to the “despotism of fact” (Arnold 1962: 344). In compensation for their lack of rational, organizational, and governmental genius (by which Arnold meant that the Irish could not be trusted to rule themselves from a national parliament), the Irish had been gifted with a surfeit of imaginative creativity — manifested in their storytelling (in the literal sense), what became later designated as a “gift of the gab,” or a capacity to resist allowing the facts to get in the way of a good story, channeled in literature in Irish saga, myth, and legend. Although this argument clearly had very negative implications for political projects such as Parnellite or Redmonite Home Rule, which were based on profoundly rational arguments, in the theoretical work of W. B. Yeats it was transformed into a positive view that Irish “spiritual” energy allowed the Irish nation (or at least the part of it located in County Sligo) to rise above the gross materialism of the English world, and remain in touch with cultural and religious verities expressed in literature and myth (Arnold 1962: 317).

Although the Irish have in some senses been struggling to extricate themselves from the stereotypes produced by the Arnoldian-Yeatsian formulation (quaint, spiritually rich, peasant) — now exported to the world through the tourist office, Bord Fáilte — and although the flowering of cultural criticism associated with the Field Day Company (especially in the work of Seamus Deane) took an extremely anti-Yeatsian inflection, Arnoldian theories were given a new inflection in the period after Gothic began to be seen in a positive rather than negative light in literary critical work in general. In The Irish Mind (1985), the Irish philosopher and cultural critic Richard Kearney controversially argued that a strain of nonrealism/antirepresentationalism connected Irish thinking across the ages, and the collection of essays he edited moved from the prehistoric megalithic tombs of the Boyne Valley complex
to the work of Seamus Heaney, suggesting that a consistent antipathy to rationalist thought (here configured as monologic and Eurocentric – the main sins of the 1980s) could be found in Irish culture. Terry Eagleton made the argument even more explicit in his article “The Irish Sublime” (1996) and in his study Heathcliff and the Great Hunger (1995), which posited “a remote connection” (Eagleton 1995: 51) between the negative theology of John Scottus Eriugena, the antirepresentational epistemology of Bishop Berkeley, Edmund Burke’s theory of the sublime, and the failure of the realist novel in the nineteenth century. While Kearney’s volume had strangely ignored the Gothic strain in Irish writing, Eagleton picked this genre up forthrightly (Eagleton 1996).

Significant intellectual weight was given to this view of Irish writing by two of the cutting-edge Irish theorists of the 1990s and 2000s. In Transformations in Irish Culture (1996), Luke Gibbons argued that Irish history was so disruptive and incoherent that Gothic texts like Melmoth the Wanderer should be considered appropriate (and accurate) responses to this disruption:

Due to an [...] uprooting of Irish experiences after the 1798 rebellion and the devastation of the Great Famine, Irish literature in the nineteenth century (especially in its romantic or gothic register) often evinced a “proto-modernist” outlook, whether in the dishevelled, multiple narratives of Charles Maturin or William Carleton, the colloquy of voices in Bram Stoker’s Dracula, or the heightened, montage effects of Boucicault’s melodramas. (Gibbons 1996: 6)

Later, in his brilliant intervention into the debate on Irish literary history “Violence and the Constitution of the Novel” (1993), David Lloyd argued that the reason for the “inadequacy” of the nineteenth-century Irish novel was that Irish society was constituted by too many “non-statist” elements that simply could not be absorbed into or represented within realism – which is an inherently statist and stabilizing genre – and that, therefore, attempts at Irish realism were always disrupted by other energies; Irish society contained many “modes of organization which offer counter-possibilities to the social vision embedded in either constitutional or novelistic embedded in either constitutional or novelistic narratives” (Lloyd 1993: 145) (this would include the Gothic, although Lloyd strangely does not mention it) (see also Lloyd 2008).

What was particularly useful about this argument was that, in positing an antirepresentational, dialogic, polyvalent theory of Irish literature which incorporated Irish Protestant Gothicists (see protestantism), its nonsectarian inclusivity coincided with the postmodern, pluralist version of Irish identity articulated in the Belfast Agreement 1998. The Gothic, a supposedly minor and neglected strain of writing in England, abused and marginalized by the hegemonic realism of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, could now be recognized as the “main” tradition in Irish writing, and thus the Irish canon could be salvaged as being in no way inferior to that found in the mother country; and indeed, in certain versions of this argument, Irish writing could be seen as anticipating the postmodern turn in its centering of the fractured, dissolute, daring, and subversive world of the Gothic. In this critical discourse, Ireland moves from being a premodern to a postmodern space in the wink of an eye, or perhaps was always already postmodern, from the calligraphy of the Book of Kells right up to the “Bog Gothic” of Patrick McCabe. Ulysses is not (or not only) a modernist surprise, but an understandable text to emerge from a nonrealist tradition.

This literary critical cartography is still dominant in Irish discussions of Irish fiction, mainly because it has a great deal to be said for it – it is certainly true that Irish writing is deeply implicated in nonrealism and Gothic, even when it attempts to be realist (the “Irish” novels of Maria Edgeworth are fairly clear examples of this tendency). The model does have the disadvantage of being rather too flattering to Irish writing in general, making it all look postmodernist avant la lettre (see contemporary gothic). According to Roy Foster,
“historians had problems with the ahistorical approach taken by some literary critics, which could involve time-travelling manoeuvres whereby Irish literature somehow prophesied postcolonial theory” (Foster 2003: 45). This tendency is hardly unusual or confined to Irish Studies, however, and many have rightly complained that one of the major flaws with much of the literary criticism practiced in the 1980s and 1990s was that it made all texts seem to have brilliantly anticipated the arguments about self-referentiality posited by poststructuralists.

A more serious problem with this model is its simplification of “English” traditions, as if, in the first place, there was not a very significant (and far from “marginal”) English nonrealist, Gothic tradition, and secondly as if “realism” meant only one thing. The “English realist tradition” did not exist as a purified realm cut off from other novel traditions. Whereas a clear distinction between the romance (in which the Gothic is traditionally included) and the realist novel is typical of much literary history – Georg Lukács, in his influential The Historical Novel (1937), in particular claimed that with the writing of Walter Scott a breach between the two forms was made – it is now untenable to maintain such hard and fast division: Charles Dickens (see Dickens, Charles) is a clear example of a major realist author being intimately acquainted with and imbricated in the Gothic and the romance (of course, this is probably the reason why Dickens has always been a problematic case within the English canon) (see Duncan 1992; Robertson 1994: 6, 7–8). Realism itself is far more complex a literary genre than was previously thought as critics such as George Levine, Elizabeth Deeds Ermath, Alice Jenkins, and Juliet John have shown.

Moreover, this version of Irish literary history has failed to keep up with shifts in Gothic criticism itself, which has moved from a view of the Gothic as a kind of nonrational, anti-Enlightenment, subversive space to a much more complex understanding of the genre as in many ways deeply implicated in the Enlightenment rationalizing project, and indeed, in many ways, as the most Eurocentric/logocentric discourse available. For many, including eminent scholars such as Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, the Gothic is best characterized not as an alternative to the real but as an attack on elements that would undermine the real whether they be internal (to the subject) or external (to the nation) (Baldick and Mighall 2000). Anti-Catholicism, chauvinistic nationalism, anti-Semitism, misogyny, and a host of other crimes are now being increasingly recognized as typical of the Gothic, while – perhaps even worse from the point of view of some critics – the Gothic is seen as a contribution to the growth of a liberal, rational state rather than a protest against it (see also Schmitt 1997). While this new writing on the Gothic has gone almost unnoticed in much Irish criticism, Chris Morash has argued that the entire body of “supernatural literature” in Ireland is not a means by which to celebrate and revel in an “alternative” thought process to bourgeois Anglophile rationalism, but is in fact a way to banish such thought processes altogether, by writers thoroughly committed to realist, rationalist, and civilizing modernity. In this alternative theoretical view it comes as no surprise that Irish Gothic is the product of the “civilizing” community of Irish Protestants, who were most uncomfortable with the nonmodern elements in Irish political and cultural life and fantasized in their fiction about exorcizing Catholic primitivism and recreating Ireland into a little version of England (Morash 2003).

One of the problems here is that critics have been working with unnecessary dichotomies: if subversive, then not conservative; if conservative, then not subversive – despite the fact that the Gothic tends to problematize both sides of binary divisions and tends to have a foot on both sides of the Irish Sea. Irish Studies was very receptive to this cultural version of Manichaeanism, because it was so bogged down in an argument between historical revisionism – a kind of empirical wet dream of history whereby the irrational elements of Irish history could be isolated and driven out (one such “irrational” element being, of course, nationalism) – and postcolonial criticism, headed by the Field Day
school. While in the discipline of Irish history, revisionism came out on top, in the study of “Anglo-Irish literature” – which would eventually morph into what is now called Irish Studies – the postmodernist, postcolonial view became the norm. Indeed, according to Linda Connolly, “Irish Studies’ itself has become almost exclusively identified with one critical perspective – postcolonialism – and one set of critics and their heirs – Field Day” (Connolly 2004: 139). In a genuinely “post-Revisionist” critical landscape (both institutionally and philosophically), perhaps the real complexities of the Irish Gothic, and of Irish nonrealism, can be confronted.

SEE ALSO: Contemporary Gothic; Dickens, Charles; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Modernism; Protestantism; Stoker, Bram.

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Jackson, Shirley

TRICIA Lootens

An unsparing, even fierce, social critic; a densely allusive satirist; and a writer whose fictions draw on thorough study, both of English literature and of the Gothic tradition in all its historical manifestations, Shirley Jackson (1916–65) is perhaps best known for her short story “The Lottery.” Published in The New Yorker on June 26, 1948, this spare account of an annual New England village gathering, with its stunningly matter-of-fact culmination in ritual murder, unleashed what the author herself termed “bewilderment, speculation, and plain old-fashioned abuse” (Jackson 1993: 128). “Anthologized, dramatized, televised, . . . made into a ballet,” and banned in South Africa, “The Lottery” also won immediate critical success (Jackson 1993: 128; Hyman 1966: viii). By the time Jackson’s story was republished toward the close of her 1949 The Lottery; or, The Adventures of James Harris, it seemed primed to take its part within what was, in its own time, perceived as an ambitious and largely successful literary career (Hattenhauer 2003: 1–2).

By the end of that career, Shirley Jackson had written six novels, two family chronicles, several works for children, a large body of short stories, and numerous lectures and essays. A descendent of architects, she claims her position in the Gothic canon in part through intense engagements with the terrors of built space. Although such terrors are most famously associated with her late novels of ghost-hunting and witch-making, The Haunting of Hill House (1959) and We Have Always Lived in the Castle (1962), Jackson’s capacity to make agoraphobia and claustrophobia alternate, converge, and even fuse, traces back to earlier works. The breaching of suburban Pepper Street in The Road Through the Wall (1948); the assignment of an already disturbed college student to a grimly sterile institutional bedroom in Hangsaman (1951); these stand in unclear, if troubling, juxtaposition to Jackson’s novels of child murder and apparent descent into schizophrenia. In The Bird’s Nest (1954), however, Jackson opens a narrative of personality disintegration by tipping a museum over; while in the comic apocalyptic The Sundial (1958), millenarian viciousness springs directly from the character’s obsession with a New England imitation of Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill.

What relation might such spaces bear to Jackson’s actual home? The question is one she herself raised. Married to distinguished critic Stanley Edgar Hyman (with whom, not incidentally, she shared a library reportedly containing some 100 000 volumes), and the mother of four, Jackson staked out a cultural terrain of startling boundary crossings. She wrote not only for Harper’s or the New Yorker, for

The Encyclopedia of the Gothic, paperback edition. Edited by William Hughes, David Punter, and Andrew Smith. © 2016 John Wiley and Sons Ltd. Published 2016 by John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
example, but also for *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Good Housekeeping*; and she devoted two volumes to stories of a comic domestic life shaped in part by the “swift, accurate conviction” that one “is going to step on a broken doll in the dark” (Jackson 1953: 1). Here, as the titles of *Raising Demons* (1953) and *Life Among the Savages* (1957) suggest, she could turn “housewife humor” even on Gothicism itself. Suggestively, Sylvia Plath seems to have approved (Murphy 2005: 3). Still, Jackson’s self-positioning also opened the author and her work up to critically dangerous marketing strategies. Simultaneously sensationalized and domesticated, the figure of Jackson as happy household witch may, over time, have done her reputation no good (Carpenter 1988: 143–4; Reinsch 2001: 4–5, 11–13). Certainly by 1975, Lenemaja Friedman could close her groundbreaking monograph by suggesting that Jackson had seen “herself primarily as an entertainer, as an expert storyteller and craftsman”: a writer, that is, perfectly suited to a satisfied audience of “sensitive, imaginative, and fun-loving” readers (Friedman 1975: 161). To be sure, writers including Stephen King, Neil Gaiman, and Sarah Waters leave no doubt as to Jackson’s ongoing creative influence. Nor has “The Lottery” ceased to be a pedagogical standard. Still, in many quarters, (including, perhaps, the 2010 Library of America *Shirley Jackson* collection selected by Joyce Carol Oates), Jackson’s association with the “easy read” seems to linger. Her more dedicated students might find this ironic: for as bibliographer Paul N. Reinsch suggests, to devote oneself to serious criticism of Jackson’s writing is, in effect, to commit oneself to a Gothic process. “These texts haunt me,” Reinsch testifies (Reinsch 2001: 5); and he is not alone.

Some of the grounds for Jackson’s current status may emerge through a brief look at *The Lottery* volume itself. For that book, as many readers have purchased it (e.g., Jackson 1972, 1982), is a radically diminished work, shorn of its subtitle and deprived, at the very least, of its first major epigraph (Hall 1993: 3–4). Restore the subtitle, however (as, to be fair, Oates does), and Jackson’s short story cycle takes on a far more challenging form. The book’s very cover now invokes sexual betrayal, supernatural vengeance, and damnation, while its “Epilogue,” in which Jackson reprints the seven final stanzas of “James Harris, The Daemon Lover,” now frames (and in some sense trumps) even the culminating brutality of the closing story, “The Lottery” itself. James Harris, smashing his lover’s ship and aimed straight for hell, has the volume’s penultimate word. Jackson, insisting on her own scholarly presence, reserves the last words for herself: “(Child Ballad No. 243).”

The volume’s laconic, enigmatic, and often satiric invocations of sexual anxiety, snobbishness, economic victimization, racial and religious bigotry, corrosive loneliness, and, perhaps above all, self-loathing devotions to conformist cruelty, are already bad enough in their own right. These are, as Joan Wylie Hall writes, aptly reversing Flannery O’Connor’s famous phrase, “moments of gracelessness” (Hall 1993: 42). If O’Connor’s “moments of grace” register the unexpected workings of a divinity, however, what can we say of Jackson’s? (Do these people – do we – need a devil?) A teenager regales a party guest with her school essay on the exhilarating inevitability of nuclear annihilation; a women primps anxiously, ready to wed a man who will never appear, and may not exist; a neighbor calls, pleased at charging the family dog with killing chickens; two mothers watch as one’s child, echoing the other’s, mouths racist language; a tourist, struggling against the crowd, finds she cannot cross the street: already sinister enough to begin with, these and other scenarios shift, once peopled, in unpredictable and often elusive fashion, by figures who may or may not be James Harris (Hall 1993: 4–7). “Jamie,” “Mr. Harris,” “Jimmy” – the series of unnamed men who seem to be wearing Harris’ trademark blue suit – can all these possibly be demon lovers? And if so, of whom – or what? Moreover, to add to the effect, four ambiguous section breaks stage their own form of critical challenge. Each includes a paragraph-long epigraph; and here, as with the ballad, labeling is clear. “Joseph Glanvill:
Sadducismus Triumphatis”: what might supernatural evil, as “documented” by Glanvill’s seventeenth-century treatise on witches and apparitions, have to do with Jackson’s accounts of everyday life – accounts that even name her own son? (“Charles” was to appear again, later, as part of Life Among the Savages.) The man who watches helplessly as his neighbor entertains a Mr. Harris in his apartment, pretending it is her own; the young wife who realizes she somehow cannot prevent her man-hating domestic servant from moving into the house: are we to read such figures as witches? As bewitched? Such questions have to do with Jackson and her characters, but they are also about us.

In order to read Jackson seriously must we look for James Harris figures and take Glanvill as gloss? To address this question may be to find oneself acceding to a disorienting, more or less literally maddening, immersion in ambiguity. The urgent, and perhaps ultimately impossible, drive to distinguish the potential workings of supernatural evil from those of personal madness or cultural and political brutality moves as a central, Gothic force, not only through The Lottery, but also through Jackson’s writing as a whole. (“Housewife humor” is no exception: Raising Demons opens with a paragraph of “Conjunction from the Grimoire of Honorious.”) Yet so, too, does an aggressive engagement with the fears involved in critical analysis itself. “One of the most terrifying aspects of publishing stories and books,” Jackson wrote, referring to “The Lottery,” “is the realization that they are going to be read, and read by strangers” (Jackson 1993: 127). One of the most terrifying aspects of reading Jackson may be the realization that one can never quite tell how many critical questions one dare pose, without feeling either credulous, crazed, or both. Another, surely, is the sense that Jackson’s works, read seriously, gesture well beyond the text. Like two of the authors she most admired, Austen and Thackeray, Jackson is capable of creating fictional worlds that can incite, while refusing to enact, intimate political soul-searching. In this, as in other ways, her work may position vulnerable readers to understand themselves, not merely as the haunted, but as the haunting.

In recent years, students of Jackson, many of them feminists, have begun to return to the author as Stanley Edgar Hyman himself once characterized her: that is, as an author whose “fierce visions of dissociation and madness, of alienation and withdrawal, of cruelty and terror” represent neither frivolous fun-loving entertainment nor “personal, even neurotic, fantasies,” but rather “a sensitive and faithful anatomy of our times, fitting symbols for our distressing world of the concentration camp and the Bomb” (Hyman 1966: viii). Drawing, in part, on Reinsch’s indispensable critical bibliography, Bernice M. Murphy’s valuable edited essay collection, Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy (2005) gathers a number of key essays in this vein. Joan Wylie Hall’s useful Shirley Jackson: A Study of the Short Fiction (1993) offers readings, notes, essays, letters, an interview with Jackson, and brief critical excerpts. (A selection of unpublished and uncollected stories edited by two of the author’s children, Just an Ordinary Day, appeared in 1996.) Darryl Hattenhauer’s persuasive 2003 Shirley Jackson’s American Gothic argues for revalorizing her oeuvre as proto-postmodernism; more recently, Colin Haines’ “Frightened by a Word” (2007) sets forth compelling arguments for reading her work in terms of queer theory (see American Gothic; Queer Gothic).

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Queer Gothic.

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Henry James (1843–1916) wrote numerous novels, short stories, plays, and travel writing, and was a key theorist of the novel in the late nineteenth century. Born in America and educated throughout Europe, James was from an illustrious family. His father Henry (1811–82) was an unorthodox mystical theologian inspired by the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg; his brother William (1842–1910) was a philosopher and psychologist; and his sister Alice (1848–92) was a noted diarist. James published the first of his 112 short stories in 1864 and his first novel in 1871 and after several years of international traveling moved to London, eventually becoming a British citizen in 1915. James’ fiction reflects this perspective, often exploring a clash of European and American cultures in what became known as the “international theme” in novels such as The Portrait of a Lady (1881). In the early 1890s James embarked upon an ill-fated attempt to become a dramatist before returning to the writing of fiction in 1895. This later phase produced works including The Wings of the Dove (1902) and The Golden Bowl (1904) which cemented James’ critical reputation as a key transitional figure between Victorian realism and the experimental style of literary modernism. James’ style of this period is notoriously oblique and complex, rejecting omniscience for the limited perspectives of individual subjectivities. The latter years of James’ life were spent producing the monumental New York
Edition, a twenty-four-volume collection of his work with newly written explanatory (if at times characteristically enigmatic) prefaces.

Beyond these more realist forms James wrote a number of stories that showed a fascination with the supernatural and experiences that lay outside the realm of everyday consciousness, becoming one of the central figures in the development of a psychologized Gothic during the late nineteenth century. James’ first ghost story “The Romance of Certain Old Clothes” (1949 [1868]: 4–27) is a more conventional Gothic tale involving a vengeful ghost, while “The Ghostly Rental” (1949 [1876]: 105–41) subverts expectations, revealing that the ghost is in fact a living person, who is nonetheless haunted in more metaphorical ways by the past. “Owen Wingrave” (1949 [1892]: 316–55) is another tale concerned with the weight of the past, in which the ghost is never seen and a young man who has failed to live up to his family expectations is found dead in a room in which a family member had previously died. The literary past is explored in “The Real Right Thing” (1949 [1899]: 552–69) in which the ghost is both a literal and symbolic presence that explores the ways in which a younger writer is haunted by the spirit of an elder. “The Friends of the Friends,” originally titled “The Way it Came” (1949 [1896]: 396–434) explores apparitions witnessed at the moment of death and the relationship of haunting to emotional intimacy. The more light-hearted, even parodic “Sir Edmund Orme” (1949 [1891]: 142–75) retains the presence of the traditional ghost but remains ambivalent as to whether he can be seen by the characters, a technique James exploited to the full in his best known Gothic tale, The Turn of the Screw (1898; published with “Covering End” within The Two Magics) which combined the dense prose and psychological subtleties of his late style within a ghost-story frame. This short story appears to have driven critics toward a kind of interpretative madness that reflects that experienced by the characters within the tale, and has produced a body of criticism out of all proportion to its short length: critics still disagree as to whether the ghosts are a real presence or a projection of the governess’ hysterical imagination. This projection of a spectral self is the subject of one of James’ last Gothic tales, “The Jolly Corner” (1949 [1908]: 725–64) in which the main character returns to his ancestral home in New York to find it is haunted by a ghost, who is in fact the presence of the man he might have been. However, this is not to suggest that there is a strict divide between James the realist and James the Gothic writer, as he suggested himself: “a good ghost-story [...] must be connected at a hundred points with the common objects of life” (1984: 1067). James’ use of images and themes derived from Gothic can in fact be found throughout his work in those stories and novels that do not directly feature the supernatural.

James’ psychologized Gothic emerges within the context of the Victorian fascination for spiritualism, occultism, and psychical research (what is now more usually termed paranormal investigation). His brother William was a member of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), formed in Cambridge in 1882 by an elite group of intellectuals to investigate mediums, haunted houses, doubles, telepathy, and other occult phenomena with the methods of scientific naturalism. William served as its president in 1894–5, and founded the American branch of the society in 1895, and Henry once read one of William’s papers to a meeting. He also knew SPR cofounder Frederic Myers, with whom he corresponded on The Turn of the Screw: Myers’ verdict was that Flora feels lesbian love for the ghostly governess Miss Jessel. Henry produced his own characteristically enigmatic essay on the topic, “Is There A Life After Death?” (1910) while the preface to New York Edition of The Turn of the Screw provided a clearer statement, James lamenting that the scientific approach of the ghost stories investigated by the SPR removed all sense of mystery. Like James’ Gothic tales, psychical research was poised ambivalently between accepting the existence of ghosts and the exploration of new psychologies in which haunting
is the product of the subliminal consciousness. James’ ghosts are thus both literal and metaphorical, not only the spirits of the dead, but specters of the self, ghostly doubles that represent a divided psychology of characters who are haunted by their own pasts or alternate lives.

SEE ALSO: Doubles; Modernism; Occultism; Psychical Investigation; Psychoanalysis; Spiritualism; Victorian Gothic.

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FURTHER READING


James, M. R.
(Montague Rhodes)

ANDREW SMITH

The tales of M. R. James (1862–1936) are characterized by a scholarly ambience which is in keeping with his academic background as a medievalist historian and his respective positions as Provost of Eton and Provost of King’s College, Cambridge. His first collection of tales, Ghost Stories of an Antiquary, was published in 1904 and this was followed by More Ghost Stories of an Antiquary in 1911. Three further collections were published: A Thin Ghost and Others (1919), A Warning to the Curious (1925), and Wailing Well (1928), before a collected edition was published in 1931.

His tales frequently focus on the disruption of ostensibly genteel academic lives in which the discovery of a historical artifact has a tragic consequence for the academic investigator. “Canon Alberic’s Scrap-Book” (1895), for example, focuses on the activities of Dennis-toun, an academic who while in France purchases the scrapbook of the title. The scrapbook contains a number of rare ecclesiastical writings but the final page consists of an illustration in which four soldiers (with a fifth lying dead) attempt to restrain an apparently demonic figure that has been brought before King Solomon to face judgment. Anyone who looks at this figure, described as a strange
coarsely haired skeleton with monstrous talons and intense burning eyes, is immediately horror-struck. This odd figure becomes manifested in Dennistoun’s hotel room but flees when people come to the screaming Dennistoun’s rescue. Dennistoun’s terror is palpable, and it forces him out of his quiet, genteel, world of academic enquiry into a Gothic one in which demonic history comes to life (see apparition).

This unsettling of scholarly investigation and the resurrection of dead histories runs throughout many of his tales and is a key aspect of “The Mezzotint” (1904) in which an engraving (the mezzotint of the title) is being considered for purchase by a curator (Williams) for the university museum at Cambridge. The mezzotint seemingly comes to life and plays out a story concerning the abduction of a child from a house. Some historical research reveals that the mezzotint was engraved by one Arthur Francis, a landowner who after the execution of Gawdy, who had been poaching on his land, had his infant son abducted and murdered (seemingly by the vengeful ghost of Gawdy). Again, history comes alive in order to disrupt the quiet world of the academic common room.

These repeated narrative patterns have intrigued, but also frustrated, critics of James’ tales. David Punter, for example, has argued that during the twentieth century the ghost story entered “a highly mannered phase” which culminated in “the shockingly bland tones of M. R. James” (Punter 1996: 68). Julia Briggs has claimed that the Gothic’s typical fascination with extreme mental states is also absent because in James’ tales “psychology is totally and defiantly excluded” (Briggs 1977: 135). Clive Bloom has argued that “Much went into the creation of these tales, but they refuse to be read as sexual, psychological, or social realities” (Bloom 1993: 70). However, this is to acknowledge that if we wish to determine the locus of James’ Gothic then it is to be found elsewhere than in the usual Gothic places.

An early tale such as “Lost Hearts” (1895) makes an explicit condemnation of academic enquiry and provides a way of reading the later tales. “Lost Hearts” centers on the reclusive Mr. Abney who is Professor of Greek at Cambridge. Over a twenty-year period he has admitted three children into his house and the tale focuses on the third, Stephen Elliott, Abney’s orphaned cousin – who is seemingly subjected to spectral attacks from the ghosts of the earlier children (see spectrality). It transpires that Abney has murdered the other children as part of his academic research into the occult, which had indicated that after consuming the hearts of three children he would acquire supernatural powers, such as the ability to fly, invisibility, and the ability to take on any form he wished. The vengeful spirits redirect their attention to Abney who is killed in a violent assault by them and so Stephen, somewhat fortuitously, is saved from sharing their fate. “Lost Hearts” thus makes an explicit condemnation of academic enquiry which is demonized here through its detached (if personally motivated) amoral investigations. Indeed, crucially it is this amoral detachment which is condemned elsewhere and is, as in “Canon Alberic’s Scrap-Book” and “The Mezzotint,” subtly Gothicized.

James’ tales thus turn his “shockingly bland tones” into a demonized amorality. The dispassionate way that his dons in “The Mezzotint” observe the unfolding of a Gothic narrative centering on abduction and murder is intended to implicate their amorality within the wider Gothic plot; as one of them concludes, “it looks very much as if we were assisting at the working out of a tragedy somewhere” (James 1970: 46). James’ tales can thus be read as a reactionary critique of an intellectual distance and amorality which typifies a certain view of modernist writing. While this is not explicit in James, it nevertheless provides a historical context which explains how the reticent figures within his tales become peculiarly complicit with demonic forces.

It should also be noted that James’ tales have an oral quality to them which is in keeping with how he frequently read out his tales in his Cambridge college rooms at Christmas, and it was while at Cambridge that he influenced
other ghost story writers such as E. F. Benson (see Benson, E. F. (Edward Frederic)) and his brother A. C. Benson, Edmund Gill Swain, A. N. L. Munby, and Richard Malden. In 1923 James edited an edition of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s Madam Crowl’s Ghost and Other Stories. In the preface James noted the need to exercise a type of narrative control, which he saw Le Fanu as being the master of, because “the ghost story is in itself a slightly old-fashioned form; it needs some deliberateness in the telling” (James 1994: 1); which reveals an awareness of the formal narrative properties of the ghost story during the period (see modernism).

SEE ALSO: Apparition; Benson E. F. (Edward Frederic); Blackwood, Algernon; James, Henry; Modernism; Spectrality; Spiritualism.

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FURTHER READING

Japanese Gothic
KATARZYNA ANCUTA

The term “Japanese Gothic” is perhaps most commonly used in association with the contemporary Goth-related popular culture of Japan, as represented by J-Goth music, manga and anime, and Goth-related fashions and sub-cultural lifestyles, epitomized by the so-called Gothic Lolita – a street fashion style usually associated with the Harajuku region of Tokyo that has managed to gain a considerable following worldwide. Although the Gothic Lolita style undeniably derives from Western Gothic aestheticism, it remains expressive of local cultural values, some of its specifically Japanese references including the Visual Kei transgender musical movement, where musicians dress in elaborate costumes and apply intricate make-up; the culture of shōjo (young girls) emphasizing sweet innocence and close emotional relationships between women in a world free from men; as well as rōri-kon (or loli-con) – the Nabokov-inspired “Lolita complex” referring to middle-aged men’s fascination with young girls and to the style adopted by women willing to personify that particular fantasy. The Japanese Lolita style is rather complex; Vera Mackie (2009) lists five most significant Lolita sub-groups: Kuro-Rori (Black Lolita), Ama-Rori (Sweet Lolita), Guro-Loli (Grotesque Lolita), Gosu-Pan (Gothic Punk), and Rori-Pan (Punk Lolita) and concludes that although the fashion is frequently simplified as containing references to “Victorian” or “Rococo” aesthetics, these references are not meant to be accurate but rather suggest a mood of archaic romance. Mackie (2009) quotes Takahara Eiri’s description of Japanese Gothic sensibility as “essentially a variation on the heritage of the past [...] which has never actually existed.” This allows us to find parallels between the Gothic Lolita style and other forms of “costume play” (kosu-pure or cosplay), cross-dressing theatrical performances of the all-girl Takarazuka Revue, or the stylistic extravagance of the Visual Kei musicians incorporating elements of Glam Rock, Punk, and Goth, with a touch of Japanese manga, geisha, and the samurai.

Just like the Goth subculture in general, J-Goth and its Lolitas are seen as transtextual, in that they are both influencing and influenced by various forms and texts of Japanese
popular culture. Although no Japanese band fits the Goth Rock music formula completely, we can certainly find J-Goth (a curious mixture of Goth Rock with Japanese pop music) and Industrial bands, the most influential of those being Malice Mizer (the ur-Goth Japanese rock group currently reincarnated as Moi Dix Mois) and Dir en Grey (the Japanese answer to Nine Inch Nails). The transtextuality of J-Goth is also ensured by the specific mobility of its icons within Japanese popular culture. And so Mana, the guitarist of Malice Mizer, consistently appearing on and off-stage in Victorian mourning dresses, is also known as the founder of one of the most successful street fashion labels “Moi-Même-Moitié” focusing on the Elegant Gothic Lolita and Aristocrat styles.

Visual Kei is frequently demonized for the purpose of horror film, for example in Suicide Circle (Sono, 2001), or Death Note (Kaneko, 2006); the musicians themselves frequently get involved in film projects, such as Malice Mizer’s Bara no Konrei (Muto, 2001; a silent movie basically retelling the plot of Dracula), or Moon Child (Zeze, 2003), starring their lead singer, Gackt, as Sho – a young man who befriends a vampire. J-Goth references can be found in popular Japanese novels, such as Novala Takemoto’s Kamikaze Girls/Shimotsuma Monogatari (2002); manga, such as Rozen Maiden (2002–); or anime, such as Le Portrait de Petite Cossette (2004). The result of all this is what Mackie calls a “transnational bricolage” responsible for the expression of a fantasy that allows its followers to align themselves with “beatniks, existentialists, Zen Buddhists, French Situationists, 1930 movie stars and samurai,” seen as united by their partiality to wearing black (Mackie 2009).

Aside from the Japanese Goth culture, the label of “Gothic” is perhaps most consistently applied to contemporary Japanese horror film productions that have been enjoying enduring popularity with worldwide audiences since the somewhat unexpected international success of Hideo Nakata’s Ringu/Ring movies at the end of the 1990s. The appeal of the Nakata’s version of Sadako Yamamura (originally created by Kōji Suzuki in his novels), immortalized in her crawling-out-of-the-TV-screen posture, was so great that it resulted in adding a new category of onryō (a vengeful spirit, frequently portrayed as a woman with long flowing dark hair covering her face) to the plethora of instantly recognizable cinematic Gothic monsters. In Japanese folk religion, the onryō were frequently treated as minor deities requiring pacification (onryōgami). As the concept of onryō is connected with the notion of “bad death” – dying in tragic circumstances, prematurely and unexpectedly – a great majority of ghosts seen as having a legitimate enough reason to return and demand retribution have always been those of men fallen in battle. Arguably, the first historically recorded example of an onryō was also a man, Sugawara no Michizane, believed to return from the grave in order to take revenge on the Fujiwara clan (871–909) after his death in exile. Despite that, the vengeful spirits known from Japanese literature and cinema are usually wronged women and children.

The association of the female figure with its double role of a victim and a vessel of evil is not new to Japanese culture. Henry J. Hughes (2000) looks for the beginnings of Japanese literary Gothic in three medieval texts with their descriptions of jealous and ruined women (Genji Monogatari [The Tale of Genji], eleventh century), spiritual encounters (Konjaku Monogatari [Tales of Times Now Past], twelfth century), war and violence (Heike Monogatari [The Tale of Heike], twelfth century). The spirit of obsessively jealous Lady Rokujo haunting Genji’s women in The Tale of Genji is frequently described as prototypical of the many female vengeful spirits to come. At the same time, however, as Hughes points out, the foreign label “Gothic” (Goshikku) is hardly ever applied to “serious” Japanese literature amid fears that such a classification may prove demeaning to the authors. While exception may have been made in the case of the crime and mystery writer Edogawa Rampo, whose pen-name and writing style are both clearly reminiscent of E. A. Poe, the perception of the
more canonized authors, such as Akinari Ueda, Izumi Kyōka, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, Yukio Mishima, Jun’ichirō Tanizaki, Yasunari Kawabata, or Kōbō Abe as representing a particularly Japanese strand of Gothic fiction is a relatively new phenomenon, although not completely undeserved.

English translations of the works of Akinari Ueda and Izumi Kyōka bear the title of “Japanese Gothic Tales,” obviously hoping to win Western audiences by association with the already familiar genre. In the case of Ueda the main reason behind such a classification is his fascination with the supernatural; for Kyōka, according to Charles Shirō Inouye, it is his “decadent romanticism” (Inouye 1996: 1) and a preference for nonrealistic forms of narrative steeped in symbolism and mysticism. One particularly striking example of this is Kyōka’s story “The Holy Man of Mount Kōya” (1900), introducing a predatory female character preying on men attracted by her sexuality and turning them into animals when she gets bored with them. Stories of Ryūnosuke Akutagawa abound in grotesque depictions of the macabre, such as the incineration of the artist’s daughter by men attracted by her sexuality and turning them into animals when she gets bored with them. Stories of Ryūnosuke Akutagawa abound in grotesque depictions of the macabre, such as the incineration of the artist’s daughter in search of creative inspiration in “Hell Screen” (1918), rotting corpses of the plague victims at the Rashomōn gate in “Rashomōn” (1915), or episodes of violence in “The Story of a Head that Fell Off” (1917), or “In a Bamboo Grove” (1921). Gothic motifs can also be traced in works of major modern Japanese writers. Abe’s novel The Face of Another (1964), for instance, deals with the notions of disfigurement and transformation resulting in social ostracism and rejection. In Kawabata’s “House of the Sleeping Beauties” (1961) we find a brothel catering to the needs of old impotent men allowing them to spend the night sleeping next to a young, beautiful, drugged, unconscious virgin, while in “One Arm” (1964) a young girl presents the narrator with her artificial right arm to take home for the night; both stories are representative of the cult of female invalidism, very familiar to Gothic.

Hughes defines Japanese literary Gothic as focusing on the quest for an empty self following the discovery that good and evil are undivided forces in life (Hughes, 2000: 2). Similarly to Western Gothic, Japanese writers seek inspiration in medieval sources and their records of courtly love and honor, but also war and disease, superstition and religious extremism. What distinguishes Japanese Gothic from its Western counterpart, for Hughes, is that Japanese Gothic heroes do not seek self-affirmation through an act of final annihilation of the Other, but rather are inclined to accommodate evil in order to restore the balance of the universe (Hughes, 2000: 14). Such an attitude, however, can be seen as inspired by Eastern philosophies and religions, particularly Buddhism, Taoism, Animism, and Shintō, and is likely to be characteristic of many other Asian texts, not necessarily those written in Japan (see ASIAN GOTHIC). At the same time, literary explorations of the aesthetics of sex, blood, and death, a familiar theme for many Japanese authors, yield themselves quite naturally to a Gothic interpretation.

Typically, such interpretations begin with Akinari Ueda (1734–1809) and his Ugetsu Monogatari (Tales of Moonlight and Rain, 1776) “driving ghosts and demons of old Japan into the religious and erotic imaginations of Edo people” (Hughes 2000: 6). One of the most influential of his tales, Asaji ga yado (“The House amidst the Thickets” or “Homecoming”) tells the story of a faithful wife waiting to be reunited with her husband. When the husband finally returns home and spends the night with his wife, he wakes up to the realization that he has shared his bed with a ghost. The story itself seems to be as enduring as the spirit of the lovely woman it describes. Inspired by a Konjaku Monogatari tale, “How a Poor Man Left His Wife,” it was later reworked by Lafcadio Hearn as “Reconciliation” (1900) and led to several film adaptations, such as Ugetsu Monogatari (1953) and Kaidan (1964). The image of the wife’s corpse described in these stories as nothing but the bones and long black hair proved clearly inspirational for generations of writers and filmmakers and the
long-haired female spirits they continue to bring to life.

_UGETSU MONOGATARI_ stories belong to the genre known in Japanese as _kaidan-shū_ (tales of the strange and mysterious). Noriko T. Reider (2001) identifies three early examples of _kaidan_ literature which can be seen as having an impact on the development of the genre: _Oto gi Bōko_ (1666), a collection of stories adapted from Chinese fiction; _Inga Monog atari_ (1661), a _kaidan_ work including a Buddhist conceptual framework; and _Oto gi Monog atari_ (1660), containing stories inspired by Japanese folklore (Reider 2001: 88). Although _kaidan_ stories enjoyed their golden age in the Edo period (1603–1868), they remain popular today, forming a staple repertoire of Japanese cinematic horror, where they appear in modern and classical formats, as parts of horror omnibus film collections, such as _Tales of the Unusual_ (Hosi, Ochiai, Ogura, Suzuki, 2000) and _Dark Tales of Japan_ (Nakamura, Ochiai, Shimizu, Shiraishi, Tsuruta, 2004); or elaborate cinematic productions, such as _Ringu_ (Nakata, 1998), _JuOn_ (Shimizu, 2003), _Dark Water_ (Nakizu, 2002), _Sakebi_ (Kurosawa, 2006), _Rinne_ (Shimizu, 2005), _Kaidan_ (Nakata, 2007), and _One Missed Call_ (Miike, 2003). Interestingly enough, most of the cinematic _kaidan_ stories tend to be located in contemporary urban settings infused with modern information technology and highly dependent on new media. While the choice to digitalize the spirits has obviously interesting interpretational consequences, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano points out that new Japanese filmmakers frequently resort to new media simply because they lack extensive 35 mm training and want to trim their budgets and shooting schedules (Wada-Marciano 2007: 25).

It is a common observation that Japanese horror movies tend to be technologically minded. New media and technologies serve as the locus of spiritual manifestation, for example TV and videotape in _Ringu_, mobile phone in _Chakushin Ari_, surveillance cameras in _JuOn_, computers with access to the Internet in _Kairo_, computer networks in _Ghost System_ (Nagae, 2002); they also influence J-horror in terms of iconography and aesthetic and narrative structure, for example the use of video recording technologies for the sake of narrative formation in _Marebito_ (Shimizu, 2004), or _Rinne_. According to Wada-Marciano, one other representation of this can be the films' gearing toward “an interrupted pattern of spectatorship” preferred by viewers watching movies at home, as exemplified, for instance, by the “modular” narrative structure of _JuOn_, where the film consists of chronologically dislocated multiple narrative segments that can be watched together or separately (Wada-Marciano 2007: 28). At the same time, however, J-horror is also known for its fascination with the flesh, whether represented by the extremes of the _kaiju_ giant monster movies, such as _Godzilla_ (Honda, 1954), or by the excesses of body horror in all its possible transfigurations.

Japanese body horror is frequently described as excessive due to its combination of sadomasochistic eroticism, graphic representation of violence, and pornographic modes of visual representation including a perverse fascination with deformity. At one end of the spectrum we find films focusing on bodily transformation, such as _Tetsuo I-II_ (Tsukamoto, 1989, 1992) and _Organ_ (Fujiwara, 1996), or a somewhat independent group of zombie movies, such as _Versus_ (Kitamura, 2000), _Junk_ (Muragino, 2000), _Stacy_ (Tomomatsu, 2001), or _Kakashi_ (Tsuruta, 2001). At the other end we find torture- and rape-related gore films of the _Guinea Pig_ (1985–9) series type, bearing significantly visceral titles, such as _Naked Blood_ (Sato, 1995), _Guts of a Beauty_ (Komizu, 1986), or _Entra ils of a Virgin_ (Komizu, 1986). Somewhere in between these we have films examining the relation between the mind and the body, such as _Saimin_ (Ochiai, 1999), _Cure_ (Kurosawa, 1997), and _Premonition_ (Tsuruta, 2004); speculating on the results of biomedical experiments, as in _Parasite Eve_ (Ochiai, 1997) and _Infection_ (Ochiai, 2004); or simply rejoicing in the spectacular depiction of bodily destruction, as in _Evil Dead Trap_ (Ikeda, 1988), _Battle Royale_ (Fukasaku, 2000), _Audition_ (Miike, 1999).
1999), and *Ichi the Killer* (Miike, 2001). In a sense, most Japanese horror productions, whether technologically or biologically oriented, can be brought down to representations of Chaos and its turbulent effects on the otherwise highly organized Japanese way of life. Chaos predominates in the films’ iconography rich in spirals and vortexes, as in *Uzumaki* (Higuchinsky, 2000); and in their utilization of the discourse of scientific disciplines associated with Chaos Theory, mostly advanced physics, mathematics, and biology, especially virology: *Ringu*, *Rasen* (Iida, 1998), *Kairo* (Kurosawa, 2001). This observation also seems to be valid with regard to contemporary Japanese horror literature, which is only to be expected, seeing that many of the novels in question were in fact adapted for the cinema.

Much contemporary Japanese horror literature is published by the Kadokawa Shoten group, specializing in publishing horror, detective and science fiction novels, true crime, manga, and popular magazines, but also responsible for the production and distribution of the majority of J-horror films. Some of the contemporary horror authors published in the *Kadokawa Horror Bunko* series include Kōji Suzuki, the author of the *Ringu* video curse series comprising four books to date: *Ringu* (1991), *Rasen/Spiral* (1996), *Birthday* (2004), and *Loop* (2005); Hideaki Sena, a doctor of pharmacology turned writer, responsible for the introduction of the invasive mitochondria horror in *Parasite Eve* (1995); and Yusuke Kishi, whose contribution to the genre includes a science-fiction game show horror *Crimson Labyrinth* (1999). Other interesting contemporary titles include *Battle Royale* by Kōshun Takami (1999), depicting a survival game show where school children are expected to violently exterminate one another; *Naoko/Himitsu* by Keigo Higashino (1998), introducing the motif of reincarnation, with a wife of the main protagonist returning from the dead in the body of their daughter; and *Out* by Natsuo Kirino (1997), a story of four female factory workers united by the murder and disposal of one abusive husband.

While concerns may be voiced that promoting the Japanese Gothic label is nothing but an act of colonial appropriation, as Hughes notes, at the same time “the subversion of religious and social norms, an obsession with sex and death, and a fear of the supernatural or unknown” are qualities not particular to one culture, and as such are also native to the Japanese (Hughes 2000: 2). Judging by the ease with which Japanese popular culture embraced the *Goshikku* category for its own intents and purposes, Japanese Gothic has a chance to become an established critical term in its own right.

**SEE ALSO:** Asian Gothic.

**REFERENCES**


**FURTHER READING**


Jewish Gothic

Stories about three legendary Jewish figures – the dybbuk, the golem, and the Wandering Jew – all invoke a classically Gothic mixture of fear, horror, and desire. They also present patterns of uncanny doubling and dislocation and an interrogation of the concepts of home and homelessness, belonging and alienation, in ways that suggest a mode that might be described as “the Jewish Gothic.”

The word dybbuk derives from the Hebrew קובד, meaning “attachment”, or “to cling.” Isaac Luria, a sixteenth-century mystic, set out a doctrine of transmigration of souls (gilgul) that was later developed into a notion of bodily inhabitation by the dybbuk. The key difference is that a dybbuk shares the body of the host, in what is sometimes a hostile and uneasy cohabitation, whereas the gilgul is reincarnated as the sole inhabitant of the new body. Demonic possession is a standard motif within a Gothic register but, in terms of a specifically Jewish Gothic, dybbuk stories speak of tensions that have a particular resonance. They are tales that suggest painful processes of dislocation and the uneasy conditions of assimilation that have meaningful connotations within Jewish cultural narratives. The idea of a restless, half-dead soul seeking a home within another living being is well-established in early cabbalistic texts, but beliefs in such spirits and the circulation of dybbuk stories was especially prevalent in early modern eastern Europe. The story lives on as an emblem of a premodern Jewish sensibility, epitomizing a fictionalized folk Yiddish world.

Within Jewish folklore the dybbuk was conceived as a kind of demon or incubus. However, the person whom the dybbuk had colonized was not necessarily aware of the possession, and dybbuk stories could be used to explain socially transgressive behavior and perceived madness. Possession by a restless spirit might then serve as a way in which to explain many types of deviance while offering the hope that the unsettled and unsettling spirit could be expelled from both the body and the body politic. The dybbuk may be a wronged, vengeful spirit or it may be simply lost. It was said to sometimes leave the host body of its own volition but, at other times, the release could only be achieved by the process of exorcism. In this way the dybbuk is presented as an archetypal Gothic figure, a liminal, uncanny creature signaling the dangers of uncertainty. As Naomi Seidman has argued, “the dybbuk is an over-determined figure – indeed, it is a figure for over-determination and ambivalence – mediating between life and death, male and female, the transcendent and the deformed, victimization and empowerment” (Seidman 2003: 236).

These unfulfilled souls are depicted as the agents of dark, disruptive, and often terrifying events. The intrusion of the dybbuk into an unsuspecting body suggests the dangerous contaminating potential of these unanchored beings, and dybbuk tales demonstrate the imperative to cleanse the possessed body of such troublesome forces. They also, however, suggest the anguish of the homeless spirit. In this way, dybbuk stories tell of conflicting desires, desires that have arguably haunted the Jewish imagination.

However, dybbuk stories are not just indicative of a cultural tension between self and other in terms of a Jewish–Gentile dynamic. They also suggest moments of cultural transition within the Jewish collective self. The most influential version of the story was written by the Jewish scholar and folklorist S. Ansky (the pseudonym of S. Z. Rappaport). Ansky’s Yiddish play, Der Dybbuk (1914), was translated into several languages and performed around the world. The story here places the dybbuk within a tale of thwarted young love. It thus presents an interrogation of tradition, in
terms of generational conflict, but also suggests a complex dialogue between the premodern world of the Jewish shtetl and emerging conditions of modernity. As the recent depiction of the dybbuk in the opening to the Coen brothers’ film *A Serious Man* (2009) demonstrates, this dialogue between the Jewish past and present, between cultural continuity and the disjunctures of postmodernity, is ongoing.

The story of the golem is no longer an exclusively Jewish tale, but has figured in Jewish and non-Jewish stories across the centuries. It featured in the speculations of medieval cabalists and resonates still within contemporary culture. In many respects the golem has become a universal figure, a kind of everymonster, within the sociosecular folklore of Europe and beyond. But, despite this process of dispersal across cultures, golem stories are still embedded in a specifically Jewish cultural history and constitute part of a shared “cultural memory” within a metaphorized Jewish past (Kieval 1997: 14).

The most familiar version of the golem story is rooted in late-sixteenth-century Prague. The Jewish ghetto, so the story goes, was under pressure from anti-Semitic attacks. One night the rabbi, Judah Loew, dreamed that God commanded him to make a golem, a creature of superhuman strength and purpose who would protect his people. Rabbi Loew set about studying *The Book of Creation* (*Sefer Yetzirah*) and after intense contemplation he molded a huge humanoid male figure from clay. He animated it through a complex ritual of letters and recitation. The word *emet* (truth) was placed on the creature’s forehead and the golem was born. In some versions of the story the golem was returned to clay every Friday evening on the Sabbath. In others the golem was only dissolved when it was no longer needed to protect the Jews from anti-Semitic dangers. Still others related a more dramatic tale of how the golem turned on its creator, becoming a powerful and destructive force that raged through the ghetto threatening everything in its path. The rabbi eventually destroyed the creature by disabling the power of linguistic animation. So the initial letter of *emet* was erased, leaving *met* (dead) and the golem crumbled into dust. To this day the remains of the golem are said to lie hidden in the attic of the ancient synagogue of Prague and, according to legend, could be resurrected at any time. And this is where many other stories begin.

According to Isaac Bashevis Singer “the golem legend [is] the very essence of Jewish folklore” (Bilski 1988: 9). It is a Jewish creation, made by a Jew for the protection of Jews; a kind of super-Jew fantasy savior. But the golem is an uneasy figure of identification for a number of reasons. In terms of its excessiveness, its traditional lack of language (and by implication soul), its clumsiness and lack of wit, the golem is less than a man. It can serve human needs but carries the potential for destruction and mayhem. It is a sign of difference disguised as similarity. It looks almost like a man, acts almost like a man but ultimately is not. It cannot be domesticated or regulated in any sustained way. It is abject in the way that Julia Kristeva has described as that which “disturbs identity, system, order. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (Kristeva 1982: 4). It is this closeness to the human, the destabilizing of the category of the human, which makes the golem a compelling and unnerving archetypal horror figure. For Jews, this potential for horror, as well as identification, creates a particularly ambivalent attraction to the golem story within Jewish collective memory.

In many stories the golem literally roams the borders of the ghetto, protecting the Jews from their enemies, but in turn it also poses a threat to the Jews within the ghetto walls. It is then a profoundly uncanny figure, both familiar and strange, symbolizing the uncertainties and repressions of diasporic identity. All golem stories must end with the dissolution of the golem. As the embodiment of excess, of unassimilated alterity, it cannot survive. When, from time to time, the attic is opened and the golem’s dusty remains are disturbed it reminds Jews that even within the security of assimilation and acculturation some uncomfortable excesses might still linger within the Jewish self.
The golem, as Carol Margaret Davison has observed in her insightful study of Anti-Semitism in British Gothic literature, is “unarguably, a blood brother of the vampiric Wandering Jew in Gothic literature.” Both, she observes, “are undead, uncanny creatures who blur the boundary between life and death” (Davison 2004: 72). We might also include the dybbuk, an archetypal figuration of the undead, in such a characterization. Each of these Gothic paradigms – the golem, the dybbuk, and the Wandering Jew – blur boundaries between self and other as well as life and death in ways that signal a particularly Jewish gothic mode. The Wandering Jew, sometimes named as Caraphlus Buttadeus, or Isaac Laquedem, but more commonly as Ahasverus or Ahasuerus, is a legendary figure. Stories originating from the thirteenth century tell the tale of the shoemaker who was said to have taunted Christ on his way to crucifixion. As punishment Ahasverus was condemned never to die. He would wander the earth in perpetual exile until the second coming. It is a potent legend in which the Wandering Jew is a restless soul, doomed to a liminal half-existence until the end of time. This aberrant figure thus comes to represent the fundamentally shifting condition of the Jewish people as a whole.

The particular uncanny attributes of the Wandering Jew, the revenant, the undead, the ghostly manifestation of repressed desires, make it a particularly Gothic figure. Moreover, the Wandering Jew embodies the profound and unending loss that comes from the transgression of the founding principles of Christianity. Unlike the depictions of the golem and the dybbuk, which originate primarily within Jewish folk tradition (particularly within the Yiddish cultural idiom), the origins of the Wandering Jew stem from Christian legend. While in some interpretations the story can suggest the hope of millennial redemption, in many versions it presents the Jew as fundamentally depraved and has been used to fuel anti-Semitism. The Wandering Jew can in this way be linked to standard anti-Semitic stereotypes in which the Jew is represented as embodying demonic dangers and is repeatedly associated with well-poisoning, child-killing, the blood libel, and so on. In terms of the Gothic imagination, the Wandering Jew, like the dybbuk and the golem, is the monstrous mirror image of the Christian self, a haunting manifestation of the inassimilable other.

However, Jews themselves have also incorporated ideas about the Wandering Jew into their own mythologies especially within a Zionist discourse that seeks to end perpetual Jewish wandering by establishing a Jewish homeland. Leo Pinsker, for example, writing in the late-nineteenth century, invoked the unheimlich attributes of the Wandering Jew in order to propose an end to Jewish exile:

The world saw in this people [the Jews] the uncanny form of one of the dead walking among the living. The ghostlike apparition of a living corpse . . . no longer alive, and yet walking among the living . . . And if the fear of ghosts is something inborn, and has a certain justification in the psychic life of mankind, why be surprised at the effect produced by this dead but still living nation? A fear of the Jewish ghost has passed down the generations and the centuries. (quoted in Davison 2004: 1)

In addressing the diasporic condition of the Jews, Pinsker argued, so the primal fear engendered by these “living dead” would be at last resolved. The Wandering Jew, like the dybbuk and the golem, is in these terms the embodiment of loss, a symbol of exile. As Pinsker realized, such lost souls are fundamentally terrifying creatures.

The Wandering Jew, the dybbuk, and the golem can then be read alongside the many other monsters, ghosts, and uncanny beings that inhabit the Gothic psyche. As with all monsters their function is to disturb the border between self and other. In this way they are to be feared. But, in their connection to the specifically Jewish Gothic, they speak of dispossession as well as possession, human longing as well as inhuman rage, and home as well as exile.

SEE ALSO: Anti-Semitism.
REFERENCES

FURTHER READING
Kafka, Franz

JIMMY PACKHAM

In the work of Franz Kafka (1883–1924), much of it published posthumously, the Gothic is to be found principally in the nightmarish qualities of the labyrinthine narrative developments and the psychological and physical frustrations inflicted on characters by impenetrable bureaucracies. So distinctive is Kafka’s treatment of these themes that the term “Kafkaesque,” coined by Cecil Day Lewis in 1938, is used to describe any scenario resembling those of Kafka’s literature, and has secured for Kafka a niche within Gothic writing.

The popular conception that Kafka was a misunderstood writer is somewhat exaggerated: he published seven books of short fiction during his lifetime and received praise for his work from fellow writers. Yet it is certainly possible to see his own experiences, some of which correspond with distinctly Gothic tropes, echoed in his writing. Before being forced into early retirement in 1922 as a consequence of the tuberculosis that would eventually kill him, Kafka’s working life was spent mostly at the Kingdom of Bohemia’s Workers’ Accident Insurance Institute, after reading Law at university, and confrontations with bureaucratic institutions inform perhaps the most familiar aspects of his literature. His uneasy relationship with his father and troubled relationships with women also find a correspondence in the domineering patriarchs and disruptive seductresses of his work.

Beyond this, there is certainly evidence in Kafka’s stories of other traditionally Gothic motifs. Severe bodily torture is seen in the flagellation of Josef K.’s associates by a governmental official known as the whipper in The Trial (1925), while the device used literally to inscribe punishments onto the bodies of its victims in “In The Penal Colony” (1919) is reminiscent of some of Edgar Allan Poe’s ingenious machinery (see POE, EDGAR ALLAN). There is also the grotesque transformation of Gregor Samsa, who wakes up one day as an ambiguous insect-like verminous creature in The Transformation (1915, commonly known as Metamorphosis). A stark contrast between light and dark is another recurrent Gothicism in Kafka’s fiction: antagonistic characters, such as the policemen of Amerika (1927) and the officials who lurk in dimly lit corners during Josef K.’s trial, frequently emerge from shadows; and, while light, conversely, seems redemptive, it remains elusive, as is evidenced in “Before the Law,” a short parable incorporated into The Trial that relates the attempts of a man to gain admission to the law, from which the light emanates, only to be forever denied entry. Kafka also held an interest in the Fall of Man, and much of his fiction may be read in relation to an inherent, though indefinable, guilt attendant upon those characters fallen,
or falling, from relatively comfortable social standings. This is especially true of *Amerika* and *The Trial*. Yet Kafka’s most quintessentially Gothic object, *The Castle*’s (1926) eponymous building, subverts its Gothic heritage when it appears to be no more than an unimposing collection of stone hovels. Moreover, it is through the Kafkaesque aspects of his literature that Kafka chiefly merits consideration as a Gothic writer.

Even before addressing the narrative peculiarities of Kafka’s work, the Kafkaesque appears in the design of the books themselves. The incomplete manuscript of *The Trial* was never definitively sequenced by Kafka. His notes for each chapter of the novel reveal nothing of their sequential relation to one another, and there exist numerous fragments of unfinished sections. One such fragment, “B.’s Friend,” has often been included in the published novel, while the remaining fragments are usually included, if at all, in an appendix. Similarly, *Amerika* and *The Castle* are unfinished, and *The Castle* even abruptly ends mid-sentence. Far from obscuring the Kafkaesque in his stories, it is arguable that these problems of textuality constitute part of it.

Within his writing, and especially in his three most popular stories, “The Transformation,” *The Trial*, and *The Castle*, the Kafkaesque serves to generate feelings of unease and the uncanny (see uncanny, the) while addressing such concepts as alienation, the perversion of bodies and sex, and problems relating to the perception of reality. Kafka’s relatively detached prose gives way to a world founded on a kind of dream-logic, and, though apparently based on faultless institutional foundations, to the outsider these worlds seem only an unfathomable labyrinth of ridiculous contradictions.

When K. enters the hermetic world of *The Castle*, his attempts to undertake the work for which he has been commissioned meet with fierce resistance from the conservative townsfolk, and signs of his resignation to this situation are met with an equally fierce indignation. Simple tasks are made almost impossible due to K.’s failure to adhere to various protocols, which themselves are so nonsensical that adherence to them is just as impossible. Evoking the nightmarish conditions of this world, K. is confronted by long hallways of doors so identical that it is pure chance whether or not he will pass through the door he desires; and, when one does prove beneficial and he meets an official offering his services, K. is too exhausted to comprehend its significance. Elusive figures, essential to K.’s progression through the layers of bureaucracy, appear only when – and on the condition that – K. absents himself from their presence, ensuring that K. is locked out from this world while seemingly unable to return to his own.

In *The Trial*, an irrationality comes to bear on an environment already familiar to its protagonist when Josef K. falls prey to his own legal system. The system proceeds to prosecute him for a crime that is never revealed and in a manner that equates his acquiescence with an admission of his guilt. Suffering from a distress akin to that suffered by K. of *The Castle*, Josef gradually loses his place in society, becoming finally dehumanized and so detached as to cooperate with his two murderers: while watching them indecisively pass a knife over his body in an effort, Josef assumes, to tempt him to suicide, he exclaims that he dies “like a dog!” (Kafka 1997: 178).

In “The Transformation,” it is the most intimate aspect of Gregor Samsa, his own body, that is rendered alien and fails him, forcing his family to question whether the human ends when its form has changed. The horror of Gregor’s condition lies not simply in the fact that he has become something that can no longer be considered human but also in his failure to grasp its implications: his immediate concern is how his transformation will affect his daily commute. However, the loss of Gregor’s humanity permanently prevents him from ever participating in this society again, despite his desire to do so.

Kafka’s major texts all depict someone losing their place in a disturbingly bureaucratic
society, and finding not relief in their freedom but fear. This is Kafka at his most unnerving, yet it is an inversion of a Gothic theme. The horror of freedom is equated by his protagonists with displacement and purposelessness. So dependent are they on the institutional machinery that they take even the most menial employment to gain reintegration, while liberty remains, as Karl Rossmann of Amerika puts it, “the most worthless condition” (Kafka 1996: 88).

SEE ALSO: Poe, Edgar Allan; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING

King, Stephen

ANNE WILLIAMS

Stephen King (1947–) is the most prolific contemporary writer of Gothic fiction, and arguably the most significant. As of 2011, he has published approximately fifty novels, nine collections of short stories, seven graphic novels, seven screenplays, eight teleplays, four e-books, and two nonfiction works, Danc Macabre (1979) on horror in various media, and the autobiographical On Writing (2000). Forty-five of his works have been made into theatrical films and twenty-two adapted for television, not including sequels. Early novels such as ‘Salem’s Lot (1975) or Pet Sematary (1983) appeal primarily to the consumers of conventional horror in all media. But Brian De Palma’s Carrie (1976) and Stanley Kubrick’s The Shining (1980) are among the best horror movies ever made, and in 1990 Kathy Bates won an Oscar for best actress in Misery (see film). King has received forty-eight literary awards and in 2003 the Medal for Distinguished Contributions to American Letters from the National Book Foundation.

Stephen King was born in Portland, Maine in 1947. Shortly after his birth his father deserted the family, leaving his mother to raise him and his older brother David. A sickly child, Stephen “read [his] way through approximately six tons of comic books, progressed to Tom Swift and Dave Dawson [...] then moved on to Jack London’s bloodcurdling animal tales” (2010: 27). Encouraged by his mother, he began writing stories, completing his first tale around the age of six or seven (2010: 28–9) and first submitting one in 1960. It was rejected, but he persevered, collecting a mass of rejection slips. His first published work appeared in a horror fanzine under the (editor’s) title of “In a Half-World of Terror,” though King remains fond of his own: “I Was a Teen-Age Grave Robber” (2010: 36).

King graduated in 1971 with a degree in English from the University of Maine at Orono,
and married a fellow student, Tabitha Spruce. He briefly taught high-school English, but always continued to write, earning small amounts of money by publishing in magazines such as *Dude*, *Cavalier*, *Adam*, and *Swank* (2010: 69), and moonlighting in an industrial laundry. Tabitha found a discarded draft of *Carrie* and insisted that he complete it. Published by Dutton, the successful sale of the paperback rights enabled King to write full-time.

During the years of early success, King became addicted to drugs and alcohol. Around 1986, his wife arranged an intervention by his family and friends: “I was treated to a kind of *This Is Your Life* in hell [...] what finally decided me was Annie Wilkes, the psycho nurse in *Misery*. Annie was coke, Annie was booze, and I decided that I was tired of being Annie’s pet writer” (2010: 97–8). “I decided,” he continues, “that I would trade writing for staying married and watching the kids grow up. If it came to that” (2010: 98). Fortunately it did not.

King spends most mornings writing, often producing around two thousand words a day. He writes that a book draft should demand no more than a season—three months—to complete. Ironically, *On Writing* is an exception to this rule. While working on it in 1999, he experienced a real-life horror when he was struck and seriously injured by a driver when he was walking on a small country road. Despite several operations and painful physical therapy, King returned to writing only a couple of months after the accident (2010: 265–8).

But why have King’s readers so greedily consumed his brand of Gothic horror for decades? Early in his career, King did not see himself as a Gothic novelist. In *Danse Macabre* he identifies “Gothic” in terms of the governess-in-the-haunted-house fiction popular in the 1960s. He also cites the then received critical opinion that “the gothic novel has always been considered something of a curiosity” (1979: 244). But King’s body of work, like the Gothic tradition itself, has fed on changing cultural anxieties, rediscovering or inventing genres to confront with monstrous otherness. King has used almost all the tradition’s literary tropes and archetypes: haunted houses, haunted people, doubles, vampires, werewolves, inescapable disasters, disruptions of time and space, apocalyptic visions of cultural collapse. Most significantly, however, *Carrie* invoked an alternative mode of Gothic Walpole initiated in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) (see *walpole*, *horace*). Ira Levin’s *Rosemary’s Baby* (1967) revived this tradition of characters tormented by the supernatural, but King definitively re-established it in mass-market fiction (see *horror fiction*).

This heritage explains critics’ accusations that King’s early fiction is misogynistic. In Walpole’s Gothic, female characters are most interesting in their capacity to suffer. In M. G. Lewis’ notorious *The Monk* (1796) the hero/villain Ambrosio rapes and murders innocent Antonia and murders her guardian Elvira, then learns that they were his sister and mother. The second heroine Agnes is discovered in her convent’s crypt, cradling the maggot-infested body of her dead infant; “to every eye [it] was a loathsome and disgusting object. To every eye but a Mother’s” (1973: 412). Lewis’ readers also thrilled to his tale of “The Bleeding Nun,” a ghost who had murdered her lover and now haunts her distant relation, a hapless young man. In short, this Gothic incorporates the Western symbolic order encoding darkness, materiality, blood, madness, and death as “female” and ultimately “evil” (see *lewis*, *matthew*). Thus in *Danse Macabre* King also acknowledges his allegiance to a founding Gothic aesthetic: “I recognize terror as the finest emotion and so I will try to terrorize my reader. But if I find that I cannot terrify, I will try to horrify, and if I find that I cannot horrify, I’ll go for the gross-out. I’m not proud” (1979: 34–6) (see *terror*).

*Carrie*, though a victim of Western assumptions about female sexuality, also triumphs within them. Like Lewis’ Bleeding Nun she is no stranger to violence, and is all the more horrific because of it. But the source of *Carrie’s* horror is internal, in her psychokinetic power. Thus King’s early fiction also extended the
process occurring since the beginnings of Gothic: the gradual “migration” of its haunted spaces from medieval, Roman-Catholic Italy and Spain to Britain’s foul industrial cities (*Bleak House*) to contemporary London (*Dracula*) to the dark interior of the human self (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*). King transposed that space into mid-twentieth-century working-class America, where casually profane characters eat Ritz Crackers and drink Pepsi, wear blue jeans, drive Plymouts, and cherish household pets. King entranced his early readers by rendering the mundane, implicitly sacred things implicitly the opposite: a cat named Church (*Pet Sematary*), a Saint Bernard (*Cujo*), or a Plymouth Fury (*Christine*) all become objects of horror, vehicles of inescapable violence. In relocating horror within everyday American life, he also imported the comic-book sensibility of the male adolescent, the chief connoisseurs of “the gross-out,” for King had grown up immersed in popular culture: horror comics, science fiction, and horror movies such as Roger Corman’s adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe.

During the 1990s, however, King began writing novels featuring heroines imprisoned within the implacable cruelties of patriarchal marriage. Indeed, *Gerald’s Game* (1991), despite its sexual explicitness and gruesome violence, conforms to the female Gothic formula. (The single apparently supernatural event is explained and the protagonist finds a happy ending.) *Dolores Claiborne* (1992) explores the horrible ramifications of domestic violence, as does *Rose Madder* (1994), though it retreats from the realism of the first two. These and other stories such as “Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption” (1982) or *Full Dark, No Stars* (2010), show why King allies himself with the American naturalists, who explore the fragile boundary between civilized “reality” and the human propensity to violence.

King’s popular success stems from his skill in “going for the gross-out.” The careless reader may assume that his prose is merely serviceable and transparent, but it is in fact both literate and literary. *Danse Macabre* demonstrates his encyclopedic knowledge of his tradition and a keen appreciation of the finest writers, such as Shirley Jackson. Attentive readers will, however, also notice his debt to the canons of English and American literature. From *Carrie* onwards one hears allusions to many writers, not only Poe, but T. S. Eliot, Coleridge, Yeats, Dylan Thomas, or Robert Browning (“Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came”). Furthermore, as John Sears argues, King’s fiction shares the epistemological anxiety about writing itself that has haunted Gothic fiction, its dubious function in conveying and perhaps constructing “reality.” Walpole published the first “Gothic Story” pretending to be the translator of an antique Italian text of mysterious provenance. Numerous stories told through collections of documents, such as *Dracula* or *Carrie*, are always potentially unreliable. Sears writes that *Carrie* “emphasizes the written-ness of human subjectivity that King’s writings will henceforth relentlessly elaborate in his Gothic vision” (2012: 51). King’s major works exploring the dynamics of fiction and reality, of reader and writer, of his past and his present, of his conscious and unconscious minds include *Misery* (1987), *The Dark Half* (1989), *Bag of Bones* (1998), and *Duma Key* (2008). *Lisey’s Story* (2006) views these mysteries refracted through the subjectivity of a writer’s wife.

With few exceptions King always includes the paranormal in his fiction. But Gothic supernaturalism encodes received (psychoanalytic) opinion about our selves. According to Freud, we are heavily defended structures enfolding forgotten secrets and forbidden desires. In *On Writing* King defines his craft (or art) as “Telepathy, of course” (2010: 103), implicitly endorsing the Romantic notion that the writer’s power is magical. Poets (as Coleridge observed) create new worlds from the materials of the old one. Thus King’s seemingly permanent place on the best seller lists leads one to wonder whether his fiction constitutes for his readers a therapeutic psychoanalysis of themselves and their culture, an opportunity to confront and work through
their nightmares. As he writes in *Danse Macabre*, “It may well be that the mass-media dream of horror can become a national analyst’s couch” (1979: 26). He implicitly constructs his readers as analysands: “I believe that horror does not horrify unless the reader has been personally touched [...] It is a combat waged in the secret recesses of the heart” (1979: 25); “The job of the fantasy-horror writer is to make you, for a little while, a child again” (1979: 378). Horror is a dream, and “the dream of horror is in itself a lancing or an out-letting” (1979: 26). These excursions, King believes, have a fundamentally conservative purpose, as they in the end reassert a status quo; our confrontations with hysterical misery return us to common unhappiness. Thus for future readers, Stephen King offers not only a portrait of post-World War II American culture, but also evidence of its most terrible fear, the omnipresent threat of violence that haunts our lives (see psychoanalysis).

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Female Gothic; Film; Horror Fiction; Lewis, Matthew; Psychoanalysis; Terror; Walpole, Horace.

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FURTHER READING


Kipling, Rudyard

WILLIAM HUGHES

Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) was born in the Indian city of Bombay (now Mumbai). Though educated initially in a domestic environment on the Subcontinent, frequently through the agency of native servants, he received his formal schooling in England between 1871 and 1882. He returned to India in 1882, to work as a reporter for the *Civil and Military Gazette*, a newspaper based in Lahore in modern-day Pakistan, and later for *The Pioneer* in Allahabad. At this time he began publishing short fiction in the provincial press and longer works within an ephemeral, but voluminous, series of paperbacks known as the Indian Railway Library. Kipling’s short fiction from this period was later collected into volumes which remain in print to the present day: these include *Departmental Ditties* (1886), *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888), *Soldiers Three* (1890), and *Wee Willie Winkie* (1890). His schoolboy recollections of the United Services College in Devon, which he attended between 1878 and 1882, informed the collection *Stalky & Co.* (1899).

Kipling returned to London in 1889, and the serial publication of some of his Indian and military poems – including “Danny Deever,” “Mandalay,” “Gunga Din,” and “Tommy” – in the *Scots Observer* in 1890 enhanced his literary celebrity in the United Kingdom. In 1892, he married the sister of his American literary agent, and the couple lived in Vermont until 1896, when they returned to England. The Kiplings settled in Sussex in 1906, and though the author continued to travel extensively after his marriage – visiting the United States, Japan,
South Africa, Egypt, Australia, and New Zealand – he did not return to India in the twentieth century. He was awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907 but he was never appointed Poet Laureate, and though he is often viewed as the laureate of British imperialism, his works are in places equivocal as to the benefits of colonialism. The poems “Recessional” (1897) and “The White Man’s Burden” (1899) are worthy of consideration in this respect. The death of his only son during World War I prompted him to write military journalism and regimental history, and though he was publicly skeptical regarding the claims of Spiritualism it has been suggested that he was nonetheless interested in mediumship and automatic writing. His death in 1936 was prompted by a hemorrhage, probably associated with a long-undiagnosed stomach ulcer.

Kipling’s supernatural fiction may conveniently be divided into those works set in India and those with a European milieu. The latter are also capable of subdivision into works associated with the Great War of 1914–18 and stories that have no association with the conflict. A specific interest in the complex relationships between colonialism and the Gothic in recent years has drawn the bulk of critical attention toward “The Mark of the Beast” (1890), to the detriment of criticism of Kipling’s other supernatural fiction (see CRITICISM; IMPERIAL GOTHIC). “The Mark of the Beast” (Kipling 2006: 3–14) is, nonetheless, an important work, for it considers extensively the interface between the nominal faith of the Christian West and that of the more committed Hindu East. On the one hand this is a tale grounded in the Western mythology of the werewolf, although the behavior of the drunken violator of the Hindu shrine of Hanuman after he is cursed is medically diagnosed as some variant of hydrophobia. The collapse of this ill-advised colonial adventurer into bestial debasement, though, recalls also fin-de-siècle fears of racial degeneration, and the cultural equivalent of this is evoked in the explicitly un-English imposition of torture by his associates as aid to recovering his sense and identity (see DEGENERATION; FIN-DE-SIÈCLE GOTHIC). If the blasphemer’s associates have been rendered foreign by their recourse to arbitrary violence, they have likewise been compromised by their acknowledgement of the puissance of native belief.

The sober protagonist of “The Mark of the Beast,” a minor colonial official who displays a consistent reverence for native beliefs, appears again in “The Return of Imray” (Kipling 2006 [1891]:15–25). This latter narrative is a tale of haunting rather than possession, and the titular “return” refers to a murdered man whose wraith first leads his colonial associates to his concealed body before indicting his murderer – a native servant who believed his master had fatally bewitched his child (see GHOST STORIES). These two narratives, like so many of Kipling’s Indian stories, are recounted from within the colonial homes and temporarily occupied bungalows which both resemble, and yet mock with their faulted familiarity, the comforts and safety of the home country (see UNCANNY, THE). Similar settings are associated with “The Phantom Rickshaw” (Kipling 2006 [1888]: 26–45), first published as part of the Indian Railway Library, which is a haunting associated with romantic infidelity in an Indian Hill Station, and “At the End of the Passage” (Kipling 2006 [1890]: 206–23), which is set in a railway settlement. The latter is distinguished by its interest in the occult possibilities of photography, and with the convention that images seen at the moment of death remain preserved on the retina. “My Own True Ghost Story” (Kipling 2006 [1888]: 278–84), which was published with “The Phantom Rickshaw,” is somewhat ironic, the billiard-playing ghosts being eventually revealed as restless vermin within the bungalow’s superstructure. Kipling’s Indian narratives of the supernatural tend to follow – with this notable exception – a paradigm in which the secular, worldly British colonialist is left shaken by his encounter with the uncanny Asian Other. They are also intense narratives of masculine friendship, played out as they are in dangerous colonial spaces where women are often absent.
The author’s European ghost fiction is less well-known than his Indian tales, though it is equally deserving of critical attention. Set in Sussex, “They” (Kipling 2006 [1904]: 66–84) is a ghost story which suggests that the dead – in this case, children – are selective with regard to whom they appear. “The House Surgeon” (Kipling 2006 [1909]: 121–41) is another haunting, though here the house itself is “cured” of its bad atmosphere through the revelation of the truth regarding a supposed suicide. “The Wish House” (Kipling 2006 [1924]: 142–57), if it is a ghost story at all, is concerned with phantoms of the living, and the power of sexual desire; it is told in Sussex dialect. Kipling’s wartime fiction is not exclusively supernatural in its implications, though its connections with the unprecedented carnage of World War I, a conflict in which almost every British family reputedly suffered a fatality, align it to the traditions of horror writing (see horror fiction). “Mary Postgate” (Kipling 2006 [1915]: 178–91) is a narrative of familial anger and resentment, the titular heroine’s calculated refusal to assist a fatally wounded German airman being an implicit response to the deaths of her nephew, a pilot, and a local child killed by the perceived aggressor’s bombs. “Swept and Garnished” (Kipling 2006 [1915]: 170–7) is a response to German massacres in Belgium, the ghostly children’s appearing to a feverish Berlin woman suggesting that a nation remains at all levels responsible and accountable for its army’s excesses. Most significant among Kipling’s war fiction, though, is “A Madonna of the Trenches” (Kipling 2006 [1924]: 192–205). Set in a Masonic Lodge of Instruction – Kipling had been initiated into Freemasonry in Lahore in 1886 – it is the narrative of a haunting and a suicide on the Western Front, and is associated with adultery and a loss of faith. The psychological trauma of war is here aligned with that of more personal issues of conscience and belief, and its implications remain as disturbing as those raised by “The Mark of the Beast.”

SEE ALSO: Criticism; Degeneration; Fin-de-Siècle Gothic; Ghost Stories; Horror Fiction; Imperial Gothic; Uncanny, The.

REFERENCE

FURTHER READING
Lathom, Francis

MAX FINCHER

Most readers of eighteenth-century and Romantic fiction probably know of Francis Lathom (1774?–1832) through a footnote in Jane Austen’s parody of the Gothic novel, *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Lathom’s successful novel *The Midnight Bell* (1798) features on the reading list of suitably “horrid” novels that Isabella Thorpe gives Catherine Morland to read while staying in Bath. However, Lathom was a diverse popular writer, penning nineteen novels between 1795 and 1829, nine of which can be described as Gothic.

A successful dramatist and actor for the Norwich Theatre in the 1790s, Lathom’s sense of drama is ever-present in his Gothic fiction, which is fast-paced, dramatic, and full of rapid incident. Lathom follows the style of Ann Radcliffe (see Radcliffe, Ann) in the use of the supernatural (see supernatural, the) that is explained. Secrecy, disguise, transgressive sexuality, identity, murder, and interclass romance form the basis for intricate plots and complex back stories, even if Lathom’s characterization is heavily influenced by earlier Gothic writers.

*The Castle of Ollada* was published by William Lane’s Minerva Press in 1795. One of the earliest Gothic novels to be set in Spain, the novel unfolds a complex plot in a haunted castle that terrifies the local community. The novel establishes a significant trend found in Lathom’s fiction for orphans who will discover their real parents and inheritance (see inheritance). The story concerns Matilda, daughter to the tyrant Baron Garcia Ollada, who resists an arranged marriage with the Duke of Gaspero, eloping with a peasant, Henrico, who is revealed to be her brother, but finally turns out to be her cousin. Garcia, after secretly murdering his brother Ferdinand, kept his sister-in-law, Fatima, locked up in his castle. Contemporary reviewers noted the novel’s Jacobin sympathies and intricate, labyrinthine plot, a common feature of Lathom’s fiction.

Certainly *The Midnight Bell* (1798), Lathom’s second novel, explores social and political transgression within the safety of an apparently conventionalized Gothic narrative. The plot concerns the revenge of a supposed fratricide and is heavily influenced by Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Significantly, *The Midnight Bell* imagines a scenario of same-sex love (and simultaneously, a mixed-race/class relationship) by having characters cross-dress. Count Byroff, the heroine’s father, while imprisoned in the Bastille, is the object of affection from his jailer, Jacques. Deciding that Byroff “may easily pass for a woman,” Jacques arranges their escape, disguising himself as a black beggar. Queer desire in the early nineteenth century is present in the very place it is least suspected, the domestic scene of the heterosexual family (see family).
Lathom uses cross-dressing in many of his novels. Transvestitism was common in many eighteenth-century comedies and farces; outside of the theater, cross-dressing was increasingly linked to homosexuality. Speculation about Lathom’s sexuality, that he was queer, or “homosexual,” began when he moved suddenly from Norwich in 1800 and lived with a man on a farm in Aberdeenshire. He established an acting school for farm laborers, while he continued to write popular fiction in between traveling abroad. Suspicion and exile are prevalent themes throughout Lathom’s novels, and may express his awareness of living in a sexually repressive society where he felt compelled to forge a new identity.

With The Impenetrable Secret (1805), Lathom develops further our understanding of a contemporary theme in Romantic writing (see secret histories). We are immersed in a world where characters doubt the evidence of their senses. They are witnesses to events and behavior that are described as “impenetrable,” both arousing suspicion and driving the narrative forward. (Im)penetrability is a loaded concept in Gothic fiction generally, symbolized by both the settings of vast, dark castles clothed in mist, and the inscrutable physiognomy of quiet, brooding villains. To penetrate into mysteries also contains an implicit sexual reference. The gaze of the “penetrating” eye of the Gothic villain upon his subject, both male and female, and their consequent thrill of terror, brings into play the possibility of secret desire and its twin, fear, being explored through the language of looking. In The Impenetrable Secret, the secret of Sylvio could be that he is queer: he deserts his lover, Averilla, inexplicably. The reader then discovers he has also left his wife without any apparent reason. But, as with all good Gothic novels, we are left to “find it out!” as the subtitle demands.

Lathom, along with other popular writers, plays an underestimated part in reviving the historical Gothic novel, first established by Sophia Lee with The Recess (1788). The Mysterious Freebooter; or, Days of Queen Bess (1806) is set during the reign of Elizabeth I and influenced by Lee. With The Fatal Vow (1807), Lathom exploits the dramatic potentialities of the character of Richard I (Richard the Lionheart), anticipating Walter Scott’s novel The Talisman (1825) by some twenty years. Although Lathom wears his research on his sleeve, and there is some wild artistic license with the facts, there is no doubt that Lathom exploits the Gothic possibilities of history to impressive effect. His account of Richard I’s imprisonment in Germany, and the supposed murder of Rosamund de Clifford by Eleanor of Aquitaine, is particularly striking.

After a hiatus of ten years of traveling, Lathom picked up his pen to write his last Gothic novel, Italian Mysteries (1820). Undoubtedly, this is the most mature of Lathom’s Gothic novels in narrative terms, showing the influence of his European travels. Urbino di Cavetti, a Venetian doctor, is persecuted by an Italian aristocrat, the Marchese di Valdetti, after he refuses to commit euthanasia on a dying mysterious Marchesa. Fleeing to a remote and haunted castle, his niece Paulina is abducted by the Marchese and held to ransom, while the reader is left to wonder who the mysterious woman is.

Several of Lathom’s novels are now in print again for the modern reader to enjoy the plot twists, dramatic reversals, and camp style of a charming eighteenth-century eccentric personality.

SEE ALSO: Family; Inheritance; Radcliffe, Ann; Secret Histories; Supernatural, The.

REFERENCES
The term “Gothic” had various, often conflicting, meanings across a range of discourses in eighteenth-century England. It referred historically to the Germanic tribe that defeated Rome in the fifth century and thus Gothicism was often posited as the antithesis of an Enlightenment neoclassicism that looked to ancient Rome for its inspiration (see Sowerby 2000). The term also had a significant, highly charged ideological presence within eighteenth-century legal discourse and here its conflicting connotations acquired a particular urgency: if Gothicism was aligned with barbarism on the one hand, it came to signify, on the other, an almost sacred point of juridical origin within an emerging Whig ideology of nationhood. The English body politic and its constitution was seen to have its origin in a Germanic past, in a culture that was virile, free, and implicitly “protestant” (see protestantism). This Gothic myth of origin enabled the English constitution to be defined against supposedly corrupt, labyrinthine systems of law that were considered to prevail in Catholic Europe; it famously enabled the most well-known jurist of the period, William Blackstone, to figure English law as a great “Gothic castle” only in need of moderate renovation to render it a more suitable refuge for the nation (see roman catholicism). It is therefore arguable that the Gothic, with all of its conflicting connotations, came to inhabit, or perhaps to haunt, the juridical domain at the onset of modernity. From this point on, the Gothic was to have a complex – at times subversive, at times complicit – relation to the rule of law.

Horace Walpole, author of the first Gothic novel, The Castle of Otranto (1764), had the execution warrant of Charles I hanging on his bedroom wall. As a longstanding Whig Member of Parliament during a time of considerable political, social, and economic upheaval and instability, Walpole was alive to and frequently a participant in controversies concerning the legitimate basis of national governance. The Castle of Otranto has been read as a political allegory set in a distant, superstitious, Catholic past that nevertheless interrogates contemporary problems of inheritance, lineage, and the legitimacy of aristocratic rule (see walpole, horace). Indeed, it is impossible to understand the origin and development of Gothic fiction in the eighteenth century and beyond without careful consideration of its ambivalent, often fraught, relation to and interrogation of emerging modern principles of governance (democracy, republicanism, the pre-eminence of the constitution in defining the proper basis of political legitimacy, and so on) that began significantly to redefine the relation between the individual, the nation, and the rule of law from the late eighteenth century onwards. Gothic fiction in the 1790s displayed a marked preoccupation with abuses of juridical power in various forms, and many of the stock conventions of the eighteenth-century Gothic (the persecuted man or woman of virtue, the murderous father figure, the haunted castle, the disputed inheritance) symbolize a significant contemporary complication of the relation between the individual and the law. Consider, for example, the predicament of two very different Gothic protagonists – William Godwin’s Caleb in Caleb Williams (1794) and Ann Radcliffe’s Vivaldi in The Italian (1797) – as they struggle to make their case before the law. While Godwin’s novel stands as an overt condemnation of the
English ancient regime, contemporary political anxieties in Radcliffe (and in many other Gothic fictions of the period) are displaced on to the religious and juridical institutions of the Catholic Church. These displacements and projections can easily be read as anti-Jacobin hostility toward revolutionary “terrors” associated with Catholic Europe, but they are also arguably much more than this. As Claudia Johnson observes, “torture was hardly a remote affair” in England in the 1790s (1995: 121); Radcliffe was certainly no radical in the Godwinian sense, but her fiction nevertheless interrogates the position of ostensibly “free” subjects (subjects ideologically positioned, in spite of their geographical and historical locations, as modern subjects, subjects of the English Protestant Enlightenment) before an unjust and opaque legal system (see Radcliffe, Ann). This malign system of law, moreover, cannot be characterized as wholly Other to a contemporary English juridical order that had overseen the repeal of habeas corpus and the severe curtailment of freedom of speech and association in the 1790s. As David Punter observes, Radcliffe’s Gothic manifests an “intense, if displaced, engagement with political and social problems” (1996: 54). These problems center upon the deeply ambivalent position of the ostensibly free, modern bourgeois subject before an ostensibly enlightened law that nevertheless remains grounded in and productive of terror.

The relation between the Gothic and law, moreover, is arguably not limited to the representation within Gothic fiction of juridical abuses or inconsistencies. While the depiction of flawed legal systems and practices (law suits and criminal trials, for instance) is common in the Gothic novel and its related genres (such as detective and sensation fiction), it is often the case that the Gothic problematizes the very epistemological and ontological basis of law: the Gothic’s challenge to the law, therefore, is not only ethical or political but existential. Unlike literary realism, which can be seen to consolidate the stable economy of representation upon which law relies (see Aristodemou 2001), literary Gothicism undermines the Enlightenment association of truth with empirical fact and of narrative authenticity with juridical authority. The law in early Gothic fictions frequently emerges as spectral, as beholden for its effective symbolic functioning upon a kind of haunting; the juridical forms of the past return not as fixed, coherent precedents or bloodlines but as spectral interventions or “counterfeit” signs (see Hogle 2000). In later Gothic works, the hegemony of rationalist empiricism and literary realism (the equivalent of which in law is legal positivism – the doctrine that the “truth” of law can unequivocally be expressed through the “word” of law) is challenged yet further as a proliferation of monsters (in the work of Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, H. G. Wells, H. P. Lovecraft, and so on) emerge to confound juridical and scientific authority. Of course, this is not necessarily a radical gesture; Gothic narratives from the eighteenth-century romance to the late-twentieth-century horror film frequently suspend authority only ultimately to have it reaffirmed. It remains the case, though, that the Gothic, from the moment of its origin in the faked medieval manuscript published in 1764 as The Castle of Otranto, has had an unparalleled capacity to frustrate hegemonic understandings of literary and legal authenticity and authority. It remains a category that “defies the concept of category” (Williams 1995: 13) and its fluid, monstrous subversions of “reality” and “truth” defy the ontological consistency of a system of law premised upon fixed, supposedly universal determinations of “reality” and “truth.”

SEE ALSO: Protestantism; Radcliffe, Ann; Roman Catholicism; Walpole, Horace.

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FURTHER READING


Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan

VICTOR SAGE

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–73) was born in Dublin, of mixed Irish origins. His father was a cleric in the Irish Protestant Church, a Huguenot descendant, who became Dean of Abington, an isolated parish on the borders of Limerick and Tipperary. His grandmother on his father’s side was the sister of R. B. Sheridan, the dramatist. Le Fanu’s mother, Emma, on the other hand, had republican sympathies: when young, she stole the dagger of the betrayed revolutionary Lord Edward Fitzgerald from the man who arrested him, and slept with it hidden in her mattress for years afterwards (Power 2011: 194). Le Fanu’s mixture of Irish “sides” is a complex inheritance: he wrote a famous patriotic poem, “Shamus O’Brien,” that became a part of Roman Catholic Republican folk culture: the revolutionary Padraig Pearse used to get his pupils to sing it at his school in the run-up to 1916, the year of the Easter Uprising. Le Fanu’s mother was his confidante about his work, and his interest in landscape and folktale (for example) perhaps owes something to her. During the last ten years of his life, Le Fanu befriended Patrick Kennedy, a Dublin bookseller and writer who had an encyclopedic knowledge of Irish folklore, which fed into Le Fanu’s later use of folktales as vehicles of horror. But the patrilinear legacy, recorded in Le Fanu’s name “Sheridan,” also frequently surfaces in his fiction in the way that he reworks from his great-uncle’s plays the old theatrical character of the hypocrite (rather as Dickens does – compare John Jasper in Edwin Drood) to indicate a divided self that becomes so extreme that it turns into the violently Gothic figure of the doppelganger (see doubles). A series of events at Abington during Le Fanu’s boyhood were a nightmare that must have had an effect on the sensitive boy; the glebe house was surrounded by violent mobs of angry Irish peasants, protesting against Church taxes in what came to be known as the “tithe wars” (McCormack 1997: 9–71), and one of the family, simply riding to and from the house, had a horse killed under him. Le Fanu’s ghosts never seem to know they are dead (he was a reader of Swedenborg): they are notoriously solid, their uncanny otherworldliness enhanced, rather than weakened, by a lingering, inexplicable threat of extreme violence. V. S. Pritchett called them “blobs of the unconscious” (Pritchett 2011: 127–31).

A Trinity College graduate, Le Fanu was called to the Irish Bar in his youth, but he wanted to be a writer. He managed by borrowing capital to become the proprietor and editor of several journals, including The Warder and the Dublin University Magazine. His family were not of the Protestant Ascendancy landowning class – Le Fanu seems to have owned no property during his life, apart from the newspapers he bought – but they were well connected through the Sheridan side. He tried to become
an Irish Tory politician but (fortunately for his readers) was not selected. After the mysterious death of his wife, Susannah, in 1858, as a result of what was apparently a sudden fit of hysteria, Le Fanu was suffused with guilt. To judge from the painful fragments of his journal that have survived, he did his best to allay her compulsively anxious religious doubts but was guilty of allowing her to fall into the hands of homeopathic doctors. He was left with four children to bring up, and had to write to survive. In this period of intense productivity up to his death, he wrote twelve novels, and drove the editorial policy and did much of the writing for the Dublin University Magazine. For an important writer of Victorian Gothic, Le Fanu is elusive, in all sorts of ways. Instead of taking advantage of his Anglo-Irish reputation, he seems, until relatively recently, to have suffered from his dual status, despite the fact that he was one of Ireland’s leading journalists in the Victorian period and a prolific novelist, published both in Dublin and London. There was no biography until 1980. His reputation as a novelist was at first occluded, in exactly the same way as that of Wilkie Collins and other (English) Victorian sensation novelists, until the 1920s; his shorter magazine fiction, sometimes published anonymously or pseudonymously, was identified and kept alive by the attributional research of his self-confessed admirer M. R. James, whose own immaculately rendered, disturbingly uncanny stories show Le Fanu’s influence and helped to carry his name forward. Le Fanu is a writer’s writer – V. S. Pritchett and Elizabeth Bowen have both written illuminatingly about him. Among his longer works, there are two exceptions to the general neglect: first, his ramblingly hybrid, Cervantes-like, comic historical novel The House by the Churchyard (1863), set in Chapelizod, at the edge of Phoenix Park, which is now a suburb of Dublin but was a village in the eighteenth century, when the novel’s past action begins. James Joyce was fond of this novel, which he refers to punningly in Finnegan’s Wake, partly because the house of the title eventually became the offices of the Dublin and Chapelizod Distillery Co., which employed his father, John Joyce, as Secretary (Jackson and Costello 1997: 67–72). The other exception to oblivion is the perennial Victorian chiller Uncle Silas (1864), which is perhaps Le Fanu’s finest piece of work and which has seldom, if ever, been out of print since he wrote it. Among the shorter works, it is the superb lesbian vampire novella Carmilla that (with the rise of the Gothic and the rise of feminism since the 1960s, and from movie adaptations) caught the imagination of later generations, having been twice made into movies. It also directs the attention of younger readers to the fine collection in which it appears, In A Glass Darkly (1872). Outside these works, there are thirteen novels, some unreprinted and several critically underrated, and a second (unreprinted) collection of stories, Chronicles of Golden Friars (1871), which contains some of Le Fanu’s most powerful and widely anthologized shorter fiction. At the moment, there is still no standard edited text of Le Fanu’s important early (late 1830s) collection of fiction, The Purcell Papers, which was published posthumously as a three-decker in 1880 and is now still a rare book.

SEE ALSO: Doubles; Irish Gothic; Protestantism; Roman Catholicism; Uncanny, The; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING
One of the most prominent female publishers in the Gothic industry, Ann Lemoine (born Ann Swires, dates unknown) specialized exclusively in short tales of terror known as bluebooks (see bluebooks) or chapbooks. Lemoine is a conspicuous character in this Gothic bluebook trade, not just as a female in a male-dominated field, but also as an innovator in the dissemination and marketing of short Gothic tales. Her publications were found in the most prominent circulating libraries, usually listed under the heading of pamphlets and available for a mere penny a night.

In 1786 Ann married the controversial author and bookseller Henry Lemoine. Her knowledge of the bluebook trade may have come, in part, from her husband’s experience as a pedestrian bookseller and chapbooker. In 1794 the Lemoines sustained serious business losses through the bankruptcy of two associated booksellers, which circumstance, connected with some domestic disagreements, resulted in his confinement for debt and a separation from his wife. In 1795 Henry lost his bookshop and recommenced a business as a pedestrian bookseller, while simultaneously doing much hack work in way of translation and compilation for the London booksellers.

In 1798, Ann Lemoine opened her own shop and began publishing at White Rose Court, Coleman Street, in London. Working closely with J. Roe and the printer Thomas Maiden, Lemoine published many of the most popular bluebooks of the period including the anonymous Romances and Gothic Tales (1801), Tales of Terror! or, More Ghosts (1802), and Sarah Wilkinson’s The Subterraneous Passage or Gothic Cell (1803).

In 1803, Ann Lemoine launched the popular magazine The Tell-Tale; or, Universal Museum, perhaps employing Sarah Wilkinson (see Wilkinson, Sarah) as its editor, which ran for three years. Following the model established by Thomas Tegg’s (see Tegg, Thomas) Marvellous Magazine and Compendium of Prodigies published 1802–4, The Tell-Tale Magazine was fundamentally a bluebook series which comprised forty-eight issues published between 1803 and 1805 and included some eighty-three tales. These tales of terror were subsequently individually packaged and sold on street corners as well as placed in circulating libraries. By specifically targeting readers of the Gothic novel, Lemoine became one of the most prominent and successful publishers, controlling some 20 percent of the bluebook marketplace.

Lemoine, Ann

FRANZ J. POTTER


Surviving titles indicate that Lemoine primarily dealt in bluebooks, though occasionally producing full-length collections of short tales of terror such as *English Night’s Entertainments* (1802) and at least one short novel, William Holloway’s *The Baron of Lauderbrooke* (1800).

As the popularity of the Gothic shifted from bluebooks to short tales of terror in periodicals Lemoine’s business began to fail and with the death of Henry Lemoine in 1812 she closed her doors. Ann Lemoine’s influence on the bluebook and Gothic publishing industry, though, is unmistakable: not only did she diversify the distribution of the short Gothic tale, she understood the appeal of those tales to an ever-increasing readership.

SEE ALSO: Bluebooks; Tegg, Thomas; Wilkinson, Sarah.

FURTHER READING


Lesbian Gothic

PAULINA PALMER

In *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions* (1999), in which the term “lesbian Gothic” was coined, Paulina Palmer investigates the way in which contemporary women writers utilize Gothic motifs and narrative structures as a vehicle to represent and explore lesbian sexuality, same-sex relationships, and the problems attendant on negotiating lesbian existence in heteronormative society. She also explores the connections between the emergence of particular Gothic motifs in this fiction and the changing agenda and priorities of lesbian culture and politics. One of the earliest motifs to receive attention was the witch, employed ambiguously in Barbara Hanrahan’s *The Albatross Muff* (1978), Sarah Maitland’s “The Burning Times” (1983), and Ellen Galford’s *The Fires of Bride* (1986) to signify lesbian victimization by, and resistance to, hetero-patriarchal power. With the advent of the lesbian sexual radical movement in the late 1980s and 1990s, the vampire, employed by writers to explore an alternative economy of lesbian eroticism, came to the fore, exemplified by Pat Califia’s “The Vampire” (1988) and Jewelle Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories* (1991). Spectral visitation, evoking psychoanalytic connotations of the return of repressed fears and desires and acting as a metaphor for lesbian invisibility, also infiltrated novels and stories in the 1990s, as illustrated by Molleen Zanger’s *Gardenias Where There Are None* (1994), Ellen Galford’s *The Dyke and the Dybbuk* (1993), and Emma Donoghue’s *Hood* (1995).

The key role that these and other Gothic motifs have played in lesbian fiction from the 1970s onward raises a question: what is the attraction that Gothic holds for writers who produce it? The explanation involves different factors. First, Gothic is a popular genre, notable for its versatility. As Galford, whose contribution to lesbian Gothic is especially imaginative, humorously writes in *The Dyke and the Dybbuk*, parodying her own interest and that of her readers in fiction and film typifying the genre, “old Gothic mansions, bats and secret chambers and Vincent Price” (Galford 1993: 74) are common cultural currency in the lesbian community. In addition, the transgressive dimension of Gothic and its tendency to interrogate mainstream conventions and versions of reality make it admirably suited to discussing lesbian sexual/political issues, defined by Alice Parker as “a discourse that disrupts or radically interrogates the authorising codes of our culture” (Parker 1990: 319). Another factor that helps to explain writers’ readiness to recast and parody Gothic motifs and conventions is the prominent role that, from the 1970s onwards, they have played in lesbian feminist and – since the 1990s – queer theoretical discourse. Mary Daly in *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical*
Lesbian Gothic (1979) portrays the witch as a signifier of female independence and sisterhood; Sue Ellen Case in “Tracking the Vampire” utilizes the vampire as a metaphor for “queer in its lesbian mode” (1991: 9); while Diana Fuss, in her collection Inside/Out, describes heterosexual and homosexual economies haunting one another in “ghostly visitations” (1991: 2). Other contributors to Fuss’ collection, such as Patricia White and Ellis Hanson, also prioritize spectrality; they display, as Fuss observes in her introductory essay, “a fascination with the figure of the homosexual as spectre and phantom, as spirit and revenant” (1991: 3).

Another theoretical text that has promoted reference to spectrality in lesbian fiction and that merits attention here is Terry Castle’s The Apparitional Lesbian (1993). Castle charts the way in which, from the eighteenth century to the twentieth, writers have portrayed the figure of the lesbian in terms of spectral imagery with the effect of disembodying her, decorporealizing her desire, and rendering her invisible. As Castle remarks:

The lesbian remains a kind of “ghost effect” in the cinema world of modern life: elusive, vaporous, difficult to spot – even when she is there, in plain view […] at the centre of the screen […] She is never with us, it seems, but always somewhere else; in the shadows, in the margins, hidden from history, out of sight. (1993: 2).

Imagery of spectrality and haunting, as well as evoking lesbian invisibility, also furnish the writer with a strategy to resist it since, as Castle herself acknowledges, the ghost refuses to be banished but, on the contrary, continues to return. The motif and its ambiguous implications are central to a number of novels and stories treating lesbian subjectivity and sexuality. In The Night Watch (2006), which depicts the experiences of Londoners during World War II and the years immediately following, Sarah Waters poignantly juxtaposes images of the spectral appearance of London during the bombing raids with the portrayal of the relegation of the lesbian protagonist Kay to the role of ghost when, with peace declared, she finds the ambulance brigade in which she previously served disbanded. Waters describes how “Kay haunted the attic floor like a ghost or a lunatic […] She’d sit still for hours at a time, stiller than a shadow […] And then it seemed to her that she might really be a ghost” (2006: 4). This description, as well as recalling Castle’s representation of “the apparitional lesbian” and her invisibility, echoes Judith Butler’s account of hetero-normative society’s banishment of the lesbian “to a domain of unthinkability and unnameability” (1991: 20) – and, at the same time, the attempt by theorists and writers to challenge and rectify it.

Lesbian fiction has not remained static. Since its production gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s in the wake of the advent of the lesbian feminist movement, it has undergone significant changes in style and sexual perspective. Intertextual allusions and the recasting of narratives appropriated from earlier texts, such as the novels of Charles Dickens, give the fiction of Waters, Ali Smith, and Jeanette Winterson a postmodern dimension, while references to the mobility of desire and gender performativity introduce a distinctly queer note (see queer gothic). Gothic motifs and narrative structures continue, however, to inform these texts, contributing to their representation of lesbian eroticism and relationships. Winterson’s The Power Book (2000) furnishes a vivid illustration. Reference to the vampire, though one tainted by commercialism, is reflected in the description of “the Dracula tour” that the lesbian protagonist Ali sees meeting outside her house in the historic London borough of Spitalfields. Spectral references also haunt the novel. They are apparent not only in the sound of the ghostly footsteps that Ali hears on the stairs and the images of the ghosts of lovers from the past she conjures up but also, more unexpectedly, in “the invented world” (Winterson 2000: 4) of virtual reality where she and her bisexual lover, Tulip, their “fingers resting lightly on the board like a couple of table-turners” (26), encounter each another and pursue their love affair. The motif of the uncanny double – familiar to
the reader from Victorian Gothic novels that inscribe a queer subtext, such as Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) – also features in the novel. Winterson employs it, however, not to evoke the fears and prejudice that, in a bigoted era, queer sexuality and the terror of its discovery can arouse, but, on the contrary, to celebrate lesbian love; Ali romantically tells Tulip,

> Sex between women is mirror geography. The subtlety of its secret – utterly the same, utterly different. You are a looking-glass world. You are the hidden place that opens to me on the other side of the glass. I touch your smooth surface and then my fingers sink through to the other side. You are what the mirror reflects and invents. I see myself. I see you, two, one, none. I don’t know. Maybe I don’t need to know. Kiss me. (Winterson 2000: 174)

Other shifts and mutations have occurred in lesbian Gothic since the 1970s and 1980, as well as in the approaches that critics adopt to the texts exemplifying it. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith in their essay collection *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (2009) remark on the fact that in *Lesbian Gothic* Palmer employs the term chiefly in relation to contemporary fiction and perceptively suggest that it “has implications for a wider range of texts which have yet to be fully explored” (Wallace and Smith 2009: 5). This is, in fact, starting to occur; critics are discussing the import of lesbian Gothic in literature produced in earlier periods. Wallace herself, exploring the connections between lesbian Gothic and female Gothic texts, has examined the utilization of the imagery of death, burial, and spectrality in the writing of Lucy Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle; Mary Wollstonecraft; and Virginia Woolf (Wallace 2009: 26–41); Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham discuss, in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, Lee’s delineation of the dangers attendant on lesbian decadent desire (2006: 12); and Palmer analyzes Antonia White’s sensitive depiction of same-sex female erotic attachments in the convent school of Lippington in *Frost in May* (1933) (Palmer 2009: 105–22). White also describes the harsh and frequently absurd measures that the teaching staff employ in an attempt to prevent the pupils from cultivating what they euphemistically call “particular friendships.” In describing the fog-enshrouded convent walls and the “nail studded” front door echoing scarily with the sound of “rattling chains and bolts” (White 1978: 16), she conjures up an image of the claustrophobic castle interiors in which the heroines of Ann Radcliffe’s novels and other Gothic texts find themselves Entrapped.

Influenced by the focus on the mobility of desire, the interplay between different sexualities, and the constructedness of gender in queer theoretical discourse, critics have also investigated the ways in which writers employ uncanny motifs of secrecy and doubling to explore the interrelation between lesbianism and transgender – as Susan Swan achieves in *The Wives of Bath* (1993). In addition, they analyze the contribution that Gothic conventions make to the representation of the intersection between sexuality and race. Shani Mootoo, focusing on the fictional Caribbean island of Lantanacamara in *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996), employs motifs of invisibility, secrets, and the haunted house to represent the furtive aspect of the relationship between the Indian Sarah and the British Lavinia and the danger of discovery that they face from other members of the household.

As is apparent from the changes that it has undergone, described above, lesbian Gothic, like the genre in general, continues to flourish. Adapting to new circumstances and sexual/political perspectives, it furnishes writers with a vibrant source of motif, imagery, and narrative strategy.

SEE ALSO: Female Gothic; Queer Gothic.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING

Lewis, Matthew

EMMA MCEVOY

Matthew Lewis (1775–1818) was born in London on July 9, 1775. He was the oldest of the four children of Frances Maria and Matthew Lewis, and the heir to his father’s large fortune. Lewis senior was Deputy-Secretary at the War Office and the owner of two slave plantations in Jamaica (see Slavery and the Gothic). Shortly after Lewis’ sixth birthday his mother left her husband’s house and ran off with a music master named Samuel Harrison. The probable result of this union was the birth of a daughter, a Miss Lacey who was provided for
in Mrs. Lewis’ will. When Mrs. Lewis was traced she was compelled to leave her lover. Lewis’ father tried in vain to obtain a divorce; however, though estranged from his wife, he continued to support her financially.

The affair was not embroiled in as much scandal as we might assume. Matthew Lewis saw both his mother and father, was attached to both, acted as “umpire” between them on occasion (Peck 1961: 8), and seemed to suffer little more from the circumstance of his mother’s elopement than having to pretend, when with his school friends, that she was dead. Lewis’ first biographer, Mrs. Margaret Baron-Wilson, in a decorous work, managed to make of his mother both a young heroine and a religious yet still fashionable older woman, writing of her “natural delicacy of complexion and sweetness of expression, which with a courtly bearing, an elegance of deportment, and unaffected good-breeding, she retained to the last” (Baron-Wilson 1839: 8) and mentioning her connection with “old Mrs. Wesley” (mother of Charles and John) (1839: 14). The fundamentally virtuous mothers in Lewis’ work, from Elvira in The Monk (1796) to the eponymous heroine of Adelgitha (1806), who by the “fruits of a single error” (subtitle of Adelgitha) of one sort or another have such a disastrous effect on their sons, might owe their existence to some of Lewis’ complicated feelings about his family situation. Certainly the consequences of women’s lapses from strict conduct of virtue are repeatedly worked out in a variety of ways in Lewis’ writing: from Adelgitha’s series of disasters to Agnes’ ghastly penance in The Monk, and the happy, though contrite, ending for Zorayda in the comedy The East Indian (1800). Perhaps also the sense of being injured in infancy might be linked to some curious passing references in Lewis’ work to babies receiving throat wounds which they bear as scars when adults, as with Angela in The Castle Spectre (1797); see also Adelgitha II i.

Lewis was educated at Marylebone Seminary until the age of eight, then attended Westminster School. In the holidays he lived with his father at Devonshire Place. His mother, after the scandal, resided for a while in France then returned to England, living in Leatherhead in Surrey. Lewis was in constant contact with her. He was a fairly precocious teenager and wrote his first comedy in 1792 at the age of sixteen; it was to be produced successfully eight years later as The East Indian at Drury Lane. In the summer of 1792 he was sent off to Weimar to learn German, and while there imbibed much of the spirit of German Romanticism, reading widely in works of the Sturm und Drang writers (including Schubart, Schiller, and Veit Weber) and meeting Goethe (see Sturm und Drang). In 1794, newly graduated from Oxford, Lewis was sent off traveling again, his father hopeful that experience in diplomatic service would fit him for a career in politics. He spent five months as attaché to the British Embassy at The Hague but, plagued by boredom, started writing a romance, the major part of which he is supposed to have written in ten weeks. What he produced was the work for which he is best known, The Monk (eventually published in 1796), and with which his name was ever after linked. “Monk” Lewis’ career in politics was nowhere near as long-lasting as his literary success. He sat in parliament from 1796 to 1802 (bizarrely enough taking up the seat for Hindon, Wiltshire, just vacated by William Beckford), but proved lukewarm in his attendance, enthusiasm, and voting habits.

The Monk was a runaway success. It went through four editions in two years and was known all over Europe (by 1810 there had been four German editions). It acquired the status of a cult book in part because of its reputation for blasphemy and lewdness. The Reverend Thomas James Mathias wrote of it as “a new species of legislative or state parricide” (quoted in Wright 2007: 18). Markman Ellis has pointed out its anomalous position as “a gothic libertine novel for young ladies” (2000: 96). One of its major contributions to the development of the British Gothic novel was the way it married the fervid style and shocking subject matter of German horror Romanticism with English prose and did so in an explosive, energetic, integrated, and mold-breaking manner (although Peter
Teuthold’s 1794 The Necromancer had introduced British readers to the delights of the German horror novel it is little more than a clumsy translation). Lewis’ use of German sources in The Monk was, however, to draw charges of plagiarism upon him. Indeed he became extremely sensitive to charges of plagiarism in his later work, citing influences and derivations, and making attributions when what he is using seems to a modern reader to be merely part and parcel of Gothic paraphernalia. Perhaps this was part of his genius, though: a sharp eye for all those traits which worked well in the works of others and which he in turn passed on to a further Gothic readership/audience.

The Monk has something wonderfully mercurial about it, and demonstrates an ability to investigate and abandon any style or tone that might, or might not, be deemed suitable for the subject matter. It veers from the grotesque to the comic and even the parodic, from poetry to fervid prose, from the theatrical to novelistic social realism, from bizarrely allegorical starkness to trivial banter. It decisively inaugurated the masculine Gothic mode, which, as Kate Ellis argues, “gives the perspective of an exile from the refuge of home” (Ellis 1989: xiii). Ellis also notes that Lewis’ outsiders “appear to be more sinned against than sinning, and the burden of blame is shifted toward social institutions and away from the villains themselves” (Ellis 1989: 132). The Monk was equally significant in its establishment of a tradition of horror. Terrors are not averted; the novel follows through with the worst of fears. Ghosts are real, violations successful, murder happens in the present rather than the past and instead of gruesome effigies we are shown gruesomely decomposing bodies and an abundance of blood. In conjunction with this, Lewis’ characters turn out to be much more morally ambiguous than their counterparts in earlier Gothic novels. His villains are almost accidentally villainous, his heroes and heroines amiable rather than virtuous.

The Monk’s emphasis on the body and its anatomization of desire, combined with its gender confusions, have made it attractive to many modern critics who have chosen to look at the novel through the lens of Queer Theory (see queer gothic). Dale Townshend considers Ambrosio as one of the “queer fathers of Gothic writing [who] are nothing if not polymorphously pervers” (2009: 30). Max Fincher considers how in the novel “the misinterpretation of the body is foregrounded and […] the body changes the order of things, not least how gender and desire are perceived and understood” (2006: 4). Lauren Fitzgerald (2004–5) links Lewis’ attitude to literary borrowing/plagiarism, his “circumventing the primacy of origins” to a queering of “the history of the sexuality of authorship.” (Evidence for Lewis’ own sexuality is confined to anecdote. A few references suggest an interest in handsome young men. There was also gossip that he had fathered an illegitimate child. Modern biographers have speculated about his relationship with his protégé, William Kelly, son of the Gothic novelist Isabella Kelly.)

Some critics have pointed out the dramatic resonances of The Monk: Robert Miles notes that “spectacle, not narrative is Lewis’ motivating force” (2002: 54) and Peck proffers the hypothesis that large portions of the novel had originally been conceived in dramatic form (1961: 41). Lewis worked not only in prose narrative: he was also a writer of poetry and of dramatic works. Between 1796 and 1801 Lewis had eleven works produced on stage (seven more were to follow in the next eleven years). He composed not only melodrama, tragedy, and monodrama, but also comedy and farce. Lewis showed himself to be both an astute judge and creator of public taste. His most celebrated play, The Castle Spectre, was performed forty-seven times between December 1797 and the following June: this was an extremely lengthy and lucrative run for a play at this time – Jeffrey Cox notes that “Before the first three months of its run were over, Lewis’ drama was said to have brought £18 000 into the Drury Lane treasury” (1992: 176). Alfonso: King of Castile (1801), with ten performances, was the most popular new tragedy of its generation.

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Cox points out, Lewis “exemplifies the power of the Gothic at the box office and on the page: and he explores the boundaries of the Gothic – the borderland between popular and “high” literature” (50).

Lewis’ dramatic works are notable for their sense of the possibilities of the stage (see drama). Cox notes that *The Wood Daemon* (1807) contained “grand processions, an extravagant dream sequence, ghostly portraits who step down from the wall, a bed that descends into a magic chamber where the villain worships the wood daemon, and a spectacular appearance of the wood daemon in a chariot drawn by dragons” (Cox 1992: 39–40). Peck notes that Lewis’ “knowledge of theater’s new mechanical resources, of what mechanics and carpenters could do if they had to, made him bold in planning spectacles, and managers quickly learned that money was well invested in them” (Peck 1961: 110). Lewis had a keen sense of how to exploit stage technology to represent the supernatural. He dramatized the object endowed with uncanny life – the walking armor in *The Castle Spectre*, the portrait which comes to life in *The Wood Daemon* – and, despite criticism, the ghost.

His plays, however, were not just known for their spooky, sometimes terrifying, effects (the 1803 monodrama *The Captive* had to be withdrawn after one performance after sending several audience members into hysterics), they were also characterized by an exuberant physicality, akin to that of Hollywood films of the 1940s and 1950s. Lewis’ characters, male and female, fought and made daring escapes and, using the opportunities provided by new stage scenery, they performed impressive stage leaps (see melodrama). In *The Castle Spectre* the hero Percy jumps from a tower to safety, despite the fact that some contemporary critics thought that such physical display in a hero was in bad taste. Princess Zorilda in *Timour the Tartar* (1811) leaps from a tower to a terrace, then into the sea. Her son, Agib, leaps a horse over a parapet and disappears.

*Timour the Tartar, “A Grand Romantic Melo-drama in Two Acts”* (title page description) was celebrated for the introduction of what the advertisement called “New Performers” to the stage: horses. These marvelous animals came at call, played dead, bowed, and appeared to rise from the sea. Lewis’ stage works are notable also for the exciting roles given to heroines. Angela, of *The Castle Spectre* (played by the celebrated Mrs. Jordan), firm of purpose, kills her would-be rapist Osmond with a dagger. Lewis’ interest was not limited to young virginal heroines. Zorilda, who arrives to rescue the young prince in *Timour* and who appears as the commanding and seductive warrior princess, dressed as an Amazon, leaps so impressively around the palace, is the prince’s mother. Adelgitha (played by Mrs. Powell who had earlier taken the part of Angela’s mother in *The Castle Spectre*) was a gift of a role to a mature actress; the central character displays not only beauty, wisdom, fortitude, and bravery – snatching a javelin at one point to rescue her husband – but also a more interesting fatal passivity and cowardice. She, like Angela, kills the tyrant who is about to rape her. Lewis’ plays are also notable for other experimental *dramatis personae*: the deliberately unfunny Father Philip in *The Castle Spectre* (an experiment which he freely admitted was not very successful) and the group of anachronistic African servants, in particular the misanthrope Hassan, in the same play, who give voice to outrage over the loss of liberty and to the ruinous effects of slavery on the human character.

Lewis’ literary career was inevitably linked with his need to make money to support himself, his mother, and occasional protégés. When his father died in 1812, Lewis was thirty-six. They had quarreled over his father’s attempts to have his mistress, Mrs. Ricketts, accepted by his family and as a result had not spoken for nine years, only becoming reconciled on the older Lewis’ father’s deathbed. However, Lewis was not written out of his father’s will. As the main heir, Lewis became a wealthy man and his writing for money ceased. There was a well-received volume of poetry from that year, then nothing till the posthumous publication of his *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (1834). Lewis, however, kept himself busy and went traveling.
He had always been a very sociable, if rather argumentative, man and was not shy of exploiting the potential of his literary fame. He enjoyed some celebrated literary friendships, most importantly with Walter Scott, whom he advised on matters poetical and with whom he later collaborated. He traveled for eighteen months in 1815–16, visiting Byron at the villa Diodati where he also met the Shelleys. He also twice traveled to Jamaica in order to improve conditions for his slaves (he would not countenance full emancipation, fearful of the consequences for the white inhabitants of the island). Lewis died of yellow fever at sea while returning from the West Indies on May 16, 1818 at the age of forty-two.

SEE ALSO: Drama; Melodrama; Queer Gothic; Slavery and the Gothic; Sturm und Drang.

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Liminality
KATIE GARNER

The term “liminality” is employed by critics of the Gothic to refer to spaces or bodies situated either on or at the recognized borders or boundaries of subjective existence. In eighteenth-century Gothic writing, these thresholds are predominantly encountered through liminal spaces (e.g., wild mountain ranges, hidden tombs, secret rooms). From the nineteenth century onward, the human body has increasingly become a liminal site where normative boundaries are challenged; the monster, vampire, and werewolf are all liminal beings.

With its earliest usage recorded as recently as 1964, liminality remains a relatively modern concept arising first and foremost from the field of cultural anthropology (OED). The French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep (1960) originally proposed that all human subjects experience a liminal period of transition (often brought about by the advance of adulthood, marriage, or parenthood) before full integration into the community at large. Victor Turner developed van Gennep’s theories in ways especially pertinent to the Gothic by observing that “liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and
to an eclipse of the sun and the moon” (1969: 95). The liminal subject’s terrifying experience of death is frequently explored in Gothic texts, many of which feature reanimated corpses, life-sustaining portraits, or live burials. The two liminal sites of the womb and the tomb are shockingly yoked together in Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796) when the incarcerated Agnes de Medina, having undergone a false death, gives birth to her child within the funeral vaults of the abbey of St. Clare (Lewis 2008: 412). In her feminist reading of Turner’s work, Elisabeth Bronfen (1992) argues that Gothic texts construct liminality as an innately feminine state through their fixation on the female cadaver. Liminality can be both biological and social, and center on “a body socially dead but not bodily interred, as well as the decaying corpse” (Bronfen 1992: 198). The recurrent doubling of figures that occurs in the Gothic mode (partially suggested in the affinity between a liminal state and an eclipse) precipitates this kind of social death by forcing one figure into a disconcertingly marginalized role.

It is often, however, in the more abstract “language of in-betweenness” that liminality makes itself a pervasive characteristic of the Gothic aesthetic (Smith 2007: 53). By setting their actions on margins, borders, and boundaries (of day and night; interior and exterior; dream and reality; above and below ground), Gothic texts enact an unsettling sense of incompleteness and continual referral (Smith 2007: 53–5). This inability to comprehend what is most liminal, precisely because it is situated on the borders of our known experience, points toward the close links between liminality and the sublime. Though often opposed in their orientation, both terms are equally rooted in the idea that preconceived thresholds can be breached through imaginative expansion (see sublime, the). For Vijay Mishra, Ann Radcliffe’s conceptualization of the sublime relies on “the liminality of the unthinkable,” created when her narratives refuse to fully describe a character’s sublime experience (1984: 233).

Various forms of Gothic monstrosity also act as physical expressions of liminality by blurring the boundaries between individual subjects or species (see Hurley 1996: 24–8). The vampire’s ability to pass for, or mirror, the human indicates his or her position on the cusp of the fragile, liminal boundary between human and Other (Botting 2008: 82). An ability to travel – to physically cross the borders of nations – also imbues the vampire with an evasive power rooted in its liminal state (Auerbach 1995: 21) (see vampire fiction). Similarly, the werewolf adopts an unsettling position between the animal and human binary that can be explicitly connected to the subject’s liminal state between childhood and adulthood. In Angela Carter’s “The Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice” (1979), the onset of female menstruation marks the position of both female protagonists on the liminal threshold of womanhood (see werewolves). Fin-de-siècle works, such as Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), can often disturb the preconceived limits upon nineteenth-century sexuality by exploring the liminal potential of newly emerging gendered identities such as the dandy or the “new woman” (Hurley 2002: 199). Intimately concerned with social and bodily boundaries, and often marginalized in favor of high art despite its popular appeal, the Gothic trajectory as a whole can also be conceived to be pervasively (or even fundamentally) liminal (Napier 1987: 4).

SEE ALSO: Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann; Sublime, The; Vampire Fiction; Werewolves.

REFERENCES
WILLIAM HUGHES

Born of British stock in Providence, Rhode Island, H. P. Lovecraft (1890–1937) is a pivotal figure in the closely related generic traditions of Gothic, fantasy, and science fiction. His mother could trace her American ancestry to the Massachusetts Bay colony, though such a lineage did not invariably convey with it wealth or status in East Coast America. Whatever comforts the family had, the course of the young author’s life was disrupted when his father (who dealt in jewelry and precious metals) became psychotic while on a business trip, and was subsequently incarcerated in Providence’s Butler Hospital, where he remained until his death in 1898. It has been suggested that Lovecraft senior’s condition was a consequence of syphilis, though it is unlikely that the author himself was ever aware of this possibility. With his father necessarily absent, Lovecraft was raised by his mother, aunts, and maternal grandfather. A sickly child, Lovecraft wrote poetry and fiction and dabbled in amateur journalism. Comparative poverty, though, accompanied him throughout his life, particularly through his marriage, which concluded in a divorce. Living in New York for much of his married life, he became disillusioned with regard to the position occupied by Anglo Saxons in communities subjected to immigration, and this fueled a nascent racism that, nonetheless, tended to be expressed in coded rather than direct form in his fictions: “The Horror at Red Hook” (1927) is a notable exception. After his divorce, Lovecraft returned to Providence, where he wrote a considerable body of short fiction, much of it for serial publications such as 

Lovecraft, H. P.  
(Howard Phillips)

WILLIAM HUGHES

FURTHER READING


seem unconscious of the apparent spiritual and epistemological threat posed by lingering medieval or Roman Catholic resonances and artifacts in the modern world. Much of Lovecraft’s work draws on the New England coastline and its hinterland, the site of North America’s oldest European settlements. There is an intriguing parallel to the preoccupations of Southern Gothic in these fictions of the 1920s and the 1930s, for they frequently balance the prestige of an established settler lineage with the fearful prospects of racial stagnation and inbreeding (though seldom with actual incest).

New England is, at once, the source of America’s antiquity and yet distant in cultural time and geographical space from the “new” Pacific-orientated west into which the nation had progressively and profitably expanded. There is a sense of this perceptibly “old” world being left behind by progressive America, just as Europe had once formed a repressive foil to the opportunities presented by the “New World” that white European immigrants entered via the East Coast colonies. The issues arise, implicitly, as to when an immigrant family may be considered effectively indigenous (and thus entitled to disdain later immigrants); and, indeed, whether these settled, former-immigrant families have now become regressive, stagnant, and effectively poisonous to the healthy evolution of local and national culture.

The seaports and towns of the East Coast, the birthplace of immigration to the New World, are both curious and dangerous in Lovecraft’s fiction: crumbling and stripped of profitable seagoing traffic on the one hand, on the other they are the source of potent atavisms and dangerous lineages that appear to have been dissipated or diluted as the nation progressively absorbed both territory and settlers from beyond Europe. Strange communities exist within the curtilage of ostensibly normal urban landscapes in these works: arcane or even occult religions are celebrated, sometimes in conjunction with rituals that celebrate ancient deities and whose devotees proclaim their utter deviation and physical degeneration through the display of bodies that have mutated into the ambiguous, resembling hybrids of the human with lesser animals or sea creatures. Paradoxically, in such places, ancient European—and specifically British—ancestry is both a source of perverse pride in a nation premised upon democracy and inclusion and also a source of danger. Lovecraft’s apparent commitment to Anglo-Saxon superiority would thus appear to be a brittle, even a hopeless, illusion.

Lovecraft’s literary output is monumental, his works varying from short stories to almost novella length. Much of it bridges the generic divide between Gothic and fantasy, the logic of a known (and usually vaguely contemporary) world being sporadically interrupted by the interposition of alternatives evidently rooted elsewhere in distant time and imagined space. Notably, Lovecraft frequently deploys rhetorical authorities in his work, these varying from significant or forbidden (though utterly fictional) books—the *Necronomicon*—to recognizably organized institutions, such as the Massachusetts city of Arkham with its Miskatonic University. Among the more overtly Gothic works from Lovecraft’s pen, several of those that depict New England in lingering cultural decline and haunted by its European and colonial pasts are especially worthy of study. These works include “The Rats in the Walls” (1924), which has a subtext of ancestry and inheritance in the context of degenerative insanity; “The Festival” (1925); and “The Shadow over Innsmouth” (1936), set in Massachusetts in the late 1920s.

These three narratives are important (and, indeed, representative) works that detail the persistence of atavism in contemporary American culture. “The Rats in the Walls,” which is set in 1923, chronicles the return of an American, whose lineage is derived from noble British ancestors, to his home country. Once there, he becomes possessed by his environment, deteriorating not merely into the cannibalism practiced by his distant European ancestors but also into their archaic languages, even to the
extent of these no longer resembling any recognizable European dialect. The ostensible (and diagnosed) insanity of the protagonist does not satisfactorily contain the uncanny here, and the question is implicitly posed as to whether his degeneration might not have easily been precipitated on US soil. “The Shadow over Innsmouth” is likewise a significant exercise in paranoiac Gothic that anticipates later works in the tradition up to and including The X-Files. Innsmouth, an ancient seaboard community, appears to be degenerating into a ghost town in much the same way as the Maine town of Jerusalem’s Lot does in Stephen King’s 1975 East Coast vampire novel ’Salem’s Lot. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that the titular town of Innsmouth is plagued not by vampires but by degenerates – human beings who are apparently returning to a more primal, amphibian form. This degeneration is, however, paralleled by the rise of a viable alternative community with its own laws and religion, a community from which the physiologically “normal” are excluded. Its destruction by Federal intervention is thus an act that protects “normal,” modern American humanity, though the narrative is engagingly ambiguous with regard to how much of a role heredity plays in this descent into the primal and the abject. “The Festival,” to continue this theme, depicts a traveler’s return to ancestral space and his participation in ancient Yule rites. At this event, in which the traveler demonstrates his residual instinct as much as his civilized discomfort, he encounters beings whose hybrid nature defies classification.

The so-called “Cthulhu Mythos,” which structures many of the author’s fantasy works, functions as self-referential mythology that embraces cosmology, theology, physics, and morality. There is an almost postmodern sense of futility in the worlds depicted here, many of which have antecedents in Lovecraft’s youthful exercises into the fantasy genre. Certainly, if the fantasy lands – atemporal and exotic – of some of these works distance themselves credibly from the familiar urban and rural environments known to Lovecraft’s contemporary readers, they are also inclined to bring the deific into everyday life in a manner reminiscent of Classical Greek mythology. Even deity, though, is potentially or actually degenerate in Lovecraft’s writings, for a god may be insane and persist sullenly in his existence, hemmed in by the sound of unceasing drumming. Fate and destiny are, likewise, frequent preoccupations, and the arbitrary nature of life may be discerned in such Gothic-inflected science-fiction works as “The Color Out of Space” (1927) and “The Shadow Out of Time” (1936).

Lovecraft’s influences must assuredly embrace both American and European Gothic, and it is almost certainly Poe to whom he paid youthful attention. That said, the trace of works such as Lord Dunsany’s Time and the Gods (1906) is evident across Lovecraft’s output, as are more conventionally Gothic works such as The House on the Borderland (1908) by William Hope Hodgson. Lovecraft was the correspondent of several literary figures in his day, including Robert E. Howard and August Derleth, who completed the author’s The Lurker on the Threshold (1945) from fragments. Lovecraft was also the author of an early work of Gothic criticism, in the form of the long essay Supernatural Horror in Literature (1927), in which he acknowledges the generic importance of Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, M. R. James, and Arthur Machen.

SEE ALSO: Abjection; American Gothic; European Gothic; King, Stephen; Poe, Edgar Allan; Southern Gothic; Uncanny, The.

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**Lugosi, Bela**

GLENNIS BYRON

Bela Lugosi (1882–1956), the actor who became synonymous with Dracula, was born Béla Ferenc Dezső Blaskó on October 20, 1882 in Lugos, Hungary, now a part of Romania. While many of the details of his early life are difficult to establish, given that Lugosi had a notable penchant for embellishment, it appears that Lugosi’s acting career began when he became connected with the Franz Joseph Theater of Temesvar in the early 1900s, taking on various small roles and singing in operettas. He subsequently travelled with various repertory companies, playing the title role in Byron’s *Manfred* (see Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron) and Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* and, in 1910, the lead in *Romeo and Juliet*. Moving to Budapest in 1911, he began using the name Lugosi, which was based on the name of his hometown, and debuted as Vronsky in *Anna Karenina*. In 1912 he attended a private acting school and, by now a box-office draw, made his debut with the National Theater of Hungary in 1913. With the outbreak of war in 1914, Lugosi enlisted, serving in the Royal Hungarian Infantry until 1916, when he returned to the theater. The first of his five marriages, to a banker’s daughter, took place in 1917. In this year he also began to act in films: his first was *The Leopard*, for which his name was changed to Arisztid Olt.

Lugosi became involved in union politics following the fall of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1918 and launched the Free Organization of Theater Employees. With the counterrevolution and the banning of the Communist party under the regime of Miklos Horthy, Lugosi, because of his socialist activities, was barred from working in any national theater. In 1919 Lugosi fled to Austria and subsequently moved to Germany, where he resumed his film career, taking roles in such films as F. W. Murnau’s *Der Januskopf* (1920), a version of Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (see Stevenson, Robert Louis). Unwilling to stay in Germany, in 1920 Lugosi decided, at the age of thirty-eight, to emigrate to the United States. Speaking no English, Lugosi eventually formed a small stock company with other émigrés, putting on plays for Hungarian audiences. Eventually he was offered a role in a New York play, *The Red Poppy*, and learned the role phonetically. In 1923 he played the villain in his first American film, *The Silent Command*.

Lugosi’s real breakthrough came in 1927 when he was approached to take on the title role in Horace Liveright’s Broadway production of the Balderston Deane *Dracula*, and this highly successful performance began to establish his reputation. When Universal Pictures optioned the rights to *Dracula*, Lugosi was not initially considered, but, after various candidates fell through and after much campaigning, he was selected for the title role by director Tod Browning. Browning’s *Dracula* (1931) in many ways can be said to have initiated the horror film in the United States: it was the first in a cycle of horror films in which the supernatural was not explained away at the end as the work of some human villain. Lugosi became a star. His heavy accent, odd intonations, and dramatic if unpredictable pauses set the standard for Dracula, and Lugosi became typecast for life.
Universal planned to follow up the success of *Dracula* with Lugosi in the role of the monster in *Frankenstein*, but the role ultimately went to the previously unknown Boris Karloff. Lugosi was instead cast as the mad scientist (not in the original Poe story) in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932) (see *Poe, Edgar Allan*). The failure of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* – at least in comparison with Whale’s *Frankenstein* – meant that Lugosi’s contract was not renewed, and Boris Karloff took his place as the leading horror star for Universal. Soon after, however, Lugosi was approached by the independent producers Halperin Brothers: *White Zombie* (1932), generally derided by the critics of the time, was a box-office success, and the role of the satanic Murder Legendre may well be Lugosi’s most notable performance after *Dracula*. In 1939, Lugosi took on the role of Ygor, the mad shepherd who exploits Karloff’s monster in *Son of Frankenstein* (1939).

In the 1940s, Lugosi sank into obscurity and, near bankruptcy, toured in the comedy *Arsenic and Old Lace* and began to take on roles in various obscure horror films. His first and only color film, *Scared to Death* (1947), saw the end of the horror revival. Lugosi toured in *Dracula* and was eventually hired for *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, his final screen appearance as Dracula. For the remaining years of his life, Lugosi, whose theatrical acting style was at odds with the increasingly naturalistic Hollywood productions, was reduced to minor roles in low-budget thrillers and personal appearances, often for comic purposes. During the late 1940s he began an association with independent filmmaker Edward D. Wood Jr., who cast him in his first feature film, *Glen or Glenda*. Increasing dependency on opiates led Lugosi to seek help. He died of a heart attack on August 16, 1956 and, at the request of his family, was buried in one of the Dracula stage costumes.

SEE ALSO: Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Poe, Edgar Allan; Stevenson, Robert Louis.

FURTHER READING


The word “macabre” describes a gruesome effect in a work of art. It is used especially when elements of death and life are brought into close proximity, as in the medieval danse macabre (dance of death), in which grinning skeletons invite the living, from popes to peasants, into the equalizing democracy of the grave. This subject of late-medieval mural painting became an important musical subject for Saint-Saëns and Liszt, and is used by Edgar Allan Poe most effectively in “The Masque of the Red Death” (1842). In the story, Prince Prospero flees the pestilence devastating his country by secluding himself with friends in an iron-girt abbey in which they follow an aestheticized pursuit of pleasure until, one night, a figure, “shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave” (Poe 2000: 184), with the face of a stiffened corpse, appears among the waltzers (see Poe, Edgar Allan). He belongs to the color scheme, since he is found in a room of black with windows stained red, the color of his own particular mode of decease, which involves bleeding from the pores on the face. When the mask of the Red Death is removed, nothing at all remains, and at this point the specifically macabre effect of the story is dissipated: without the physical propinquity of the corpse, there can be no macabre.

Hans Holbein’s sequence of woodcuts with accompanying poems is a good example of the development of the danse macabre in the Renaissance period, in which Death speaks to individuals, ending with a young woman. Death and the male gallant had been a popular trope, but attention now turned to the encounter of seductive, leering Death and female nubidity: “Death and the Maiden.” In Christian teaching, Death had only appeared on the scene because of the Fall of Adam and Eve. In paintings of “Death and the Maiden,” the girl is naked like Eve and the grave lies at her feet, but a new element of eroticism has entered the story. Death is now associated with desire, as in Schubert’s Death and the Maiden string quartet, with its Romantic search after the erasure of limits. This macabre trope is central to the female Gothic (see Female Gothic), in which the heroine is the center of attention and is threatened with death or rape. Matthew Lewis’ eponymous monk acts the part of Death as he has Antonia drugged into a seemingly death-like state so that he may ravish her as she lies in her coffin in the convent vault, surrounded by tombs and skeletons (see Lewis, Matthew). Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s tale “Schalken the Painter” (1839) makes its heroine, Rose Velderkaust, a literal bride of death, sold by her uncle to a strange merchant, who takes her off to the grave. Years later, Schalken falls unconscious in a church in Rotterdam and imagines Rose appearing and leading him to a curtained
bed, in which the demoniac corpse-like husband sits bolt upright. It is the juxtaposition of the nubile Rose and erotic invitation with the malignancy of death that gives the macabre effect. Another particularly macabre image is to be found in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818, revised 1831), in which the scientist dreams of meeting his beloved in the street. As he embraces her, he holds a worm-ridden corpse in his arms. Bürger’s poem “Lenore” (1773), which was to have a strong influence on the Gothic novel through its narrative of the skeletal bridegroom stealing his living bride, derives from the “Death and the Maiden” trope (see Bürger, Gottfried).

The macabre has much in common with the grotesque (see Grotesque, the) in that both modes are concerned with putting together disparate and opposite elements: ugliness and beauty, death and life. Both are also concerned with the limits of what can be thought. Death gives shape to our experience of life; to picture it is already to seek to deny it any ultimate blockage to meaning. Hence, there is something playful about the macabre, as in the anonymous novel *The Animated Skeleton* of 1798, in which the uncanny specter of a skeleton turns out to have wholly benign intentions. In Perceval Landon’s 1908 shocker “Thurnley Abbey,” playfulness turns to horror. Colvin is so angry about being taken for a credulous fool by his host when faced with a skeletal form at his bedside that he rends it limb from limb, leaving a pile of small bones and a tattered shroud at his feet. When he takes the pieces to confront his host, ghostly steps are heard and the bones disappear, as they are claimed by their supernatural owner. The nineteenth-century fin de siècle was drawn to the macabre as part of its appetite for the perverse and forbidden, and good examples can be found in the short stories of Arthur Machen and Vincent O’Sullivan. Prosper Mérimée’s fantastic tale “The Venus of Lille” (1837) culminates in a marriage bed in which the bridegroom is found dead by his young wife in the metal arms of a vast statue. The macabre is central to modern horror fiction, Manga, and film, where, in a secularized universe, the physical reality of death and putrefaction provides an even more absolute limit to human knowledge.

**SEE ALSO:** Bürger, Gottfried; Female Gothic; Grotesque, the; Lewis, Matthew; Poe, Edgar Allan.

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**FURTHER READING**


**MacDonald, George**

**GINGER STELLE**

The literary career of George MacDonald (1825–1905) was prolific and diverse. After his heterodox religious beliefs cost him his first and only pulpit, he turned his attention to
writing and produced an oeuvre which includes poetry, literary essays, sermons, translations, an annotated edition of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, several short stories, fantasy novels for children and adults, and over two dozen nonfantasy novels. His most prominent literary influences were the English Romantics Wordsworth and Coleridge and the German Romantic Novalis (see *wordsworth*, *william*). However, he read widely, and his works demonstrate an interest in a variety of literary genres.

MacDonald’s work as a minister influenced his writing. He sought to disseminate his beliefs as widely as possible, and they adorn every page he wrote. At the center of these beliefs is a loving Father-God, who is actively involved in his Creation, and who guides all events with the ultimate goal of bringing his children back into a right relationship with himself. MacDonald believed that absolute obedience to the will of God is a fundamental element of this right relationship, but he also believed in the possibility of redemption. He saw Hell as impermanent; it is a means through which God brings the most stubborn of his children to repentance and ultimate redemption.

Gothic offered MacDonald a wider vocabulary through which to explore these ideas. His fiction, both fantasy and nonfantasy, is full of Gothic motifs: remote castles, heroines in distress, evil villains, bizarre creatures, winding staircases, hidden rooms, secret passages, supernatural events, and so forth. Among his nonfantasies, one of the best examples from his extensive oeuvre can be found in *Donal Grant* (1883), which may represent MacDonald’s most concentrated use of the Gothic. The plot revolves around an heiress being pressured by her uncle into an unwanted marriage. At the end, she is kidnapped, drugged, and chained in a hidden room in an attempt to gain her consent. She is rescued at the last possible moment by the novel’s hero. Along the way, there are ghostly noises, somnambulism, strange encounters in dark staircases, the search for a secret room, the discovery of an ancient murder, and the revelation of numerous dark secrets. Among MacDonald’s fantasies, *Lilith* (1895) includes vampirism, skeletal dances, human-to-animal transformations, and a variety of other terrifying images. Few of his works are as extreme as these examples, but most include some Gothic elements, which add excitement to the plots and contribute to creating an atmosphere of unreality.

MacDonald’s novels are full of Gothic imagery, but he does not use Gothic merely for entertainment value or atmosphere. MacDonald sought to impress his beliefs on his readers. In his hands, the Gothic becomes a means of exploring theological possibilities. MacDonald sought to produce real changes in the lives of his readers, both internally by turning their minds and hearts toward God, and externally by producing observable changes in behavior. He thought one of the greatest obstacles to achieving this purpose was a strong sense of self-satisfaction and complacency that he saw among many of his contemporaries, and his novels illustrate this. He frequently presents characters possessing this sense of self-satisfaction and complacency, which MacDonald proceeds to dismantle.

The Gothic propensity to induce terror frequently plays a role in this (see *terror*). MacDonald subjects his characters to terrifying experiences that shake their self-satisfaction and complacency. Anodos, in *Phantastes* (1858) is very pleased with himself, until his encounter with the Alder Maiden:

> I woke as a grey dawn stole into the cave. The damsel had disappeared; but in the shrubbery, at the mouth of the cave, stood a strange horrible object. It looked like an open coffin set up on one end; only that the part for the head and neck was defined from the shoulder-part. In fact, it was a rough representation of the human frame, only hollow, as if made of decaying bark torn from a tree. [...] The thing turned round – it had for a face and front those of my enchantress, but now of a pale greenish hue in the light of the morning, and with dead lustreless eyes. (MacDonald 2000: 84)

This experience leaves Anodos thoroughly shaken and repentant. Throughout his oeuvre,
both fantasy and nonfantasy, MacDonald uses terror, in various forms, to shatter his characters' complacency and start them on the path toward spiritual growth. At the same time, he provides a vicarious terror experience for his readers, shaking their own complacency and self-satisfaction.

In this, MacDonald's use of the Gothic is unusual. He uses the Gothic to provide an experience for his readers, while at the same time modifying the Gothic in a way that specifically explores his theological ideas. For MacDonald, no one, not even the most heinous of Gothic villains, was irredeemable. MacDonald's fiction includes many of the features of Gothicism, including the fact that his villains rarely finally win. However horrifying the situation becomes, good triumphs in the end. Still, his villains have hope. Their plans are utterly defeated, but the fate of their immortal soul remains undetermined. Even the child-murdering demoness Lilith is redeemed in the end. MacDonald draws on Gothic character types, plot elements, images, and tropes to magnify the darkness and the terror of his novels, deepening the abyss (see Abyss) from which his characters are ultimately redeemed and emphasizing his redemptive message.

The Gothic provided MacDonald with one strategy among many. Few, if any, of his works could be classified as "Gothic novels"; they incorporate too many elements from other types of literature to be so considered. Nonetheless, the Gothic plays an important role in MacDonald's fiction and in his overall literary purposes.

SEE ALSO: Abyss; Terror; Wordsworth, William.

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FURTHER READING

Machen, Arthur

TOMOS OWEN

Arthur Machen (1863–1947) was a Welsh author of novels, short stories, and essays. Though he had a long publishing career, it is for the cluster of Gothic texts he produced in the 1890s and the fin de siècle that he is best remembered.

Machen was born Arthur Llewelyn Jones in the village of Caerleon, Gwent; he adopted Machen, his mother’s name, early in his career. His father, John Edward Jones, was the vicar of the small, poor nearby parish of Llanddewi Fach. Machen was educated at Hereford Cathedral School, where he did well; however, owing to his father’s poverty he did not attend university. This setback prevented him from gaining the training which would have enabled him to follow tradition on his father’s side by entering the Anglican ministry; it was also an outcome which precipitated his turn to writing.

As a result, Machen made his way to London in the early 1880s in the hope of making a career as a journalist, but in reality accepting many and various commissions from publishers. His first authored books were the mystical poem Eleusinia (1881), now coveted by collectors, and The Anatomy of Tobacco (1884), a pastiche of Robert Burton’s The Anatomy of Melancholy celebrating the pleasures of pipe-smoking, which was published under the pseudonym “Leolinus Siluriensis.” There followed several volumes of translation of
Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron* (1886) and *The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova* (1894), and, later, a commission by the publisher George Redway to catalogue an extensive collection of recherché texts on the occult, alchemy, and other esoteric topics. Machen’s first work of fiction was *The Chronicle of Clemency* (1888), a work full of archaic language and kitsch medievalism set in Gwent. As Hardy constructed through his fiction the county of Wessex, so Machen uses “Gwent” – here as throughout his oeuvre – for the county which was at the time officially called Monmouthshire. In doing so he invokes association with the medieval Welsh kingdom which followed Roman encampment in the area; Gwent later becomes a Gothic space haunted by historical and mythical associations.

In the succeeding years Machen turned to writing essays, articles, and short fiction for London magazines like the *Globe* and the *St. James Gazette*. His early stories engage with the prevailing Gothic and decadent currents in the literature of the 1890s, with particular indebtedness to the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, and Oscar Wilde (whom Machen later met). These shorter stories were soon followed by the first major work, *The Great God Pan* (1894). This novella consists of a series of interlinked stories (the first chapter, “The Experiment,” was separately published) and moves between the Welsh border country and fin-de-siècle London in its exploration of themes including degeneration, science, and threatening female sexuality. The scientist Dr. Raymond, a practitioner of “transcendental medicine” performs a vivisection – a “trifling rearrangement of certain cells [...] that would escape the attention of ninety-nine specialists out of a hundred” (Machen 2010a: 5) – upon Mary, his subject, in order that she may glimpse behind the “veil” into the spirit world, and see the great god Pan. The experiment renders her physically disfigured and mentally no more than “a hopeless idiot” (Machen 2010a: 13). Nine months later Mary dies, giving birth to a child, presumably of an infernal conception and fathered by Pan. The subsequent chapters, made up of a number of nested narratives, describe how the child, Helen Vaughan, now grown up, wreaks unspeakable terror in London, leading to the suicide of several prominent aristocrats in a series of crimes known as the “West End Horrors”: Helen is the late-Victorian femme fatale nonpareil. The text suggests that the criminality, violence, and sexual transgression associated with London’s East End through the Jack the Ripper Murders has extended beyond there: the violence previously directed toward poor, working-class women in the east of the city is now wielded, by women, at the upper-class gentlemen of the West End and, by extension, at the heart of English society itself. Machen is one among a number of late-Victorian authors to incorporate the figure of the scientist into his work, and particularly the scientist whose method moves from the rational and logical to the transcendental and the mystical.

*The Great God Pan* was followed in 1895 by *The Three Impostors*, published by John Lane in the Keynotes Series. The embedded narratives – and almost incomprehensibly complex plot structure – move between past and present, Welsh border country and, principally, the London metropolis, concrete material reality, and abject or supernatural terror. The novel, like the city itself, becomes an uncanny space which is both alienating and unknowable; here, as elsewhere in Machen’s work, the human subject is shown under threat of literal disintegration by means of supernatural villainy. One of the novel’s interpolated narratives, “The Novel of the Black Seal,” is told to the London scientist Phillipps by the young Miss Lally while sitting on a bench in Leicester Square: she tells how she once accompanied the scientist Dr. Gregg to the Welsh border country, ostensibly on the trail of a famous black seal bearing a strange inscription, but in reality searching for the lost race, the “little people.” Gregg employs a local boy, Jervase Cradock, who communes with the little people yet, by the power of the mysterious stone, is turned into a serpentine creature and Gregg is lost to an unspeakable fate.
Machen was not to publish another book until 1902; however, during this period he contributed to periodicals and between 1895 and 1897 also worked on The Hill of Dreams, though this remained unpublished for another decade. Hieroglyphics (1902) is in part a work of literary theory – a Paterian treatise on how “ecstasy” is the essential quality of great literature – stemming from the context of 1890s aestheticism. The Hill of Dreams (1907), arguably Machen's most famous book, extends this but in fictional form. Frequently described as the most decadent novel in all of English literature, the novel is a semiautobiographical Künstlerroman. Its protagonist, the impressionable aesthete Lucian Taylor, is drawn from his father’s rectory to the mystical surrounding Gwent landscape. On the “hill of dreams” Lucian is overcome by visions associated with the former Roman Legion based there: further, “The Celt assailed him [...] and his far-off ancestors, the 'little people', crept out of their caves, muttering charms and incantations in hissing inhuman speech; he was beleaguered by desires that had slept in his race for ages” (Machen 2010b: 52). Determined to forge a career as an author and “to translate into English prose the form and mystery of the domed hills, the magic of the occult valleys” (Machen 2010b: 37), Lucian moves to London, though the task proves too much for him, and he is found dead, slumped over an indecipherable manuscript. As with many of Machen's other works from the fin de siècle, a challenge to the notion of a coherent human subject manifests itself in a fragmented and similarly incoherent narrative.

Through his friendship with the mystic A. E. Waite, Machen became for a period a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn; it was here that Machen met W. B. Yeats and George Moore. He also, in 1901, became an actor in F. R. Benson's Shakespearean company. In 1906 Machen published The House of Souls, a volume which collected several of the shorter fictions from the 1890s, including “The White People,” a remarkable story that reveals the diary of a young girl who encounters the white people and nymphs, both benevolent and malign, in the countryside; her narrative is framed by a conversation between two gentlemen about the nature of pure evil.

Drawing on late-century fears of atavism and degeneration, texts like The Three Impostors, “The White People” and others suggest that notions of modernity and progress are threatened by (or indeed already contain) evil ancient powers that will lead to their undoing. Furthermore, Machen's use of the fairy folk and the Welsh setting position his work in relation to the Celtic Revival, also drawing momentum from the London of the 1890s (Machen in his Autobiography attributed the impetus behind his career as a man of letters to his Celtic identity). However, while other Celticists of the period like Ernest Rhys and W. B. Yeats reconfigure the Celt as romantic and inspirational, Machen's Celtic material is imbued with a nightmarish Gothic power.

In 1910 Machen was employed on the staff of the London Evening News; this commenced a decade of work as a journalist, during which time he became a well-known Fleet Street character. It was also during his time at the Evening News that Machen published “The Bowmen,” the story with which many people still associate his name owing to the widespread furor caused by its publication. The story, set in the trenches of World War I, describes the ghostly appearance of the archers of Agincourt alongside the British troops. So firmly did the story capture public imagination that belief in the historical accuracy of Machen's tale spread, and Machen received correspondence requesting the source of his story and, later, congratulating him on bringing the story of “the Angels of Mons” to wider attention. Machen left Fleet Street in 1921. Still, the 1920s saw a growing interest in Machen’s work, which enjoyed a particular burgeoning of popularity in America (which remains to this day); the first critical study of Machen's work was published in 1918 by the American man of letters Vincent Starrett, and his work was also championed by Carl Van Vechten and the Harvard professor Robert Hillyer.
The Secret Glory (1922) saw Machen turn once more to Celtic themes: the protagonist Ambrose Meyrick is able to harness the transcendental power of the Grail (located in Wales and associated with the Celtic Church); John Betjeman was a confessed admirer of the story. In the same year he published his first volume of autobiography, Far Off Things, and this was followed by Things Near and Far (1923); both volumes, later published together as the Autobiography of Arthur Machen (1951) are often praised for their lyrical prose and their evocation of the landscape of the Gwent border country. In 1929 Machen retired to Amersham, Buckinghamshire where he was to spend the rest of his days. During the later period he continued to produce stories, essays, and reviews: Notes and Queries and Dreads and Drolls, two anthologies of his journalism from his Fleet Street days, were published in 1926. The Cosy Room (1936), an anthology of otherwise uncollected pieces dating back to the 1890s, contains one of Machen’s most admired later pieces, the story “N.” Like his earlier work, “N” unsettles distinctions between the mundane physicality of the material world (in this case, the London district of Stoke Newington) and an altogether more transcendental and spiritually significant other world.

Machen died in 1947. Since his death, his work has continued to attract a devoted – if narrow – following, though interest in his work is increasing and more of his works are returning to print.

SEE ALSO: Medicine and the Gothic; Uncanny, The; Welsh Gothic.

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derived from literary and cultural tropes of the Gothic has been well documented by a number of academics and writers (e.g., Dunja Brill, Joshua Gunn, Paul Hodkinson, Catherine Spooner). The term Goth itself is fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity, especially when applied to the construction of different subcultures within society (see goth). As Catherine Spooner points out, “While all subcultural identities are based on the process of ‘making monstrous’ – fashioning themselves as different from mainstream culture – goth in particular is situated within a signifying space in which metaphors of monstrosity abound” (Spooner 2007: 153). These “monstrous” identities, based as they are on certain Gothic literary icons, can be further traced through the development of magazines, fanzines, e-zines, blogs, and websites that are devoted to exploring what being a Goth means as defined by contemporary cultural norms. The power of Gothic appropriation can be seen in the constantly evolving remediation of Goth identity in various forms of print and internet media.

Like its predecessors Glam Rock, Punk, and New Wave, Goth as a subculture fused music, fashion, and attitudinal postures in the late 1970s and early 1980s, particularly in the United Kingdom before emerging in Europe and North America. British bands such as Joy Division, Bauhaus, Alien Sex Fiend, and Siouxsie and the Banshees provided early crossover points between punk and Goth, but as Goth subculture developed images of androgyny it became antithetical to punk’s aggressive masculine posturing and sublimated violence (see music).

As Dunja Brill writes, Goth music and media are inextricably linked as forms of political economy that are “culturally charged” and that “in these (semi-) professional media, a cross cutting of discourses engineered by the music and media industries with their focus on marketing, advertising and image creation takes place” (Brill 2008: 148). Starting off as self-published, independent, and locally produced flyers, pamphlets, and leaflets, early Goth fanzines have been superseded by a global media network that uses both print media and internet sites to commodify Goth identity through music, fashion, and crucially, advertising. The visibility of Goth as a specific media construction is found in mainstream media: in the 1980s and 1990s British music magazines such as NME, Melody Maker, and Kerrang frequently showcased bands and acts such as The Cure, The Mission, Sisters of Mercy, and The Cult that existed within the various subgenres of Goth music. But it is also found in alternative forms of publication that Paul Hodkinson, using the definitions of cultural sociologist Sarah Thornton, describes as “small scale specialist micro media” (Hodkinson 2002: 153).

These “micro medias” derived from self-published fanzines that would serve as both sources of information (music concerts, small independent record releases) and key players in the development of a Goth subcultural identity. Through the late 1990s and into the start of the twenty-first century many of these early fanzines – Meltdown (UK), BRV (UK), and Propaganda (USA) – were distributed through a network of festivals, independent record shops, and clothing stores. According to Hodkinson, fanzines “provided centralized specialist noticeboards for the pooling of practical information relating to subcultural consumables, forthcoming gigs, festivals and CD releases” (Hodkinson 2002: 168). Crucial to their success were the relatively low costs associated with printing and publication due to advances in print technology, a revolution that became even more pronounced with the widespread adoption of the internet in the late 1990s. Early fanzines included magazines that covered wide geographical regions and styles of Goth music and were all created in a period leading up to the millennium: Gothic (Germany, 1993), Ascension (Italy, 1998), Comatose Rose (Canada, 1999), and Elegy (France, 1998). Fanzines such as Morbid Curiosity (USA, 1997) were inspired by Gothic horror nonfiction and others such as Sentimentalist (USA, 2001) by crossover indie music sites and culture.

Joshua Gunn writes that “goth’s resistant gestures are premised on a kind of lifestyle
irony” that “resist the cultural mainstream in spaces of ambivalence” (Gunn 2007: 41). The range of contemporary print magazines catering to different aspects of Goth subculture (fashion, music, literature) offer interesting deviations on this resistance to mainstream cultural norms. Newgrave (USA, 2000) is a magazine “devoted to the preservation and growth of dark and gothic culture” and markets itself as “extreme death rock fashion” that is based in the “California underground.” The publisher Matt Riser created Newgrave as a response to what he saw as “embarrassing” Gothic magazines “full of wannabe vampires and Renaissance Faire rejects” (Kilpatrick 2005: 103).

In contrast, a magazine like Gothic Beauty (USA) explores the world of Gothic fashion with formats and production values that imitate mainstream “lifestyle” magazines like GQ, Elle, and Vogue. Issue 32 included features on haute couture fashion house Pinar Eris, designer Isabelle Batz, LA jewelry line Hello Drama, and articles on the history of insane asylums and “Gothic Gardening.” Gothic Beauty can be downloaded as an iPad app, with the now requisite Twitter feed and Facebook page to exemplify its position as a multiplatform media engine. The cultural and ideological differences between Newgrave and Gothic Beauty would suggest that they are competing in different markets for a readership that would identify itself as part of a wider Goth community. Magazines such as Gothic Beauty, rather than offering up a resistance to the cultural mainstream, replicates the normative value system of commodification culture that is dialectically opposed to Gunn’s assertion that ambivalent Goth identity projects “lifestyle irony.”

Auxiliary magazine (US) is also a contemporary “alternative subculture” magazine whose contents are divided into five main sections: Beauty, Media, Music, Lifestyle, and Fashion. Commercial magazines like Auxiliary are dependent upon advertising for income and in the July 2010 issue there was a wide range of music events and products advertised and aimed at a specific market that would consider itself to be part of a Goth alternative subculture. Articles in the magazine included “A quick start guide to promoting your personal business with social media,” “Notable film scores,” and reviews of music drawn from the wide range of genres associated with Goth. The British magazine Bite Me is aimed at a Goth readership that is fixated around vampires and Fiend is an Australian magazine which, like Auxiliary, markets itself as an “alternative lifestyle magazine,” with pull-out posters of Marilyn Manson; competitions to win a “Gallery Serpentine corset”; reviews of music, fashion, and cinema; and interviews with Goth artists, writers, and musicians such as Charlaine Harris, originator of vampire HBO series True Blood.

These magazines are a hybrid mix of (Goth) consumer lifestyle magazine combined with haute couture designs, marketing Goth as a product to be utilized by a consumer who readily identifies with the images that are being marketed through fashion and advertising – cyberpunks, steampunk Victorian dilettantes, sexualized zombie schoolgirls, androgynous posthumans, vampiric parodies. Spooner (2006) has written that mainstream culture has consistently appropriated Gothic modalities (for example, the work of British designer Alexander McQueen) and that advertising and marketing companies return to visual stimuli that are drawn from Gothic themes in order to sell their products. While some magazines like Newgrave and others on the Goth-fetish scene attempt to retain a vestige of radical antiestablishment ethos, the glossily produced and packaged magazines that confirm Goth’s entry into an alternative economic marketplace are aimed at a media savvy demographic that “consumes monstrosity” through a variety of cultural artifacts.

SEE ALSO: Commodity Gothicism; Goth; Music; Popular Culture; Urban Gothic.

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**FURTHER READING**

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**Manga**
CHARLES INOUYE

The “*man*, 漫” of manga has a wide range of meaning: involuntary, without authority or reason, arbitrary, superfluous, and reckless. There is, therefore, something potentially Gothic, or nonstandard, about these pictures (ga, 図) that tend toward both caricature and monstrosity (see *MONSTROSITY*). Often narrative or declarative in thrust, manga have frequently nurtured a symbiosis between words and pictures that traditionally flowed from the soft, pointed brush (fude) that rendered both text and image. Established anciently, this symbiosis survived the separation of word and image that occurred during the modern era and survives today as a salient aspect of postmodern culture in its graphic splendor (see *CONTEMPORARY GOTHIC*). As a term, “manga” gained popular currency from about 1925. But its emergence dates to the Tokugawa period (1600–1868). *Hokusai manga* were playful sketches of miscellaneous subjects done by the ukiyo-e artist, Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849). But the earliest examples of reckless pictures go back much further, to the graffiti left behind by builders during the Nara period (710–94), or to the well-known scrolls *Caricatures of Animals* (Chōjū giga), attributed to the priest Toba Sōjō (1053–1140). Other examples of picture scrolls, or *emaki*, which tell their story as they unroll from right to left, include the *Hell Scrolls* (*Jigokuzuōshi*, twelfth century). It aided the propagation of Buddhism with depictions of various punishments – seas of blood for murderers, endless fire for adulterers, and so forth. Another famous *emaki* is the *Night Procession of One Hundred Demons* (*Hyakki yagō emaki*, circa sixteenth century), which graphically expresses processions of *yōkai* (evil spirits) taking to the streets on hot summer nights, fatal to anyone not protected by a Buddhist sutra.

Such scrolls were hand-painted and limited in circulation. With printing, reckless pictures became mass-produced and commercialized. To this end, moveable-type printing was tried for a short season during the first decades of the seventeenth century. But it was rejected in favor of the more plastic surface of the carved wood block that kept the calligraphic symbiosis of word and picture (and Japan’s interest in Gothic expression) alive and well.

An early example of mass-produced manga for Tokugawa-period consumers were *tobae*, playful caricatures accompanied by short passages and poems. As the printing of text and image developed in a more narrative direction, various subgenres of illustrated fiction (*ezōshi or kusazōshi*) evolved. *Nara ehon, aakahon, aobon, and kurobon* were largely reworkings of stories from both the oral (*densetsu*) and written (otogizōshi) traditions, many of them fanciful and supernatural. Ostensibly, these thin, illustrated volumes were written for women and children. But, in truth, their readership was wide, and their subject matter
increasingly adult. Indeed, *kibyōshi*, the next genre in this evolution, were witty, often sexually explicit, highly sophisticated works that circulated within a rather tight-knit group of urban literati. They were eclipsed by the longer, more word-oriented *yomihon* (reading books), such as Takizawa Bakin’s (1767–1848) highly metaphorical *Tale of Eight Dogs* (*Hakkenden*), and by the densely illustrated *gōkan*, or composite books that were clearly intended for as wide a readership as possible. Serially produced and illustrated by artists such as Utagawa Kuniyoshi (circa 1797–1861), these often violent and moralistic tales were graphically expressive of an “end of the shogunate” (*bakumatsu*) decadence and of the anxiety of Japan’s “opening” to the rest of the world.

A hiatus comes with the reintroduction of type-set printing at the end of the Tokugawa period. As wood-block printing quickly phased out, the traditional tie between words and pictures weakened. Yet, at a point when type-set modern novels (*kindai shōsetsu*) were largely stripped of illustration, manga began a quiet resurgence by way of political cartoons done as etchings and lithographs by Westerners such as the Englishman Charles Wirgman (1832–91) and the Frenchman Georges Bigot (1860–1927). These men came to Japan to work as journalists and technically speaking, they resuscitated manga. But the impulse to visualize the grotesque (see *grotesque*, the) and monstrous had already become a deeply rooted part of Japan’s expressive tradition.

Post-Meiji Restoration (1868) artists, such as Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831–89), produced politically oriented caricatures that marked an emerging expression of “people’s rights.” But these critiques of social policy evolved toward pictures of a more desultory sort. Appearing as erotic grotesque nonsense (*ero-gurosansensu*), the manga of Yokoyama Ryūuchi (1909–2001) and others became fashionable during the interwar period. His *Fuku-chan* kept readers entertained from 1936 to 1971 with its brief dialogues and visual humor. As Japan turned increasingly to militarism in the 1930s, and during the harsh exigency imposed by World War II, repentant manga artists “converted” from their playful ways and liberal leanings and turned toward more serious endeavors, such as providing children with value-rich manga, and making propaganda leaflets for the war effort, covered with monstrous images of the demonized enemy. *Manga eiga* (an early form of *anime* or animated film) also emerged at this time.

In the postwar era, the production of manga became thematically freer, highly capitalized, and extremely lucrative. The successful career of Tezuka Osamu (1928–89) exemplifies the way that the visual rhetoric of manga was influenced by cinema, and how manga, in turn, served as an inspiration for both television and cinema (see *film*; *television*). Needless to say, photography’s (*shashin*) role had been a crucial influence on manga from early on. While photography stimulated the documentary, journalistic function of Meiji-period caricature, it also led to the creation of off-set printing (*shashinsatsu*), a process that had the effect of putting pictures back on the page. Once restored, the text-image symbiosis led to strongly narrative manga, not only the brief-format, episodic work of Hasegawa Machiko (1920–92) (*Sazae-san*), but also the more extended, cinematic manga of Otomo Katsuhiro (1954–) (*Akira*) and Masamune Shirow (1961–) (*Ghost in the Shell*).

Today, numerous niche markets and specialized genres have developed: boys’ manga (*shōnen manga*), girls’ manga (*shōjo manga*), young men’s manga (*seinen manga*), adult female manga (*redisu komikkusu*), adult male manga (*seinen manga*), even manga for the teaching of subjects such as economics and calculus. One niche artist relevant to Gothic expression is Mizuki Shigeru (1922–), creator of the one-eyed *Ge ge ge no Kitarō*. Having experienced the horrors of World War II, he has focused almost exclusively on *yōkai*. His return to animism has been viewed as a hopeful critique of modernity, war, and violence.
Others have pushed monstrosity and metamorphosis in other, darker directions. Umezu Kazuo (1936–), the father of the so-called horror manga subgenre, is famous for his *Drifting Classroom* (*Hyōryū kyōshitsu*), one of many contemporary Japanese works to embrace postapocalyptic themes. Another is Suehiro Maruo (1956–), whose highly imaginative creations, such as *Mr. Araki’s Amazing Freak Show* (*Shōjo tsubaki*), are marked by their references to earlier Tokugawa-period transformations. Metamorphosis, transformation, and monstrosity remain a preoccupation of manga, whether the emotional register is horror, romance, or social critique. Such expression is not always Gothic. Yet the ancient and contemporary presence of reckless pictures in Japan forces us to reconsider the meaning and definition of Gothic as a solely modern phenomenon.

**SEE ALSO:** Contemporary Gothic; Film; Grotesque, The; Monstrosity; Television.

**FURTHER READING**


**Marsh, Richard**

**NICHOLAS DALY**

Richard Marsh (1857–1915) was the pseudonym under which Richard Bernard Heldmann published most of his work. While he is best known for his supernatural thriller of 1897, *The Beetle*, he was a prolific author of fiction in various popular modes, including school stories and novels of mystery and crime. Heldmann’s own life story is not without its own enigmas and plot-twists. It was not until Robert Aickman, his grandson, published his autobiography in 1966 that it became widely known that Heldmann and Marsh were the same man. (Aickman himself also wrote supernatural fiction, and was the editor of the several editions of the *Fontana Book of Great Ghost Stories*). It is only in the last few years with the availability of state records and other resources online that it has emerged that the most likely reason for Heldmann’s adoption of a pseudonym in 1892 was that he had been convicted of obtaining goods and money by false pretences at the Quarter Sessions at Maidstone, Kent on April 9, 1884, and sentenced to eighteen months in prison (Capture of a Forger at Tenby, 1884). (As late as 2004, when the Broadview edition of *The Beetle* appeared, the motivation for his second career under the name Marsh was obscure.) Heldmann was imprisoned for a minor crime spree that saw him use assumed names to live lavishly in various parts of the country. From 1880–3 he had also been writing school stories and novels, and his shorter works appeared in the boys’ magazine, *Union Jack*, where he was also associate editor (with G. A Henty) from 1882. Upon his release he resumed his writing career, but did not publish his first novel under his new name, *The Devil’s Diamond*, until 1893. From this period he began to churn out short and longer fiction at an impressive rate, sometimes publishing several novels a year: for example, in the same year that *The Beetle* appeared (1897) he also published three other novels. His short novels
were well-suited to the changing publishing market, in which people were buying single-volume novels rather than renting three-deckers. Published in colorful pictorial boards by such firms as Ward Lock, his “shilling shockers” were calculated to appeal to the browsing eye. Like other Victorian authors, Marsh made his work pay by serializing the novels before volume publication; *Tom Ossington’s Ghost* (1898), for example, was serialized earlier that year in the *Ipswich Journal* as the *Ossington Mystery*. His shorter fiction was tailored to the proliferating light-reading magazines of the period, such as the *Strand*, the *Windsor*, and the *Idler*, and he republished some of this work in such collections as *Curios* (1899) and *Marvels and Mysteries* (1900).

It has become common to link Marsh’s *The Beetle* to the other great supernatural novel of that year, *Dracula*, critics noting that Marsh’s novel initially enjoyed greater success than Stoker’s, before stage and film versions turned the latter’s work into one of the most successful literary properties of all time. But the comparison of the two was already underway in the year of their publication. According to the *Glasgow Herald* of Saturday, October 9, 1897, while Stoker’s tale of “a vampire man” was “sufficiently blood-curdling,” Marsh had “out-Heroded Herod” with a “creepy-crawly” story that was “not for people with weak nerves” (Literature, 1897). First serialized in *Answers* from March to June of 1897 as *The Perils of Paul Lessingham: The Story of a Haunted Man*, *The Beetle*, like *Dracula*, is told by multiple narrators, and centers on a rising political star, Lessingham, and his fiancée, Marjorie Lindon, who are persecuted by a strange, shape-shifting human/insect entity of ambiguous sex. Lessingham had fallen into the clutches of this creature in Egypt, where he seems to have witnessed orgies and human sacrifices in the underground temple of a cult of Isis. In this respect *The Beetle* descends from such late-Romantic novels as Thomas Moore’s *The Epicurean* (1827) and Edward Bulwer Lytton’s *Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), both of which feature sexually predatory priests of Isis, though in Marsh’s mélange of late-Victorian anxieties, the monster seems to be – mostly – female (see *BULWER LYTTON, EDWARD*). In London, like Svengali in George Du Maurier’s *Trilby* (1894), the Beetle uses its hypnotic powers to control its victims (see *HYPNOTISM*). The novel brings together fin-de-siècle discourses of gender, sexuality, and science, and suggests symbolic connections between Britain’s imperial reach, and the “darkest London” close at hand. Like *Dracula* it is an invasion narrative, one in which Britain’s imagined foe is treated in a supernatural register, rather than in the more realist mode of such tales as George Tomkyns Chesney’s *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), or the scientific romance of H. G. Wells’ *The War of the World*. Like *Dracula*, too, it links the boundaries of the nation to the boundaries of individual bodies – by troubling the limits of the latter, *The Beetle* also undermines the former.

Marsh had learned to put together a thrilling yarn long before *The Beetle*, and a number of his novels marry Gothic interest to a strong mystery plot. *The Devil’s Diamond* (1893) features a precious stone that exerts a maleficent power over whoever owns it. *The Crime and the Criminal* (1897) is a thriller without supernatural elements, but features a murder club, the members of which are pledged to murder for pleasure; like *The Beetle*, it is told by multiple narrators, one of whom provides us with a graphic, first-hand description of the strangulation of his pregnant lover. He finds that “appetite [comes] with eating”: “as I got a tighter and tighter hold, and felt her convulsive writhings and her life slipping through my fingers, I began to feel the joy of killing for killing’s sake [...] I began to be filled with an ecstasy of passion” (Marsh 1897: 75). Elsewhere Marsh exploited rescue scenes that owed a good deal to the melodramatic stage, and that looked forward to the episodic cliff-hanging adventures of the serial era on screen. Thus, in *The Datchet Diamonds* (1898), our hero escapes from being tortured in a cellar only to then find himself trapped by fire elsewhere in the building; in *In Full Cry*, serialized in the *Manchester Weekly Times* in 1899, the hero is locked in a
big trunk, in the bottom of which is a live snake.

Marsh died in 1915, four years before The Beetle was filmed by the British production company, Barker; the novel was staged at the Strand Theatre in London in 1928. So great had been his annual output that his publishers were able to produce eleven new books after his death.

SEE ALSO: Bulwer Lytton, Edward; Hypnotism.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING
In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Emily’s preoccupation with what lies behind the black veil has been read as a flaw in the novel’s construction – Elizabeth Napier, for example, suggests that Radcliffe’s technique of withholding information to attenuate the narrative is indicative of a “reluctance to explore more fully the psychological substratum of her work” (1987: 61) and leads to the reader inevitably feeling confused and cheated when the final revelation works to deflate the supernatural expectations built up (111) (see supernatural, the). According to Sedgwick, however, this type of reading overlooks the significance of the veil itself, and its importance lies in the fact of concealment rather than what is being concealed. Radcliffe herself prized obscurity in the evocation of sublime terror, commending images “seen in glimpses through obscuring shades” (2000: 169) and therefore implicitly positioning the process and thematics of veiling as central to her fictional practice (see sublime, the).

In *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (2004), Spooner extends Sedgwick’s argument to suggest that masks, veils, and disguises in Gothic fiction are not only important in and of themselves (rather than in terms of what they conceal) but also determined by historically specific discourses about clothing. Spooner argues, for example, that the emphasis on the revelation of women’s décolletage in Romantic-era Gothic not only reflected the dramatic shift from the heavily corseted female figure predominant through most of the eighteenth century to the loose, high-waisted gowns of the 1790s but also replayed political concerns surrounding the exposure of Marie Antoinette’s body preceding and during the French Revolution. Masks, veils, and disguises articulate the body in specific ways, informed by gender, class, and other socially constructed differences.

Veils evoke religious mysteries as well as discourses of female modesty and propriety. The expression “to take the veil,” meaning to take religious vows, encompasses both, and veiled nuns are frequently found in Gothic fiction; for example, the ghostly Bleeding Nun of Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796). The veil, or shroud, traditionally worn by specters represents a barrier between the living and the dead, this world and the afterlife, and as such can represent spiritual, otherworldly, or forbidden knowledge. The concealment and revelation of the female body is also frequently profoundly sexualized, and the forbidden knowledge it suggests explicitly carnal. In *The Monk*, Lewis sexualizes the veil by presenting its removal as a spectacle for the male gaze – whether it be the two chevaliers’ erotic teasing of the chaste heroine Antonia to remove her veil or the demonic Matilda’s strategic exposure of her breast in her attempt to corrupt the titular monk, Ambrosio. The veil is accorded the prurient qualities of striptease.

Costumes and masks have a more explicitly dramatic function, recalling theater and masquerade, and suggest the conscious adoption of an alternative persona. Writing of eighteenth-century masquerades, Terry Castle suggests that “the pleasure of the masquerade attended on the experience of doubleness, the alienation of inner from outer, a fantasy of two bodies simultaneously and thrillingly present, self and other together, the two-in-one” (1986: 4–5). In Gothic texts, the pleasures of doubleness quickly become the terrors of doubleness, as illustrated in Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938) (see du maurier, daphne). The nameless heroine copies the dress of a family portrait for a fancy dress ball, thrilled with the excitement of swapping her meek, girlish identity for a sophisticated and worldly one, only to discover that she has unwittingly turned herself into the double of her husband’s dead wife, Rebecca. Haunting is effected through costume, just one of the ways in the novel in which the dead Rebecca threatens to destroy her successor’s identity.

If masks, veils, and disguises evoke doubleness, their horror frequently lies in its collapse: in the loss of control of the mask or the disguise, so that it estranges the bearer from his/her “original” identity, entrapping him/her in a role experienced as alien to the self. In Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll*...
and Mr. Hyde (1886), Jekyll’s dual identity is presented as a form of costume: “I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the body of the noted professor, and to assume, like a thick cloak, the body of Edward Hyde” (1992: 145) (see Stevenson, Robert Louis). Jekyll’s increasing inability to prevent himself from turning into Hyde represents the triumph of the “disguise” over the “original” (although, interestingly, in this sentence Jekyll’s outward identity is presented as no more essential than that of Hyde). In Jekyll and Hyde, disguise enables the pursuit of a double life, a common motif of late-Victorian Gothic fiction that persisted through the twentieth century. In Bret Easton Ellis’ American Psycho (1991), narrator Patrick Bateman gives obsessively detailed descriptions of the designer outfits worn by himself and his peers. His worldly success and immaculately presented boy-next-door image prevent society from recognizing the possibility that he could be a brutal serial killer, even when he wears a sign on his back written in blood and reading “MASS MURDERER” to a fancy dress party. He is in disguise as himself – a disguise no one can see through. In this novel, the prioritizing of surface over depth is presented as an inevitable outcome of consumer capitalism, and signals the moral vacuum at the heart of contemporary American culture.

The mask also has a carnivalesque function. In Rabelais and His World (1965), Bakhtin includes masks among the comic, regenerative features of the medieval feast of fools, “related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames” (1984: 40). In Gothic texts, however, masks more often take the form of what Bakhtin calls the Romantic grotesque, in which images “usually express fear of the world and seek to inspire their reader with this fear” (39). Thus, “The Romantic mask loses almost entirely its renewing and regenerating element and acquires a somber hue. A terrible vacuum, a nothingness lurks behind it” (40). This is evident in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death” (1842) (see Poe, Edgar Allan).

In this short story, Prince Prospero attempts to escape the plague ravaging his country by shutting himself and his aristocratic friends away in his castle, where they hold a decadent masked ball. A mysterious figure disguised as the Red Death visits them, but when the revelers unmask him they discover “the grave cements and corpse-like mask [...] untenanted by any tangible form” (1938: 104). The absence behind the mask is in this case both the court’s moral vacuum and the annihilating properties of death, from which there is no escape.

In contemporary fiction, the concern with masks and veils is often transmuted into a preoccupation with costume and fancy dress, which Angela Carter has called “a holiday from the persistent self” (1997: 106) (see Carter, Angela). The possibility of self-transformation through dress on the one hand offers liberatory potential but on the other invokes a disorienting, hallucinatory world where nothing is as it seems. The climax of Carter’s early novel Several Perceptions (1968) presents a bohemian fancy-dress party as a heady opportunity for self-transformation and renewal, but, in stories such as “The Tiger’s Bride” (1979), masks represent the social constructs inhibiting the equal sexual relations of men and women. This ambiguity was taken up enthusiastically by film in the twentieth century. In Rupert Julian’s 1925 silent adaptation of Gaston Leroux’s The Phantom of the Opera, the mask worn by the Phantom both enables and inhibits his engagement with the world. On the one hand it provides romantic mystery and an alternative (and appropriately theatrical) identity; on the other it repels onlookers with his spectral, unearthly appearance and emphasizes, through concealment, the horror of his facial deformity. Similarly, in Georges Franju’s Les Yeux Sans Visage (1960), the disfigured heroine wears an eerie, immobile mask as she awaits a face transplant from a murder victim, the uncanny doll-like qualities of her face symbolizing her objectification by her scientist father while enabling an expressivity of gesture and movement that transcends it.
The Gothic propensity for masks, veils, and disguises has found its apotheosis in the Goth subculture of the late 1970s to the present day, in which spectacular style forms a significant feature of subcultural identification (see goth). Although masks and veils only occasionally form a literal component of Goth style, the emphasis on outward display can be regarded as a continuation of Sedgwick’s emphasis on the importance of the surface in Gothic texts. This has in turn influenced mainstream fashion designers, with John Galliano, Alexander McQueen, Rick Owens, and Riccardo Tisci for Givenchy prominently adopting a Gothic aesthetic in many of their collections. In 2008 and 2009, New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology hosted an exhibition entitled Gothic: Dark Glamour, curated by fashion historian Valerie Steele, that demonstrated the extent to which contemporary fashion draws on Gothic for inspiration. Many of the mannequins wore veils across their eyes, while the set for the show emphasized concealment and revealment through artful use of reflective glass, scrims, and gauzes. In the ensembles on display, sheer fabrics, lace, and chiffon recalled the veils of Gothic fiction, while a John Galliano dress inspired by the Mexican Day of the Dead sported a grinning mask in the shape of a lipsticked skull. From masks, veils, and disguises as Gothic effects in fiction to garments Gothicized by their association with masks, veils, and disguises, the process has turned full circle.

SEE ALSO: Carter, Angela; du Maurier, Daphne; Goth; Lewis, Matthew; Poe, Edgar Allan; Radcliffe, Ann; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Sublime, The; Supernatural, The.

REFERENCES


Matthew, The; Supernatural, The.

FURTHER READING


Matheson, Richard

STEPHEN CARVER

Richard Burton Matheson (1926–) is a prolific American novelist and short-story and script writer responsible for some of the most iconic horror and science fiction produced after World War II. Matheson favors Gothic narratology, often in a contemporary setting with a notional science-fiction frame. To liken his influence on the postwar Gothic, across media, to Poe’s on the nineteenth-century form would not be an understatement, and many modern masters of horror, most notably Stephen King and
George A. Romero, cite Matheson as both influence and inspiration. King has argued that Matheson represents “the birth of a new breed of American fantasists” and “the break from the Lovecraftian fantasy that had held sway over serious American writers of horror for two decades or more” (King 1981: 348–9). When Tim Burton discusses the influence of Poe in his early work, he is, in fact, referring to Matheson’s screenplay adaptations for American International Pictures (Salisbury 1995: 16–17).

Matheson’s major genre works include the apocalyptic Gothic novel *I Am Legend* (1954), *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (novel and screenplay, 1956–7), and the screenplays of the best of Roger Corman’s “Poe Cycle”: *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1960), *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961), *Tales of Terror* (1962), and *The Raven* (1963). Matheson also wrote *The Comedy of Terrors* for Corman in 1963, and adapted Dennis Wheatley’s *The Devil Rides Out* for Hammer in 1968. Other significant Matheson screenplays are *Duel* (1971), directed by Steven Spielberg; *The Legend of Hell House* (1973, from his novel); Dan Curtis’ *Dracula* (1972); the “Prey” segment of *Trilogy of Terror* (1975, also directed by Curtis); and *Jaws 3-D* (1983), an under-rated monster movie in the 1950s tradition. The brooding blue-collar ghost story *Stir of Echoes* (1999) is based on Matheson’s novel, while *I Am Legend* has been filmed as *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), with a screenplay written by Matheson under the pseudonym “Logan Swanson”; *The Omega Man* (1971); *I Am Omega* (2007); and *I Am Legend* (2007). Romero has also acknowledged that *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) was inspired by Matheson’s novel (Gagne 1987: 24).

Matheson’s notable television work began with sixteen episodes of *The Twilight Zone* (1959–64), including “Nightmare at 20,000 Feet,” “The Invaders,” “Steel” (filmed in 2011 as *Real Steel*), and “Little Girl Lost,” which formed the unofficial basis of Tobe Hooper’s *Poltergeist* (1982). Matheson also wrote the iconic *Star Trek* episode “The Enemy Within” (1966), in which Captain Kirk is doubled, as well as the two feature-length pilots that introduced *Kolchak: The Nightstalker* (1972–3), for which he won an Edgar Allan Poe Award.

Matheson was born in New Jersey and raised in Brooklyn, the son of Norwegian immigrants. He served in the infantry in World War II and gained a degree in journalism from the University of Missouri in 1949. His first published story, “Born of Man and Woman,” appeared in 1950 in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, a digest at the fag-end of pulp fiction (he also wrote for *Weird Tales*). This story is a first-person account of a child locked in a cellar. The denouement is unsettling and ambivalent – the protagonist may or may not be some kind of mutant, possibly resembling a spider (the references to extra limbs and running on the walls suggest this), and there are intertextual nods toward *Frankenstein* and Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*. As Philip Strick notes, this story established Matheson as “an articulate champion of the isolated loner in a hostile universe” (1996: 213).

This recurrent theme is taken to its extreme in *I Am Legend* as a lone survivor battles hordes of zombie-like “vampires” after a biological war – alongside John Wyndham’s *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), this is the blueprint for all subsequent postapocalyptic narratives, especially the “zombie” subgenre. *I Am Legend* concludes with a Gothic inversion that Hollywood has chosen to avoid (Matheson’s version was made in Italy), casting the protagonist instead as a messianic military scientist. The original Neville, “the last of the old race,” is a cynic who spends his days obsessively killing vampire-zombies and his nights drinking in his boarded-up suburban home, trying not to think about the dead women outside (Matheson 1954: 157). John Brosnan and John Clute have argued that “the dominant theme in Richard Matheson’s work has always been paranoia, whether imagined in gothic or science fiction terms,” reading “obsessive images of persecution” in *I Am Legend* (1979: 388). In this sense, the best cinematic interpretation of the novel belongs to Romero and his impersonators.

Matheson remains active, and the recent Hollywood revival of “Steel” is indicative of his...
continuing influence on the global discourse of the fantastic. He received the Bram Stoker Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1990, and was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 2010.

SEE ALSO: Film; Hammer House; Poe, Edgar Allan.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Maturin, Charles Robert

DALE TOWNSHEND

Though by no means exclusively a Gothic writer, the reputation of Charles Robert Maturin (1782–1824) today rests largely upon Bertram, or, The Castle of St. Aldobrand (1816) and Melmoth the Wanderer (1820), the two Gothic masterpieces he produced in the mid-to-later years of his literary career. Maturin was born in Dublin on September 25, 1780. During the late seventeenth century, Maturin's Huguenot ancestors had fled France for Ireland under the threat of religious persecution, when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Fontainebleau the earlier Edict of Nantes, the 1598 Bill of Henry IV that had granted considerable rights and freedoms to Protestants (see Protestantism) within an otherwise predominantly Catholic country (see Roman Catholicism). Despite the Catholicism of their adoptive Ireland, the Maturin family, once repatriated, maintained its ardent Protestant affiliations: a relative of Maturin had been Dean of Killala, and Maturin's grandfather, Gabriel James Maturin, had succeeded Jonathan Swift at the Deanery of St. Patrick's Cathedral. The fifteen-year-old Charles entered Trinity College, Dublin in 1795, matriculating from that institution with a Bachelor of Arts in 1800. In 1803, Maturin was ordained into the Church of Ireland, a province of the Anglican community, and in October of the same year he married the accomplished singer Henrietta Kingsbury, also of a Protestant clerical background; together, the couple would bear and raise four children. Although shortly after his admission to the Church Maturin was appointed to the position of curate in the rural parish of Loughrea, County Galway, he spent very little time there, choosing instead to divide his time between Dublin and Cloghan Castle in Western Ireland. In 1805, Maturin became curate at St. Peter's Parish, Dublin, a post that he would retain until his death on October 30, 1824.

At odds with the excesses of the Gothic though they might seem, Maturin's professional undertakings as a Protestant clergyman would become increasingly influential in the development of his authorial persona over the next two decades of his life, and not only in terms of the voracious anti-Catholicism of his later works: forced to eke out an existence
on the meager income of a curate, Maturin turned to writing, together with the running of a school, as a means of supplementing his income. When, in 1809, Maturin’s father lost his position in the Irish General Post Office on a false charge of official misconduct, the financial imperatives driving Maturin’s literary endeavors became all the more urgent. However, his first three-volume novel, *Fatal Revenge, Or, The family of Montorio. A Romance* (1807) was published under the pseudonym Dennis Jasper Murphy in London in 1807 at his own expense. If nothing else, Maturin’s early choice to conceal his identity points to a perceived conflict between the writer’s authorial and clerical pursuits, and, indeed, a consideration of the taboo subject matter of *Fatal Revenge* makes much sense of his caution: the labyrinthine narrative shuttles between fratricide and parricide – two outrageous, politically charged acts of Gothic assassination. In the novel, an embittered brother Orazio Montorio assumes the identity of a monk, Schemoli, a figure of double-dealing villainy who owes much of his name and his character to Father Schedoni in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian* (1797) (see *radcliffe, ann*). Bent upon the fratricidal assassination of his own brother, Orazio/ Schemoli manipulates his nephews, Annibal and Ippolito, into a parricidal complicity with his scheme, albeit to predictably disastrous effects.

Sir Walter Scott favorably reviewed *Fatal Revenge* in the *Quarterly Review* in May 1810: though expressing his distaste for the tired, somewhat overworked Gothic mode in which the novel was written, Scott records having been impressed “with no common degree of respect for the powers of the author” (Norton 2000: 319). Having articulated in this review his famous critique of the Radcliffean technique of the explained supernatural (see *supernatural, the*) – a tiresome and frequently imitated narrative turn, the presence of which he identifies in *Fatal Revenge* – Scott concludes his piece with an unequivocally positive appraisal of “Mr Murphy’s” literary powers:

> He possesses a strong and vigorous fancy, with great command of language. He has indeed regulated his incidents upon those of others, and therefore added to the imperfections which we have pointed out, the want of originality. But his feeling and conception of character are his own, and from these we judge of his powers. (Norton 2000: 323)

Maturin published his next novel, *The Wild Irish Boy*, under his own name in 1808. This act of self-disclosure might well have been facilitated by the fact that *The Wild Irish Boy* constitutes a distinct turning away from the established conventions of Gothic writing. Instead, the novel is a sentimental tale of Irish nationality, partly inspired, as its title implies, by the success of *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) by Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan). Maturin would pursue similar matters of Irish national interest (see *irish gothic*) in *The Milesian Chief*, his next novel, published in four volumes in London in 1812, and the first work from which he would earn money, having sold the copyright to the text for £80. Like the novels of María Edgeworth, *The Milesian Chief* explores in fictional form the issues of Irish national identity thrown into relief by the Act of Union of 1801; here, Maturin seems preoccupied with documenting the traces of ancient Milesian culture (Ireland’s legendary race of traditional rulers) that have persisted in Irish life almost unchanged. Like Owenson and other Irish antiquarians of the period, Maturin in *The Milesian Chief* is intent upon foregrounding the obdurate remains of ancient Hibernian culture otherwise overlooked and occluded by pro-Unionist politics. While it may occasionally employ aspects of the mode, *The Milesian Chief*, like Maturin’s earlier Irish novel, is not primarily a Gothic fiction. Indeed, his dedication to *The Milesian Chief* makes much of a deliberate turning away from Gothic conventions in favor of an application of the novelist’s imaginative powers to scenes of a more quotidian nature:

> If I possess any talent, it is that of darkening the gloomy, and of deepening the sad; of painting
life in extremes, and representing those struggles of passion when the soul trembles on the verge of the unlawful and the unhallowed. On the following pages I have tried to apply these powers to the scenes of actual life. (Clery & Miles 2000: 273)

Embodying, perhaps, the conflict between his clerical and authorial professions, Maturin’s oeuvre attests to a continuous struggle between fact and fancy: between a responsible recording of history, on the one hand, and the imaginative excesses of Gothic romance, on the other. In 1812, once the identities of both the writer and the reviewer of Fatal Revenge had become known, each to the other, Maturin began his correspondence with Sir Walter Scott. Maturin’s friendship with Scott would prove to be invaluable to his later success as a writer, for Scott remained a reliable source of professional and financial support, not only recommending Maturin’s plays to London producers but also arranging the publication of his last three novels by Constable and Company, Scott’s own Edinburgh-based publishers. While Maturin had certainly distinguished himself as a novelist by 1812, it was really only through his drama Bertram, or, The Castle of St. Aldobrand, written as early as 1813 but only produced and published in London in 1816, that he achieved widescale popular and financial success. Maturin sent the manuscript of the play to Scott, but, when Scott suggested to John Kemble that he produce the play, Kemble refused; in 1815, Lord Byron asked Scott, on behalf of Drury Lane Theatre, to write a play, but Scott again used this opportunity to promote Maturin, referring Byron instead to Bertram (see Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron). Byron’s enthusiastic responses to the play culminated in his sending to Maturin a fifty-guinea loan well before Drury Lane had agreed to produce it; Edmund Kean agreed to play the title role, and in time Bertram would be the part for which Kean would become the most famous (Kramer 1973: 59). Charles Nodier and Isidore Justin Séverin translated the play into French in 1821.

Though lacking in a “real” ghost, Bertram is a Gothic tragedy-cum-melodrama par excellence, replete with banditti, storms, monasteries, sexual indiscretions, and the brooding presence of a malcontented villain. Though Maturin’s most staggering success to date – the production in its first run enjoyed over twenty performances, and on the basis of its considerable financial rewards Maturin was able to pay off much of the familial debt for which he was liable – Bertram did provoke the chagrin of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: during 1816, Coleridge offered in several issues of the Courier an extensive critique of the play as an example of the depraved national taste for “German” drama, later publishing the series as chapter twenty-three of Biographia Literaria (1817). Opposed to a seemingly imported German theatrical tradition as they might have been, Coleridge’s responses to Bertram are most notable for their embarrassed concession to the Gothic’s ultimately English origins. However, as literary history has it, Coleridge’s vitriol was, in all likelihood, fuelled by anger and indignation at having his own play, Zapolya (1817), passed over by Drury Lane in favor of Bertram. Maturin was deeply angered by Coleridge’s attack, but, convinced by Scott that a reply on his behalf would only further fuel the debacle, the author remained silent. Besides, Bertram had been, for Maturin, both a literary and financial success, and, buoyed up by this, Maturin briefly enjoyed an extravagant lifestyle, cutting an eccentric, somewhat flamboyant figure about Dublin, often to the neglect of his clerical duties.

Maturin turned to Moorish Spain for the setting of his next Gothic drama, Manuel, which premiered in 1817. Written at the request of Edmund Kean, Manuel remains Maturin’s only commissioned work. However, the play could not match the success of Bertram. Indeed, the financial failure of Manuel was followed by the theatrical disaster that was Fredolfo,
Maturin’s next drama, which was produced at Covent Garden in 1819: the play, an account of the fourteenth-century Swiss struggle for independence from Austria, was laughed and shouted off stage. Maturin’s other, lesser-known dramatic productions include the unpublished Osmyn, the Renegade; or, The Siege of Salerno, produced in Dublin as late as 1830, and “The Sybil’s Prophecy: A Dramatic Fragment,” published posthumously and probably extracted by Maturin’s wife from the writer’s unpublished papers. In his 1818 novel Women; Or, Pour et contre, Maturin enlisted aspects of the Gothic in a spirited attack upon Calvinism.

Melmoth the Wanderer, the text for which Maturin remains most well known today, was published simultaneously by Archibald Constable and Company (Edinburgh) and Hurst, Robinson and Company (London) in four volumes in 1820. With this fiction, Maturin returned to the Gothic mode he had employed in his first novel, The Fatal Revenge, and that, as Scott’s review of the novel had pointed out, was already an outdated, overworked mode in 1807. Seeking to revivify the Gothic while responding to such contemporary fictions as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818), Maturin in Melmoth the Wanderer employs the decidedly Shelleyan narrative structure of the frame narrative in order to recount the tale of the eponymous Melmoth, a damned supernatural entity bent upon exchanging his position with humans figured in a range of extreme and compromising circumstances. Part satanic tempter, part Promethean over-reacher, and part Wandering Jew, Melmoth is the only constant element in what critics frequently describe as a “Chinese box” of narratives – a tangle of seemingly unrelated tales and stories-within-stories with settings as diverse as nineteenth-century Ireland, an imaginary Indian island, and seventeenth-century Spain. Though not without commentary on such other world religions as Islam and Judaism, Gothic convention in Melmoth the Wanderer is put to decidedly anti-Catholic use, and to these ends graphically figures scenes of clerical violence, torture, and immolation. As David Eggenschwiler (1975) has argued, Melmoth constitutes a concerted case of “Gothic on Gothic,” a self-conscious, even defiant deployment of Gothic convention in the face of the knowledge that the form has quite worn itself out. Consequently, the text is often hailed by literary historians as an instance of “belated Gothic,” and often seen as the point that punctuates, with a period, the first wave of Gothic writing that began with Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto in 1764 (see Walpole, Horace).

The novel’s belatedness did not go unnoticed by its earliest reviewers. As the review published in Monthly Review in January 1821 put it,

The taste for horrors, or for tales abounding in supernatural events and characters, compacts with the devil, and mysterious prolongations of human life, has for some years past been on the decline in England. The necromancers of the Rhine, the Italian assassins of Mrs. Radcliffe, the St. Leons of Mr Godwin, &c. &c., had indeed begun to disappear, overwhelmed by their own extravagance, previously to any positive symptoms of a returning relish for sense and nature. (82)

However, in reviving a literary mode that was long presumed dead, the writer himself, the review continues, “might even be said to have re-called, for one apparent instant, the spirit of the dead” (82). Stylistically necromantic though it may have been, the sheer length of the critical reviews of Melmoth the Wanderer attest somewhat to the impact that the novel had: those published in, inter alia, Blackwood’s Magazine (November 1820), Eclectic Review (December 1820), Monthly Review (January 1821), Quarterly Review (January 1821), London Magazine (May 1821), and Edinburgh Magazine (June 1821) all ran, somewhat uncharacteristically, to several pages. A recurring note sounded in many contemporary responses was that Maturin’s risqué subject matter was inappropriate to the formal office of a clergyman, an uncomfortable straddling of professional activities underlined by the
claim made in the novel’s preface that it was inspired by a portion of Biblical text taken from one of Maturin’s own sermons: as the reviewer in the *Monthly Magazine* in December 1820 opined, “there are some passages which do not appear suitable to the pen of a clergyman, even though he be turned romance writer” (455). Accordingly, some reviews, including that just mentioned, were unequivocally damning. And yet, despite themselves, most of the novel’s critics, having articulated their reservations both with the novel and the worn-out Gothic mode in which it was written, were somewhat uncomfortably led to register their appreciation: having criticized Maturin for contenting himself in *Melmoth* “with copying the worst faults of his predecessors and contemporaries, in the commonest works of fictitious writing” (161), the reviewer in *Blackwood’s Magazine* claimed that “Maturin is gifted with a genius as fervently powerful as it is distinctly original” and that “there is ever and anon a truth of true poetry diffused over the thickest chaos of his absurdities” (161). “In horror,” the review continued, “there is no living author, out of Germany, that can be at all compared with Mr Maturin” (162), and for all his formal faults and extravagances, Maturin is a writer who remains, “without question, one of the most genuine masters of the dark romance” (168), not least in his ability to combine the trembling sensations of Ann Radcliffe with the penetrating intellectual insights of William Godwin (see Godwin, William). Similar sentiments were expressed in *The Literary Gazette* (November 1820), in which the critical denouncement of the text as “a fable destitute of instruction, unnatural, and absolutely stinking of the infernal sulphur throughout” (737) was rapidly followed up with the admission that “yet we must say that *Melmoth* possesses a sort of wild interest which display [sic] great though perverted talent in the writer” (738).

Maturin provoked in his original readers emotional responses not wholly unlike the nauseous enjoyment elicited by extreme forms of horror fiction and film today. His final work of fiction, *The Albigenses, A Romance* (1824), was a historical novel patently informed by Maturin’s ongoing friendship with Walter Scott; transparently under the influence of *Ivanhoe* (1820), the novel was intended by Maturin to be the first book in a trilogy of romances detailing the ancient practices of feudalism and chivalry. An anthology of Maturin’s sermons was published in 1819, and a second edition of this collection in 1821; Maturin’s last clerical work was *Five Sermons on the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church*, published in Dublin in 1824. By the early 1820s, Maturin’s health was in rapid decline, and in 1824 the writer died at his home in Dublin, purportedly of an overdose of the laudanum-based medicine with which he had been treating an ailment of the stomach. A short Gothic tale by Maturin, “Leixlip Castle,” was published posthumously in *The Literary Souvenir, or Cabinet of Poetry and Romance* in 1825.

SEE ALSO: Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Drama; Godwin, William; Irish Gothic; Protestantism; Radcliffe, Ann; Roman Catholicism; Supernatural, The; Walpole, Horace.

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**FURTHER READING**


**McCabe, Patrick**

**ELLEN MCWILLIAMS**

The work of Patrick McCabe (1955–) demonstrates a Gothic sensibility that is fundamental to his engagement with twentieth-century Irish history and politics. McCabe’s work is sometimes categorized as “Bog Gothic” because of the macabre and gruesome content of his novels and his preferred setting of small town, rural Ireland (see Irish Gothic). Most of
McCabe’s narrators are maniacal outsiders cut off and excluded from mainstream society. The overriding narrative voice of McCabe’s fiction is that of the madman whose stories of life in Ireland, north and south of the border, take the form of Gothic fairy tales.

The apparent derangement of his narrators is often reflected in the structure and tone of McCabe’s narratives. In *The Dead School* (1995) the unusually short chapters of the novel reflect the unfolding chaos in the lives of the main characters, while a deliberate dearth of punctuation in *The Butcher Boy* (1992) calls attention to the sing-song hysteria of the narrator, Francie Brady. History is, for McCabe’s characters, to borrow Joyce’s phrase, a nightmare from which they are trying to awake; the horror in his novels is linked back to the political violence that permeates Ireland’s past and so advances a particular, and grisly, narrative about the genesis of modern Ireland. The grotesque and often macabre fate of his characters mirrors larger traumas endured in Irish society, and offers a means of commenting on and critiquing Irish political history and the ideologies of post-Independence Ireland in particular.

*The Butcher Boy* and *The Dead School* are especially striking examples of McCabe’s engagement with the Gothic, as the main characters are reduced to a homicidal or suicidal frenzy by trails of events linked to the larger processes of Irish history. In *The Butcher Boy*, Francie Brady recounts a story of cruelty and neglect at the hands of a church-run institution that eventually leads him to murder; Francie’s maniacal and tragic-comic stream of consciousness is interrupted by carefully placed glimpses of Francie the impoverished and abused child and victim of the industrial school system in Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s. McCabe marries historically sensitive social realism with fantastical intertexts, as popular culture, and American cinema in particular – along with his various hallucinatory visions – offer Francie a medium through which he can channel his distress. *The Dead School* charts a similar descent into madness and takes up this investigation and criticism of the pieties of conservative, Catholic post-Independence Ireland in its treatment of national school teacher Raphael Bell and his nemesis Malachy Dudgeon; the characters become trapped in a deadly master–slave dialectic, each seeing the other as the cause of his downfall. In this novel, tradition and contemporary culture collide with diabolical consequences as the characters become embroiled in a battle of wills to the death. Raphael Bell, who embodies the convictions and promises of Eamon De Valera’s conservative insularism, reflected in his privileging of the family as the most important unit of the new nation, starts out with the firm conviction that “what the national schools are the nation will be;” but in the final chapters he establishes the “Dead School” of the title of the novel; his new school is a macabre Beckettian refraction of all that he had hoped to achieve (the dynamic between the characters invites a reading of the novel as a reworking of Beckett’s *Endgame*), as Raphael’s long-cherished ideals turn into psychopathic hallucinations.

The hauntings of history take on a new form in McCabe’s more recent novels *Emerald Germs of Ireland* (2001), *Winterwood* (2006), and *The Holy City* (2009). In *Emerald Germs of Ireland*, Pat McNab murders his mother (a grim version of the figure of Mother Ireland prized by earlier Irish literary traditions) only to find that she is reborn in the form of the different all-powerful matriarchs who line up to take her place; he destroys each resurrected version of his mother in a killing spree that is interrupted only by surreal adventures reminiscent of the Nighttown episode of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. The dark comedy of *Germs of Emerald Ireland* is followed by a more sinister haunting in *Winterwood*. Journalist Redmond Hatch, the narrator of *Winterwood*, which spans from the 1980s to the 2000s, is sent on a mission to record the changing face of Ireland and meets Ned Strange, curator of folklore and traditional music, who is later convicted of the abuse and murder of a young boy. After Strange’s suicide, Redmond Hatch is haunted
and then possessed by his spirit. The ghoulish Ned Strange holds him in thrall and ultimately drives him to destruction as the characters are bound together in a Gothic doppelganger that is a familiar feature of McCabe’s work.

McCabe’s most recent work, *The Holy City*, presents another maniacal narrator, Chris McCool, whose story stretches back to Ireland in the 1960s, the decade through which he filters all of his life’s experience, and sees the past encroach upon and infect the present in ways resonant with the rest of McCabe’s oeuvre. It emerges that McCool has spent much of his life in an asylum and the betrayals and infidelities that lead to obsession in a number of McCabe’s earlier novels are revisited as a cause of personal crisis and psychosis. The Gothic is central to McCabe’s investigation of the sometimes shocking social realities that existed alongside political ideals in Irish society in the twentieth century. The Gothic elements of his fiction are the means by which he interrogates the inequalities and injustices perpetrated in post-Independence Ireland in ways that are resonant with larger revisionist trends in the contemporary Irish novel.

SEE ALSO: Horror Fiction; Irish Gothic; Roman Catholicism.

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FURTHER READING

**McCarthy, Cormac**

NICHOLAS MONK

Cormac McCarthy (1933–) is one of the most important representatives of the Southern Gothic tradition in recent literature; this tradition informs not only the work he chooses to set in the South but also his Western novels (see *southern gothic*). Born in Rhode Island on July 20, 1933, McCarthy’s family moved to Knoxville, Tennessee in 1937. McCarthy attended the University of Tennessee initially in 1951–2 and returned in 1957, staying until 1959. During this period he published two short stories, “A Drowning Incident” and “A Wake for Susan,” in the student literary magazine *Phoenix*. Both stories hinted at the themes of death and loss that would dominate his future work. McCarthy is responsible for ten published novels, two published plays (*The Stonemason*, 1995; *The Sunset Limited*, 2005), a screenplay (*The Gardener’s Son*, 1976), and a number of unpublished works that now reside in the Wittliff Collection at Texas State University, San Marcos. McCarthy’s novels divide neatly into the “Southern” and the “Western,” with the *Orchard Keeper* (1965), *Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1973), and *Suttree* (1979) falling into the first category and *Blood Meridian* (1985), *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994), and *Cities of the Plain* (1998) occupying the second. His two most recent novels, both of which have been filmed, also fall loosely into the categories of Western (*No Country for Old Men*, 2005) and Southern (*The Road*, 2006).

*Suttree* marked the end of McCarthy’s initial focus on the American South and, with the possible exception of *Blood Meridian*, is considered by most critics to be his finest work. The novel’s protagonist, Cornelius Suttree, is the heir to a fortune, yet is disillusioned and dissolute, living in a community of the transient in filthy conditions in a Gothic Knoxville under which strange bat-infested tunnels burrow, and through which bizarre detritus floats upon a Stygian river. *Suttree* parades its
grotesques freely and regularly: those who fornicate with watermelons, Fundamentalist goatherders, ragpickers, a motley collection of brawlers, assorted prostitutes, and a biting, legless beggar. Richly bizarre and deeply philosophical, the novel brings the tradition of Faulkner into the late twentieth century (see Faulkner, William). Similarly redolent of the strange grimness of a South ravaged by poverty and beset by moral paradox is the almost biblically punishing *Outer Dark*, set in the Appalachians, in which a teenage girl is impregnated by her brother and the resulting baby is stolen, ending its handful of days blinded and burned, its blood drunk by the mute member of a hellish trio of depraved wanderers. Similarly chilling is Lester Ballard, the cross-dressing serial killer of *Child of God*. Ballard’s victims lie dead on slabs in rows in a cave beneath the farmland of Appalachia, to be discovered long after his imprisonment, grey, befouled, fungal, and dripping slime. In the hands of a lesser author, such material might decline into caricature, but, partly because of the grandeur and sophistication of McCarthy’s prose, the content remains profound and convincing. As Dana Phillips reminds us, “[McCarthy’s] prose [is] remarkable for its syntactic complexity, its recondite vocabulary, its recording of minute detail, and its violent intensity, as well as for an uncanny, almost scriptural stateliness” (2002: 18). McCarthy revisits the South in *The Road*, a postapocalyptic novel in which a young boy and his father wander a ruined landscape littered with the remains of the dead and prey to cannibals and ragged armies in makeshift armor wielding clubs and knives and towing zombie-like catamites in their wake.

The Western novels are equally unafraid of contemplating extreme violence, brutality, and terror. In the person of *Blood Meridian*’s Judge Holden exists McCarthy’s most grotesque human monster: Holden is amoral and insatiable; he is a scalper, a serial murderer, and a baby-killer, yet what terrifies the reader most is his rationality. Holden’s violence is instrumental; necessary, even. McCarthy suggests that man, represented by Holden, has been liberated by the Enlightenment from the spiritual and physical constraints of previous arrangements, and is now free to seize control of the world and its inhabitants and to experiment in the name of knowing and the rational, no matter what the cost in blood and pain. This is the horror that lurks beneath the veneer of civilization: even at the uttermost limits of human endurance, as he pursues his human prey through yet another tortured and torturing landscape, Holden fashions a bizarrely elegant parasol from the skins and bones of dead animals with which to protect himself from the sun. His once-caged idiot bounds alongside him like a pet dog in a grotesque parody of a boulevardier indulging in a morning constitutional. McCarthy returns to the notion of the monster in human form in *No Country for Old Men*’s Anton Chigurh. Like Judge Holden, Chigurh demonstrates a species of rationality in his murderous actions, but his violence remains both ruthless and arbitrary and, like Holden, he possesses an almost superhuman ability to escape certain death to kill again. Blood soaks this novel, and Chigurh’s weapon of choice – the air-powered slaughterhouse bolt gun – is its emblem. The remainder of the Western novels contain no characters as overtly monstrous as Holden or Chigurh, but Gothic motifs abound. As Rick Wallach notes in his introduction to Holloway’s *The Late Modernism of Cormac McCarthy*, “McCarthy’s works are littered with the detritus of numerous failed potentials: trashed and abandoned bodies, vehicles, mansions, careers, and [...] most of all churches” (Wallach 2002: xii–xiii). On a number of occasions, McCarthy situates his philosophical digressions in these heavily atmospheric and decayed structures as they become the venue for his exploration of the relationship between the romantic and the spiritual. For many of McCarthy’s characters this dialogue suggests a sublime and mystic union with the geological immensity of the earth and the imperishable souls of its creatures, but just as frequently it manifests in a quasi-supernatural obsession with blood, horror, terror, and what critics have
labeled “sacred violence” (Hall and Wallach 2002: vii).

SEE ALSO: Faulkner, William; Southern Gothic.

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NOTE

1 At present, the only way to gain access to these stories is to contact Phoenix directly.

McGrath, Patrick

SUE ZLOSNIK

Although Patrick McGrath (1950–) was brought up in England, he has spent much of his adult life in North America. He is the author of seven novels and two volumes of short stories. His work initially derived from an impetus to revivify the Gothic by writing in dialogue with its conventions and so make new its enduring concern with transgression and decay, which he sees as key elements in the tradition. The most powerful early influence on McGrath’s work was Edgar Allan Poe (see POE, EDGAR ALLAN) but he also acknowledges the part played by his own background in his choice of subject matter. His father was for many years medical superintendent at Broadmoor, Britain’s foremost secure psychiatric hospital; as a child McGrath was familiar with tales of transgressive and bizarre behavior. In 1991, he edited with Bradford Morrow a collection of stories by contemporary writers entitled The New Gothic, which, as the editors claimed in their introduction, could be regarded as “strongly manifesting the Gothic sensibility” although they were “no longer shackled by the conventional props of the genre” (1991: xiv). The evolution of McGrath’s own writing shows a development from a postmodern and playful engagement with Gothic “props” into an exploration of the darker recesses of the human mind and the effects of trauma on personal and public histories.

McGrath sees his early work as a pastiche of the Gothic, an exaggeration of conventions that had already been exaggerated by two centuries of development. Out of the pastiche of the stories in the 1988 collection Blood and Water emerge the thematic concerns and formal features of his later writing. The transgression of boundaries characteristic of all Gothic fiction manifests itself either horrifically or comically (see COMIC GOTHIC) (and sometimes both) in all the stories. In them, the England of the recent past is a Gothic place and urban Gothic finds a natural home in New
York. Various antecedents are tacitly acknowledged in these tales. Poe haunts the decaying mansions and claustrophobic spaces, and the colonial Gothic of writers such as Somerset Maugham and Rider Haggard is parodied in tales of British culture's encounters with the exotic. Some of the more eccentric features of earlier Gothic fiction and film appear: sinister and enigmatic monkeys and hands with a wayward life of their own, for example. Perverse bodies of unstable identity are central to some of the tales; vampirism appears in unexpected forms and the Gothic's vexed relationship with religion is evoked. Doctors, recurrent figures in McGrath's later fiction, appear in several guises, none of them sympathetic. All display an impoverishing rationality in the face of the uncanny (see uncanny, the) and, at their worst, a grotesquerie that makes them Gothic figures themselves. Anxieties about creativity find shape in tales about a writer and an artist. These early stories show experimentation with different kinds of narration but a number of them use the device of the unreliable, psychologically dysfunctional narrator characteristic of McGrath's later fiction.

Like the short stories, McGrath's first novel, *The Grotesque* (1989), displays many of the characteristics of postmodern writing with pastiche and unreliable narration in the foreground. Set in a caricatured England at the end of the 1940s, this is a tale about a gentleman and his butler told by the gentleman himself, who, following a “cerebral event,” is deemed by his doctors to be “ontologically dead.” Blackly humorous, it represents the breakdown of boundaries that characterizes the grotesque, most significantly that between animal and human. The decay of the gentry in this tale is played out through varieties of transgression, including the violation of social convention, sexual mores, the law of the land, and taboo (see taboo). Fictional genre itself is challenged as the novel situates itself in a variety of traditions and plays one off against the other: as well as being a self-consciously Gothic novel, it is also a country house novel, a “whodunit” and an eccentric novel of manners.

McGrath's next three novels represent different forms of madness; Poe's legacy is again evident in their world of tortured psyches, in which the boundary between madness and sanity becomes unstable. Abandoning the playful pastiche of the early stories, these novels are darkly haunted by the Gothic in their exploration of taboo and transgression. All are set in a murky and eccentric mid-twentieth-century England. Formally complex, their unreliable first-person narratives are full of false clues and semantic echoes. In *Spider* (1990), the East End of the 1950s is represented as Gothically labyrinthine and threatening. The novel's complex narrative tells the story of a schizophrenic who, discharged into the community after a long incarceration in a secure hospital, revisits his past and finds the mental structures that have enabled him to function collapsing, with tragic results. As his psyche disintegrates, the reader glimpses a history of trauma. In *Dr. Haggard’s Disease* (1993), the boundary between passion and madness becomes indistinct as its doctor narrator descends into obsessive delusion and projects his obsession with his dead lover onto the body of her son. Set in the late 1930s and early 1940s, it is more overt than *Spider* in its evocation of a violent public history, a besieged Britain providing the context for Edward Haggard’s anguished personal history as the frames of his narrative are fully revealed in a shocking conclusion. The third of these novels, *Asylum* (1996), is set in an oppressively drawn England of the late 1950s. Its psychiatrist narrator is an apparently dispassionate spectator in a story about the catastrophic consequences of an affair between a patient and the wife of one of his colleagues at a secure psychiatric hospital. As the novel goes on, it becomes apparent that his account is not to be trusted as the boundary between fact and speculation becomes blurred. It also becomes apparent that the patient, who is an artist suffering from acute paranoia, is in some ways his own double and that both experience a desire to possess the woman. His desire for possession is ultimately parallel to that of the artist, although in the case of the latter it is manifested in murderous jealousy. Stella
Raphael is the first of McGrath’s significant female figures; her tragic story raises questions about gender because, in spite of her centrality in the novel, its narrative voice means that her consciousness remains inaccessible to the reader.

McGrath’s later novels have American settings. In this period of his fiction, issues of historicity, national and personal identity, and the figure of the artist become central concerns. Martha Peake (2000) takes a final self-reflexive look at earlier period Gothic as a way of enacting the abandonment of a culturally haunted England in favor of the New World, a movement that parallels McGrath’s own departure for North America after university. As the later fiction shows, however, haunting is not confined to the Old World. The narratives of history continue to make themselves felt in the present. The later fiction is concerned more overtly with “history” as well as individual histories. All of the later work is haunted in some way by the Gothic in spite of McGrath’s insistence that he does not want to be regarded as a Gothic novelist. Martha Peake makes this haunting thematic in its treatment of the Old World and the New in the late eighteenth century, a point in history that witnessed not only the American Revolution but also the emergence of Gothic fiction in England. Told through a fallible narrator, Martha’s story involves the Gothicization of the Old World through artful pastiche as a national myth of destiny is made for the New. Gothic discourses, however, leach into McGrath’s narrative of the New World too, suggesting a future that reflects the nation’s birth in violence.

Port Mungo (2004) presents a self-consciously cliché-ridden representation of the mythopoetic modernist artist (see modernism), who is ultimately shown to be reiterating the old myth of Narcissus in his work. The Gothic tropes that haunt this novel provide a different narrative of the artist. Although McGrath is reluctant to identify it as a Gothic novel, horror, madness, monstrosity, death, disease, terror, evil, and weird sexuality – those characteristics of “the New Gothic” – are all present in Port Mungo in full measure, as well as some conventional props of the genre. The artist Jack’s relationships with others are represented through the discourse of the vampire (see vampire fiction); the portrait he paints of his daughter, which is also visibly a self-portrait, draws on a Gothic tradition of portraiture to demonstrate both a doubling and a clue to the secret of incest (see incest). This family secret of incest, a staple of Gothic fiction, is no longer unspeakable for the twenty-first century reader, and it comes as no surprise. The corpse of the egotistical Jack beside the portrait provides a Gothic mise-en-scène that signals his final decentering and, whereas his devoted narrator sister finds it difficult to believe the worst of him, the novel ends with her acknowledgment that it may well be Jack’s estranged wife who was really the one with the artistic talent all along.

By this point in McGrath’s career, female figures had become very important. His next work, Ghost Town (2005), a trilogy of short stories set in New York at different points in its history, creates memorable female characters and the figure of the mother assumes particular importance. The heroic mother figure in the first story, reminiscent of Martha Peake (with the same stature and startling red hair), is accessible only through the narrative of her guilt-ridden son, writing across the decades. The other two stories, however, are told by female narrators. In them, the artist and the doctor figures reappear and are further redefined, this time in relation to American history. This set of linked short stories is, in McGrath’s words “a sort of urban archaeology” (Scotsman 2005), his way of engaging with a violent history that had become all too present in the shadow of the events of 9/11. In these tales of tragic personal histories, Gothic gives shape to the occluded history of violence that made Manhattan. In all three, parental figures are used as a way of representing aspects of the American inheritance. McGrath himself acknowledges that each of the stories involves a ghost but the nature of that ghost changes with the period. The different historical settings of the stories also provide a
cue to adopt the Gothic conventions and preoccupations of the time, thus performing a kind of literary haunting. In the first, “The Year of the Gibbet,” the nameless narrator tells a story of a child’s perspective on some of the events of the Revolutionary War, in which history and Gothic symbolism are entwined. He has been haunted by his mother’s ghost for the last fifty-five years and he realizes that his life has been dominated by a desire for death. The second tale, “Julius,” visits Manhattan in the mid-nineteenth century. The narrative voice is more distanced from the action in this tale, which is told by a female descendant of one of the protagonists. Uncovered in a leisurely manner as the unfolding of a mystery, it is a tale of patriarchal oppression and dynastic self-interest in a period when the commercial class was consolidating its wealth and the city was growing at a rapid pace in “the din and turmoil of construction” (2005: 97). The last tale of this trio, “Ground Zero,” is set in 2001, in the weeks after 9/11. Coming after the two earlier stories, it serves to emphasize the threads of continuity in the violence that has shaped and continues to shape this “violently contested piece of real estate” (Mackenzie 2005). Here, the most recent violence of all is subtly linked with Manhattan’s violent past, a past that is understood in terms of family betrayal.

In spite of the Gothic themes of McGrath’s most recent novel, *Trauma* (2008), in which transgression and decay are present in multiple guises, it represents what seems to be a conscious attempt to move away from the Gothic, to exorcize its ghosts. Whereas in the Gothic deeper, darker secrets (either personal or cultural) are displaced on to the spectral or abject, in this novel the source of its psychiatrist narrator’s problems is eventually revealed. His troubled adult life is shown to stem from a deeply traumatic incident with his mother when he was six. The novel’s imbrication with the legacy of the Vietnam War and the symbolic power of the mother in the earlier works suggest, however, that the Gothic is not entirely exorcized and, like the undead, may well return in McGrath’s future work.

SEE ALSO: Comic Gothic; Incest; Modernism; Poe, Edgar Allan; Taboo; Uncanny, The; Vampire Fiction.

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Medicine and the Gothic
WILLIAM HUGHES

In “Plato’s Pharmacy” (1972), Jacques Derrida makes the perplexing assertion that the Greek word “pharmakon” may signify both “medicine” and “poison.” Derrida’s point is that rhetoric is something akin to ingesting a pharmakon or medical substance. Such subtle interventions into the mental or physical economy of the self, whether they be absorbed in the form of ideas or consumed as a literal antidote or
poison, are apt to divert the reader or the patient away from his or her current course of being or thinking. They may pervert the hitherto healthy processes of body and mind, or else crucially correct some potentially destructive fault in corporeal being or perceptive abstraction. Pharmaka are at once both cure and its opposite.

The discourse of medicine – that authorizing body through which the use of both rhetorical and literal pharmaka is customarily justified – is, likewise, itself a paradoxical institution. As a cultural practice, medicine embodies simultaneously an acknowledgement of human mortality and a dogged resistance to its inevitable course; dependent both philosophically and financially upon the continued presence of illness and disease, medicine is yet committed to their eradication. Again, medical practice itself is implicated simultaneously in both the knowing imposition of pain and its relief, often making temporarily radical (and agonizing) interventions into the integrity of the body in order to alleviate some painful disorder. Concerned, indeed, with the integrity of the body and its good order, medicine customarily attempts to maintain these by way of contaminative supplements – drugs, implants, prostheses – or else is instrumental in the removal of limbs, organs, or mental processes deemed pathological or else redundant. Supposedly an objective science, having as its focus the literal object of the body, medicine is yet imbricated with the prejudices of its surrounding cultures, the variable discourses of racism, sexism, ageism, and speciesism all contributing to its diagnostic and prognostic rhetoric, and influencing its application to all – or some – of the individuals who might be brought within its curative boundaries.

The ambivalence of medicine makes it a quite natural subject for incorporation into Gothic textuality. If the late eighteenth-century manifestation of the genre was concerned with cultural turmoil, displacing the specific horrors of the French Revolution onto the historical autocracy of feudal Europe, the nineteenth century brought a closer engagement, not with the body politic but rather with the singular body that might stand for any human being subjected to pain. That body had always been the subject of attention. The works of Sade, and the detailed horrors inflicted by the Inquisition in Gothic fiction, tend to render the body and its products abject and visceral, before finally discarding them as pathological. The arbiter of pain in such cases, though, is feudal, theological, or proprietorial, yet the power of restraint and the ability to intervene into the body and its processes remains analogous to that wielded by medical professionals later in the genre’s development.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), possibly the first text to Gothicize the figure of the doctor at length. If Victor Frankenstein is the secular-minded product of the liberal educational system of Enlightenment Switzerland, his professional activities recall the arbitrary excesses of feudal barons and scheming priests. His power over the body is absolute. In Shelley’s novel, as is customary in the West, the dead body passes from the ownership of its former self into the nominal hands of the inheriting family. The doctor’s desire, though, overrides any familial wishes for the dead to rest – uselessly – in peace, and his professed profanity when robbing graves is less a violation of spiritual laws as it is a challenge to the conventions of ownership and proprietorial rights. The novel’s title-page epigraph, taken from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, repeats Adam’s lament to his Creator, but it is equally applicable to the doctor as the new secular arbiter of life and death. The novel raises the question of what right one being has to determine the life span or the very continued existence of another, if that other has not been consulted (see SHELLY, MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT).

*Frankenstein*, likewise, tests the very integrity of the familiar concept of the human body. Frankenstein’s first viable creation is explicitly a hybrid of many bodies, sourced from graves and charnel houses. Beyond this, Mary Shelley is tantalizingly silent, and her vagueness facilitates two worrying implications regarding the
whole conception of humanity. The first is one of gender: the creature might well embody both male and female components, and as such it may no longer be logically subject to the cultural restrictions and associations that demarcate the sexes. The second is a matter of species. A passing reference to “the slaughterhouse” (Shelley 2012: 34) raises the tantalizing possibility that this viable human body may be hybridized with some “lower” species – or else that Frankenstein is a proto-vivisectionist, a figure to which the Gothic was to return toward the end of the nineteenth century.

As Timothy Marshall rightly intimates, the enduring cultural reputation of Frankenstein may well draw a portion of its energy from the various pieces of anatomical legislation that regulated possession of, and experimentation into, the mysteries of human flesh, life, and death in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Marshall 1995). The fearful image of the doctor as one who may bring pain as much as relief, and induce premature death rather than prolonging faltering life, recurs throughout Victorian Gothic. In melodramatic Gothic, such things are commonplace, as the work of Wilkie Collins testifies. In The Woman in White (1860), Count Fosco is a polymath whose personal expertise includes pharmacology, and whose plots quietly make use of medicolegal restraint and the nonperson status that may be achieved when an inconvenient individual is placed in a lunatic asylum. In The Moonstone (1868), by contrast, a mischievous physician unknowingly generates the central plot of the work by the inappropriate administration of a narcotic. More deliberate abuse is, however, associated with Collins’ Dr. Nathan Benjulia in Heart and Science (1883), in which a patient is systematically subjected to what may be termed human vivisection in the interests of the physician’s research (see Collins, Wilkie). Benjulia’s deliberate attempts to foster his victim’s disorder anticipate the actions of Bram Stoker’s John Seward with regard to the mental patient Renfield in Dracula (1897). Thankfully, not all physicians are scripted in terms of absolute evil or ruthless inhumanity: Stoker’s Van Helsing is to a certain extent the mentor-savior of Seward’s challenged ethics (see Stoker, Bram).

The asylum, it might be suggested, comes to occupy the privileged place in Victorian Gothic taken by the castle and the Inquisition in earlier fictions in the genre. The hospital has similar implications, though a lesser polemic value. These are institutions whose practices are carried on behind closed doors and often, necessarily, in rooms hermetically sealed to prevent the ingress of both disease and outsiders. The doctor’s rule is seemingly arbitrary within this privileged inner space, and his role still attracts status and respect beyond the walls of his domain. The paradoxical nature of this, with all its implication for hidden lives and illusory public virtue, may of course be exemplified through Robert Louis Stevenson’s medically titled The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) (see Stevenson, Robert Louis).

A reflection of the sexism of Victorian institutional medicine, the presiding physician is invariably male, and his power over his prone female victims in particular may gain a suspiciously erotic imperative. If this is not necessarily the case in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s The Yellow Wallpaper (1892), one might consider the fleeting medical scenario that initiates The Great God Pan (1894) by Arthur Machen. The presiding physician’s disregard for the dignity of human life in general is matched only by his lack of a duty of care toward a female subject who does not fully understand the surgical operation which she is (needlessly) to be subjected to. In this narrative, the sexual implications of what she has endured – she is somehow, when entranced, raped and impregnated by Pan – only become apparent when she regains consciousness, and is pronounced hopelessly insane. The doctor’s actions initiate a metaphoric disease, for her daughter by Pan brings about the downfall of those she encounters, and her own demise is associated with a Darwinian descent that debases her to the most basic level of organic existence (see Machen, Arthur). The motif of vivisection in the Gothic is emphatically not confined to H. G.
Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) (see Wells, H. G. (Herbert George)).

The menacing figure of the unethical physician elides into the more generalized image of the mad scientist in the twentieth century, a development which in many respects brings the genre back to its speculative roots in *Frankenstein*. In the transition, though, may be found the engaging figure of the psychic doctor, a recurrent character trope who bridges the epistemological gap between science and spirituality. As his typological names suggests, he is generally a practitioner of conventional medicine as well as an earnest enquirer into metaphysical realms. His Victorian ancestor is J. S. Le Fanu’s somewhat incompetent Dr. Hesselius in *In a Glass Darkly* (1872), though subsequent figures in the tradition, such as Stoker’s Van Helsing, William Hope Hodgson’s Carnacki, Algernon Blackwood’s John Silence, and Dion Fortune’s Dr. Taverner, were inclined to meet with more success. The figure is relevant, also, to the polymath Duc de Richelieu in Dennis Wheatley’s occult-inflected adventure stories (see Wheatley, Dennis).

The mad scientist – who may well be as much a physician as a physicist – is, of course, a stock figure in science fiction, a genre whose origins are entwined with the Gothic through the central position occupied in both by *Frankenstein*. However, the temporally distant figures associated with speculative writings by authors such as Philip K. Dick and William Gibson, implicated as they are in the creation of hybridized, supplemented, or else fully artificial bodies, are not the sole representatives of medical discourse in the contemporary. Away from the portrayal of the medical professional, the Gothic and science fiction have both been inclined to describe the debilitation of the individual body as well as more general plagues and contagions. Nineteenth-century Gothic, for example, drew frequently upon the contemporary perception of masturbation as an individual vice and a potential threat to wider society (Mason 2008). If a veritable plague of onanists were not a sufficient threat in itself, the implication was widespread that indulgence in self-destructive practices (not merely masturbation but also, for example, absinthe drinking and drug abuse) would spread the contagion to others, thus decimating – or at least compromising – the rest of the population.

In Gothic and science fiction such scenarios of national, racial, or species apocalypse are played out in narratives that depict a relatively familiar world rendered uncanny and depopulated by disease. Though the Count never triumphs in his ambitions, this is one of the implications of Stoker’s *Dracula*, and the recurrent plot can be traced back at least as far as Mary Shelley’s unjustly neglected *The Last Man* (1826). Among the many modern narratives that depict apocalyptic scenarios of this type may be listed *I Am Legend* (1954) by Richard Matheson, *Survivors* (1975–7) by Terry Nation and, from many examples in the cinema, *28 Days Later* (2002) (see Matheson, Richard). More conventional diseases, though, are commonly referenced in contemporary Gothic. AIDS, in particular, is frequently depicted in late-twentieth century and early twenty-first-century works: *Exquisite Corpse* (1996) by Poppy Z. Brite and *Dorian* (2002) by Will Self are but two examples (see Queer Gothic; Brite, Poppy Z.). With contemporary fears of ecological collapse paralleled only by an enduring paranoia associated with medical experimentation and human cloning, medicine looks likely to inform the Gothic for the foreseeable future. *Never Let Me Go* (2005) by Kazuo Ishiguro may well set the tone for future works.

SEE ALSO: Brite, Poppy Z.; Collins, Wilkie; Hodgson, William Hope; Matheson, Richard; Queer Gothic; Science Fiction; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Stoker, Bram; Wells. H. G. (Herbert George); Wheatley, Dennis.

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Mediumship
CIARÁN O'KEEFFE

Mediumship is the alleged ability of certain individuals, called mediums, to communicate with the dead. Traditionally the relaying of messages received during such a communication occurs in a setting where the intended recipient is present, for example, a séance (see spiritualism), a one-to-one private sitting, a spiritualist church or theater (known as a “demonstration of mediumship”), and more recently in ostensibly haunted buildings (see apparition). Today, some mediums can be found giving messages on various television programs and providing readings via phone lines and through the internet.

There are a number of different types of mediumship which can broadly be divided into two categories: physical and mental mediumship. The information relayed by mental mediums can vary temporally (e.g., regarding future versus present or past events) but also in message content (e.g., the location of lost possessions or those with emotional significance, the history of a particular object when presented to the medium) (Irwin 2004: 15). A reading, the term often given to the collective messages given, can contain all manner of pertinent detail or generality for the sitter as a result of conversing directly with the deceased.

Mental mediumship can be further subdivided into two groupings that reflect the medium’s method of communication. Clairvoyant mediums work in a manner that appears the most natural, simply describing the impressions received from the spirit world. Such impressions are received clairvoyantly (seen), clairaudiently (heard), or clairsentiently – which can either take the form of sensed impressions “coming into the head” of the medium or a general sensing of information or emotion. As a result of this form of mediumship the term “sensitive” is often used as an alternative for “medium” (Society for Psychical Research 1965: 4). There are other, less common, forms of clairvoyance such as clairalience or the smelling of odors associated with spirits (e.g., perfume, pipe smoke).

Trance mediums pass into an unconscious state during the communication sitting. With regards to appearance, the trance process looks initially as though the medium is going to sleep, without any obvious physiological changes. Then they begin to speak, but the voice and manner are different from those of the waking state as though there is a complete change in the medium’s personality. This altered personality (known as the “control”)


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verbally relays “messages which purport to come from unseen presences” (Society for Psychical Research 1965: 4).

Physical mediums, in addition to having “mental” abilities, also have the ability to affect physical objects through movement and so forth. Gauld (1982: 4) lists a whole array of physical phenomena that have been reported by sitters in séances, for example, “spirit” raps; levitation of the medium; direct voice phenomena; displacement of séance-room furniture and apports (objects appearing from nowhere, allegedly brought into the séance room by spirits); and appearance of ectoplasm (a physical substance that would emanate from the medium, meaning discarnate spirits could become visible to sitters).

Historically, mediumship and, more generally, attempts to contact the dead, have been documented throughout human history with references in writings as far back as Ancient Greece. A well-documented account is the story of the “Witch of Endor” reported in the biblical First Book of Samuel. It refers to an incident where the witch, referred to in some versions as the “medium of Endor,” was ordered by the king to raise up the spirit of the recently deceased prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 28: 3–25).

Observed case studies from the early twentieth century are indicative of the sort of communication with the departed that is alleged to happen. For example, Professor Horrell Hart (1959) presents an “outstanding example” in the case of a Mrs. Talbot who, in a sitting with Mrs. Gladys Leonard, received specific information allegedly from Hugh Talbot, her deceased husband. He communicated details about a notebook of his, which Mrs. Talbot had not, up to that point, opened. Another famous example from the archives of psychical research focuses on technical information transmitted through Mrs. Eileen Garrett about the R-101 airship disaster in 1930. The facts were conveyed three days after the crash, purportedly from the dead captain (Fuller 1979; Leasor, 1957). These single cases emphasize the evidential character of some of the more impressive messages – details, unknown to the sitters, communicated via a medium – but also highlight the anecdotal nature of such evidence.

SEE ALSO: Apparition; Necromancy; Psychical Investigation; Spiritualism; Supernatural, The.

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Melodrama

Melodrama developed out of its French origins (melo-drame means “drama with melody”). Its late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century predecessors evolved from a predominantly Gothic and populist mode into what initially might be termed a form of bourgeois “domestic tragedy.” With this process, melodrama became much less prescribed in its dramatic content and more varied in its range, themes, and concerns. The Marquis de Sade suggested that Gothic fiction was the product of the revolutionary shocks suffered by all of Europe in the later eighteenth century. He could have added that Gothic melodrama was similarly a product of its time.

This artistic form is often seen as the creation of the era of the French Revolution, of heroic virtue triumphing over villainous vice. Boutet de Monvel’s Les Victimes cloîtrées (The Cloistered Victims) (1791) is often considered the first melodrama. More generally, Guilbert
de Pixérécourt is regarded as the father of French melodrama. And, given that there was no international copyright at this time, he is regarded as the father of English melodrama as well. Based on (via an unacknowledged translation) a Pixérécourt play (Cœlina, or, The Mysterious Infant), Thomas Holcroft's A Tale of Mystery (1802) is often cited as the first English “Melo-Drame” (to use the genre term printed on its title page). Here, it is as though the music in the drama is a character in its own right within the play; hence, there are stage directions such as the following: “Music to express contention... Music expressive of horror... Music to express disorder.” Many theaters in early-nineteenth-century London were only licensed to produce musical entertainments. This brought about the conjunction of “melody” and “drama.” It resulted in often-sensationalized forms of theater involving passionate conflict concerning distressed maidenhood and devious villainy, in suspenseful plots that structured complex in-fighting over property and inheritance.

But, from before the use of “Melo-Drame” as a generic descriptor, Matthew Lewis' The Castle Spectre (1797) has claims to be seen as a founding instance of Gothic melodrama, a “Dramatic Romance” that typically draws its inspiration as much from Continental sources (Schiller’s The Robbers) as from Shakespearean tragedy (the mixture of tragic tension and comic relief in Macbeth, as well as the paralyzed-pregnant atmospherics of Hamlet), all to demonstrate, as Lewis’ prologue intimates, “That prosperous vice is but triumphant woe!” One would not expect otherwise, with this work coming from the pen of the author of The Monk (1796). Alternatively, the origins of Gothic melodrama can be traced back further, probably to the (unperformed) play The Mysterious Mother (composed 1768; published 1791) by Horace Walpole. Sensible that “the subject is disgusting,” Walpole, in his play, demonstrated what was perhaps only a marginally more explicit interest in the great Oedipal-anthropological themes of incest and parricide (insisting that his narrative was based on a true story) than was evident in The Castle of Otranto. Famously, this earlier novel gave us the generic description “A Gothic Story” in its second edition of 1765. It seems fitting indeed, therefore, to locate the origins of both Gothic fiction and Gothic melodrama in Walpole.

To encompass the larger historical arc of melodrama, as well as to address the vexed question of melodrama’s politics, one could do worse than to take up with the categories – the periodizations – available in Raymond Williams’ (1968) drama-derived cultural materialism. It is thus possible to speak schematically of the emergent, the dominant, and the residual regarding melodrama’s historical development. This provides a purchase, at the same time, on melodrama’s politics as an artistic form, dependent as they are on the form’s “emergent,” “dominant,” or “residual” positioning within the larger cultural process. Put in an initially bald way, with more nuanced comments to follow, the historically emergent Gothic melodrama of the 1790s and after manifests the political volatility of this contemporaneously revolutionary era. This volatility settled somewhat as melodrama proper, as we might call it, assumed a dominant position in nineteenth-century theater some time into the second quarter of that century. Then, following the advent of Naturalism in the theater in the 1860s, what was once dominant in this regard gradually became residual – a basis for more modern forms of innovation – as major talents in the theater strove to produce new kinds of plays.

Schematic and bald as these suggestions are, they nevertheless have the value of throwing into relief how it is that the period of the first wave of popularity of Gothic fiction is roughly the same as that of Gothic melodrama. In the follow-through from the 1790s, Gothic melodrama shifted into a different phase of its development in the late 1820s. To see this is to see the difference between two “nautical melodramas” from the second half of this decade, Edward Fitz-Ball’s The Flying Dutchman (1826) and Douglas Jerrold’s Black Ey’d Susan (1829). Where one is spectral and spectacular, the
other is realistic and idiomatic. The difference at issue is sharpened both despite and because of these plays’ shared interest in the nautical melodramatic.

Thus, in terms of theatrical development, we can quite easily look back from The Flying Dutchman to the wider English Romantic tradition, privileging the Byronic hero and exalting the primacy and quasi-divinity of the imagination and desire; Byron’s Werner (1822) (a title role made famous by the eminent tragedian William Charles Macready), Percy Bysshe Shelley’s The Cenci (1819) (a later twentieth-century inspiration for Antonin Artaud), and Keats’ less-well-known Otho the Great (1819) were retrospectively significant landmarks. Shelley’s play, like that of Keats’, was not performed in his lifetime, premiering eventually in 1886. That in itself shows a continuing public appetite, if not in mainstream commercial terms, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century for Gothic melodramas from the earlier part of that century and genre. Along with Macready, and ultimately eclipsing him in both his lifetime and also in later historical theater scholarship, Charles Kean, in actor-manager mode, took over the Princess Theatre in London to produce a successful season of “gentlemanly melodramas,” such as Dion Boucicault’s The Corsican Brothers (1852). The first production of this play also introduced the innovative mechanical stage devices that were being used increasingly to achieve the spectacular stage effects required by melodrama. In this instance it was the “Corsican Trap,” also known as the “Ghost Slide.” This was essentially a hidden slot in the floor of the stage through which an actor would arise while traversing on a wheeled platform.

Jerrold’s Black-Ey’d Susan is perhaps the best example of a transitional melodrama within the “nautical melodrama” tradition (also referred to as “aquatic spectacles,” after Charles Dibdin the Younger employed a vast water tank in a stage production of 1804). The Bells, produced in 1871 and written by Lewis Leopold, made a star of Henry Irving, and ran for 150 performances at the Lyceum Theatre – indeed, Irving kept the part going for several decades. It was firmly based, though, on a French original – Le Juif Polonais (The Polish Jew), by Erckmann-Chatrian – and its villain’s haunting refrain “The bells, the bells!” entered popular urban parlance and folklore.

While remaining characterized as a broadly Romantic artistic form, the transition from around 1840 onwards, and for the next twenty to thirty years, saw melodrama move away from those definitive Gothic-Romantic roots to ultimately produce a creative dialectic with the then innovative radicalism of dramatic Realism, especially in the plays of Henrik Ibsen. Writers within English drama who preceded, though with lesser dramatic range and sophistication, Ibsen’s “high period” sociopsychological domestic tragedies Ghosts (1881) and Hedda Gabler (1890), and their implicit fusion of the melodramatic into a bourgeois tragedy, were Tom Taylor and his The Ticket of Leave Man (1863) and T. W. Robertson’s Caste (1867). While different in genre, respectively tragic and comic, both plays are important in that, in Taylor’s case, we have the first English play to engage in a proto-social realist way with major contemporary issues of the day. Taylor’s play employs in a more sophisticated way some of the classic elements of earlier melodramas while crucially revealing an emerging sociopsychological model of character. In The Ticket of Leave Man, Taylor exposes and criticizes Victorian society’s callous and hypocritical disregard for the penal system and especially the tragic plight of its central antihero: a man who has completed his prison sentence and with his official “ticket-of-leave” re-enters a society that discriminates against him and offers him no hope or help. While Robertson’s Caste was also more mildly critical of social mores within the English class system, its form and purpose were comic and satirical, leading to an eventually more reactionary resolution. It went on to become the prototype for many other derivatives of its major commercial success in what became known as “cup-and-saucer” comedies. Indeed, both writers and both plays prefigure by a century the emergence of the postwar
“kitchen-sink dramas” of the 1950s, such as Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956) and Wesker’s *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958) and *Roots* (1959).

Ibsen and Strindberg, in seeking in their respective ways to create a new and essentially proto-modernist drama, nevertheless wrestled with and incorporated certain classic characteristics of the melodramatic. Ibsen, in his major Naturalistic dramas including and following *A Doll’s House* (1879), such as *Ghosts*, sought to expose and criticize social and moral hypocrisy and reactionary bourgeois values. However, in the final scene of *Ghosts*, in which Oswald dies from inherited venereal disease, the heightened, almost operatic declaration of tragic maternal love and guilt is melodramatic in its language, its stage directions, and the demands it makes upon the actress. Equally, in Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* (1888) and *The Father* (1887), themes such as desire-as-transgression and its destructive social and moral repercussions and the debilitating, tragic consequences of sexual guilt and madness resonate with the Gothic elements of embryonic melodramatic themes. Equally significantly in this context, the resolutions of both Strindberg plays, and to some extent Ibsen’s, are reactionary. In Strindberg’s case, one would add misogynistic. The struggle to create a modern bourgeois drama could not quite escape the continuing prevailing aura that melodrama continued to exert.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the major dramatist Eugene O’Neill, in his classic *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* (premiered posthumously in 1957), took the genre of melodrama into a darkly powerful hybridity, incorporating the insights and imagery of Freudian psychoanalysis, post-Gothic preoccupations with madness and moral dereliction, and an epic, tragic sense of destiny in both the individual and the family.

Melodrama as a genre arguably continues to endure and appeal to a mass audience in British television dramas such as *EastEnders* and United States 1980s “mini-series” such as *Dallas*. That it does so some two hundred years after its embryonic emergence in English drama as a hugely successful form of “nonlegitimate” popular drama is testimony to its tenacity and also its broad appeal and continuing resonance. An integral part of its longevity, as Eric Bentley observed in *The Life of the Drama* (1964), in the uniquely defining way in which melodrama encompasses elements of both the popular and high culture, and most specifically as a reimagining of the “tragic.” To the extent that this results in the earlier and mid phases of the genre forming a compensatory, nostalgic, and inherently reactionary social and moral hierarchy, this reflects the genre’s symptomatic function of addressing the economic and moral anxieties of the growing urbanized middle classes. In the hands of major dramatists such as Ibsen, Strindberg, and O’Neill, the genre adapted itself once more and displayed its versatility in providing a dramatic form strong enough to encompass and frame the cataclysmic impact of Darwin and Freud in a post-Enlightenment and post-Romantic world of a human species struggling in the searchlight of its own troubled evolution and unconscious conflicts.

SEE ALSO: Drama; Incest; Lewis, Matthew; Schiller, Friedrich von; Walpole, Horace.

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Melville, Herman
CHARLES L. CROW

There are Gothic elements in the early work of Herman Melville (1819–91), such as the flaming corpse and the magnetically evil sailor Jackson in Redburn (1849). His Gothic turn really begins, however, with his discovery of Nathaniel Hawthorne (the man and his work) in 1850 (see hawthorne, nathaniel). The resulting burst of creative energy was first recorded in his review “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1850), which can be seen as a manifesto of American “dark romantic” (i.e., Gothic) ideas, defining not only the work of Hawthorne and Melville but also Poe’s (see poe, edgar allan).

Unlike Emerson and the transcendentalists, Melville saw the world as ambiguous and menacing. Against the transcendentalists’ sunlight and unified circles (Emerson’s transparent eyeball, Thoreau’s pellucid pond) Melville opposed images of darkness, division, and ambiguity: masks and veils, the light and dark sides of the turtle, the Earth half-shrouded in darkness, the doublon Ahab nails to the mast (see masks, veils, and disguises). Melville distrusted the transcendentalist program of merging the self into the “oversoul,” and parodied it in the “Mast-Head” chapter of Moby-Dick (1851). He had seen much of the world, and he knew that its dangers were real. He (and the other dark romantics) also saw evil as a tangible force, not just the absence of good, as Emerson had defined it.

While not all of Melville’s mature work is Gothic, all of it displays the ambiguity of the world and the reality of evil. He profoundly distrusted the doctrines of progress, American optimism, and simple solutions. His works are filled with self-confident characters who are deluded or mad, and who unleash unforeseen, often terrible consequences.

Thus in Melville’s greatest work (rewritten after his discovery of Hawthorne), Captain Ahab binds his crew to a mission of revenge against a white whale. Ahab’s Manichean vision is clear and compelling, a world divided between dynamically clashing forces of good and evil (which he believes are incarnated in Moby-Dick). The doomed odyssey of the Pequod neither confirms nor refutes this vision, but demonstrates the folly of Ahab’s obsession. In the end, Ahab earns his destruction less for his metaphysics than for his morality, his willingness to sacrifice everything — ship, crew, the lost boy of the Rachel, his surrogate son Pip — to his revenge. Ishmael, Melville’s normative narrator, survives because he rejects Ahab’s monomania and achieves a balanced vision, represented by the image of the “Catskill eagle” of the soul.

No such balance is attained in Melville’s next novel, Pierre (1852), in which Melville explores subconscious desire, “the flowing river in the cave of man” (1884: 130). The exaggerated, experimental language and symbolism reflect this inner reality. A key image of the novel is Guido Reni’s painting of Beatrice Cenci (a painting later used by Hawthorne in The Marble Faun, 1860), a figure “doubled hooded by the black cape of the two most horrible crimes [...] possible to civilized humanity, incest and parricide” (1984: 407). Such unacknowledged motives apparently drive Pierre, both in his feelings toward his living mother and his dead father, and in his sexual attraction to the mysterious Isabel, who claims to be his half-sister. Pierre’s obsession, like Ahab’s, brings destruction, and the novel’s final scene is strewn with corpses, recalling the end of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, which was indeed an influence.

Melville’s distrust of progress, including mechanical progress, led him to write what may be the first robot story in English, “The
Bell Tower” (1856) (see Science and the Gothic). The tale is set in Renaissance Italy, often used by Hawthorne for tales of obsessed artists and scientists. Melville’s Bannadonna is both, a genius who builds the mighty tower, casts and ornaments the bell, and creates a mechanical figure to ring it. But the robot destroys its maker, anticipating rebellious machines in countless stories and films of our own time. Layers of allusion also connect the murder to female vengeance and to the rebellion of slaves, the subject of the novella Benito Cereno (1856).

In Melville’s story of the uprising on the slave ship San Dominick, he employs a device he uses also in “Bartleby the Scrivener,” an optimistic American narrator who is unable to fathom the meaning of the events he witnesses. Amasa Delano, captain of an American ship, is so blinded by racial stereotypes about happy slaves that he is unable to unmask the charade staged for him by the brilliant slave leader Babo (see Race; Slavery and the Gothic). As in “The Bell Tower,” the story is heavily charged with symbols and allusions, linking it to the larger history of slavery in the Americas, including the revolution in Haiti. Benito Cereno may be the most penetrating meditation on slavery and its legacy by any white American author in the nineteenth century.

Benito Cereno, “The Bell Tower,” “Bartleby the Scrivener,” and other short works were collected in The Piazza Tales (1856), in the period when Melville’s reputation was in decline following the popular failures of Moby-Dick and Pierre. The Confidence Man (1857) ended his career as a commercial writer altogether. An extreme experiment in unreliable narration, a virtual hall of mirrors, the novel completely baffled contemporary readers. In a later age that values such experiments, critical opinion is still divided on this book, which is, at a minimum, a satire on American optimism.

After The Confidence Man Melville disappeared from public view, publishing only little-noticed poetry. Decades after his death his first biographer, Raymond Weaver (1921), discovered the manuscript of his last major work, Billy Budd, a complex study of war, innocence, expediency, and moral choice.

SEE ALSO: Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Masks, Veils, and Disguises; Poe, Edgar Allan; Race; Science and the Gothic; Slavery and the Gothic.

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FURTHER READING

Misogyny

HELENE MEYERS

Although the Gothic is a notoriously slippery and diverse genre, its preoccupation with otherness is foundational. The othering of women and, by extension, the feminine is often explored in Gothic texts; thus, misogyny – the hatred and fear of women endemic to Western culture – is illuminated, reinforced, critiqued, and subverted by and through Gothic literary traditions.

Misogyny is often manifested in the Gothic through its violent effects: rape, imprisonment, and femicide. Indeed, the wounded,
vulnerable, or dead female body is a dominant Gothic trope. In Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796), violence against women is direct and explicit, while in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolfo* (1794) it tends to be an inchoate and perpetual threat or a narrative cast in the past. While Radcliffe goes to great – and unconvincing – efforts to mobilize female virtue and the family as counters to such violence, Mary Wollstonecraft in *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) and Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre* (1847) locate the violence of misogyny in the very institutions purportedly protective of women: the law and, most especially, marriage.

Gothic misogyny certainly takes the form of figuring women as “wounded creatures who were born to bleed” (as Angela Carter puts it in *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*, 2001: 23); however, it also functions through the positioning of women as dangerous, even demonic threats. In *The Monk*, the devil takes the form of a temptress; in less supernaturally inclined works, the threat is figured in the realistic body of a woman with an appetite – for money in the case of Madame Montoni in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Mrs. Reed in *Jane Eyre* exemplify this trend. In *Rebecca*, the American employer of the narrator, Mrs. Van Hopper, plays this role (see *du maurier, daphne*). Misogynistic culture sets mothers up to either play the role of policewoman for patriarchy (a type Kate Millett identified in *Sexual Politics*, 2000: 201) or represent the quintessential victim.

Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), an explicit revision of *Jane Eyre*, provides insight into the psyche of the unnamed Rochester: his violent aversion to his wife is a projection of his aversion to his own vulnerability, a stereotypically feminine quality. Thus, the Gothic tradition helps us to understand that, while female fear is a logical, even necessary effect of misogyny, male fear mobilizes misogynist violence against women. In other words, female bodies are used to represent, manage, and excise male anxiety. The imperialist discourse at the heart of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* usefully reminds us that the gendered dramas of misogyny are inextricably connected to Gothic narratives of race and nation (see *imperial gothic*). John Fowles’ *The Collector* (1963) performs the ways in which misogyny and class warfare become intertwined; the ending of *The Collector* also chillingly exposes the ways in which the strategy of using female bodies to manage male class anxieties is doomed to fail, thus promoting the serial killing of women.

Increasingly, Gothic tropes are being employed to resist, subvert, and recast misogynist narratives. In “The Bloody Chamber” (1979), Angela Carter’s revision of “Bluebeard’s Castle,” a newly married woman about to be murdered by her husband is saved by her mother, a contemporary cinematic example of this phenomenon.

Another symptom and effect of misogyny is anxiety surrounding the mother, the prototypical female Other in human development. The only good mothers in the early Gothic tend to be dead ones, and aunts, who function as surrogate mother figures, are often antagonists or monitory figures: Madame Montoni in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Mrs. Reed in *Jane Eyre* exemplify this trend. In *Rebecca*, the American employer of the narrator, Mrs. Van Hopper, plays this role (see *du maurier, daphne*). Misogynistic culture sets mothers up to either play the role of policewoman for patriarchy (a type Kate Millett identified in *Sexual Politics*, 2000: 201) or represent the quintessential victim.

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woman who in her youth disposed of a man-eating tiger. Here, the mother, another woman, plays the role of protector rather than a malicious, impotent, or absent figure (see Carter, Angela). This short story is a paradigmatic example of shifting traditions in which, as Luce Irigaray puts it, “the goods get together” (1981). Alice Walker’s Gothic novel The Third Life of Grange Copeland (1970) chronicles a man’s ultimate refusal to perpetuate and comply with the misogynist violence that racist culture breeds. Margaret Atwood’s metafictional comic Gothic novel Lady Oracle (1976) is, among other things, a working through of romantic plots that feature murderous men and maternal villainy (see Atwood, Margaret).

SEE ALSO: Atwood, Margaret; Carter, Angela; du Maurier, Daphne; Female Gothic; Imperial Gothic.

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FURTHER READING


Modernism

ANDREW SMITH

The relationship between modernism, a culturally elite form, and the popular idiom of the Gothic novel might seem an unlikely one. However, modernism’s representation of shattered versions of subjectivity (which has its roots in a response to World War I) rework familiar Gothic images of fractured or fragile conceptions of the self. Writers such as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and May Sinclair utilized, at different levels of explicitness, the Gothic in order to account for a 1920s cultural malaise. The relationship between modernism and popular writing is evidenced in T. S. Eliot’s working title for The Waste Land (1922), “He do the police in different voices,” which refers to the moment in Dickens’ Our Mutual Friend (1865) when Betty Higden notes of Sloppy, her adoptive son, that “Sloppy is a beautiful reader.
of a newspaper. He do the police in different voices” (Dickens 1978: 204), which reflects upon the different voices which seemingly inhabit Eliot’s poem. However, Eliot’s reference to Dickens suggests an engagement with popular culture that is also manifested in the poem’s explicit reference to *Dracula* (1897):

> A woman drew her long black hair out tight  
> And fiddled whisper music on those strings  
> And bats with baby faces in the violet light  
> Whistled, and beat their wings  
> And crawled head downward down a blackened wall  
> And upside down in air were towers  
> T olling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours  
> And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells


The lines refer to the moment when Jonathan Harker sees the Count crawling down the wall of Castle Dracula, and his subsequent return with a baby is reflected in the line concerning “bats with baby faces.” *Dracula* is also multi-voiced as it is composed out of a range of different textual formats and told through a number of narrators and so echoes the structural sentiment suggested by Dickens.

Eliot’s is not the only high modernist text of 1922 to refer to *Dracula*. James Joyce makes reference to Stoker’s novel in *Ulysses*: “He comes, pale vampire, through storm his eyes, his bat sails bloodying the sea, mouth to her mouth’s kiss. Here. Put a pin in that chap, will you? My tablets” (Joyce 1993: 47). The final line refers to Harker’s (misquoted) line from *Hamlet* (1603) “My tablets! quick, my tablets! / ’Tis meet that I put it down” (Stoker 1996: 36), which refers to the material production of writing that runs throughout *Dracula* and that also underpins a modernist fascination with the process of writing.

That this modernist co-option of the Gothic is a self-conscious one is suggested in the work of Virginia Woolf. Woolf wrote an essay in 1921 on the ghost stories of Henry James and argued of the form that “if the old methods are obsolete […] it is the business of a writer to discover new ones” (Woolf quoted in Seed 2001: 46), rather as Eliot and Joyce evoke, but redirect, *Dracula*. David Seed and Judith Wilt have acknowledged Woolf’s indebtedness to Henry James, specifically to his emphasis on how the ghost is perceived. Seed has traced this to Woolf’s review of Dorothy Scarbrough’s *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917), where she comments on the ghosts in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) that “The appearance of the figures is an illustration not in itself specially alarming, of a state of mind which is profoundly mysterious and terrifying” (Woolf quoted in Seed 2001: 46–7). Seed has claimed that “in her works Woolf appropriates the discourse of the supernatural to challenge presumptions about the priority of material circumstance in reality” (Seed 2001: 50), which characterizes tales such as “The Mysterious Case of Miss V” (1906), “A Mark on the Wall” (1917), “A Haunted House” (1921), and “A Sketch of the Past” (1939–40). Further, Judith Wilt has explored the development of “the modernist ghost” in texts such as *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), and *The Waves* (1931). She notes that at the end of *Mrs. Dalloway* Peter Walsh is moved to both terror and ecstasy at the sight of a ghost. As Wilt notes, “The ecstasy is that he has seen a ghost: the terror is that he has felt ecstasy” (2001: 63); a notably Jamesian anxiety.

James’ *The Turn of the Screw*, with its narrative convolutions, emphasis on point of view, and skepticism about material reality, sits well within a conception of the modernist text. A contemporary of Henry James (indeed for a time a close friend) was the short story writer, novelist, and Renaissance historian Vernon Lee (real name Violet Paget), who has an unusual, because ambivalent, position in relation to modernism. Her principal collections of ghost stories are *Hauntings* (1890), *Pope Jacynth and Other Fantastic Tales* (1904), and *For Maurice: Five Unlikely Stories* (1927). Her work seems to reflect a premodernist era because her stories often work through, but also challenge, Walter Pater’s theory of artistic innovation from his *The Renaissance* (1873).
Lee’s “Amour Dure” (1887) focuses on how the past is resurrected through the research of Spiridion Trepka, a historian who is writing a history of Umbria. His research seemingly brings back to life the sixteenth-century Medea (a type of Lucrezia Borgia) who kills him. Writing about history and resurrecting it are elided in what becomes a debate about the aesthetics of beauty (referring to a portrait of Medea) and the ugliness of history (the Borgias), which were for Lee key characteristics of the Renaissance. Woolf distanced herself from Lee’s work because of its apparent engagement with moribund Victorian debates about art. However, Lee’s work is stylistically complex and focuses on a psychology of terror that is indebted to Henry James (which was in turn inherited by Woolf). Tales such as “Oke of Okehurst” (1886) and “A Wicked Voice” (1887) examine a relationship between art and spectrality that anticipates modernist concerns about the imagination and the fractured self. Indeed, Denis Denisoff (1999) has argued that Woolf owes a debt to Lee, and Mary Patricia Kane has claimed that Lee “was one of the few writers in her generation to truly understand the use to which the layering traces of the high modernist gothic genre could be put in the constitution of the modern fragmented subject” (2004: 46). Lee provides a good example of a writer who bridged the Victorian and modernist periods by successfully importing the Victorian Gothic into her modernist evolutions of psychological states.

Sinclair wrote twenty-four novels, over forty short stories, and poetry in a writing career that spanned the late nineteenth century to the 1930s. She was a member of the Society for Psychical Research and was interested in how the Society’s Proceedings developed ideas relating to the mind (Seed 2001: 51). Her interests in psychology were supported by philosophical interests in Hegel and Kant (on whom she published). These intellectual interests in turn shaped her engagement with modernism and she wrote (and wrote on) Imagist poetry during the time when she knew both Ezra Pound and Virginia Woolf. Her supernatural stories are principally collected in Uncanny Stories (1923) and The Intercessor and Other Stories (1931). Laurel Forster has noted that Sinclair’s work on her supernatural stories coincided with a period in which she was writing journal reviews of Imagist poetry (2006: 112). Sinclair also wrote the introduction to The Closed Door (1917), a collection of Jean de Bosschère’s Imagist verse. Bosschère was also a novelist, painter, and illustrator who created the haunting line drawings that illustrate Uncanny Stories.

Sinclair’s supernatural tales frequently focus on images of thwarted romantic love in which feelings take on a curious life of their own after the death of a loved one. They thus tap a wider discourse of mourning that seemed to characterize the immediate post-World War I period. However, many of her tales (unsurprisingly, given her interests in psychology and philosophy) center on the idea of knowledge and knowing within emotionally fraught scenarios. “The Nature of the Evidence,” for example, focuses on how a deceased wife intervenes so that her husband cannot consummate his second marriage to an apparently overly sensual and immoral second wife. What the husband discovers about the meaning of love (as a kind of ongoing fidelity) is crucial to the tale. Stories such as “If the Dead Knew” focus on ghosts who come back to grant forgiveness, and so instill moral understanding, in those who have done them harm.

May Sinclair, although a rather different writer to Lee, also reworked the Victorian Gothic within a modernist context. The title of Suzanne Raitt’s biography, May Sinclair: A Modern Victorian (2000), captures this and implicitly reflects the fact that, although Sinclair’s ghosts are modernist in emphasis, given that they are forward-looking and experimental (often functioning as an intellectual abstraction), the tales are ultimately unable to state what it is that replaces this older Victorian order.
The clearest example of how modernist ideas and the supernatural are aligned is to be found in Sinclair’s “The Finding of the Absolute.” The tale centers on how Spalding, a metaphysical philosopher, after death finds himself in heaven with both his former wife and her lover (an Imagist poet). Spalding discusses history with the spirit of Kant, who shows him an image of the past and a projected model of a future in which there is “the Indian Republic, the British Revolution, the British Republic, the conquest of Japan by America, and the federation of the United States of Europe and America” (Sinclair 1923: 359–60). However, in a strangely prescient move, Kant is also able to show Spalding the end of history, which is characterized by global warming: Spalding “saw the Atlantic flooding the North Sea” and “saw men and animals driven before [the melting polar ice cap] to the belt of the equator” (360). However, the image of history is endlessly replayed to Spalding and, although he finds within it an image of the Absolute that he has always been searching for, it nevertheless transforms his heaven into a type of hell from which there can be no escape because there is no possible philosophical transcendence. David Glover has explored this conception of history in modernist texts such as Ford Madox Ford’s *The Inheritors* (1901) and Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902), arguing that in these works we witness “a vision of the future as a new calamity” in which progress comes to “reconfigure the worst features of the past” (2001: 42). However, this problem of knowing and of understanding one’s place within the metropolis is an additional key feature of the modernist Gothic.

Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood* (1936) uses the modernist figure of the flaneur in order to evidence a Gothic fascination with an oddly Gothic city: Paris. Fritz Lang’s famous *Metropolis* (1927) also evidences a dystopian Gothic vision of life and labor in the modern city. Such moments constitute a Gothic twist to the modernist evocations of the city, as in Leopold Bloom’s journey around Dublin in *Ulysses* (1922). This is also to acknowledge the fundamentally European contexts of modernism and how the slogan of “make it new” crossed different media at the time (see European Gothic).

It is noteworthy that German Expressionist films of the period are characterized by an experimental approach in both style and content and that they tend to be horror films (see German Expressionism). Films such as Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), Wegener’s *The Golem* (1920), and Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922) employed the Gothic as an idiom through which to explore narratives about fractured selves, transgressive states, and images of excess.

It is the Gothic’s focus on a loss of moral certainty that is inherited within the modernist Gothic as it too explores where moral and intellectual understandings of the world are broken down and troublingly reconfigured. The new model of the self that emerges from these texts is a quasi-Freudian one: subject to doubt and moral confusion, and wrestling with new ways of understanding the new experiences that confront them.

SEE ALSO: European Gothic; German Expressionism; Gothic 1900 to 1950; Spectrality; Victorian Gothic.

REFERENCES
“Monster movie” is a colloquial term for a sub-genre within horror, science fiction, and fantasy film characterized by the threat of something large and frightening (or a bunch of small ones). Although most traditional horror archetypes are, technically, “monsters,” the designation is usually limited to oversized but essentially dumb animals. The label “creature feature” (which originally referred to horror-themed television and film screenings) is interchangeable. The concept is so simple that it allows for a dizzying number of interpretations, ranging from gigantic apes, dinosaurs, robot dinosaurs, and leviathans (especially sharks and octopuses), man-eating plants, insects, arachnids, and rodents (giant or swarming), to colossal men, fifty-foot women, and aliens that look like streamlined and disturbingly phallic gargoyles. In narratology, this story archetype is often referred to as “Overcoming the Monster,” where protagonists must battle and defeat a destructive creature. Landmark examples would include: *The Lost World* (US, 1925), *King Kong* (US, 1933), *The Thing from Another World* (US, 1951), *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (US, 1953), *Them!* (US, 1954), *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (US, 1954), *Godzilla* (Japan, 1954), *Jaws* (US, 1975), and *Alien* (US, 1979).

Horror film orthodoxy tends to cite Galeen and Wegener’s *Der Golem* (Germany, 1915) as the first “monster movie,” but in “creature feature” terms the honor goes to *The Lost World*, a feature-length silent adaptation of Conan Doyle’s 1912 novel of the same name where living dinosaurs are discovered in the Amazon Basin. Scientists return to London with a captured brontosaurus, which escapes and stomps the Square Mile before trashing Tower Bridge, establishing a classic plot device where rampaging monsters cause panic while destroying familiar landmarks. The stop-motion dinosaurs were created by Willis O’Brien (1886–1982), who had made short dinosaur films for Edison, most notably *The Ghost of Slumber Mountain* (US, 1918), and went on to animate *King Kong*, which is basically *The Lost World* with a gorilla and a bit of sex appeal. *Son of Kong* (US, 1933) quickly followed, along with a legion of franchised and unlicensed gorilla chillers, including *Mighty Joe Young* (US, 1949), *Robot Monster* (1953), *King Kong vs. Godzilla* (Japan, 1962), and *Queen Kong* (UK, 1976). The “lost world” plot remains popular, as seen in Steven Spielberg’s *Jurassic Park* trilogy (US, 1993–2001), and Peter Jackson’s remake of *King Kong* (US, 2005).

Ray Harryhausen (born 1920) worked with O’Brien, and picked up the torch when *King Kong* was rereleased in 1952, stimulating a craze for monster movies crossed with atomic...
anxiety. Harryhausen animated *The Beast from 20000 Fathoms* (US, 1953), where Arctic nuclear tests thaw a hibernating dinosaur, and *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (US, 1955), where hydrogen bomb tests destroy the food source of a giant octopus, compelling it to eat San Francisco. In this formula, monsters are either created by irresponsible science, or are forced to retaliate to protect their habitat. The heroes are usually soldiers, the heroines scientists, and the monster always destroys a metropolitan area and defeats the military in the second act, before being killed by the hero in a suicidally brave scenario that might just be crazy enough to work. Other atomic monsters include the giant ants of *Them!* (US, 1954), and *Tarantula* (US, 1955), although the most enduring of them all is Ishiro Honda’s mutant dinosaur *Godzilla* (Japan, 1954). Godzilla is traditionally played by an actor in a suit, and has starred in twenty-eight films to date. Rival monsters include Mothra (a giant moth), King Ghidorah (a three-headed dragon), Mechagodzilla (a robot Godzilla built by aliens), and Ebirah (a giant lobster). The best British example of the form is *Gorgo* (UK, 1961), where a volcano releases a monster that is captured and put on display until his mum turns up to save him – a plot later lifted for *Jaws 3-D* (US, 1983).

As environmental anxiety replaced nuclear, the monster movie shifted more toward the theme of nature in revolt (or “eco horror”) in the 1960s and 1970s. The model for this plot is essentially Arthur Machen’s novella “The Terror” (1917) combined with Charlton Heston’s battle against army ants in *The Naked Jungle* (US, 1954). Examples include: *Phase IV* (US, 1974 – ants); *Frogs* (US, 1974 – homicidal amphibians); *Night of the Lepus* (US, 1974 – giant rabbits); *Kingdom of the Spiders* (US, 1977 – organized tarantulas); and *The Swarm* (US, 1978 – killer bees). Spielberg’s *Jaws* (US, 1975) is basically a return to the traditional values of the monster movie, while Ridley Scott’s *Alien* (US, 1979) explores the form’s Gothic, fairytale, and sexually surreal possibilities.

By the 1990s, the archetypes begin to repeat, with *Jurassic Park* returning to Skull Island and *Deep Blue Sea* (US, 1999) being dubbed “Jaws 2000,” *Arachnophobia* (US, 1990), *Eight Legged Freaks* (2002), and *Snakes on a Plane* (2006) are hyperreal eco horrors, while the 9/11 allegory *Cloverfield* (US, 2008) is a vérité Godzilla. The most interesting monster movies are presently either international or independent. For example, Bong Joon-ho’s *The Host* (Korea, 2006) is a Godzilla-like allegory of America’s military presence in South Korea, while the monster in Frank Henenlotter’s low-budget *Bad Biology* (2008) is a giant, drug-addicted penis able to detach itself from its owner and run amok. You don’t see that every day.

SEE ALSO: Environment; Film; Japanese Gothic; Matheson, Richard.

FURTHER READING


Monstrosity

JERROLD E. HOGLE

The figures that most define the “monster” in Gothic fiction, theater, and film are undoubtedly the creatures fabricated by the title
character in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft) and the vampire-Count who has survived for centuries in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) (see Stoker, Bram). Though there have been numerous variations on monsters before and after these in Gothic fictions, this pair has set a defining standard for Gothic monstrosity because both figures combine wildly incompatible ingredients. Both embody the ultimate anomaly, first, by being partly alive and partly dead at the same time. The Creature is composed of multiple cadavers into which a mysterious “vital fluid” has been infused (Shelley 1982: 35), and Count Dracula is un-dead: inwardly deceased yet reanimated by dark forces and kept outwardly vital by a bloodlust that keeps draining life from the living. Around this fundamental coexistence of opposites, these symbolic figures gather many other anomalies and paradoxes to them. Frankenstein’s monster is simultaneously quasi-human and a mixture of dead animal parts; a working-class wanderer and a well-read autobiographer; a reverse mirror-image of his Swiss creator and a confl ation of non-Aryan races (among them yellow and black); and a site of warm, outward-tending impulses mixed with Victor’s inward-turning egotism and the rage of the mixed-breed cast out from the dominant culture. Dracula is the supreme shape-shifter between different states of being, able to transform himself from man to wolf to bat and even to the wind, as well as the striking embodiment of the most high-class grandiosity mixed with the most primitive of “child-brains” (Stoker 1997: 279) and the most lowbrow drives of sexual promiscuity and bestial violence. The Gothic monster, in short, is the locus of that “otherness” from the human norm, by the conventional standards of Western civilization, where the most incongruous of elements are precisely the ones that coexist in it, all in an excess of being where supposedly separate conditions blur uncontrollably into each other. Such figures thus become the ultimate nonsensical “others” of the supposedly sensible human beings who claim to have coherent “identities” (and thus define those identities) by being the supposed opposites of those “monsters.” Consequently, monstrosity in the Gothic is the incongruous congruence of the most fundamental anomalies that threaten to engulf people in the contradictions that can most destroy their desired “natures” unless they believe they have found ways to annihilate it completely or to bury it from view.

To be sure, symbolic monstrosity as grotesque incompatibility has a long history in Western mythology and literature that precedes Gothic fiction, and the Gothic has extended that very history in quite distinctive ways. The word “monster” comes from the ancient Latin *monstrum* (“portent” or “atrocious”) and therefore recalls the often gigantic mixtures of the incompatible – from Scylla (which combined swirling waters with the biting heads of dogs and serpents) to the Minotaur (the progeny of a human woman and a bull) – that were portentous signs in Greek-based mythology that the laws of the gods had been violated and the cosmos thereby threatened by disorders that could breach divinely sanctioned boundaries. The literary Gothic transforms such oxymorons in Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the initial fiction labeled “A Gothic Story” (Walpole 2003: 63), when huge and broken-off parts of the Ghost of Alfonso violently invade an antiquated setting as signs of a primal crime buried in the past and as indicators of a Catholic aristocracy being broken up and displaced by a more entrepreneurial order (with the author an avowed Protestant) that is haunted by what it displaces even while it asserts a new kind of economy (see Walpole, Horace). This anomalous symbol of ongoing yet fragmented power both serves as a portent about the wages of past sins and embodies, as E. J. Clery says, “a conflict between two versions of economic ‘personality’” (Clery 1995: 77) – a struggle between social groups and systems of belief that was the cultural undercurrent of the 1760s symbolically sublimated (and thus monster-ized) by the first “Gothic story.” While it recalls the old portent of a time out of joint (partly by
enlarging the Ghost in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, 1600), Walpole’s monstrous Ghost is also a partial breaking-up and emptying-out of an antiquated form – an avatar of Frankenstein’s Creature as a *homunculus* recast from medieval alchemy and Dracula as a transmogrified old-Catholic bogey itself based on veneful Indo-Chinese ancestors – that allows new cultural anomalies seeking symbolic expression to be poured into the vestiges of old icons and structures in the place of former meanings now, as if vampirically, “sucked out” of them.

The Gothic monster from the start, then, has been and continues to be a contradictory old-figure-made-new that uses its oxymoronic nature to make itself the repository of the most unresolved cultural and psychological contradictions in the audience’s culture at the time of each new Gothic-monster story. That is why Frankenstein’s Creature is such an apt “horror” for an era of both rising industrial revolution and accelerating debates over black slavery (see *Slavery and the Gothic*) and why Dracula so epitomizes the 1890s’ fears connected with Darwinian evolution and the questioning of sexual categories. It is also why such figures arouse both the repulsion of characters and readers at their discordances and at least some sympathy for how our own incongruities (personal and cultural) are reflected in them. Such has been the case in the Gothic even when the “monster” has been a human character rather than an enlarged mixture of the human and non-human. Walpole begins that pattern too in the title figure of his play *The Mysterious Mother* (composed in 1768), in which the truly charitable and modestly feminine Countess Narbonne turns out be a reincarnated Oedipus from ancient Greek tragedy, the committer of a long-hidden incest that has made her more the destroyer than the nurturer of her own progeny (Walpole 2003: 245–8). Even as the Oedipus of Sophocles incarnates the old Greek ideological conflict between externally predes- tined behavior and internally personal responsibility, thus becoming a human monster as portentous as the Minotaur, Walpole’s sympathetic yet abhorrent monster-mother is a site onto which audiences of the eighteenth century and since can “cathect” (project psychic energies connected with) their unresolved quandaries about how passive or active – socially, personally, or sexually – even a high-born woman ought to be. The resulting oscillation in the whole Gothic mode between mixed-breed and super-natural horrors on the one hand and human-scale embodiments of extreme contradiction on the other has consequently continued in such fictions of terror to this day, whether in the zombies of George Romero’s films and the half-mechanical/half-biological creature of the *Alien* movies, or in the Hannibal Lecter of Thomas Harris’ novels (alongside other animalistic geniuses) and the oversexed femmes fatales of *Rebecca* or *Fatal Attraction*. Just as Gothic monsters have always done, but in their own ways suited to the most feared anomalies of their own times, these figures keep allowing us to project the contradictions that we cannot resolve in our senses of humanity and the world onto “monstrously” inchoate “others” that we claim to be our antitheses, so that we can construct ourselves anew against them, while also sympathizing with them at times, by Gothically half-disguising how much we and our culture are dependent on them for who we claim to be.

SEE ALSO: Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Slavery and the Gothic; Stoker, Bram; Walpole, Horace.

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From the moment European explorers discovered ancient Egyptian embalming practices, the figure of the mummy captivated the science community as well as the general public; this interest in the Egyptian dead quickly led to the mummy becoming a stock character in Gothic horror. Similar to the undead vampire (see vampire fiction) in literature and film, the mummy transfixes and terrifies because once the sarcophagus is opened and the figure revealed, there is the possibility that the remains will come to life and wreak havoc.

An anonymous 1825 account of a paper presented to the Fellows of the Royal Society in London exemplifies the scientific community’s fascination with the well-preserved body of the mummy:

These envelopes being removed, it became at once apparent that the Mummy was that of a female, and in the most complete state of preservation, possessing softness with the firmness of muscles, mobility in the articulations, and a peculiar character of beauty in the general form.

Often utilizing animate descriptors like this one, scientific papers that were then made public by newspapers helped to promote the public’s obsession with the unwrapping of Egyptian bodies as well as further the fear that the mummy’s lifelike state could render it alive. The Americans had a similar reaction to the figure of the mummy as the British. In 1826 Peale’s American Museum and Gallery in New York City displayed an Egyptian mummy that also riveted the American public (Martin 2009: 113).

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gothic horror was teeming with tales focusing on the Egyptian mummy’s return to life in order to take revenge on those who had disturbed its slumber. Bram Stoker’s 1903 novel The Jewel of Seven Stars is one of the most famous mummy tales. Others include Edgar Allan Poe’s “Some Words With a Mummy” (1845), Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Ring of Thoth” (1890) and “Lot No. 249” (1894), and H. Rider Haggard’s “Smith and the Pharaohs” (1913) (see Poe, edgar allan; stoker, bram). In 1932, the Gothic figure of the mummy reached an even larger audience with the film adaptation of Conan Doyle’s story in The Mummy starring Boris Karloff. Other notable films followed: The Mummy’s Hand (1940), The Mummy’s Tomb (1942), The Mummy’s Ghost (1944), and The Mummy’s Curse (1944). The figure of the Egyptian mummy in horror film has had a resurgence in recent films such as the 1999 remake of The Mummy and the 2008 The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor.

There are numerous contemporary theories regarding the figure of the mummy in Gothic horror. Following Sigmund Freud’s well-known fascination with Egyptology, the mummy has lent itself to psychological exploration. In his work on Gothic horror and the...
British Empire, Patrick Brantlinger coined the phrase “imperial Gothic” which describes stories in which “The destructive magic of the Orient takes its revenge” (Brantlinger 1988: 227). The figure of the Egyptian mummy embodies this definition, and much of the current research on mummies in Gothic horror focuses on imperial as well as economic theories and history in both Great Britain and the United States. In his 2009 essay, Charles Martin notes that

the mummy represented an exotic Orient once magnificent in its power but now conquered and dissolute, a silent East that refused to reveal its mysteries. Yet as the exhibition of the mummy helped the white patrons to imagine the goals of empire, the mummy’s mute witness aroused in the public imagination the impulse to have the mummy speak. (Martin 2009: 113)

This description of the mummy and the audience’s wish for it to speak mirrors the British scientific descriptions of the mummies that had been unrolled to reveal beautifully preserved bodies. Aviva Briefel’s essay in Victorian Studies notes that “Victorians seized on the thought of mummies as commodities” and that they were “fascinated and repelled” and “managed their ambivalence by emphasizing the mummy as a collectible object, a physical marker of imperial [...] conquest” (Briefel 2008: 264).

Egyptian mummies still spellbind audiences in the West, whether in Gothic horror fiction, cinema, or museum exhibits. In 2010, San Francisco’s De Young Museum of Art held a special exhibit on King Tutankhamen replete with x-rays from the mummified body; it was sold out months ahead of time. Future scientific research on mummies will proceed in utilizing x-rays, DNA testing, and other newly developed forensic tests, while research on the mummy as a Gothic figure will continue to look at Western romanticized notions of the East in the context of imperial histories, psychological theories, and contemporary gender and feminist studies.

SEE ALSO: Film; Imperial Gothic; Poe, Edgar Allan; Stoker, Bram; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING

Music
EMMA MCEVOY

The term “Gothic music” may cover a range of phenomena – from the music of the Goth bands of the late 1970s and 1980s to the scores composed for horror films and thrillers. It may also include music not originally composed for Gothic film but that, by its use in that genre, becomes Gothicized. Significantly, what all these Gothic musics have in common is a relation to film (see film).

Some twentieth-century classical music has been re-presented as Gothic for the purposes of film; composers such as Carl Orff and Krzysztof Penderecki have seen their work undergo this fate. William Friedkin’s The Exorcist (1973), Stanley Kubrick’s The Shining (1980), and David Lynch’s Inland Empire (2006) all feature at least one work of Penderecki’s. “O Fortuna” from Carl Orff’s cantata Carmina Burana (1935–6) has been so often used for the purposes of horror that it has slid into the realm of parody and satire. Orff’s strong medieval-sounding rhythms, bare fifths, lines of unadorned chant, and massed choirs are reinterpreted by film makers not as celebratory of the medieval but as an excursion into the horrors of Gothic. The bi-temporality that characterizes the piece, its sense of historical disjunction – its “medievalness” in relation to the very twentieth-century musical phraseology of the work as a whole – is essential to its reunderstanding as Gothic, which, typically, embeds a problematic past within the present.

Many tropes from Gothic film music have entered cultural understanding more generally, and are to be found in television programs, advertising, and popular music. The conjunction of sacred music and twentieth-century harmonies has become a particularly ubiquitous shorthand for horror; examples include the Orffian satanic/divine-sounding choir (used particularly effectively in The Sisters of Mercy’s “This Corrosion,” 1987) and the equally prevalent cliché of a church organ playing disconcertingly virtuosic pieces characterized by dissonant harmonies and a liberal use of pedal bass. Indeed, Schoenberian dissonance has, in popular cultural terms, become linked with Gothic – think, for example, of the Phantom’s organ playing and preferred composition style in Andrew Lloyd Webber’s The Phantom of the Opera (1986). Other Gothicized and much-revisited musical tropes include the child’s music box, the percussive mechanical toy, and the fairground organ (notable examples include Tod Browning’s Freaks, 1932; Gene Moore’s chilling score for Carnival of Souls, 1962; Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds’ song “The Carny,” 1986).

The late 1970s saw the emergence of a type of music that, because of its “borrowing of punk musical elements” was initially described as “‘post-punk’ and ‘minimalist punk’” (Gunn 1999: 37) before the adjective “Gothic” or “Goth” was settled on (see goth). Gothic music, in this sense, is the music associated with – and a key component of – Goth subculture, performed by bands who were either self-identified as, or identified by Goths as, Goth. Goth music has a characteristic emotional range, though it is as well to take into account Paul Hodkinson’s warning that the “dark mix of emotion, angst and energy often associated with Goth music, for example, may be linked by some to elements of Gothic literature, but has at least as much to do with the influence of longstanding themes from within contemporary popular music” (2007: 262). What perhaps is most characteristic of Gothic music in relation to many other Gothic texts is the poignancy of its particular emotional positioning; its mixture of rebellion, desire, nostalgia, and irony; and its potent Romanticism.

Catherine Spooner writes of Goth subculture more generally that “Goths suture their identities from complex networks of literary and cinematic affiliations, incorporating the various characters and archetypes they encounter into their fantasy life and playing them out through costume” (2004: 165). Such allusive play is characteristic also of Goth music. Gothic bands often play off against very specific cultural icons, often, though not always,
cinematic: such figures as Dracula, tortured Christs, the heroes of spaghetti Westerns, vampires, femmes fatales, demon-lovers, and the serial killer. In Goth music, “Gothic tropes and discourses may be embedded at the level of structure, voice, lyrics and performance style” (McEvoy 2009: 28). Gothic songs may be structured as framed narratives; performance styles tend to be theatricalized; voices may suggest personae (examples include Siouxsie Sioux’s broken-voiced dominatrixes and the high-voiced pure heroine and the low-voiced vamp of such songs as the pop-Gothic Shakespeare’s Sisters’ “Stay,” 1992). In performance, the Gothic song is both theater and lyric, “Gothic from the outside and as first-person narrative” (McEvoy 2009: 29).

Goth music in its earliest phase is primarily the work of guitar-based bands with some characteristic palettes: ultra-low, often perilously loose, bass sounds; “sinister jangling guitars” (Hodkinson 2002: 36); the metronomic exactitude of the drums (in the case of many bands – for example, The Sisters of Mercy, Gene Loves Jezebel, Alien Sex Fiend – an actual drum machine); and the distinctive use of the effects of chorus and short delay. Gothic music frequently suggests different temporalities, using suggestively passé styles (e.g., Fields of the Nephilim’s indebtedness to Morricone) to create the sense of a past that is being revisited, or exists within the present. Such music often conjures up a particularly acute sense of space and/or place (castles, cathedrals, fairgrounds, labyrinthine forests, film sets) and, in its heightening of contrasts, creates the effect of a musical chiaroscuro.

The account of classic Goth given above does not do justice to the heterogeneity of 1980s Goth, which also includes the folk–rock sounds of All About Eve, the use of medieval music by Dead Can Dance, the Gothic punk of The Damned, and the psychobilly, more characteristic of US Gothic music. In recent years, not only have genres not traditionally associated with Gothic become Gothicized (e.g., “Dark Cabaret” and “Dark Country”) but Goth music has become even more heterogeneous, mixing with electronica, dance, industrial, and metal. Mick Mercer, writing in 2002, uses all of the following tags in relation to the music of Goth bands: Doom Metal, Ethereal, Dark Romantic, Dark Ambient, Goth Metal, Celtic Acoustic, Techno-Synth-Industrial, Dark Trance, Goth Folk, Dark Trip Hop, Synthcore, Electro-Goth, Dark Industrial, GothPop-Coldwave, Goth-Gangsta, Industrial-Electro-Goth, and Gothic Darkwave Blues. As Gavin Baddeley writes, “It’s now harder to cite music that hasn’t been dubbed ‘Gothic,’ or adopted by the Goth scene, at some point, than to identify music that has” (2006: 273–4).

SEE ALSO: Film; Goth.

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FURTHER READING


Necromancy

CONNY LIPPERT

The term “necromancy” originally signified a method of divination through communication with the dead, and is derived from the Greek words *necros* (dead body) and *manteia* (divination). There is more than one form in which interaction with the deceased could take place. First and most commonly, necromancy was the art of summoning the disembodied spirits of the dead for questioning and to make them “reveal the secrets of the future which they must have learned during their stay in the other world” (Givry 1931: 167), with differing opinions on whether the dead had limited or unlimited knowledge. A second, more macabre method of utilizing the dead for necromantic magic involved the exhumation of corpses, often for purposes of revivification, use of body parts for divination rituals, or, most notoriously, human consumption.

Necromancy thus assumes a belief in an afterlife of some fashion, being particularly common in cultures with a pronounced ancestor cult. This communication with the dead bridging the divide between life and death, as well as the acquisition of knowledge of the future which it entails, are means by which humans have tried to lessen a perceived lack of control over their own fate. One of the earliest mentions of necromantic practices in ancient Greece can be found in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Odysseus, following instructions obtained from the sorceress Circe, undertakes a journey into Hades in order to question the dead. Circe is therefore to be seen as an early example of a necromancer, for, among other things, she knows how to summon “the spirits of the deceased to a trough in which she offers them sheep’s blood to drink, and when they come to imbibe this life-giving fluid she has them foretell the future” (Kieckhefer 1990: 29).

According to Spence, it was not unusual for the Greeks to consider it necessary to descend into Hades personally, as Odysseus did, in order to commune with the deceased, rather than summoning them back into the realm of the living (1988: 286). This perception, however, changed rather early on and made way for a more mundane form of conjuration, allowing necromancers to bring the dead back into their plane of existence.

Necromancy is mentioned in the Bible on numerous occasions. In the Book of Deuteronomy (18: 9–12) the Israelites are cautioned against the Canaanite practice of divination. King Saul (I Samuel 28), however, consults the Witch of Endor before engaging in a fatal battle with the Philistines (see witchcraft). It may be considered particularly ironic that the king who banished all sorcery from his kingdom should have to resort to the same disreputable methods after having been cut off from communication with God. The Witch of Endor...
Necromancy raises what is supposedly the spirit of the prophet Samuel, in order to question him about future events related to the battle ahead. Since Christian theologians later rejected the idea of humans being able to resurrect the dead in any shape without the help of God (something Saul surely could not have counted on), clerics have contested whether the spirit raised by the witch could really have been the prophet’s, or was rather a demon appearing in his stead. This general conflict was also partially responsible for necromancy being considered an explicitly demonic branch of magic in the Middle Ages.

Although the art of necromancy was originally distinctly separated from the conjuring of demons or the devil and only described the calling on the spirits of the dead for assistance, those lines have become increasingly blurred and almost indecipherable over time. Along with the general demonization of the practice itself, the very term *necromancy*, through the influence of the Latin word *niger* (black) as well as popular etymology, came to be known as *nigromancy*, the Black Art, denoting antisocial or evil forms of magic. From a certain point on, the distinction between necromancy and nigromancy – between summoning demons or questioning the dead – had effectively disappeared.

A number of written sources exist from which modern scholars have drawn their knowledge about medieval necromantic magic. A fifteenth-century *grimoire* manuscript known as the “Munich handbook,” a formerly obscure piece of writing which Richard Kieckhefer draws from extensively in his *Forbidden Rites* (1997), is one example. According to him, it was mostly clerics who were accused of practicing necromancy, due to their literacy and access to certain texts and knowledge but general lack of guidance (1997: 154). “Necromantic conjurations sometimes appear in books otherwise devoted to medical material, which could indicate that they were used by clerics with an interest in medicine or by non-clerical physicians” (Kieckhefer 1990: 155). The significance of ritual in necromantic and general magical practice may thus be traced to the familiarity with the strict customary observance of behavior inherent in religion. For necromancy, this included the necessity of the right ceremonial place and time, which could differ depending on which text or teachings the respective necromancer followed. Along with magical utensils, such as spell books, bells, or even wands, one of the most unifying and significant elements of the conjuration ritual was the protective circle the sorcerer and his assistant had to draw around themselves. Lewis Spence, in the *Encyclopaedia of the Occult*, gives a detailed description of the rituals involved in various kinds of necromantic endeavors (1988: 286–90). Apart from the divinatory purposes these rituals served, medieval necromancers hoped to gain the ability to create illusions and manipulate the will of others.

Necromancy, as a means of communicating with the dead, has been a considerable influence on the rise of modern spiritualism (see spiritualism), which provides new, less demanding, and less obscure methods of doing so (e.g., table turning, the Ouija board, automatic writing). The medium (see mediumship) conducting séances acts as a literal mediator between two worlds and – like the shaman or the necromancer – is especially aware of the significance that ritual holds even within the secularized modern mind. Givry goes so far as to say that “the necromantic craft of the witches has been advantageously replaced by spiritualism” (1931: 173). The ancient practice’s meaning for our understanding of occultism is certainly not to be underestimated (see occultism). The wish to be able to communicate with the dead, influence the present, and foresee the future, will probably never lose its intense appeal to humankind.

SEE ALSO: Witchcraft; Mediumship; Occultism; Spiritualism.

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New England Gothic

FAYE RINGEL

New England Gothic, like other manifestations of the American Gothic, encompasses supernatural and explained phenomena, ghosts, witches, and monsters as well as inbred families, guilty secrets, and monsters in human shape (see American Gothic). New England’s Gothic history, folklore, and literature combine nostalgia for a medieval or colonial golden age with the stronger belief that from the past comes horror and evil.

Stephen King, the exemplar of Gothic New England since the 1970s, continues the tradition of collecting and rewriting supernatural legends begun by Cotton Mather and John Greenleaf Whittier (see King, Stephen). Nineteenth-century authors such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Harriet Beecher Stowe immortalized the region’s Gothic past. In the twentieth century, Rhode Island’s H. P. Lovecraft peopled the landscape with hybrid monsters and the reanimated dead.

For these writers, seventeenth-century Puritans stand in for the Middle Ages of the first Gothic Revival. History supports this view: by the nature of Puritan doctrine, early New Englanders shared a fear of the malevolent powers of the dead. Belief in a Devil who delighted in tempting good Puritans led to witch-hunts and executions in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, most famously to the Salem witch trials of 1692–3, one of whose presiding judges was Nathaniel Hawthorne’s great-great-grandfather. Some colonists continued to dread Europe’s legendary monsters: the merfolk, ocean serpents, and lake-dwellers, vampires, and werewolves. New England’s forests frightened the first settlers; no less frightful were the original inhabitants, the Indians whose religion the Puritans called satanic.

Gothic medievalism in New England also included less malevolent survivals: the belief in fairies, Maypoles, and the search for and acceptance of signs, wonders, and “wonderful providences.” Intellectuals such as George P. Marsh (1843) pursued the “real Gothic” connections seen in Longfellow’s poem “The Skeleton in Armor,” which recounts the supposed Viking discovery of Newport, RI. Medieval revival architecture produced the Carpenter Gothic mansions which later became the first “funeral parlors,” establishing the popular culture image of the haunted house.

The darker aspects of Gothic medievalism are exemplified in New England’s obsession with the dead, from Puritan gravestone carving to ancestor worship. The Mathers recorded poltergeist activity, while later folklorists chronicled ghosts in farmhouses and factories (see Folklore). Though its origins were in nearby New York in the 1840s, spiritualism flourished in New England. The feats of “physical medium” Daniel Dunglas Hume, caricatured by Robert Browning as “Mr. Sludge, the Medium” (1864), were witnessed by Mark Twain, who later hosted séances at his home in Hartford, Connecticut.

Not all New Englanders shared the spiritualists’ sunny view of the afterlife; in the nineteenth century some believed that tuberculosis (“consumption”) might be caused by the dead returning to consume their relatives’ life force. Archeological evidence from Griswold, Connecticut has confirmed that bodies were exhumed and mutilated to prevent them from returning as vampires. This belief, native to
New England, informs Mary Wilkins Freeman’s “Luella Miller” (1902) and may have inspired Bram Stoker: a clipping recounting exhumations in Rhode Island in 1892 was among his notes for Dracula (see McNally 1974).

Another example of Gothic literature reflecting living belief is the circle of alchemists in seventeenth-century Connecticut, led by John Winthrop, Jr. who founded a “New London as an alchemical colony (Woodward 2010). These practitioners of “natural magic” may have inspired Hawthorne’s Roger Chillingworth in The Scarlet Letter (1850) as well as Lovecraft’s necromancer Joseph Curwen and his correspondents in The Case of Charles Dexter Ward (1927), a veritable Gothic travelogue of Rhode Island’s secret history.


Sensation novels, called “Dark Adventure” by Reynolds (2011) recycled Gothic tropes through the nineteenth century (see sensation fiction). Some were written by beloved children’s author Louisa May Alcott under pseudonyms (see Alcott 1997).

In the nineteenth century, women writers of “local color” created an American female Gothic tradition; many of the New Englanders wrote supernatural stories, whether based on local lore, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Oldtown Fireside Stories (1871) or European legends, such as Harriet Prescott Spofford’s medieval romance “Sir Rohan’s Ghost” (1859) (see female gothic). Other once-famous writers of the domestic Gothic include Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and Madeline Yale Wynne (see domestic gothic). Some were spinsters living in “Boston marriages”: Alice Brown, Rose Terry Cooke, and Sarah Orne Jewett set Lesbian Gothic stories in New England (see lesbian gothic). The most famous female Gothic story by a New Englander must be Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), inspired by the author’s postpartum depression and the oppressive “rest cure” of S. Weir Mitchell. In the same year, New England’s iconic spinster, Lizzie Borden, was accused of murdering her father and stepmother. Angela Carter retold her story in “The Fall River Axe Murders” (1981) (see carter, angela); the site is now a tourist attraction, the Lizzie Borden B & B.

Shirley Jackson’s fiction continued the female Gothic tradition into the mid-twentieth century (see jackson, shirley). Though she never explicitly states that her most famous story “The Lottery” (1948) is set in New England, the characters’ willingness to follow old customs they no longer understand and slaughter innocent scapegoats recalls Puritan history. So influential has she been in the genre that an award for “outstanding achievement in the literature of psychological suspense, horror, and the dark fantastic” is named for her. Female writers resident in New England continuing her tradition include Caitlin Kiernan, whose The Red Tree (2009) draws on the Rhode Island vampire outbreaks, ghosts, inbred towns, and the writings of Lovecraft. She makes explicit his subtext of sexual horror. Elizabeth Hand brings Old Norse legends to the Maine woods in “Winter’s Wife” (2007) and strange rituals to a bleak island in Generation Loss (2007).

Two of America’s most canonical writers, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, drew from the wellsprings of New England Gothic (see hawthorne, nathaniel; melville, herman). Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” (1835) is a foundational text, revealing every guilty secret of the Puritans, as he does in The Scarlet Letter, with its diabolical hero-villain, its persecuted heroine, and her “elf-child,” Pearl. The House of the Seven Gables (1851) transforms Salem legends of the witch’s curse and haunted mansion into explained Gothic.
Melville's classic *Moby-Dick*, published in 1851 after meeting Hawthorne, is equally New England Gothic, with its Bible-quoting, obsessed captain seeking the sea monster. Just as slavery haunts Southern Gothic literature, so New England's role in the slave trade, its fortunes made in opium (the China trade), and the environmental catastrophe of the whaling industry haunt *Moby-Dick*. Melville's short stories “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tартarus of Maids” (1855) turns the picturesque Berkshires into a dark, satanic mill, while “The Lightning-Rod Man” (1854) links a traveling salesman with the Devil.

Popular magazines of the 1890s portrayed rural New England as a backwater whose population had become inbred and sinister, and Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* (1911) exemplified these regional characteristics of guilt and sexual repression. By the 1930s, urban industries that had attracted women from farms and immigrants from Europe began to leave. Industrial cities like Fall River, MA, and Pawtucket, RI, and regions like northeastern Connecticut and the Merrimack River valley seemed left behind by history. The abandoned factory joined the abandoned farm as proof of New England's decline and insularity. This depressing picture emerges from the fiction of Shirley Jackson, especially “The Summer People” (1951). Regionalists Howard Frank Mosher and Carolyn Chute portray backwoods perversion and family secrets in the hinterlands of Vermont and Maine, recalling tropes of the Southern Gothic (see *southern gothic*).


The New England Gothic sensibility is found in poetry as well, from Whittier's ballads of ghost ships and witch trials, to the weird metaphors of Emily Dickinson, whose obsession with death led Camille Paglia (1991) to call her "Amherst’s Madame de Sade," to the explained Gothic of Robert Frost's hill-wives and hired men. Amy Lowell’s “The Crossroads” and “A Dracula of the Hills” (1923) deal with revenants, the latter based upon the native vampire belief.

No writer incarnates the New England Gothic as does H. P. Lovecraft, who lived most of his life in Providence, Rhode Island (see *lovecraft, h. p.*). Steeped in the region's history, he replaced the haunted castle with the abandoned farmhouse, the Inquisition with the Puritans, and Europe's decadent aristocracy with degenerate descendants of his own Anglo-Saxon stock. His invented gods and monsters are superimposed upon a realistic New England landscape. Claimed as a founder of American science fiction and horror, he is a dark regionalist in the tradition of Wilkins Freeman and Hawthorne.

Completely different from Lovecraft in literary style, Stephen King is also a regionalist in horror, juxtaposing traditional ghosts, vampires, and werewolves with a contemporary setting. His portrayal of Maine “characters” – particularly feisty old women – in such non-supernatural works as “The Reach” (1985) recalls Sarah Orne Jewett. His wife Tabitha King is also a novelist who loves Maine voices. Her *Caretakers* (1983) and *The Trap* (1985) are Gothic, grotesque though not supernatural. Their son Joe Hill King has achieved success in horror writing as Joe Hill, though he mainly eschews local color. Other writers who draw on legends of Northern New England are Rick Hautala and Joseph A. Citro. Rhode Islander Les Daniels, who died in 2011, did not set his vampire novels in New England, but lived a Lovecraftian life, writing after midnight and shunning the light of day.

Today, creative nonfiction may be the best source for New England Gothic: Joe Citro's many collections of supernatural folklore including *Passing Strange* (1996), Sebastian
Junger’s *The Perfect Storm* (1997), and Elysa East’s *Dogtown* (2009) both, coincidentally, about Gloucester, Massachusetts. The first recalls Melville with its sea legends, the other is a memoir and history of witches, witch-hunters, ghost pirates, and phantom leaguers, Neo-Pagans and ancient Druids. The region’s Gothic legacy draws intrigued tourists to “America’s Stonehenge” in Salem, New Hampshire, and to the Witch Museum and month-long Halloween celebrations in Salem, MA.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Carter, Angela; Domestic Gothic; Female Gothic; Folklore; Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Jackson, Shirley; King, Stephen; Lesbian Gothic; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Melville, Herman; Sensation Fiction; Southern Gothic.

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FURTHER READING


New Zealand Gothic

TIMOTHY JONES

The most distinct feature of the New Zealand Gothic might be the critical and popular difficulty in defining what the category describes, and which texts belong within it. Where other national Gothics offer more or less settled cores of texts that illustrate their character, New Zealand has yet to describe its own Gothic canon. The exact significance and dimension – the shape – of New Zealand’s Gothic is still being negotiated in both critical and popular discourse. Nevertheless, there is a distinct division between the nation’s colonial and postcolonial-era Gothics, and a growing sense that the genre speaks to New Zealand’s unquiet history.

The division of the New Zealand Gothic into distinct eras is a consequence of the constitution of the New Zealand literary field. Many mid-twentieth-century writers crucial to the New Zealand canon explicitly rejected the colonial-era writing that had preceded them as being clumsy and insufficiently rooted in the realities of the nation (see *postcolonial gothic*). Much colonial literature has simply
been ignored for many years, and remains unknown outside specialist criticism. Where other national Gothics look back to the texts of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries as having foundational roles in the national tradition, this maneuver is not really available in the New Zealand context. New Zealand’s colonial Gothics are not sufficiently well known to make a substantial contribution to contemporary conceptions of the genre.

These early narratives encountered the pragmatic problems of authoring Gothics in a newly minted nation devoid of the elaborate stock in trade of the European genre. Without the facilities to mount a credible castle Gothic, New Zealand’s early Gothics (see Imperial Gothic) drew more often from imported traditions of sensation fiction and imperial romance, although writers were seldom able to uncomplicatedly transplant European models to the new country. Often, the Gothic was limited to turns within romantic novels, or selected stories within wider collections, but writers certainly began to describe the new nation, and especially its native inhabitants, in Gothic terms. William Satchell’s *The Greenstone Door* (1914), a historical novel, depicts Maori cannibalism to ghastly effect. A. A. Grace’s collections, such as *Tales of a Dying Race* (1901), depict Maori alternately as barbarians and doomed victims of colonialism. “The Tohunga and the Wai Tapu” features a murderous Maori black magician who gets his comeuppance when he mistakenly baptizes himself with sulfuric acid. “Karepa’s Taipo” seems to link the death of a chief’s daughter to the land deal he has struck with a Pakeha – that is, a New Zealand European-colonist; the injuriousness of land dealing to younger Maori generations is literalized and linked to the supernatural. In these colonial Gothics, Maori culture is always in danger of being reduced to an exploitable resource for the generation of local horrors. Nevertheless, a fear of miscegenation, so common in similar Gothics internationally, is little evident in these texts.

In addition to nightmare ethnographies, the other persistent trope featured in New Zealand’s settler Gothic is a haunted landscape, where displaced indigenous presences might return or the colonial project might simply founder and collapse. An interesting version of this narrative can be seen in Katherine Mansfield’s “The Woman at the Store” (2007), a tale of murder and madness in an atomized, alienated settler society.

There remains a degree of popular and critical uncertainty over the identification of more recent New Zealand texts as Gothics. Again, this is a consequence of the constitution of the New Zealand literary field. Those texts that still constitute the New Zealand canon were authored when, internationally, modernism was shading into realism, a period when privileged literary culture was often inimical to genre. Because this construction of New Zealand literature tends to overlook the colonial period, and because many New Zealand writers and critics have preferred to understand New Zealand texts as being sui generis, New Zealanders have not been quick to identify their literature as involved with the Gothic, even when it turns to the uncanny, perverse, or morbid.

The two most frequently recognized Gothics of the mid-twentieth century come from writers at the fringes of the canon. Ronald Hugh Morrieson’s *The Scarecrow* (1963) narrates the misdeeds of the necrophiliac prestidigitator Salter and is shot through with antipuritanical energy, but still locates Gothic threat as lying outside the family and community. David Ballantyne’s *Sydney Bridge Upside Down* (1968) also features a perverse small-town killer, but instead focuses on the fraying of the Baird family and the social fabric of Calliope Bay. Both novels link sexuality with violent death, and depict provincial New Zealand towns as potentially Gothic spaces of ruin and enclosure; both also feature significant comic elements.

Morrieson was an outsider artist, and *Sydney Bridge Upside Down* is sometimes seen as the great unread New Zealand novel. While a number of major twentieth-century New Zealand writers engage with the genre, they are
not always recognized for doing so. Frank Sargeson, regarded as central to New Zealand literature’s critical realist project, has authored a handful of Gothic stories that reconfigure the imported genre so that it seems to naturally sit within the New Zealand landscape and, perhaps more importantly, Pakeha society. Notable among these is “I’ve Lost My Pal,” a tale of cruelty, murder, and homosexual desire in a shearing shed (see queer gothic). “Gods Live in Woods,” another farmstead Gothic, nods to the weird tales of E. M. Forster while appropriating Maori lore to Gothic effect. “A Good Boy” excoriates straight-laced, Protestant mores by waggishly arguing that the narrator’s desire to be a “good” boy has driven him to kill his girl. A number of Sargeson’s tales appear to draw directly from Poe. Sargeson’s later novella, The Hangover, is a murderous satire on repressed homosexual desire and prurient Protestantism, using doubled identity as a metaphor for the predicament of a young gay man.

The work of Sargeson’s sometime protégé Janet Frame draws heavily on themes of enclosure and female bondage (see female gothic). Owls Do Cry (1957) is one of several Frame narratives that describe the incarceration of their heroines in a psychiatric hospital. These certainly drew on Frame’s own experiences of institutional care. A State of Siege (1966) also features an isolated woman, this time tormented by a rapping sound — or by ghosts and memories — throughout a long, stormy night. These novels harness the tropes of the female Gothic as critiques of New Zealand culture and as psychological, even philosophical, investigations.

The postcolonial-era texts discussed thus far emphasize malign human agency and madness before the supernatural. An exception here is James K. Baxter’s poetry, which is thoroughly haunted. While Baxter’s work is hardly Gothic in substance, it often turns to a landscape populated by spectral presences, drawing from European traditions of haunting and a persistent sense of a land occupied by displaced Maori spirits. “Brown Bone” is a ballad of lonely settler death foretold by skeletal remains, and in “Sestina of the Makutu” bad dreams and aggrieved ghosts emerge from a Maori graveyard to torment the Pakeha poet.

Keri Hulme’s The Bone People (1983) was rapturously received in New Zealand upon its publication. Few contemporary reviews emphasized the darkness of the novel, but it employs familiar Gothic tropes, particularly the ghost, to illustrate the presence of conflict and disjuncture within the nation’s biculturalism.

Going beyond the notion of a bicultural Gothic, some criticism has suggested a distinct “Maori Gothic.” Patricia Grace’s Baby No-Eyes (1998) is a potential example of this subgenre. Maori cultural protocol is challenged and then reasserted in the novel, which presents a horror of particular concern to Maori — the storage of human tissue in a genetic “bank.” Whereas this might trouble or upset Pakeha, it is culturally and spiritually catastrophic to Maori. However, the novel is hardly intended to frighten, and its understanding of haunting sits outside conventionally Gothic treatments of the spectral. Whether this subgenre label is really meaningful has yet to be critically settled.

The Gothic proliferates at the fringes of New Zealand literature. The nation’s young adult fiction frequently features substantially Gothic material, although it is not usually as discursively charged as adult literary material. Maurice Gee’s Under the Mountain (1979) is a story of near-Lovecraftian alien entities awakening beneath Auckland; it terrified a generation of New Zealand children when it was serialized on national radio. Margaret Mahy’s young-adult novels frequently return to strange legacies and family secrets, and feature the incursion of the supernatural into the lives of their protagonists. Her first work in this mode, The Haunting (1982), won the Carnegie Medal.

New Zealand cinema offers at least two Gothic modes, both touched on in Sam Neill’s documentary, Cinema of Unease (1997). There is, on the one hand, the thoughtful, historic female Gothic sensibility of Jane Campion’s The Piano (1993), which returns to the uneasy landscapes of the settler Gothic. Films like this stand in contrast to a strain of cheerful splatter films, inaugurated by Peter Jackson’s early work,
which established the viability of internationally oriented, occasionally comic horror film production in New Zealand. This later style stands apart from local literary antecedents.

Scholarship that treats a specifically New Zealand Gothic is still at an early stage. No monograph exists on the subject, although it is occasionally dealt with in chapters in more general considerations of New Zealand or postcolonial literatures. There is a collection of essays that discusses recent manifestations of the genre, and a growing handful of journal articles. There is no edited collection of significant primary texts. Unsurprisingly, there is not yet a consensus view of the genre. Scholars are beginning to rediscover the substantial body of colonial New Zealand literature, and with it the colonial Gothic, which has until recently been invisible to most readers. It seems likely that this recovered literature will provide a new light in which to examine more recent New Zealand Gothics. Presently, most critical observations tend to frame recent New Zealand Gothics as being continuous with wider discursive currents within New Zealand cultural studies. Often, this means that texts are thought to examine postcolonial anxiety, or that they are an extension of a wider critical realist project, observing dysfunction and identifying points of cultural fracture.

SEE ALSO: Female Gothic; Imperial Gothic; Poe, Edgar Allan; Postcolonial Gothic; Queer Gothic.

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FURTHER READING


Nightmare on Elm Street, A (1984)

COLETTE BALMAIN

“American Gothic, like Gothic more generally, is haunted by history. Often framed in terms of institutional power and oppression, Gothic records the pleasures and costs of particular social systems.” (Goddu 2007: 63)

Wes Craven’s A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984) doles out Gothic horror in a contemporary setting: Middle America is terrorized and tormented by a primal father figure: Freddy Krueger (Robert Englund) – child molester and murderer – who emerges from the
repressed past intent on killing “innocent” teenagers as retribution for his fiery death at the hands of their parents. While the parents continually deny Freddy’s spectral existence and by association their own past transgressions, one by one their prepubescent teenagers are violently killed by Freddy’s dismembering hand as they sleep. Before the inevitable seven sequels which transformed Freddy into a “wisecracking” postmodern pop cultural icon par excellence with his own brand of merchandise from dolls through to replica gloves (see contemporary gothic), Freddy Krueger was a horrific monster (see monster movies), an expression of pure evil haunting the dreamscapes of the children of the bourgeois with the sharp steel fingers of his homemade glove and barely concealed pedophilic appetites.

Freddy’s first victim, borrowing a plot device from Hitchcock’s Psycho (1960), is Tina Grey (Amanda Wyss) – the archetypal damsel in distress, who is set up as the main character in the film’s opening sequences, only to be brutally murdered seventeen minutes in. Her role is taken over by her best friend Nancy (Heather Langenkamp), a prototype of a new Gothic heroine in horror cinema, who alone possesses the ingenuity and strength to defeat the sadistic father, unlike the two male members of the teenage group who become Freddy’s other victims. Rod Lane (Nick Corri), Tina’s lover, fails to save his girlfriend when Freddy attacks post coitus and is rendered immobile and terrified as an invisible force throws Tina’s broken body around the bedroom while the walls bleed, seemingly proving Freud’s thesis around the misreading of the primal scene. Arrested for her murder, Rod is strangled with his own bed sheets and his lifeless body hung from the bars of his cell. Glen Lanzt (Johnny Depp in his first acting role), Nancy’s boyfriend, dies a bloody death in his own bed in a scene which mirrors the death of Tina. It is left to Nancy, in her role as Clover’s (1992) “final girl,” to defeat Freddy by bringing him into the waking world and re-enacting the original murder of the father-figure. This, however, is an illusory victory – as how can you kill that which is already dead? It is Nancy’s subsequent refusal to give life to the bogeyman that ends the nightmare, or does it? Where does reality end and dream begin (see dreams)? Is any of what we have seen “real”? The use of fog as sublime element of terror (see sublime, the) in the nightmare sequences has seeped into the daylight in the closing sequences making it impossible to tell “reality” from “representation” which is, as Halberstam argues, the primary theme of A Nightmare on Elm Street (1995: 145).

Like the more “realistic” serial killers who inhabited the frames of horror cinema in the 1980s, Freddy Krueger is a contemporary monster rather than a mythical creature of folklore. Halberstam writes: “monsters of modernity are characterized by their proximity to humans” (1995: 23). He is the worst type of predator, a child molester and murderer, who lurks within rather than outside the regulatory institutions of polite society. As a janitor, he signifies class rather than racial anxieties, although his burnt and blackened skin can be interpreted as a conflation of the two rather than a displacement of one by the other, as Halberstam points out in her discussion of Gothic monstrosity in horror cinema: “More often than not, however, race is wedded to the various demonized class identities and coded into the overall monstrosity of the monster” (1995: 126). Freddy’s basement lair, where he killed his victims and where he himself was killed, signifies both his lowly social status and his abject nature as Other. While the film itself only alludes to his sexually aggressive nature, not making it clear that Freddy is not only a child murderer but a molester as well, the mise-en-scène of pedophilia that comprises his “home” is a pathology of deviant desire with its eviscerated stuffed animals, undressed Barbies, broken toys, and fetishistic mementos of past killings.

Williams writes that the main theme of 1980s horror is “dysfunctional families and avenging supernatural patriarchal avatars” (1996: 175). Playing against the dominant discourse of “family values” integral to the Reaganite politics of the time (see family), A Nightmare on Elm Street is a perverse oedipal
domestic drama marked by the failure of patriarchy and paternity. Here as elsewhere in 1980s horror cinema, the family is in crisis marked by the absence of the biological and symbolic Father, the paternal and the patriarchal. Tina’s father has physically abandoned his family and while Nancy’s father – Lt. Thompson (John Saxon) – may be present even though he is separated from her mother, Marge Thompson (Ronee Blakley), he refuses to acknowledge that Nancy’s fears are real, as to do so would be to acknowledge his and the other parents’ collective guilt and the imbrications of past and present. While fathers refuse to adopt their parental and/or symbolic role, mothers are represented as just as culpable. Tina’s mother resorts to sex while Marge finds oblivion in the bottom of a bottle. As in nineteenth-century Gothic “the family [becomes] a place rendered threatening and uncanny by the haunting return of past transgressions” (Botting 1996: 11). Abandoned children – whether physically or emotionally abandoned – provide easy fodder for the modern predator, gothicizing the domestic space marked by the return of the primal father as signifier of parental guilt and culpability. Sobchack writes that “in the contemporary horror film the sins of the father are truly visited upon the sons and daughters” (1987: 185). In many ways, Freddy is the double of Jack Torrance in Kubrick’s The Shining (1980), both “caretakers” of a declining patriarchy which is “simultaneously terrified and terrorizing in the face of its increasing impotence” (Sobchack 1987: 185). While Freddy Krueger functions as a symptom of an impotent patriarchy and reveals the cracks beneath Reaganite “family values,” Nancy inaugurates a new era of feminist Gothic heroines. Unlike her nineteenth-century counterpart – the damsel in distress – who waits to be rescued by her patriarchal savior, this new Gothic heroine determines both her fate and future by fighting back. Nancy refuses to be a victim of her gender. In her words: “I am into survival.”

SEE ALSO: Contemporary Gothic; Dreams; Family; Monster Movies; Sublime, The.

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Nodier, Charles

MATTHEW GIBSON

Jean Charles Emmanuel Nodier (1780–1844) was a librarian and naturalist who was also one of the early exponents of the Gothic and of Romantisme in post-Napoleonic France (see European Gothic). He is best known for stirring French interest in the Slavic world, for promoting the vampire as a literary theme in France, for his defense of the fantastic as both a literary mode and a philosophical tool, and for the quite shameless reinvention of his life through some eight “Souvenirs,” all written to mutual contradiction in middle to later life.

Nodier was the son of a local Jacobin politician and atheist in Franche-Comté who was mayor of Besançon during the official Terror: a seminal moment in Nodier’s education appears to have been when his father forced him to watch the guillotining of an old man and then complained at his son’s squeamish reaction. As a boy Nodier formed a society called the Philadelphes, which was a quasi-Rosicrucian order that held as its goal a return
to the simplicity and vigor of classical times. Later, already skilled in many languages and having made various entomological discoveries, he entered Consulate Paris and frequented both Jacobin and Royalist circles, but was incarcerated in 1804 for writing the satirical ballad “Napoléone” on the eve of Bonaparte’s coronation. Released through his father’s intervention, he later redeemed himself by working as secretary to Sir Herbert Croft in Amiens and in various libraries, until he was appointed librarian at Laybach (Ljubljana) in the new Napoleonic Republic of Illyria (Dalmatia and Slovenia) in 1812. Here he was also charged with editing and publishing the Télégaphe Officiel, a paper for the province published in French, German, Italian, and “Illyrian” (really Slovenian) that gave him the opportunity to investigate and write about local customs such as the vampire and the playing of the guzla (a one-stringed guitar). This he accomplished mainly through acquainting himself with extant literature on the region (such as Abbe Fortis’ Viaggio in Dalmazia, 1774), rather than through any fieldwork.

After the fall of the region to the Russians in 1813, Nodier returned to Paris and began to rebuild his career as a man of letters, working for the Royalist Journal des Débats and later Revue de Paris. Drawing upon his experience of Dalmatia, he wrote Jean Sbogar (1818), a sub-Radcliffe romance about an Illyrian brigand/revolutionary who is the scourge of Napoleon’s makeshift Republic, and who leads a double life as a Venetian philanthropist (see radcliffe, ann). The work received poor reviews until it was revealed in the pro-Bonaparte press that Napoleon was reading the romance in exile, after which Nodier finally managed to establish himself as a literary figure, having published several works to little effect in previous years. In 1821 he adapted The Vampyre into a successful stage play with Alfred de Jouffroy: one of several forays Nodier made into the theater, the play has Aubrey and Ruthven relocated to the Scottish Islands. He both published and wrote the introduction to Cyprien Bérard’s Lord Ruthwen (1820), a work that transposed Polidori’s story once again, but this time to contemporary Venice and Naples. Nodier further capitalized on his reputation as a vampire expert by producing a selection of supernatural curia culled mainly from Dom Augustin Calmet’s Revenants et vampires (1746) and the One Thousand and One Nights, called Infernaliana (1825).

Nodier managed to gain financial stability for himself and his family when he was granted a position as librarian at Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal in 1824, and also used the location to develop a thriving literary salon, which included the likes of Victor Hugo and Eugène Delacroix. He continued to write Fantastic stories throughout his career. The more notable among these include Trilby (1822), about a young woman in the Highlands of Scotland who is wooed away from her fisherman husband by a male elf (Nodier himself visited
the land of Walter Scott in 1821 and was greatly inspired by it). *La fée aux miettes* (The Crumb Fairy) (1832) is about a Breton carpenter, Michel, who saves the life of an old beggar woman and falls in love with her once he has seen a picture of her when young, and then goes in search of a singing mandrake. *Inès de las Sierras* (Inès of the Sierra Mountains) (1837) concerns the appearance of a beautiful female ghost in a Spanish castle, later exposed as a mad woman who has taken up the role of the ghost in life. All of these stories present an ideal reality that has the power of transforming mundane reality through belief in fantasy.

Eschewing initial accusations that his work indulged in the macabre, Nodier came to define the fantastic as the literature of a third age in *Du Fantastique en Littérature* (1827). The first age, the age of the Marvelous, was the classical era, in which men believed in the reality of monsters and gods, basing their belief on the power of their senses. Then had come the second age, when man’s poetic faculty had understood the universe as ordered by unknown or abstract forces, whether spiritual or rational. As Scanu has explained, the new, third age was that of the “Fantastic,” in which man, no longer believing in the reality of the Marvelous, nevertheless felt the necessity to explore it from a position of vicarious delight in order to escape the failures of the abstract philosophies he had recently been living under (2004: 9–11). Indeed, although Nodier argues in several prefaces for restraint and skepticism when encountering the fantastic, his early introduction to Amedée Pichot’s *Essai sur le génie et le caractère de Lord Byron* (1824) argues much more nihilistically that only fantasy and *mensonge* (lying) can reveal truth because the “keen and cruel” philosophy of the age (Enlightenment rationalism) had betrayed man. His views on the supernatural in literature have more in common with Coleridge’s demand for a “willing suspension of disbelief” and subsequent analysis of the psychological effect than with the structural principles of writers such as Radcliffe or Lewis, who centered more on provoking the reader’s suspense over whether unexplained events had natural or supernatural causes (although Radcliffe, like Byron and Scott, did influence the content of Nodier’s works) (see Lewis, Matthew). As Rogers relates, not only Byron and Goethe but also Laurence Sterne, satirist of associationism and realism in the novel, was an important influence on Nodier (1985: 57). Nodier’s promotion of excess in the fantastic extended to a defense of E. T. A. Hoffmann in the *Revue de Paris* (1830), after Sir Walter Scott’s essay “On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition” (1827) had condemned the German writer’s excessive use of the supernatural as betraying mental “sickness” (see Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus)).

Forming Nodier’s most controversial legacy are his “Souvenirs,” or memoirs, which are deeply untrustworthy but also intellectually and formally some of his most interesting work. His first, *L’Histoire des sociétés secrètes de l’armée et des conspirations militaires qui ont eu pour objet la destruction du gouvernement de Bonaparte* (1815), was an attempt to reinstate himself under the Bourbon dynasty. In it an anonymous narrator recounts how the restructuring of the Philadelphes in Besançon under the French Consulate (1799–1804) constituted an attempt to work toward the re-establishment of the ancien régime. This is contrary to evidence presented by Zaragoza that the real reason for reorganizing the Philadelphes was to allow its members to take part in the benefits provided by the Consulate (Zaragoza 1992: 72). Another work, *Les prisons de Paris sous le Consulat* (1825), was Nodier’s attempt to paint himself as having played a more heroic and involved part in history than he actually had. In this work, which recalls his imprisonment of 1804, he admits that “the ‘I’ is hateful” and confesses that his memories have been modified to allow him to take a part in historical events that make sense of them, as he proceeds to recount mixing with many famous prisoners of the era whom he never actually met (Nodier 1865: II 8). Another work, *Suites d’un mandat d’arrêt* (1833), written under the new, Orleanist dynasty of
Louis-Philippe, follows the period directly after Nodier’s release from prison in 1804, when the Consulate is falsely portrayed as reneging upon his pardon and chasing him across the mountains of Jura throughout Franche-Comté. This work presents the refugee Nodier as another Werther, full of sublime intimations and solitary delight in nature, but who compromises his virtue by taking refuge with a violent, Bourbon bandit, Hippolyte Bonin. While the work begins with Nodier’s declared right to rewrite his life, he later expresses his desire to convince the reader of his memoir’s empirical truth as he repeatedly swears he is not lying.

Although these Souvenirs sycophantiques were seen at the time as crude attempts by Nodier to reingratiate himself with whatever regime was in power, his self-conscious authorial intrusions, which by turns draw attention to his memoirs’ falsity and then insist on their veracity, help to align the Souvenirs with his more extreme views on both rationalism and the fantastic. In declaring the right to rewrite his life, Nodier was in fact pursuing the logic of fantasy and exposing the insufficiencies of reason for facilitating truth. The philosophies of the Revolution had betrayed both him and his generation, and had created an unsatisfactory reality: like Michel in La fée aux miettes, published a year after Suites d’un mandat d’arrêt, he had the right to transform the reality others had imposed and thus realize himself as he should have been.

SEE ALSO: Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; European Gothic; Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); Lewis, Matthew; Polidori, John; Radcliffe, Ann; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING


Oates, Joyce Carol

GAVIN COLOGNE-BROOKES

Joyce Carol Oates (1938–) states in (Woman) Writer (1988: 6) that writers are vampires of their own lives, so – as one might expect – her extensive body of work in numerous genres includes plenty in the Gothic mode. Her novels written under two pseudonyms, Rosamond Smith and Lauren Kelly, routinely make use of the doppelganger (see doubles), but varieties of the Gothic are just as prevalent in the more than fifty novels and more than thirty story collections that she has produced alongside volumes of essays, poetry, and plays.

A Professor at the University of Windsor, Ontario, until 1978 and thereafter at Princeton, Oates was born in 1938 in Lockport, New York. She studied at Syracuse and Wisconsin before abandoning a PhD at Rice to become a writer, publishing her first book, a story collection, in 1963. Her literary fiction reveals a core concern with personality and identity in interaction with the intricacies of American society. This gives rise to such themes as maniacal ambition, psychological and physical tyranny, and illicit or aberrant love. Many of her protagonists struggle to rise through social strata, often escaping overbearing individuals and transcending internal and external conflicts on the way.

Oates’ first novel, With Shuddering Fall (1964) anticipates later works in being about a claustrophobic relationship that can also be read as a struggle between solipsism and engagement. Wonderland (1971) is about the social rise and emotional alienation of a neurosurgeon, and more generally an exploration of consciousness. Oates subsequently suffered a mental crisis that produced a sense of the fallacy of the unified self. From this came The Assassins (1975), Childwold (1976), and Son of the Morning (1978), where she sought to rethink the ways fiction renders selfhood. Such works build on the narrative innovations of Gothic forebears Edgar Allan Poe and Fyodor Dostoevsky. Her narrators switch between first and third person, and render ambiguous the balance between perspective, imagination, and reality.

In the 1980s, Oates produced historical novels with Gothic elements. Bellefleur (1980) is about a dynasty beset by strange manifestations including the ghosts of those they exploited to attain land and wealth. A Bloodsmoor Romance (1982) tells of a patriarchal father whose daughters flee his influence. The most notable of the daughters, known as Deirdre of the Shadows, is kidnapped by a black balloon and reappears as a medium. Mysteries of Winterthurn (1984) involves a nineteenth-century detective’s pursuit of a killer who may be himself, while the title of her Gilded Age novel, My Heart Laid Bare (published in 1998 but written in the 1980s), is from a Poe statement that anyone setting down such
truth would witness the page burn up even as they wrote.


SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Dostoevsky, Fyodor; Doubles; James, Henry; Poe, Edgar Allan.

REFERENCE

FURTHER READING

Occultism
JUSTIN SAUSMAN

Occultism derives from the Latin occultus, meaning secret or hidden, and refers to a diverse set of spiritual beliefs and practices associated with mysticism, esotericism, or paganism, terms that are often used synonymously with the occult. Occultism can refer to unorthodox beliefs drawing on both Eastern and Western traditions, and is often associated with Satanism. However, it is not necessarily anti-Christian; occultists do not worship any particular deity, but instead call on spirits to help them explore spiritual worlds and secret powers of humanity. Occultism posits that there are hidden energies or forces animating the natural world that orthodox science cannot explain, and that the goal of magic is the transformation of the self through using these forces. Central to this is the idea of a secret tradition, veiled in a symbolic language revealed through direct contact with spiritual authorities (often known as Masters), gods, or other spiritual beings, and only to be understood by initiates of occult societies.

The aspects of occultism that have had a particular impact on Gothic are the practices of ritual magic and the invoking of angels, demons, or other spiritual entities through black magic, providing sensationalist plotlines.
in which malignant presences can invade the human world. Magic is the way in which occultists believe forces, whether natural or supernatural, can be accessed and manipulated through focusing on a set of symbols or words to manipulate their own perceptions, explore hidden aspects of consciousness, and allow contact with spiritual worlds. Although dating back to antiquity, occult ideas underwent a particularly intense revival during the mid-nineteenth century, paralleling the development of Gothic, and is connected through both thematic and biographical links.

The best known Victorian occult society was the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in London in 1888 to study a mixture of Hebrew Kabala and ritual magic. The most notable member was modernist poet W. B. Yeats (1865–1939), who claimed that his occult studies were the basis of his writing. Alongside this more canonical figure, the Golden Dawn also counted among its ranks Arthur Machen (1863–1947), who joined in 1899 and who, in contrast to Yeats, was ambivalent about the reality of the phenomena (see machen, arthur). He acknowledged the aesthetic appeal of magical rituals, while at the same time admitting “as for anything vital in the secret order, or anything that mattered two straws to any reasonable being, there was nothing of it” (Machen 1923: 151). Machen nevertheless used these experiences in The Hill of Dreams (1907) and noted that the characters of The Three Imposters (1895) seemed to foreshadow his own contacts with the occult world of late-nineteenth-century London (1923: 153). A second Gothic writer to be associated with the society was Algernon Blackwood (1869–1951), who was introduced by Yeats in 1900, and the experiences of ritual magic can be traced in the novels The Human Chord (1910) and Julius LeVallon (1916), and his psychic detective stories John Silence (1907) (Ashley 2001: 112–14) (see blackwood, algernon).

The Golden Dawn also gave rise to the most notorious figure of twentieth-century occultism, Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), derided by the periodical John Bull in 1924 as “the wickedest man in the World” on account of a series of sexual scandals, his advocacy of drug use, and associations with Satanism, having styled himself “The Great Beast” (Suster 1988: 85). Crowley’s occultism used sex as a key part of the magical ritual, and could appear as primarily psychological and libertarian, his motto being “do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.” But equally he claimed his magical powers were revealed by a demon, confirming his belief in supernatural agencies that would communicate to the chosen. Crowley published numerous works on occultism, as well as poetry and two novels, Diary of a Drug Fiend (1922), a story of drug addiction and occultism, and Moonchild (1929), describing a war between white and black magicians (see crowley, aleister).

Crowley is a pervasive cultural presence, having appeared in fictional guises in W. Somerset Maugham’s The Magician (1908), John Buchan’s The Dancing Floor (1926), and Anthony Powell’s novel sequence A Dance to the Music of Time (1951–75). It has been suggested that he was the model for Karswell in M. R. James’ short story “Casting the Runes” (1911), although no clear evidence exists that James knew of Crowley at the time of writing (James 1999: 320). Crowley was also an acquaintance of Dennis Wheatley, who modeled the sinister occultist Mocata in The Devil Rides Out (1934) on him, and famously warned his readers that the occult practices he described were based on real accounts, stating that “I, personally, have never assisted at, or participated in, any ceremony connected with Magic” and that if any readers were tempted they should “refrain from being drawn into the practice of the Secret Art in any way. My own observations have led me to an absolute conviction that to do so would bring them into dangers of a very real and concrete nature” (Wheatley 2007:15) (see wheatley, dennis).

SEE ALSO: Blackwood, Algernon; Crowley, Aleister; Machen, Arthur; Wheatley, Dennis.
Odoevsky, Vladimir

NEIL CORNWELL

Vladimir (or V. F.) Odoevsky (stressed “Odóevsky,” as opposed to “Dostoévsky”) (1804?–69) was a central figure in nineteenth-century Russian culture for nearly half a century. From something of an “angry young man” in the early 1820s, coediting the thrusting almanac Mnemozina (Mnemosyne), he experienced a flourishing period as a leading Romantic writer of mystical and Gothic leanings, before maturing into an overconscientious public servant and an indefatigable philanthropist. At the end of his life he was a Moscow senator, a leading musicologist, a keen amateur scientist, and a would-be court historian. Earlier, he had also been a theorist of Romantic aesthetics, a cultural thinker, an important music critic, a prominent popular educator, and even a culinary columnist. Despite his aristocratic lineage (as a “prince,” or kniaz, his family was traceable back to Rurik), he depended financially on his government salary and publishing royalties. Commentators have dubbed him “the Russian Hoffmann,” “the philosopher-prince,” “a Russian Faust,” and even “the Russian Goethe.”

Odoevsky was born probably in 1804 (some sources give 1803) and was a first cousin of the poet Aleksandr Odoevsky (1802–39). Having attended the Pension for Nobility of Moscow University, he founded the Society of Wisdom Lovers (the “Liubomudry”) and coedited Mnemozina. The collapse of the Decembrist Revolt of 1825, however, called a halt to almost any dubious intellectual activity, and Odoevsky settled down to marriage and government service in St. Petersburg, where he spent the next three decades. Resuming his writing, he also took a leading role in cultural life – hosting a salon, associating with leading writers and musicians, and getting involved in the leading journals. He organized charity concerts and was a founder of the St. Petersburg and Moscow conservatories. Having held various more middle-ranking civil-service offices, he became deputy director of the Imperial Public Library and in 1862 moved back to Moscow as director of the Rumiantsev Museum and a senator. He died in Moscow on March 11, 1869.

The pressure of government and philanthropic work had led him, in effect, to abandon his literary career in the mid-1840s. Indeed, after 1844, having published his collected (literary) works – albeit incompletely – in three volumes, with his major work Russian Nights appearing as an entity for the first time, Odoevsky produced very little fiction. He
resurfaced in the 1860s with a few publicistic pieces, but a projected second edition of his works never appeared and a late dabbling in the realist novel genre remained largely unwritten.

As a writer, Odoevsky was influenced by Pushkin, and he himself duly influenced Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. However, a reputation for eccentricity, “encyclopedism,” and dilettantism caused him to be taken less seriously during his lifetime than was his due. A minor revival of interest occurred in the early twentieth century (when Russian Nights was reprinted and a huge study of his works appeared – both in 1913). This was repeated in the 1950s, when collections of his educational and musical writings were published. His prominence in other fields notwithstanding, Odoevsky is now remembered largely as a writer of Romantic and children's fiction.

Throughout his intellectual career, Odoevsky never ceased to conceive grandiose cultural projects (not for nothing did Russian Nights include a story based on Piranesi, the architectural planner of vast, unrealizable structures). Few of these achieved more than a fragmentary existence. The two that he did complete, the cycle Variegated Tales (1833) and the philosophical frame-tale novel Russian Nights (1844), were both conceived in the 1820s, yet contrive to mark the onset and the climax, respectively, of their author’s mature period as a writer. By the end of the 1820s, Odoevsky had versed himself thoroughly in the poetics, and the philosophy, of Romanticism – in both its “high” German forms (inspired by Schelling, Novalis, and Hoffmann) and the “lower” varieties of the French école frénétique.

Russian Nights stands as a fascinating formal curiosity of Russian literature – consisting of a series of stories (or stories within stories), surrounded by philosophical and cultural discussion, and led by a protagonist named Faust. Caustic satirical tales (from within Variegated Tales or subsequently included in Russian Nights), frequently with supernatural or fantastic elements attached, led their author in at least two fruitful directions in his developing body of independent tales and novellas. One veered toward the fully blown society tale, notably the female social portraiture in Princess Mimi (1834) and Princess Zizi (1839). A more hybrid direction is indicated by The Live Corpse (1838) – a potpourri of didactic satire and Romantic philosophy in fantastic trappings. Arguably the most fruitful direction, however, was that of the fantastic mystical tale. Odoevsky’s occult and alchemical studies contributed toward his most alluring, yet long neglected, trio of late-Romantic stories, imbued with Gothic accoutrements: The Sylph (1837); The Cosmorama (1840); and the substantial double-story, or “dilogy,” The Salamander (1841).

The Sylph, subtitled “From the Notes of a Reasonable Man,” comprises letters from a protagonist to his friend (and eventual publisher), the “reasonable man,” whose notes frame the letters. This figure intercedes to “save” his friend from the alchemical obsession and the pursuit of sylphs that threaten his marriage prospects and conventional provincial lifestyle, as revealed in the extracts from his occult journal. The protagonist’s complaints about his “cure” seem to resurface in Chekhov’s one Gothic tale, The Black Monk (1894). It also clearly influenced Fitz-James O’Brien’s story The Diamond Lens (1858).

Odoevsky’s most overt depiction of the Romantic concept of dualism (or dvoemirie – parallel worlds) is to be found in The Cosmorama. Here the (first-person) narrative is conveyed in a manuscript – provenance unknown. This protagonist proves to have clairvoyant powers, awakened by the childhood gift of a “cosmorama” – a “box” of moving pictures portraying, or reflecting, a parallel life, or universe. The scope of perception in time and space, the grotesque phantasmagoria of visions, and the ensuing Gothic chain of events, interwoven with considerable skill between “vision” and “reality,” would tax the abilities of the most experienced plot summarizer. Many puzzles remain and the tale (which allegedly should have had a sequel) remains within the realms of the undecidable.
fantastic, as irony serves to reinforce the ambiguities. Curiously omitted by Odoevsky from his collected works, The Cosmorama did not receive a second printing until 1988.

Odoevsky’s most ambitious tale, in both length and setting, is the two-part The Salamander. The work opens on “the southern shore of Finland at the beginning of the eighteenth century” (the title of part one). From this rugged setting, with quotes from the Kalevala, the action moves to St. Petersburg and Holland. A Finnish orphan (Yakko), Finnish sorcery, and Peter the Great’s military and European policies feed into a cultural conflict, with fantastic and magical elements gaining the upper hand in part two, set in Moscow, and retold a hundred years later by an early prototype of the psychic investigator. Again, there is a hectic Gothic-style denouement, involving a merging of Finnish magic with Western alchemy, in which the dire prophecy of the “salamander” (Yakko’s foster-sister Elsa) appears to be fulfilled. This work has, in recent criticism, been accorded stimulating readings: as an anthropological-psychological tale, as a historical novel, and as a fable of postcolonial import, as well as pure Gothic extravaganza.

Other genres and styles in which Odoevsky operated over these fertile years include Gogolian whimsy; anti-Utopian satire (a prominent theme in Russian Nights); and proto-science fiction – notably the futuristic The Year 4338, in which the survival of the world (in that distant year) is threatened by a comet. It is ironic that Russian Nights, Odoevsky’s most substantial achievement, proved to be, in effect, his literary farewell (although he lived for another twenty-five years). A retrospective work by the time of its publication (many of its constituent parts having appeared as independent stories earlier), it seemed to its readers to be outmoded and too complex in design to satisfy the tastes of those years. However, psychological (or Romantic) realism soon reappeared in Russian literature and was strongly in vogue elsewhere: Dostoevsky and Poe are but two names that come immediately to mind. It is regrettable that Odoevsky played no further role in this movement, as his work by the early 1840s had shown a surprising degree of development.

Odoevsky may have been neglected in his own time and for long afterwards. Yet he was translated into French and German, and uncompromisingly plagiarized abroad, within his own lifetime. Fitz-James O’Brien merely leaned somewhat on The Sylph; but he appropriated The Improviser word for word (presumably also from its French translation in Le Décameron russe (1855)) and passed it off as his own Seeing the World (published in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine in 1857). The rediscovered Russian interest in Romanticism and its input into Modernism, together with a renewed Western fascination with Gothic fiction, is gradually promoting Odoevsky to a more established place among the more esteemed storytellers of nineteenth-century Europe.

SEE ALSO: Dostoevsky, Fyodor; French Gothic; Russian Gothic.

FURTHER READING


Opera

DIANE LONG HOEVELER

“Gothic opera” can best be understood as what came to be known as “rescue operas.” Very similar in plot to the earliest Gothic novels — and, in fact, frequently borrowing the Gothic’s settings, characters, and themes — these operas are “sung Gothic,” or an oral and performative transmission of the Gothic mode. They most frequently focus on two themes: the domestic ritual sacrifice of a woman and/or the unlawful political imprisonment of innocent victims of tyranny (see Charlton 2000). In both cases, the rescue operas stage elaborate releases of these victims only after the victims’ heroic efforts have allowed them to prove their worth; hence, the operas collaborated in promoting a secularizing bourgeois agenda of earning one’s salvation through one’s own efforts. Extremely popular throughout Europe from roughly 1780 to 1840, Gothic operas deserve to be recognized as important performative ideological markers of the Gothic imaginary.

Critical consensus argues that the Gothic/rescue opera had its first incarnation in Friedrich von Schiller’s robber-rescue drama Die Räuber (1781). Translated into French as Les Voleurs by Friedel and de Bonneville in 1785, the drama was then translated into English by Alexander Tytler in 1792 and seems to have influenced the first English opera with Gothic features, Samuel Arnold’s The Banditti, or Love’s Labyrinth (1781, with John O’Keefe). From the beginning, Die Räuber was viewed as an amalgam of French revolutionary spirit and Germanic hyperbole, a drama that “seemed to epitomize everything that was menacing in recent Continental literature and politics” (Mortensen 2004: 155). Versions of Die Räuber quickly made their appearance in the European Gothic imaginary in a number of guises: as Lamartellière’s dramatic French adaptation Robert, chef des brigands (1792), which Wordsworth may have seen when he was in Paris (Mortenson 2004: 155); as the extended interpolated tale in the middle of Lewis’ The Monk; as Der Geisterbanner (The Necromancer) (1792), a translation of a German Schauerroman (Gothic or horror novel) by Karl Friedrich Kahlert using the pseudonym Lorenz Flammenberg; as Charlotte Dacre’s conclusion to Zofloya (1806); and as Byron’s “Germanic” melodrama Werner (1822).

In their use of the acoustics of pain, imprisonment, and life-threatening events, Gothic/rescue operas enacted in a grandiose manner their culture’s political and religious upheavals. Their popularity before, during, and after the Revolution reveals a good deal about the vexed and ambivalent relationship between France, Germany, and England during this period, as well as revealing the cultural fluidity of the Gothic as an aesthetic mode.

By the 1790s, these Gothic/rescue operas were extremely popular, in both Britain and France, and adaptations of popular Gothic novels about victimization and persecution had reached all classes in a variety of theatrical and operatic venues. There were hundreds of Gothic novels and chapbooks written in England between 1764 and 1799, a large number of which attempted to defend the increasingly serious threats posed against the monarchy and aristocracy more generally in England. The Gothic began as an ideologically conservative genre committed to shoring up the claims of primogeniture and inheritance.
by entail. Novels such as Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (1778) were concerned with unjust tyrants, imprisonments, escapes, disinheritances, wrongful claims on estates, threatened assaults on virginal females, and the eventual triumph of the “true” aristocrat as rightful heir (see Walpole, Horace). The staged form of these plots stressed the dramatic effects, and, as the Terror’s impact spread, Gothic villains began to appear in increasingly horrific manifestations in England as well as Germany and France. For instance, in 1791, the sixteen-year-old Matthew Lewis spent the summer attending the opera in Paris and then sent a letter to his mother about the profound effect that *Camille, ou le Souterrain*, a rescue opera by B. J. Marsollier des Vivetières, had had on him:

> There is an opera, called “Le Souterrain,” where a woman is hid in a cavern in her jealous husband’s house; and afterwards, by accident, her child is shut up there also, without food, and they are not released till they are perishing with hunger. The situations of the characters, the tragic [sic] of the principal characters, the gaiety of the under parts, and the romantic turn of the story, make it one of the prettiest and most affecting things I ever saw. (quoted in Railo 1964: 85)

Clearly, we have here a miniature re-enactment on the operatic stage of the most Gothic of interpolated episodes in Madame de Genlis’ novelistic “letters on education,” *Adèle et Théodore* (1782, episode trans. 1783 as *The Affecting History of the Duchess of C***)**, in which an Italian noblewoman is imprisoned by her husband for nine years before being released, a motif that would appear fairly quickly in Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) and its imitations (e.g., Eliza Parsons’ *The Castle of Wolfenbach*, 1793). The use of the imprisonment and rescue motif seems to have originated in the private domestic sphere and then moved to the public, political realm in works that feature male aristocrats under siege by hostile, usually “revolutionary” forces (see Female Gothic).

The most accomplished British musical composer of politicized Gothic/rescue operas was Stephen Storace (1762–96), whose successes at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane were based on such operas as *The Haunted Tower* (1789), *The Pirates* (1792), and *Lodoïska* (1794). Storace’s operas have been called “pasticcios” by Eric White (1951: 224) because they “borrowed” a good deal of their musical numbers from earlier operas, as had long been the custom in an era in which notions of copyright were murky at best. Storace’s *Lodoïska* was his only attempt at composing a serious rescue opera, and he collaborated on the project with John Philip Kemble, an untried librettist who never again wrote another libretto (see Girdham 1997). Based on the diary-like narrative *Les Amours du Chevalier de Faublas* (1787), by Jean Baptiste Louvet de Couvray, two competing operatic adaptations of *Lodoïska* were composed and produced in Paris within a few weeks of each other, one by Luigi Cherubini (1791, with Fillette-Loraux) and one by Rodolphe Kreutzer (1791, with Jean Dejaure). Set in Poland, Storace’s version of the opera concerns the beautiful Princess Lodoïska, who has been placed by her father in the Baron Lovinski’s castle because the father has refused to allow her to marry Count Floreski. Meanwhile, a band of Tartars are preparing to assault the Baron’s castle, and Floreski and his servant Varbel align themselves with the Tartar leader, Kera Khan, in order to gain entry into the castle. Once inside, they, along with Lodoïska’s father, are captured, but the Tartars burn the castle and free all of its captives. Because Floreski has managed to rescue Lodoïska from a burning tower, her father relents and approves of their marriage. Although no score has survived, we do know from the libretto that music was performed throughout the battle scenes, and we also know that martial music was particularly popular with the lower class during this period, both in England and in France (see Girdham 1997). As Garlington notes about this work, “the music was considered completely
useless when divorced from the stage, and was not included in the published score. Obviously, the music for these scenes was secondary in importance to the stage machinery” (1962: 54).

Storace’s *Haunted Tower* features a Gothic setting during the reign of William the Conqueror, double disguises, interesting class concerns, and a hero who assumes his father’s armor and is mistaken for a ghost. Based on a tale of usurpation of the Baron of Oakland’s estate by his foolish relative, *The Haunted Tower* is almost a burlesque of Gothic tropes: for example, servants who use superstitious fears of the Baron’s ghost in order to drink their master’s best vintages in the “haunted tower.” For all of its Gothic trappings, however, *Haunted Tower* (libretto by James Cobb) is more a romantic comedy in the tradition of Shakespeare. In discussing the play, Burwick has called it “an anti-Gothic comedy with all the trappings of a Gothic melodrama” (2009: 191), while he has traced its origins to Sade’s play *La tour enchantée* (1788), about a lecherous king who is murdered in a tower by his friend, a baron, after the king makes a derogatory remark about the baron’s current lover (Burwick 2009: 178–80). Although we only have an 1810 transcription of Sade’s play and not the original, we can note that Sade’s play focuses on dynastic and aristocratic corruption, while Storace’s centers on the treacherous rivalry between English barons after the Norman Conquest under King William. Storace’s *The Pirates*, in contrast, is set in Naples and features a series of failed attempts at escape and rescue between Don Altador and his lover, Donna Aurora, who is seeking to flee her guardian, Don Gaspero de Merida, an evil pirate who intends to force her to marry his nephew, another evil pirate. Much of the action occurs “on the Road to Pausilippo, near Virgil’s Tomb,” perhaps the most Gothic touch in the opera.

The other most well-known example of a British rescue/Gothic drama was *Blue Beard; or Female Curiosity!* (Drury Lane, 1798) by George Colman the Younger and the successful singer-composer Michael Kelly (Lewis’ musical collaborator on *The Castle Spectre*). Their collaborative version, adapted from the French *Racou, Barbe bleue* by Sédaine and André Grétry (1789), which itself was based on the actual history of depraved libertin Gilles de Rais (1404–40), instead placed Blue Beard in Turkey and relied on references to Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt. And, if its political insinuations were not potent enough, in this iteration the heroine has to escape from the harem of an accomplished wife-killer (Taylor 2000: 94–5; see also Burwick 2009: 202–29).

It was a short step from the Gothic novel to the Gothic/rescue opera, with several versions of the same novel often appearing on stage within the same year even. For instance, in 1798, François B. Hoffman and Nicolas Dalayrac adapted Radcliffe’s novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) as the “tyrant” rescue opera entitled *Le Roi de Thébaïde* (Opéra Comique, 1798), although the “Cornelle of the Boulevards” because most of his works were played on the boulevards that had replaced the old walls of Paris, turned the same novel into *Le Château des Appenins ou le fantôme vivant* (Ambigu-Comique, 1798), in which a menacing phantom appears at the end of act three but is explained away, thereby employing the explained supernatural and transforming the ghostly apparitions of Pixérécourt’s source into hoaxes perpetrated on the gullible. Pixérécourt also adapted Lewis’ *The Monk* as the never-performed *Le Moine, ou la Victime de l’Orgueil*, and other less prominent French melodramatists utilized all the Gothic devices at their disposal; hence, there were bleeding nuns, doppelgangers, evil dukes, and eventually vampires all over the French and German stages (see Lewis, Matthew). M.-C. Camaille-Saint-Aubin and César Ribié adapted Lewis’ *The Monk* in Paris in 1798, producing what Montague Summers calls an “extravagant and grotesque farce” (1938: 230), with a ballet interspersed between the dungeon scenes and Ambrosio whirled away to an inferno by a monstrous hippogriff. Attempts were made to shorten and revive the work as a tragedy in
1800 (as *Le Jacobin Espagnol* by Prévost) and as a melodrama in 1802 (an abbreviated version of *Le Moine*, directed by Ribié). Besides those that focused on the plight of Ambrosio, there were also a number of adaptations that exclusively featured the tale of the bleeding nun, most famously *La Nonne de Lindenberg* by Cailleran and Coupilly (1798), the never-performed *La Nonne Sanglante* by Eugène Scribe and Germaine Delavigne (1838), and Charles Gounod’s version of *La Nonne Sanglante*, which saw eleven performances in 1854 (Williams 2006: 127). As Williams theorizes, the Gounod opera failed because the bleeding nun assumed an all-too-material presence, singing rather loudly in several scenes, so that what should have been a ghostly apparition from the transcendent realm instead became an uncomfortably material body and voice on the operatic stage.

Taking their inspiration from northern European sources – Shakespeare, Ossian, and French and British history especially – the rescue operas were written in the uncertainty that defines modernity. Through the rescue trope, they romanced the past and lured in spectators with terrifying scenes and rhetorical turns, even as they hybridized genre and denounced the injustices and arbitrariness of the throne. So great was the appeal of the rescue opera that its descendant, the melodrama, remains with us to this day as the very embodiment of religious, political, and emotional hyperbole.

SEE ALSO: Drama; Female Gothic; Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann; Walpole, Horace.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Penny Dreadfuls

STACEY MCDOWELL

Penny dreadfuls were a popular form of Gothic literature published in cheap, serialized installments during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. First emerging in the 1840s, they provided Gothic tales of horror, adventure, crime, and romance—all for the price of a penny. Their “dreadful” tag was only attributed in the 1870s when critical campaigns called for the works to be banned owing to their lurid subject matter. Best-selling titles included The Mysteries of London (1844), Varney the Vampire, or the Feast of Blood (Rymer 1847 [also attributed to T. P. Prest]), and the Sweeney Todd thriller, innocuously titled The String of Pearls (Rymer 1850). Although earlier works (also known as “penny bloods”) were not directly targeted at young readers, their popularity with teenage audiences was quickly recognized by enterprising publishers who began to produce school stories and young-hero adventure tales such as The Wild Boys of London (Anon 1864). Each serial comprised weekly “penny part” installments, with the most successful capable of selling up to 40,000 copies.

Factors enabling such a proliferation of texts included nineteenth-century advancements in literacy rates and print technology. Even before the Education Act of 1870 there were more readers and, particularly, more young readers than ever before. At the same time, cheaper paper and larger print runs meant that vast numbers of texts could be produced quickly and cheaply, ready to be churned out to the newly literate masses. These changes in print culture enabled the penny dreadful to provide a widely accessible alternative to traditional serials such as those by Charles Dickens, which were priced at one shilling (twelve pennies) (see Dickens, Charles). Their popularity is often attributed to the appeal they held for the working classes of Victorian London, eager for stories that captured the Gothic seediness of the city while at the same time offering an imaginative escape from its everyday drudgery.

The antecedents of the penny dreadful can be traced in the Gothic literary tradition established by writers such as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Sir Walter Scott, as well as sensationalist fiction, folklore, street ballads, and supernatural narratives. One of the best-known penny dreadfuls, Varney the Vampire, for example, incorporates a range of influences and allusions, from Shakespeare’s ghosts to Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner. Varney is said to have been inspired by Polidori’s The Vampyre (1819), while having itself inspired later vampire fiction such as Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897). The mutual influence and intertextuality that characterize penny dreadfuls, however, frequently gave way to wholesale plagiarism; the demand for material to be produced in
large quantities and at a rapid rate meant that writers often resorted to plundering existing Gothic tales and popular novels. Indeed, one of the most prolific publishers of penny dreadfuls, Edward Lloyd, actively encouraged such practices in his fleet of hack writers. Two of the most important authors were Thomas Peckett Prest and James Malcolm Rymer, although the author of any one serial was liable to change from week to week.

In addition to literary sources, the penny dreadful also drew inspiration from real life. Its origins lie in the Newgate Calendar – a regular publication that chronicled the exploits of Newgate Prison inmates. Murders and other crimes were fictionalized and embellished with all the hallmarks of Gothic melodrama as they were transferred into the pages of the penny press (see melodrama). Supernatural horror was set within the familiar streets of contemporary London (see supernatural, the), fiction blended with fact, criminality was made to seem both glamorous and heroic – and all of this created a frisson of readerly excitement that deeply unsettled the Victorian critics, who saw literature's role as one of social improvement. A causal link was drawn between juvenile crime and cheap literature and the moral panic that penny dreadfuls incited was founded on the anxiety that young readers who week by week devoured the adventures of real-life criminals might one day come to inspire a "dreadful"-worthy tale themselves.

In a bid to counteract their corrupting influence Alfred Harmsworth introduced The Halfpenny Marvel – a new publication ostensibly designed to provide more wholesome tales. Ultimately, however, Harmsworth (a name worthy of any penny dreadful villain) was reputed to have “killed the penny dreadful by the simple process of producing the Ha’penny Dreadfuller” (Turner 1976: 115). The availability of cheaper, gorier alternatives, along with changes in the market, meant that by the early twentieth century the sale of penny dreadfuls had gradually petered out.

Their ephemeral nature means that, today, few original copies remain (a number are held in the Bodleian Library in the Opie, John Johnson, and Frank Pettingell Collections). Although the intrinsic literary value of penny dreadfuls is questionable, their historical status as popular mass literature and the clues they hold about the nature of Victorian public morality provide contextual information about the ways in which print culture, market forces, morality, and class operate within the wider tradition of Gothic literature.

SEE ALSO: Dickens, Charles; Melodrama; Supernatural, The.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING

The concept of “phobia” suggests something more than “fear,” conveying instead an intensely anxious reaction to a specific stimulus that verges on the excessive. The term was first recorded in the post-classical Latin formulation “hydrophobia,” which designated rabies through its sufferers’ typical display of fear in proximity to water. This supplied the model for later formations in English, which occurred in fairly limited instances during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries before appearing in abundance from the nineteenth century onward. In particular, it has been observed that “the last three decades of the nineteenth century were phobia’s ‘belle époque’” (Trotter 2004: 463). Whereas fear is an instinctual part of our brain physiology, a life-preserving process rooted in the amygdala’s function in processing negative emotions, a sufferer of phobia “experiences a marked, persistent, and excessive or unreasonable fear when in the presence of, or when anticipating an encounter with, the specific object or situation” (APA 1994: 444). In an almost Gothic moment of possession, phobia invades and engulfs the body, infiltrating the mind and disrupting normal mental associations – a process acutely captured in William James’ description of the response of an agoraphobic, who “is seized with palpitation and terror at the sight of any open place or broad street [...] He trembles, his knees bend, he may even faint at the idea” (1890: ii. 421). Over a quarter of a century later, Sigmund Freud’s Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1916) pointed out the disproportion between the triviality of stimulus and the immensity of response in the phobic sufferer.

The origins of phobias have been explained in two principal ways in psychotherapeutic studies: learning theory and psychoanalysis. According to learning theory, a phobia of a particular situation or object emerges from its association with a childhood trauma or fear (e.g., injury, loud noises, falling) while psychoanalysis posits that the phobic object/situation holds a symbolic relationship to a deeper source that is unconsciously feared. Freud argued that a process of “anticathexis” occurs in which the Superego blocks the instinctual drives (Id), frustrated desire then re-emerging as neurosis. One example of this phenomenon is phobia, which results from the repression and projection of aggressive and libidinal impulses, such as the Oedipus complex and a fear of castration, back onto the subject.

Given the excessive and compulsive aspects of phobias, it is unsurprising that they have formed a recurrent motif within Gothic writing from its earliest manifestations to present-day incarnations. Gothic is replete with variegated manifestations of inchoate fears, but then complicates matters so that the phobic source is often cathected as the object of desire. A telling example of this is Henry Fuseli’s painting The Nightmare (1781): a sleeping woman lies sprawled across a bed; upon her abdomen crouches a grotesque incubus, who peers out at the viewer, while a featureless horse’s head pokes through the bed’s drapes (in order to invoke the semantic pun of a “nightmare”). While the demon presents a disturbing figure that threatens to suffocate its victim, equally problematic is the woman’s languid body, which generates an ambivalent erotic charge in the image.

Eighteenth-century theories of the Sublime supplied a discursive model through which the aesthetics of fear could be articulated (Burke 1757; Kant 2007) (see sublime, the). More specifically, the concept of “terror” played a vital role in shaping early Gothic novels such as Ann Radcliffe’s romances of the 1790s (see terror). Radcliffe’s heroines encounter supposedly supernatural phenomena that are later explained as the influence of extreme fear combined with their vulnerable circumstances. In The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), Radcliffe’s heroine Emily discovers a black veil behind which lies an object so terrifying that she immediately faints, blocking the object from her memory. It is not until the end of the novel that we are told that Emily mistakenly believes
she had discovered a decomposing corpse stretched out on a bed, which is revealed to have in fact been a waxwork effigy (see Radcliffe, Ann). Such episodes functioned as a way of voicing anxious responses to the various displacements, particularly female marginalization, that occurred during the eighteenth century. Male Gothicists also explored their own anxieties about female sexuality: in Matthew Lewis’s novel The Monk (1796) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem Christabel (1797–1800), Matilda and Geraldine respectively present women as transgressive figures able to disrupt the boundaries of sexual identity, gymnophobically rendering both as monstrous (see Lewis, Matthew).

The atrocities in France during the mid-1790s influenced literature across the Channel, with the Marquis de Sade (1800) commenting that the French “Terror” stimulated a Gothic lexis of paranoia and hysteria, generating mixed responses in the Gothic. In the main, these manifested themselves in the xenophobia of novels such as Lewis’ The Monk and Charlotte Dacre’s Zofloya; or, the Moor (1806). Contrasting, some writers used the Gothic mode as a way of expressing a radical critique of the ancien régime: William Godwin’s Things as They Are (1795) literally palpitates with phobic anxieties about hegemonic abuses of power and persecution of innocence (see Godwin, William).

As the nineteenth century unfolded, innovations in Gothic writing began to emerge through the periodical press that would later dominate Victorian print culture. The efflorescence of the “Tale of Terror” pioneered by Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine between 1817 and 1832 produced fear-laced narratives preoccupied with situations of excessive physical and mental torment (see Tales of Terror). Daniel Keyte Sandford’s “A Night in the Catacombs” (1818) recounts the imprisonment within the underground cemetery of Paris of a young English traveler. William Maginn’s “The Man in the Bell” (1821) offers a first-person account of a bell-ringer’s entrapment in a belfry while a giant bell rings, nearly killing him and causing his subsequent campagnophobia. A suite of stories that engaged with the prevalent fear of living interment appeared in the magazines at this time, among them John Galt’s “The Buried Alive” (1821) and “The Dead Alive” (1834), and Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Black Cat” (1843) and “The Premature Burial” (1844). Heavily inspired by the Blackwood’s tales, Poe penned dozens of fear-saturated pieces during the 1830s and 1840s, making him an accomplished practitioner of the phobic narrative. Poe’s narrators tend to be enervated, emasculated relics plagued by guilt and fear, whose stories are luridly detailed in purple prose. “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843) is a chilling psychological study of an unnamed narrator who believes himself to be persecuted by an old neighbor’s “vulture eye” and murders him, hiding the dismembered corpse under his floorboards. Overwhelmed by subconscious guilt, the narrator hallucinates that his victim’s heart is still beating, forcing him to confess his crimes to the police (see Poe, Edgar Allan).

Late-Victorian Gothic narratives responded to numerous transformations in Western culture, such as the emergence of the New Woman, the spread of criminality, scandals regarding the sexual continence of the urban populace, medical discoveries about disease, degeneration theory, a loss of faith in the wake of Darwinism, and uncertainty about imperialism. It is unsurprising, therefore, that a more urgent note of anxiety crept into the Gothic, often as a panoply of phobic states imbricated upon each other in dizzying combinations. In Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Green Tea” (1872), a clergyman is haunted relentlessly by a simian demon that could be seen to symbolize his loss of faith or unconscious homosexuality, until he is driven to suicide. Fin-de-siècle concerns about science, the dissolution of class boundaries, and evolutionary regression coalesce in Robert Louis Stevenson’s post-Darwinian urban nightmare The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886). The city itself becomes a nightmarish phobic entity in many of these narratives, emematizing both an ever-growing populace
claustrophobically pressing upon each other and the anonymous autophobia of the detached individual of modernity (see Steven-son, Robert Louis; Urban Gothic).

Xenophobic fears of reverse colonization can be seen in imperial Gothic narratives, such as Richard Marsh’s The Beetle and Bram Stoker’s Dracula (both 1897), which deal with urban invasion by an alien “other.” Collapsing fears of unregulated sexual desire and oriental corruption through the paradigm of sexual exchange, these ambivalent narratives enact what Homi Bhabha (1983) has identified as the tension between identification/desire and alienation/phobia. This is often achieved using the emerging medical discourse of epidemiology, particularly that of sexually communicable diseases, which can seen as analogous to the vampirism of Dracula. Images of pathogenic contagion were also used to explore domestic fears of the horrors that might greet the colonialist abroad. Works such as Rudyard Kipling’s tale of human-to-animal metamorphosis, “The Mark of the Beast” (1890), and Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness (1902) depict worlds in which colonial greed and savagery spread from the depths of the Congo to the heart of the Thames (see Imperial Gothic; Kipling, Rudyard; Marsh, Richard; Stoker, Bram).

Twentieth-century Gothics seem to offer more rarefied, but no less powerful, representations of phobia. The frisson of M. R. James’ Edwardian narratives demonstrates that phobia can be communicated through a subtle touch. His most famous tale, “Oh, Whistle and I’ll Come to You, My Lad” (1904), recounts the discovery of a mysterious Anglo-Saxon whistle by an academic holidaying on the East-Anglian coastline. The story culminates with the protagonist being attacked in his bedroom by a non-corporeal being that possesses the linen from an adjacent bed and whose only power is “to frighten.” James’ stories are populated with phobic objects: maps, paintings, runes, dolls’ houses, and most particularly books, which haunt the protagonists in various chilling ways (see James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes)). Across the Atlantic, James’ subtle bibliophobia was ratcheted to fever pitch in H. P. Lovecraft’s febrile pulp fictions of the 1920s and 1930s, which are populated with seductive necronomica that derange their readers with their cursed contents (see Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips)). The emergent cinema industry also played out contemporary fears of the alien “other,” who sought to drain the lifeblood of the bourgeois nation. Drawing on contemporary anti-Semitic imagery, F. W. Murnau’s German Expressionist film Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror (1922) portrayed the vampiric protagonist as a hairless, rat-like grotesque. By contrast, Tod Browning’s US movie Dracula (1931) offered filmgoers Bela Lugosi’s sinister aristocrat, who seeks to invade and seduce the West with his Eastern European alterity (see Anti-Semitism; Film; Lugosi, Bela). In the postwar era, Cold War fears about global destruction and ideological conversion emerge in Richard Matheson’s I Am Legend (1954), which offered a postapocalyptic fable cloaked as a vampire narrative, while Jack Finney’s alien-invasion story, The Body Snatchers (1954), presents a loosely veiled parable about communist brainwashing (see Matheson, Richard). As mid-century cinema expanded, filmmakers were able to develop a sophisticated discourse of phobia that held audiences in thrall, particularly in the masterpieces of Alfred Hitchcock: Vertigo (1958) features as a protagonist a detective paralyzed by acrophobia, while The Birds (1963), based on Daphne du Maurier’s zoophobic novella of 1952, focuses on a community marauded by a murderous flock (see Du Maurier, Daphne).

During the later twentieth century, phobic objects emblazoned an exponentially fragmenting concept of “humanity,” the ontological essence of which had been inexorably eroded (see Gothic 1950 to the Present). Reacting against the consumer capitalism and Cold War brinkmanship of the 1970s and 1980s, Gothic presented gruesome images of human bodies taken over by alien beings with rapacious appetites for destruction that could pass themselves off as human. Ridley Scott’s Alien (1979) and John Carpenter’s The Thing
(1982) reflect a world disenchanted with contemporary values and increasingly uncertain about its own humanity. It was not simply exotic locations such as outer space or the Antarctic that harbored Gothic monstrosity: suburban Gothic probed fears of the evil “next door,” which could invade our homes or even our dreams. Stephen King’s It (1986) features a shape-shifting demon that takes the form of the thing that most frightens its victims, while Wes Craven’s A Nightmare on Elm Street film franchise (1984–2010) features a resurrected pedophile who kills his teenage victims in their sleep (see Nightmare on Elm Street, a (1984)). Technophobic anxieties of the blurred boundaries between human and non-human find their voice in Ridley Scott’s movie Blade Runner (1982) and William Gibson’s cyberpunk novel Neuromancer (1984), offering today’s networked, smartphone-reliant generation a salutary warning.

Recent Gothics have sustained this focus on the power of our fears as determining factors of contemporary life, reflecting concerns about global terrorism, biotechnological experimentation, ecological catastrophe, and the electronic revolution. Crossover movie successes such as Hideo Nakata’s Ringu (1998) and Takashi Shimizu’s Ju-On (2003) blend Japanese folklore with modern technology in uncanny and disturbing combinations (see Japanese Gothic). Staples for filmgoing teens, Stephen Kaye’s Boogeyman (2005) and Chuck Bowman’s The Tooth Fairy (2006), as well as Juan Carlos Fresnadillo’s more adult-oriented Eurogothic Intruders (2011), pay homage to the most primordial Gothic narratives: our childhood fears of the monsters under the bed or in the closet. Given the present electronic age, an intriguing number of Gothic novels have returned to the past for inspiration, combining nostalgia with a fear of history itself as a monster that threatens to devour us. Elizabeth Kostova’s bestselling novel The Historian (2005) returns to the myth of Dracula as a being who traverses time and infects the libraries of his victims with “undead” books, while Tasmanian author John Harwood’s neo-Victorian fictions intertextually mine bygone Gothics as a source of dread for today’s readers (see Intertext). It would seem that, while phobia may have changed its outward trappings to reflect the changing concerns of society, its enduring omnipresence in the Gothic shows that, ultimately, all we have left to fear is fear itself.

SEE ALSO: Anti-Semitism; Degeneration; Doubles; Du Maurier, Daphne; Film; Godwin, William; Gothic 1950 to the Present; Imperial Gothic; Incest; Intertext; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); Japanese Gothic; Kipling, Rudyard; Lewis, Matthew; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Lugosi, Bela; Marsh, Richard; Matheson, Richard; Misogyny; Nightmare on Elm Street, A (1984); Poe, Edgar Allan; Psychoanalysis; Race; Radcliffe, Ann; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Stoker, Bram; Sublime, The; Tales of Terror; Terror; Uncanny, The; Urban Gothic.

REFERENCES


Often mistakenly credited with inventing the literary Gothic, Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49) contributed significantly to the continuance and sophistication of the Gothic tradition. In the majority of his tales, in several poems, and in a novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), Poe demonstrates important modifications of Gothicism, principally in imparting psychological realism to his characters and credibility to the situations that affect them. What is often forgotten amid the mythologizing that frequently makes Poe’s works attractive is that he deliberately turned to the writing of fiction to make money after his initial three books of verse attracted little attention and less remuneration.

Poe’s fiction in many surface features follows patterns of the Gothic short story popularized in the pages of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* and other British and American literary periodicals from the 1820s well through the nineteenth century. Moreover, Poe recognized that many Gothic works—such as Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) through to Poe’s own times (and beyond)—mingled the comic and horrific, and he speedily discerned, and ridiculed, the extravagances inherent in these works. Thus, his own fiction and, possibly, “The Raven” (1845) may seem to be wholly somber, although they may likewise offer multiple interpretations, all equally valid.

Poe’s stories first appeared (anonymously) in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* in 1832. Of the five tales published that year, four were obvious burlesques of contemporary bestselling authors, though the first to appear, “Metzengerstein” (January 14, 1832), betrays comic and serious elements. In this and other works, Poe’s revisions and republications reveal increasingly serious intent and greater technical refinements. In these first years of his fiction writing, Poe also experimented with a book project, “Tales of the Folio Club.” Within the framework of a pretentious literary club, the members were caricatures of popular authors, including Poe himself. During monthly evening meetings, accompanied by plenty of food and drink, each member reads a tale of his own creating, which the members then debate in pompous, nonsensical fashion. The weaknesses of the fiction and critical methodology of the time were ultimately thus exposed. In the context of gluttony and drunkenness, the weird settings and the overstrained characterizations, situations, and language would have been entirely comic, but plausible. No publisher would risk the likely financial losses of such a book, wherein the humor was too subtle for average readers, so Poe published the tales individually, and without the Folio Club framework they often seemed ambiguous.

The tale originally entitled “The Visionary,” but better known by its final title, “The Assig-nation,” (1934) furnishes a representative text in which Poe’s revisions alter any earlier mirth into more probing considerations of life versus art, deftly blending in folkloric elements (see folklore) and romantic intrigue. What may first have read as an engagement with the controversies that encircled the biographies of Lord Byron during the early 1830s is transformed into a tale in which the love affair...
between Byron and Countess Guiccioli is subsumed by considerations of the psychology in love relationships. Similarly, the related contexts of life and art are linked to folk beliefs about tragedies that befall mortals who fall in love with nonmortal objects that mime life (in this tale, statuary). Thus, what could be read as nothing more than a tawdry story about illicit love transcends such tawdriness by means of Poe's subtle art. The “Visionary” in this tale may be either the narrator, whose perceptions are constrained within physical planes, or the stranger-hero, whose “vision” shifts from collecting art objects that relate to love (but the loves of classical deities are far more liberated than those in the human society of the early nineteenth century) to a love that itself defies the general conception of extramarital affairs prevalent in the human outlook. As in “Metzengerstein,” in which the young, profligate Baron and his great supernatural horse symbolize what might be designated as the human and animal, or rational and non-rational aspects in human behavior, the mortal–statue shifts effected in “The Assignment” lead to tragedy. The difference is that the latter tale presents what is commonly viewed as tragic as a possible transcendence of the illicit lovers to another world (that on the far side of death) that is sympathetic instead of disapproving of their love. The suicide, rather than being horrifying melodrama, is related to the root meaning of the word: “death of the self.” The union of the stranger and his inamorata is contextualized within the themes of giving up individuality, which may be destructive to a genuine union, and masculine and feminine equality.

Poe soon comprehended that he could produce tales containing bizarre characters involved in threatening circumstances, in which the human mind itself provided understandable origins for terrors besetting the protagonists. He also realized that he could use long-standing Gothic trappings and characters – for example, the haunted, decayed castle (or its equivalent); gloomy landscapes; characters whose terrors often resulted from fears of death, and, if they survived, strongly affected their subsequent conduct – to represent states of minds under heightening stress. These techniques evince a great advance over what in antecedent Gothic fiction more often seem like implausible characterizations; Poe created Gothic fiction that was eerie, but because of understandable psychological roots. Poe’s typical first-person narrative methods enhance the psychological realism, which coalesces well with the hyperbolic language and feelings of the protagonist and, usually, other characters. The brevity in these tales likewise strengthens verisimilitude: extending the length would diminish the impact of the terrors (such length sometimes being a defect in Gothic novels). Another feature in Poe’s presumably supernatural writings is his accomplished manipulation of the supernatural to achieve realistic results. That is, a seeming ghost may not be a mere cardboard figure but a character or presence symbolizing aspects of mind or gender.

Consequently, Poe’s later tales do not immediately yield the humor evident in earlier works such as “A Tale of Jerusalem,” “Bon-Bon,” “The Duc de L’Omelette,” and “Loss of Breath” (all 1832), though Poe did not altogether eschew the comic impulse in his later works. “Ligeia” (1838), “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), “William Wilson” (1839), “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841), “The Masque of the Red Death” (1842), “The Raven” (1845), “The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether” (1845), and “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846) are customarily read as wholly grim pieces, though all have comic facets (see comic gothic), and these works are not the sole examples of Poe’s later writings that subtly blend humorous and horrifying elements – witness, for example, “The Angel of the Odd” (1844), “The Sphinx” (1846), and “Hop-Frog” (1849). True, we find recurrent motifs of drunkenness and gluttony in “Tarr and Fether,” “The Cask of Amontillado” (wherein protagonist and antagonist become intoxicated, though the former, Montresor, does not overtly tell readers about his own mounting intoxication), and “Hop-Frog.” In these tales a greater
psychological realism emerges than may, or may seem to, in some of the more directly satiric and parodic earlier fiction.

“The Fall of the House of Usher” constitutes a signal representative of the sophistication of Poe’s Gothic tales. The unsettled protagonist journeying into intensifying foreboding situations; the haunted, decaying Usher mansion; the mounting suspense relating to the narrator’s reaction to the mirror image of the old stone mansion as reflected in the adjacent pool (in which he also sees his own reflection, which may resemble that of the house, which in turn looks like and symbolizes a weird human head); the narrator’s brief but unnerving meeting with the family physician; his introduction to Madeline (or, rather, his being made aware, for the first time, of her existence, which disturbs him); his discovery of the decaying state of his former schoolmate, Roderick; the pervasive, foreboding eeriness of the mansion; Roderick’s poem, “The Haunted Palace”; Roderick’s painting (of a void that seems so like the Ushers’ own state, which in turn reflects that of the narrator himself); the seeming death and eventual return of Madeline; the collapse of the “house” (physical and emotional), symbolizing the downfall of the three main characters; and finally the narrator’s escape and his compulsion to provide an account of the strange circumstances (which symbolize his own psycho-physical state): all these, and much more, emblematize a character in whom physical makeup and, more importantly, emotional stability are frighteningly imbalanced.

Poe was many years ahead of his time in his comprehension of an individual’s embodying masculine and feminine components. If, as is typical in several of Poe’s works with important female characters, the feminine is repressed, what eventuates is disaster for the male (often depicted as a survivor of a beloved female’s death), who is responsible for the decline and, usually, the burial of the feminine presence. This circumstance informs “Berenice” (1835), “Morella” (1835), “Ligeia,” and “The Fall of the House of Usher.” Of course, these deaths and burials are symbolic of the repression of some paramount force in the male’s existence, usually relating to artistic-spiritual and related psycho-sexual makeup. Two additional tales can be grouped with those just cited, “How to Write a Blackwood Article – A Predicament” (1838) and “Eleonora” (1842). The former piece parodies not only the Gothic short story overall but also Poe’s own themes and methods (and is the only tale in which the narrator is female). More than passing notice may inhere in Mr. Blackwood’s advice to the aspiring fiction writer, Signora Psyche Zenobia: “Hint every thing – assert nothing” (Poe 1968–78, vol. 2: 342). Moreover, for the finest Blackwood tale she should write about the sensations: “Sensations are the great things after all” (340). While on the one hand this remark may seem insignificant, on the other it serves well as a definition of Poe’s own aims in the writing of fiction (and verse). Complaints about Poe overdoing description in his fiction must give way to the fact that Mr. Blackwood’s counsel is also a perfect definition of Poe’s symbolic techniques. Just as many of his contemporaries accepted and employed symbolism to enhance their literary art, Poe, too, often wrought such that things or tangibles assume symbolic dimension; for example, the house of Usher itself, wherein gender issues may seem uncertain (note how Madeline, for all her apparent debilitation, proves to be more powerful than her twin) and the narrator goes forth strengthened sufficiently to follow his compulsion to tell a story with great forcefulness. Once he has witnessed the devastating consequences of “burying” the creative presence in one’s self – whether that presence is artistic or sexual creativity – he emerges with energized abilities to reflect upon the events he has observed as they relate to himself. That is, Roderick and Madeline represent twin halves in what should be an integrated self. That Roderick inclines more and more toward the artistic – but in doing so imperils the physical, and potentially sexual, elements in his makeup – produces all the horrors that result from such unbalancing or repressing of strong natural forces. Some readers of “Usher” suggest that
the downfall of the house, in all senses of that word, is the outcome of Roderick and Madeleine’s committing incest, though the text does not seem to bear out that interpretation (see incest). That critique would keep “The Fall of the House of Usher” limited to mere thriller-sensational status, whereas the text itself invites more sophisticated approaches.

That the Poe canon presents a pattern of the author satirizing or parodying his own writings is a factor not to be ignored in discussions of “Usher” or many others among his works. In “Usher” itself reside sufficient qualities to align the tale with other works in which Poe seems to create lampoons of Gothic tradition as well as self-parody. Roderick Usher and his situation may be a tilt at the accounts of Roderick, the last of the European Goths, whose downfall was connected with his illicit sexual predation upon the daughter of his greatest ally. Several British Romantics had addressed that legend, as did Poe’s American contemporary, William Gilmore Simms, in a number of works. Thus, that Poe turned his attention to the legendry is understandable. Poe’s Roderick and Madeline may serve to satirize the persecuted frail maiden and her nemesis, characters long popular in Gothic tradition. Similarly, the cliché of the dilapidated, haunted castle may take a comic fall in Poe’s tale. “Usher” may also stand as another of Poe’s self-parodies, taking a place alongside “How to Write a Blackwood Article – A Predicament” or the earlier “Loss of Breath,” which in part may also burlesque techniques in Robert Montgomery Bird’s episodic novel Sheppard Lee (1835), which Poe reviewed, and Eaton S. Barrett’s The Heroine (1813), itself a lampoon of Gothic fiction, which had been republished in America during the mid-1830s and was a favorite of and much publicized by Thomas W. White, Poe’s employer on the Southern Literary Messenger (1835–7).

This calling of attention to one’s own writings is indicative of Poe’s self-promotion, and that self-promotion or self-deprecation is not restricted to his fiction. “The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether” may be read as incorporating comedy that harks back to “Usher” in the contrasting human and animal traits of the characters, which are reminiscent of aspects of many earlier stories: Madeleine Usher’s amazing strength, which enables her to escape from her sealed coffin and a near-sealed room (she may be a vampire figure (see vampire fiction)); the orangutan in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”; the seemingly ape-like appearances of the escaped keepers of the insane asylum; and the weird, disturbing masked ball scenario in “The Masque of the Red Death.” “Tarr and Fether” may also be read as a wholly serious consideration of the fine dividing line separating sanity and madness, a theme reiterated in other works by Poe. Distinguishing serious from humorous intent in Poe’s writings often proves difficult. Poe’s repeated comment that the death of a beautiful woman constitutes the most poetic of all themes has been taken at face value by many readers; because he also repeatedly devised wordplay on his surname, one may well question the precise nature of “poetic” in his critical vocabulary.

A final specimen of Poe’s particularized handling of the Gothic is exemplified in his novel, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1838), which has elicited diverse interpretations that range from reading the novel at face value to seeing it as a deliberate hoax, and from contextualizing it as demonstrating Poe’s racism (see race) to offering subtle perspectives on gender issues. Poe was advised to attempt a novel for financial remuneration, but that he followed his own course in Pym makes the novel rich in possibilities. Poe’s attitude toward race, specifically toward African American racial matters, is ambiguous (see african-american gothic). Pym is clearly a bildungsroman, much like Mark Twain’s Adventures of Huckleberry Finn or Dickens’ Great Expectations (see dickens, charles). The episodic structure mimics an adolescent male’s maturation stages, culminating in his encounter with a mysterious, giant, white shrouded figure (likely symbolic of a female presence) and with Pym’s merging with that presence; a natural uneasiness occurs, but Pym’s maturation is complete, so the novel
ends. Arguments that the novel is incomplete may not be the last word concerning *Pym*. The scenes of treachery, horrible deaths, and near-deaths; the emphatically masculine presence on the island of Tsalal, with its natives’ destruction (which, though, also bring about destruction of many of the destroyers) of the significantly named ship, the *Jane Guy*; and the overarching aura of mystery and ambiguity throughout the novel are further examples of Poe’s manipulation of Gothic sensationalism to serve an exciting artistic purpose.

In sum, Poe brought to literary Gothicism a sophistication and psychological plausibility that is often absent or left second-rate by authors determined only to produce momentary stimulation for their readership. Poe’s own life should not be confused with his more evident accomplishments with the materials usually used for no more than ephemeral best-seller marketability.

SEE ALSO: African American Gothic; Comic Gothic; Dickens, Charles; Folklore; Incest; Race; Vampire Fiction.

REFERENCE


FURTHER READING


Poison

MARIE MULVEY-ROBERTS

“Poison is in everything and nothing is without poison. The dosage makes it either a poison or a remedy” (Paracelsus, quoted by Cuthbert 2001: 548). The permeable boundary between poison and medicine (see Medicine and the Gothic) is reflected in the indeterminacy of Jacques Derrida’s reading of Plato’s use of pharmakon as poison or cure (1981: 117–19). Less ambiguous was the use of hemlock for state executions, as in the case of Socrates, by the ancient Greeks, who attributed poisonous plants to Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft. The earliest texts on poison were by the Greek herbalist Nicander, who was the main source
of toxicology until the Renaissance. By then, Magister Sautes de Ardoynis in his *The Book of Venoms* (1424) was listing as poisons: aconite, leopard’s gall, mandrake, opium, and even menstrual blood, which according to twentieth-century pseudo-science contained meno-toxins.

During the Middle Ages, professional poisoners could be hired and ingenious methods of secreting poison employed, which included impregnating clothes and even cutlery. The most common route of transmission was through food and drink. While the wealthy could employ food tasters for protection, apocryphal prophylactics included vessels made from the horn of a unicorn, believed to render poisons harmless, and drinking out of Venetian glass, which allegedly exploded on contact with a toxin (see Cuthbert 2001: 549). The art of the poisoner, which was refined by ninth-century Arabs, was a perverse dark alchemy, distilling an elixir of death. It came to be associated with the Italian Borgia and Medici families and dreaded as a deadly Italianate export, infecting other nations. In his essay “Murder considered as one of the fine arts” (1827), Thomas De Quincey mounts a mock nationalist defense of the English cut-throat declaring: “Fie on these dealers in poison, say I: can they not keep to the old honest way of cutting throats, without introducing such abominable innovations from Italy?” (De Quincey 1827: 209).

It was feared that aspiring poisoners might seek instruction and inspiration from the pages of many a Gothic or sensation novel. In Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya; or, The Moor* (1806), a novel set in fifteenth-century Italy, the heroine murders her husband by slow poison. The author refers in her novel, *The Passions* (1811), to a “subtle poison [...] that which is extracted from and administered by books” as “sovereign poison[s]” (quoted in Dacre 2003: 25). Gothic writing has been regarded as a means of textual contamination or poisoning, to which the female reader was particularly susceptible.

Women were regarded as more likely to become poisoners than men. As a murder weapon, poisoning was conducive to domestic space (see domestic gothic). It also had to be administered with deception and cunning, which some saw as akin to feminine wiles. Poison was even perceived as constitutive of femininity itself. In Bram Dijkstra’s (1986) book on feminine evil during the fin de siècle, the chapter entitled “Poison Flowers” concerns the perilous lure of female beauty. A garden of poisonous flowers provides the setting for Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Rappaccini’s Daughter” (1844), a fable of a femme fatale (see Hawthorne, Nathaniel). It tells of how Giovanni falls in love with the beautiful and deadly Beatrice, who tends the garden. He resigns himself to dying from her poisonous breath, but when he gives her an antidote to the poison, it is she who dies. Similarly, in Thomas Love Peacock’s novel *Crochet Castle* (1831), the toxicologist Mr. Henbane accidentally poisons himself with his own “infallible antidote” (1856: 183).

The toxicologist Alfred Swaine Taylor (and editor of *The London Medical Gazette*) issued, in a series of 1847 editorials, condemnations of “three popular romances” as “handbooks on poisoning” (quoted by Burney 2006: 54) which revived the crimes of the Borgias. The culprits were Letitia Landon’s *Lady Anne Granard or, Keeping up Appearances* (1842), Alexander Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1846), and the most dangerous of all, Edward Bulwer Lytton’s *Lucretia, or The Children of Night* (1846). *The Times* upbraided him for his “sickening and unpardonable revelations; [by permitting] poison, and not ‘medicine’ [to] stream through his volumes, painfully and revoltingly, from the first page to the last” (*Lucretia*, 1846). Lucretia’s career as poisoner of son and spouse was blamed in part upon her reading a book about wives poisoning their spouses en masse in Italy. Disturbingly for many, *Lucretia* had a primarily English rather than Italian setting. The name of the heroine, Lucretia Clavering, is a hybrid of the foreign and the familiar, resonant of Lucretia Borgia’s Florentine Renaissance dynasty of poisoners and the Essex village of Clavering, which had gained notoriety as the scene of a recently discovered sorority of domestic poisoners. In common with other writers of sensation fiction, Bulwer Lytton
drew on actual crimes and criminal cases for his novels. Lucretia, along with her partner in crime Gabriel Varney, was based on the poisoner, painter, and art critic Thomas Wainewright, as identified by Oscar Wilde in his essay “Pen, Pencil and Poison: A Study in Green” (1889). Wilkie Collins’ novel *Armadale* (1866) was inspired in part by reprieved poisoner Thomas Smethurst, while, it has been argued, the trial of the infamous arch-poisoner William Palmer provided the catalyst for his better known novel, *The Woman in White* (1860) (see Sutherland 1991), whose Italian villain, Count Fosco, is partial to white mice, vanilla, bonbons, and poison (see Collins, Wilkie).

Criminal poisoning was at its height during the Victorian period, at a time when the demarcation between the toxic and the innocuous was under review. In June 1857, *The Times* described poison simply as “matter out of its proper place” (London, 1857). The Arsenic Act of 1851 was one of many legislative measures taken to regulate poisons by putting them in their proper place, preferably locked up. But, as Dr. Downward in Wilkie Collins’ novel *Armadale* (1866) explains to poisoner protagonist Lydia Gwilt, poisons were still readily available:

> look about you round the shelves of this room. There are all sorts of medical liquids and substances in those bottles – most innocent, most useful in themselves – which, in combination with other substances and other liquids, become poisons as terrible and as deadly as any that I have in my cabinet under lock and key. (Collins 1999: 776)

Aside from Gothic literature, poisoning is especially popular in detective fiction where it can serve as a useful plot device. Agatha Christie certainly favored poison as an ideal recipe for the perfect murder mystery. A more recent fictional treatment may be found in Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (1983), where monks with tell-tale blackened fingers die after turning the poisoned pages of a forbidden book. This *memento mori* serves as a somber reminder of the dangers of reading.

SEE ALSO: Collins, Wilkie; Domestic Gothic; Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Medicine and the Gothic.

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FURTHER READING


Polidori, John

STEPHEN CARVER

John Polidori (1795–1821) was a promising writer who died tragically young. His reputation has suffered at the pens of the Byron circle,
of which he was briefly a member, and their biographers (see romanticism). He is best known for his story The Vampyre (1819), which created the modern myth of the aristocratic undead – Polidori’s Lord Ruthven set the standard decades before Count Dracula landed at Whitby.

Born in London, John was the eldest son of the immigrant Italian writer Gaetano Polidori, while his sister, Frances, was the future wife of Gabriel Rossetti. Polidori attended Ampleforth Catholic College, and set aside military aspirations to study medicine at Edinburgh, where he graduated in 1815. There, William Taylor introduced him to German Romanticism. At the recommendation of Sir William Knighton, Polidori was engaged as Byron’s personal physician in 1816, and when Byron went into self-imposed exile, he took “Pollydolly” with him. Polidori had already published a play and a discourse on the death penalty, and his literary promise and oft-noted good looks, youth, and flattery undoubtedly appealed to Byron. John Murray advanced Polidori £500 to play Boswell to Byron’s Johnson, but the great poet soon tired of his rather moody chronicler, and quickly banished Polidori to the second coach and took to merciless teasing (see byron, george gordon, sixth baron). Polidori was finally dismissed in September, after a summer spent on the shores of Lake Geneva with Byron’s entourage. Polidori’s diary was not published until 1911, when it was (selectively) transcribed by Frances and edited by William Rossetti. Although Polidori’s own documented adventures often show him, as Rossetti wrote, “not very advantageously” (he once challenged Shelley to a duel), this journal, along with Mary Shelley’s introduction to the 1831 edition of Frankenstein, offers a vivid sketch of the night the Romantics decided to make up a few “ghost stories” at the Villa Diodati (Rossetti 1911: i).

Mary famously conceived Frankenstein, Percy got bored, and Byron managed “A Fragment” later appended to Mazeppa. “Poor Polidori,” wrote Mary, “had some terrible idea about a skull-headed lady,” but what he ultimately produced was The Vampyre, which, like Shelley’s “hideous progeny,” changed everything (Shelley 1831: viii) (see shelley, mary wollstonecraft).

Like Polidori, Aubrey, the tale’s luckless bourgeois protagonist, becomes the companion of a charismatic, sexually magnetic nobleman, Lord Ruthven. “Ruthven” was the Byronic anti-hero of Lady Caroline Lamb’s novel Glenarvon, so Polidori’s personal allegory is far from subtle. Appalled at Ruthven’s “irresistible powers of seduction,” Aubrey sabotages a rakish intrigue and flees to Athens (Polidori 1997 [1819]: 7). There he falls for the beautiful Ianthe, who speaks of the “living vampyre,” a creature who “prolongs his existence” by “feeding upon the life of a lovely female” (Polidori 1997: 9). Victims are found drained of blood, bite-marks on their throats. Although Aubrey hears a “pretty accurate description of Lord Ruthven,” he remains English and rational, although he does note that there are “many coincidences” (Polidori 1997: 10). Before they can marry, Ianthe is killed by a vampyre. Feverish with grief, Aubrey is attended by the apparently reformed Ruthven. They resume their travels, and Ruthven is mortally wounded by bandits. He begs Aubrey to keep his misdeeds and death secret for exactly one year. Aubrey swears, and Ruthven’s corpse disappears. In London, Aubrey finds a resurrected Ruthven seducing his sister. Sworn to silence, Aubrey’s agitation appears mad. His sister becomes Ruthven’s wife and victim on the final night of the oath, while, after recounting his story, Aubrey dies of rage and a broken blood-vessel. Ruthven disappears.

Polidori’s major Diodati project was the novel Ernestus Berchtold; Or, The Modern Oedipus (1819), which is only a bit supernatural, but legend has it that the Countess of Breuss challenged him to complete Byron’s “Fragment,” a Gothic immortal prologue where “Augustus Darvell” dies in a Turkish cemetery, swearing a younger traveling companion to secrecy and decomposing before his eyes. The Vampyre was subsequently submitted anonymously to the New Monthly
Henry Colburn attributed it to Byron, and published it in the April edition of 1819. Polidori and Byron protested while Colburn hedged, initiating a protracted dispute that was vicious even by Regency magazine standards. Polidori was now a physician in Norwich, although he was still writing. The scent of fraud unfairly clung, and a fixed fee for The Vampyre meant he saw no profit from the numerous reprints, translations, and stage adaptations. Beset by financial and health problems, Polidori returned to London to take up law in 1820. After a three-week gambling binge in Brighton in 1821, he returned to his father’s house, horribly in debt, and committed suicide by drinking prussic acid. He was 25 years old. Out of sympathy to the family, the coroner ruled death by natural causes.

Purists may argue that Goethe got there first with The Bride of Corinth, that Scott has a vampire in Rokeby, as does Byron in The Giaour and “A Fragment,” but it was Polidori’s Lord Ruthven that seized the public imagination and reinvented both the slobbering ghoul of European folklore and the eighteenth-century literary rake as the posh, sexy, and indestructible blood-sucker that we all know and love. Without Lord Ruthven, Sir Francis Varney, Carmilla Karnstein, Count Dracula, Lestat de Lioncourt, Buffy, True Blood, and Twilight would be unimaginable (see Vampire Fiction).

SEE ALSO: Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Romanticism; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Tales of Terror; Vampire Fiction.

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population. Chapbooks bearing abridged or semiplagiarized versions of popular texts allowed a much broader cross-section of society to develop Gothic reading tastes (see bluebooks). Later in the nineteenth century, serials nicknamed “penny dreadfuls” or “penny bloods” catered to a working-class audience eager for sensational reading matter (see penny dreadfuls). Some of these, such as The Mysteries of London (first series, 1844–6), Varney the Vampire (1845–7), and The String of Pearls (1846–7) (which introduced the cannibal barber Sweeney Todd), ran to hundreds of episodes and had a readership that surpassed that of any Victorian triple-decker novel. Authorial attribution of these texts is frequently unclear, as writers collaborated and episodes were published anonymously. These works are often omitted from histories of Gothic, thus obscuring a tradition of working-class Gothic production and consumption as well as “missing links” in the development of the genre – Varney, for example, is the first vampire to tell his own story in the first person. The horror comics and pulp fiction of the first half of the twentieth century constitute a similar area of popular Gothic that is only just being uncovered by contemporary scholarship (see comics and graphic novels).

The public taste for Gothic was also catered to by stage melodrama in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and horror cinema in the early twentieth century. By the late twentieth century, television was one of the most widespread modes for popular dissemination of the Gothic. American sitcoms such as The Addams Family (1964–6) and The Munsters (1964–6) made comic Gothic acceptable family viewing, while the soap opera Dark Shadows, featuring the vampire Barnabas Collins (Jonathan Frid) and other supernatural characters, ran to 1225 episodes between 1966 and 1971. It was the critical and commercial success of Twin Peaks (1990–1) and The X-Files (1993–2002), however, that really opened the floodgates to Gothic television, with drama serials such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997–2003) and True Blood (2009–) achieving huge global audiences. Many of these drama series garnered critical acclaim; however, television also became the medium for live séances and paranormal investigation in shows such as the widely disparaged but hugely popular Most Haunted (2002–10), a form of Gothic reality television (see television). In the 1990s, Gothic crossed media again to inspire numerous videogame franchises such as Alone in the Dark (1992–2008), Silent Hill (1999–2012), American McGee’s Alice (2000), and multiple games based on the fiction of Clive Barker (see Barker, Clive).

Gothic influences emerged in popular music and street style in the United Kingdom circa 1979, and “Goth” subculture swiftly developed a global reach. Goth’s underground status has always been in uneasy tension with the massive international success of bands such as The Cure and, latterly, Marilyn Manson (both of whom are sometimes rejected by Goths) (see goth; music). As an alternative subculture, Goth might seem to be the antithesis of the commercialization and global consumption of Gothic, but in many ways it anticipates the contemporary marketing of Gothic as lifestyle in its conversion of Gothic aesthetics to music and clothing styles. As Paul Hodkinson points out, it is a myth that Goth is an alternative space untainted by consumerism; maintaining such an elaborate look requires resources (Goth footwear and jewelry can be expensive), and Goth actually constitutes a niche market served by both cottage industries generated within the subculture itself and more mainstream record and clothing labels (Hodkinson 2002). At recurring intervals since the 1990s, Goth styling has become briefly fashionable, taken up by designers and celebrities not associated with the subculture. Popular musicians such as Eminem and Lady Gaga have incorporated Gothic narratives and aesthetics into their act without being perceived as Goth by the mainstream media (see Chaney and Lindquist 2007; Macfarlane 2012).

Gothic has always been associated with a culture of consumption: as E. J. Clery argues,
modern consumer culture emerged alongside Enlightenment science; as people stopped truly believing in ghosts, they became eager to consume them as entertainment. Describing the sightseers who flocked to catch a glimpse of the Cock Lane Ghost in 1762 and the ballads, poems, prints, and plays that capitalized on the event, Clery suggests that, “Freed from the service of doctrinal proof, the ghost was to be caught up in the machine of the economy; it was available to be processed, reproduced, packaged, marketed and distributed by the engines of cultural production” (Clery 1995: 17). Something similar happened to the urban myth of Spring-heeled Jack, a demonic figure named for his amazing leaps, who, between 1837 and 1904, appeared to lone travelers and frequently attacked them. Jack became the subject of multiple plays and penny dreadfuls, and pre-empted the mythology of real-life serial killer Jack the Ripper. Jack appears in interesting tension between a culture of Gothic consumption and one in which the last vestiges of folklore, considered to be the “authentic” expression of traditional rural cultures, were eagerly recorded by antiquarians (see crime). These stories of fairies, witches, and ghosts contributed to the development of the ghost story and are evoked by the character of Nelly in Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights (1847) (Armstrong 1992).

What Clery calls the packaging, marketing, and distribution of Gothic also occurred through what we would now think of as tie-in merchandise: some of the biggest publishing successes of the nineteenth century, such as Wilkie Collins’ The Woman in White (1859–60) and George du Maurier’s Trilby (1894), spawned a range of associated products from chocolates to toiletries and, of course, the famous trilby hat. The lucrative nature of the merchandise inspired by Universal Studios’ horror films of the 1930s prompted a lawsuit from Bela Lugosi’s heirs over the ownership of his image. More recent films aimed at younger audiences such as The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993) and Twilight (2008) have generated extensive ranges of associated products. Latterly, Gothic lifestyle products have no longer needed to be attached to source texts and have been marketed in their own right: Gothic-styled clothing brands such as Hot Topic and Emily the Strange market Gothic to teenagers while mainstream brands regularly sell Gothic lines – even Marks and Spencer, the bastion of middle England, launched a “Gothic Chic” range for its Autumn/Winter 2008 season (Spooner 2012). Gothic toys, in particular, have become big business – Mattel, best known for manufacturing Barbie, launched their lucrative Monster High range in 2010. Meanwhile, leisure spaces also became a site for Gothic consumption with the development of what Foley and Lennon have named “dark tourism” (Foley and Lennon 2000): the visiting of morbid or macabre locations ranging from “London Dungeon”-style theme attractions through ghost walks and cemetery tours to sites associated with historical trauma such as the ruins of German concentration camps.

The move to read contemporary popular culture as playing out Gothic narrative patterns is associated with critics such as Mark Edmundson and Fred Botting. For Edmundson (1999), contemporary America is a Gothic culture in which Gothic and its opposite, facile transcendence, can be traced in phenomena as diverse as news reporting and TV talk shows. Similarly, Edward J. Ingebretsen (2001) writes of how American culture mobilizes a discourse of monstrosity to deal with its transgressors (see american gothic). But the Gothicization of popular culture is not a new phenomenon. It came to be constructed as an increasingly sinister force in itself in the nineteenth century. A movement to revive the “authentic” rural traditions of the British Isles was a significant project of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarianism, which nostalgically viewed popular festivities such as Maypole dancing and mumming as harking back to an idealized Middle Ages, expressive of a more organic community prior to the ravages of industrialism (although in actuality many of the so-called traditions were of much more recent date). In fiction, however, popular festivities
were often presented as a throwback to a pre-Christian culture, and in some respects as threatening or sinister. Thomas Hardy’s fiction reveals the full range of ambivalence. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), for example, the “skimmity ride” or charivari is presented as punitive and cruel, while in *The Return of the Native* (1878) the rituals of the local rustics, including infernal Bonfire Night fires, Christmas mumming, and the practice and accusation of witchcraft, are part of the primitive, Gothic world of Egdon Heath against which the “civilized” middle-class characters, Clem and Eustacia, struggle ineffectively. American Gothic fiction presents a similar view in the tarring and feathering of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” (1831) and the charivari taunting of George Washington Cable’s “Jean-ah Poquelin” (1879) while simultaneously suggesting that popular culture may provide a mode of revolutionary rebellion (see folklore). It is possible to read these rituals in terms of Bakhtin’s “Romantic grotesque,” in which the transformative, regenerative properties of carnival have been stripped away in order to “express fear of the world [...] and inspire their reader with this fear” (Bakhtin 1984: 39). Traces of this popular festivity linger in the contemporary celebration of Hallowe’en, although increasingly its folkloric aspects are mediated through consumption.

The Gothicization of popular culture is perpetuated in twentieth-century Gothic fiction. In neo-Victorian fiction, nineteenth-century popular culture is rediscovered as Gothic, encompassing circuses and freak shows, puppets and music hall, spiritualism and magic. This persists into the history of twentieth-century popular entertainment; Emma McEvoy claims that “Gothic has become a dominant way of looking at [...] the history of twentieth-century popular culture itself” (2012: 165). Freak shows in particular have provided particularly fertile ground. Tod Browning’s influential film *Freaks* (1932) used real sideshow artists to portray its group of midgets, pinheads, and limbless human wonders, who band together to revenge themselves on a “normal” trapeze artist who tries to exploit them, following the sinister chant “One of us, one of us” with her pursuit, mutilation, and conversion into the grotesque “Bird Woman.” The uneasy tone of the film, combining cinema vérité with horror, and confusing moral judgments by evoking genuine sympathy for the freaks who commit the film’s central act of horror, led to the film being banned for thirty years in the United Kingdom (see film). Subsequent texts in this vein include Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus* (1984), Katherine Dunn’s * Geek Love* (1989), the films *Carny* (Robert Kaylor, 1980) and *The Elephant Man* (David Lynch, 1980), *The X-Files* episode “Humbug” (1995) (which also used “real” freak performers), and the HBO series *Carnivale* (2003–5). Latterly, the thrills of the freak show have been recreated as entertainment in the likes of the Jim Rose Circus, the Circus of Horrors, and Sideshow Illusions. McEvoy has written about how these Gothicized forms of popular entertainment have become co-opted by museums and other public educators as a means of having their cake and eating it: their positioning as historic or “retro” forms of popular culture has the “advantage of being understood as popular whilst remaining in some ways satisfyingly elitist” (McEvoy 2012: 178). As popular culture recedes into the past, it no longer vanishes but rather is reinstituted as part of an “authentic” working-class tradition that can be validated in a way that the contemporary horrors of the television series *Celebrity Big Brother* and *The Only Way is Essex* cannot.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Barker, Clive; Bluebooks; Comics and Graphic Novels; Crime; Film; Goth; Folklore; Music; Penny Dreadfuls; Television.

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Portraits

AVRIL HORNER AND SUE ZLOSNIK

Ever since Manfred’s grandfather stepped out of the frame of his painting in Horace Walpole’s 1764 novel The Castle of Otranto (see Walpole, Horace), portraits have been familiar features of Gothic texts. In drawing attention to Gothic’s concern with representation and its emphasis on simulation, portraits signify a potentially disruptive power. It is perhaps not surprising that they are such an enduring feature in Gothic fiction. In a tradition that has its genesis in imitation (one that, in Jerrold E. Hogle’s words, embodies “the ghost of the counterfeit,” 2000: 296) (see counterfeit), the portrait is a powerful image of representation itself: it is a facsimile of a person. The portraits that haunt Gothic texts invariably carry a supernatural propensity to resist containment within the frame. They thus signify a disruption of boundaries. The past manifests itself in the present; that which is inanimate comes uncannily to life; the two-dimensional portrait becomes three-dimensional and becomes active in the fourth dimension that is time.

In early Gothic novels, portraits often featured ancestors and thus represented a weight of dynastic history that could come to bear on the present in an uncanny fashion. One of the conventions of the curse narrative (see curse), Gothic portraits frequently indicate the more sinister aspects of family legacies, in particular their misappropriation. Thus the usurpation of Alonso the Good’s title and castle by Manfred’s ancestor in The Castle of Otranto is signaled by Alonso stepping spectrally from his frame and beckoning Manfred to follow him, just as the ghost of Hamlet’s father had


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beckoned the prince to follow in his footsteps. The fact that the young Theodore, supposedly a peasant, bears an uncanny likeness to the portrait of Alonso anticipates the restoration of Otranto to its rightful heir. The moving portrait of Alonso the Good, however, also signals disturbances in the heart of the novel that relate to the shifting status of the aristocracy in the fast-moving period of social change that was to culminate in the French Revolution at the end of the century. Following Walpole, European and American authors continued to use the portrait to explore not only family secrets (see family) but also wider social fears and instabilities. In Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), for example, an evil Catholic priest, Schedoni, resists plunging a dagger into the heroine's breast when he sees that she is wearing a miniature portrait of him, jumping to the conclusion that she is his lost daughter. Ellena, however, is wearing the miniature because she assumes that it portrays her dead father, the good Count de Bruno. In fact, as her mother Olivia later reveals to her, the portrait is of her dead father's brother (now known as Schedoni), who had murdered his brother and ill-treated Olivia, his sister-in-law, whom he had forced to marry him. Anxieties concerning female vulnerability and masculine power within the eighteenth-century family as well as fears about the nature of Catholicism are very evident here (see roman catholicism).

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's Gothic satire *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) (see hawthorne, nathaniel), the ancestral portrait of Colonel Pyncheon is a focal point, a persistent reminder of an evil act of greed that brought the house into the Pyncheon family's possession and remains its curse in the present day. Although Colonel Pyncheon does not literally come supernaturally to life in the manner of Manfred's grandfather, he is ever-present in the form of the portrait. In this novel, Hawthorne not only excoriates individual greed and hypocrisy but also attacks the evils of inherited wealth and the hypocrisy of a corrupt judiciary. The term "house" is thus ambiguous in such novels, signifying both lineage and architecture. In many Gothic texts the elision of the distinction is made manifest through the device of the ancestral portrait gallery. In Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), the demonic moving eyes of the portrait of the long-dead Melmoth herald the arrival of the supernatural wanderer attendant upon the death of an unworthy inheritor of the house (see maturin, charles robert).

The iconic nature of portraits has also provided a useful feature through which Gothic novelists could explore questions of religious idolatry. Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) uses the device of the portrait and its intrinsic quality of simulation as a means of trickery to explore religion and sexuality (see lewis, matthew). The downfall of the virtuous monk, Ambrosio, is instigated by his worship of a portrait of the Madonna, the model for which turns out to be the demonic Matilda. The fact that Matilda had wormed her way into the monastery and Ambrosio's affections by disguising herself as a novice monk also lends his worship of the portrait a homoerotic dimension. Thus, Protestant concerns about what was perceived as Catholic idolatry, together with anxieties about homosocial desire, are played out through the portrait. A century later, the decadence of the fin de siècle found expression in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Continuing the Faustian theme of Lewis' *The Monk*, Wilde's tale presents a supernatural portrait in which the various excesses of its protagonist are written on the visage in the picture rather than on that of the man himself. Wilde's focus on dandyism, narcissism, hedonism, and homoerotic desire clearly relates the novel to contemporary discourses of degeneration (see degeneration); the image of the portrait works here to both repress and reveal a fractured self.

The supernatural power of portraits is much in evidence in many other Gothic texts. Poe's "The Oval Portrait" (1842), in contrast with Wilde's novel, features a picture so lifelike that, once completed, it results in the death of its subject (see poe, edgar allan). Robert Browning's poem published in the same year, "My Last
Duchess,” represents a similar concern with men’s desire to possess women and the perniciousness of art as they are captured through portraiture. Although it does not contain an actual portrait, Henry James’ *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) uses Gothic effects to convey Isabel Archer’s psychic entrapment, its title indicating the nature of her tragedy: that she is viewed by her sinister husband as merely another object in his collection of beautiful things. In Stephen King’s 1995 novel *Rose Madder*, an abused woman called Rose is entranced by a portrait of an unknown woman in a rose madder gown. The boundary between life and art becomes destabilized as Rose lures her violent husband into the portrait, where he meets a gruesome end at the hands of its subject. In Salman Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (also published in 1995), the prematurely aging narrator is painted repeatedly by his mother as “The Moor,” creating a mythopoeic record of his senescence. The last of these paintings contains a hidden prophecy of her death and in the novel’s bloody climax the palimpsestic portrait reveals its secret as life and art mirror each other.

Many Gothic portraits are, like those in Rushdie’s novel, holders of dark secrets about the persistent themes of Gothic fiction: power and sexuality. In the disruption of spatial and temporal realities, these secrets are revealed. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s novella *Carmilla* (1872) uses the ancestral portrait as the key to the secret of the identity of a mysterious house guest. An old family painting of a “Marcia Karnstein” reveals when restored a portrait of Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, which the vulnerable heroine recognizes as the mysterious guest Carmilla. In also recognizing in the portrait her own likeness to the seductive, vampiric Carmilla, the motherless heroine acknowledges a ghostly resurrection of a repressed maternal lineage. The text is often read as an exploration of lesbian desire in a culture that admitted no discursive recognition of such a phenomenon. Moving away from the exclusive earlier use of the portrait to explore matters of primogeniture and property, Le Fanu here uses the portrait as a means of exploring the “self” as image and representation and – implicitly – the fractured nature of female subjectivity in Victorian culture.

In the mid-twentieth century, Daphne du Maurier was to use a similar resurrection of the maternal lineage for a key scene in her most famous novel, *Rebecca* (1938), which has also been read by some critics as a novel about lesbian desire. When the enigmatic and malevolent housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, suggests to the naïve second Mrs. de Winter that she model her fancy dress costume on the portrait of Lady Caroline de Winter, a sister of Maxim’s great-great-grandfather, she neglects to mention that the now-dead Rebecca had also dressed in that costume for the summer ball at Manderley a few years before. In *Rebecca*, the portrait episode acts as a catalyst whereby Rebecca is symbolically brought back to life and absorbed into her successor. Publicly obliterated by Rebecca’s identity, the second wife, in embodying the moving portrait, in effect becomes her. The counterfeiting of one woman by another in du Maurier’s novel is in keeping with the Gothic text’s preoccupation with fractured or lost identity and demonstrates Gothic’s capacity to give powerful expression to the anxieties inherent in female subjectivity in a patriarchal culture.

The sinister use of portraits in Gothic texts has always invited parody and appropriation. In Eaton Stannard Barrett’s *The Heroine* (1813), a farmer’s daughter whose head is full of Gothic novels discovers a portrait of Nell Gwyn, King Charles II’s mistress, hidden in one of her father’s drawers and foolishly takes this as evidence of her true identity as the daughter of Lady Gwyn, a nearby aristocrat. In Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Catherine Morland – another heroine captivated by Gothic novels – mistakenly attributes General Tilney’s refusal to hang his dead wife’s portrait, in either his own room or the drawing room, to guilt at having hastened or caused her death. Many years later, Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood*...
signals a debt to the Gothic portrait convention in its opening chapter, in which the “large, dark and imposing” (Barnes 2007: 17) mansion of Guido Volkbein contains portraits of a couple of “intrepid and ancient actors” (19) that he is passing off as images of his parents. In this context, the portrait represents a double layer of simulation. While the passage comically plays up Gothic effects, Barnes uses the portrait convention to suggest the barbaric and sinister within a civilized European city. A Jew of Italian descent living in Vienna in the 1920s (a seedbed of fascism), Volkbein’s attempt to manufacture a respectable ancestry through fake family portraits is also an attempt to protect himself from antisemitic persecution. More recently, Patrick McGrath has used the ancestral portrait in several texts as a device to parody the Gothic tradition: thus, in Martha Peake (2000), the heroine’s deformed and abusive father becomes transformed into an image of straight-backed optimism in his portrait entitled “The American Within” (see McGrath, Patrick). In all these examples, a parodic appropriation of the Gothic portrait convention points to the serious social concerns in texts that sit at the comic end of the Gothic spectrum.

Although the anxieties represented by Gothic fiction over the last 250 years have shifted, the portrait has remained a persistent trope, enabling explorations of the unstable nature of identity in relation to culture and society and changes within them. As Allan Lloyd Smith has pointed out, novels by authors such as Hawthorne and Poe are “pre-eminently psychological” (2004: 53) and anticipate later writers’ depiction of horror as something within, rather than outside, the self. By the mid-nineteenth century the focus was shifting from the ills of primogeniture, religion, and property to fears concerning the fragility and coherence of the self; at about the same time the dawn of psychoanalysis resulted in a narrative of human development that conceptualized and focused on the unconscious. It is thus not surprising to find that from this time onwards portraits in Gothic fictions have often functioned as mirrors for the terrifying Other within the self. The portrait has thus clearly proved to be an infinitely flexible device through which Gothic authors explore the shifting nature of fear and anxiety.

SEE ALSO: Counterfeit; Curse; Degeneration; Du Maurier, Daphne; Family; Hawthorne, Nathaniel; James, Henry; King, Stephen; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Lewis, Matthew; Maturin, Charles Robert; McGrath, Patrick; Poe, Edgar Allan; Roman Catholicism; Walpole, Horace.

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Postcolonial Gothic
GINA WISKER

Postcolonial Gothic combines two complex, contested terms. Postcolonial is variously understood as referring to the period after colonialism, and undercutting and operating against the values of colonialism, in dispute with colonial rule, and exposing its contradictions. Its strains are found in colonial periods (Tiffin and Ashcroft 1989) as in the critique of theft of life and land, “heads on sticks” colonialism’s insanities in Joseph Conrad’s modernist Heart of Darkness (1902), and Katherine Mansfield’s New Zealand Gothic (see New Zealand Gothic). David Punter (2000) argues that postcolonial experience is inevitably haunted by a colonial past; the repressed return (like ghosts); and traces of the legacy of silence, pain, humiliation, and dispossession that reappear in spectral figures:

as the great globalising project of modernity, which has its own controlling relationship to the postcolonial, rolls on, one of its more curious current effects is that, perhaps against expectation, we live increasingly in a world of ghosts, spirits, phantoms. (Punter 2000: 61)

The richness of historically and culturally contextualized and affected contradictions, and the energies bursting from denials and silences, are familiar in the Gothic. David Punter, Alison Rudd, Glennis Byron, Tabish Khair, and Gina Wisker see how the return of repressed, exploitative colonial histories, a major feature of postcolonial Gothic, affects landscapes and buildings, psychogeographies, identity, and language for both the once-colonized and the once-colonizer. The legacy of economic dependence, cultural appropriation, and covert rule through the influences of multinationals and the media, can effectively prevent people from moving beyond colonial influence. Punter and Wilson Harris emphasize haunted spaces and minds, “the imagination of the folk involved in a crucial inner re-creative response to the violations of slavery,” because “the possibility exists for us to become involved in perspectives [...] which can bring into play a figurative meaning beyond an apparently real world or prison of history” (Harris 1981: 27).

Rudd (2010) emphasizes metamorphosis, differences between constructions of the postcolonial Gothic in different contexts and histories. Khair (2009) focuses on Otherizing, found in both Gothic and the postcolonial, arguing that the Other – Gothic, gendered, imperial, colonial, or racial – remains a key concern, building on Homi Bhabha’s troubling of the notion of the colonial Other and Edward Said’s issues about narrating the limits of the Other in Orientalism (1978). Khair cites Stuart Hall’s recognition that the figure of the Other is “constructed as the absolute opposite, the negation of everything the West stood for” (Hall 1992: 314). Although the mix of proximity, sameness, and utter difference are folded into representations of the Other, discourses of equality, hybridity, and heterogeneity can and do operate against the demonizing of difference. Postcolonial Gothic exposes deep-seated fears of Otherness born of questioning self, identity, and visions of security which rely upon exclusion of anything threateningly different. The Other is first exposed as a perceived terror, then recreated as equal and different, revoiced by the very different perceptions and stories of the once colonized. Postcolonial Gothic is highly socially, politically, and psychologically engaged; however, it has been seen as less powerful and valid than realism, prompting Tananarive Due, author of vampire tales set in Africa, to admit:
"I needed to address my fear that I would not be respected if I wrote about the supernatural" (Due 2002).

Postcolonial Gothic uses Gothic tropes: silence, liminal spaces, ghosting, identity, split selves, metamorphosis, vampires, were-creatures, ghosts, zombies – and an endless imprinting of the repressed past, an everyday haunting of place and people – to make visible and palpable the history and legacy of the repression, silencing, erasure, and remapping that was colonialism, whether imperial rule or settler invader culture. Khair (2009) traces the non-European spaces and depictions of the vampire – revenant, fascinating, threatening, predatory, abject, and invasive – whose colonial and imperial history lies with Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) (see *imperial gothic*).

The landscapes and urban territories of the colonizers, and the colonized, are each imprinted with the living memories of horrors and dehumanizing behaviors which established and maintained colonial and imperial oppressions and regimes. The repressed of the past, both victims and those who directly or silently colluded in victimizing, haunt the landscapes and cityscapes of British cities – Liverpool, Hull, Manchester, Bristol, London – built on wealth from enslavement, mineral pillaging, and trade in human suffering. They are concrete metaphors, living memories reminding and revitalizing secrets, reflecting them back to those who wittingly or unwittingly inherited from that oppressive past. Postcolonial locations and mindsets cannot avoid the Gothic because they are laced with the history and memories of the colonial and imperial past and these return, repressed, silenced, denied, leaking out of the material circumstances of the contemporary. The *terra nullis*, the empty land that colonists and imperial travelers found in Australasia, Canada, the Americas, the Caribbean, and wherever colonialism spread, renamed, remapped, reowned, is both reclaimed and redefined under postcolonial Gothic. The ghostings and hauntings of the colonial and precolonial past lie like a human and natural palimpsest decipherable in many different ways. However it is scrutinized and rescritinized, the history that postcolonial Gothic exposes as all around us is one of silencing and marginalization, denial and enforced interpretation. The divisive cut in the map separating Pakistan and India, keenly felt in both Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1995) and Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of Day* (2001), is a cartographical redrawing, typical of the ways in which colonial and imperial forces redrew and renamed Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas, and Australia.

In Margaret Atwood’s Canadian postcolonial Gothic novel, *Surfacing* (1976), the unnamed narrator returns to the island of her childhood and discovers her father’s haunting presence cannot be settled, the land resists mapping, her own identity needs to break down and be reconstructed for her to move on (see *Atwood, Margaret; Canadian gothic*). She also needs to reject the overwhelming presence of the Americanization of Canadian and global culture (even though the hunters she meets turn out to be Canadian themselves). Freed and renewed, she can move on and reown her past and her present.

In *Alias Grace* (1996) impoverished Irish immigrant Grace Marks’ tale of murder and the complexity of uncovering a final narrative represent the confusions of history of the colonial and imperial past, traced and stitched into the fabric of the modern day. Like Tash Aw’s *The Harmony Silk Factory* (2005), the various forms of narrative unravel and ravel, quilted into patterns which only suggest order but actually reflect the separate and different versions of events.

The legacy of colonialism is contradictory, ranging from a maintenance of poverty through to excessive capitalist expansion. The Singaporean writer Catherine Lim reminds us of everyday household ghosts and teenage suicides, alongside death houses in the shadows of air-conditioned, glittering malls. In Tash Aw’s (2005) rewriting of the moments before the Japanese invasion of Malaya, the deceptions, embodied in the decadent Peter, the lying narratives of the British, who could protect neither
the mainland nor Singapore, accompany the
dangerous deicts of the intellectual, aesthetic
Japanese infiltrator. Multiple narratives con-
tinue to hide the “truth” of history including
that of Jasper, the main narrator’s own mother,
Snow, and the Japanese commander’s tale. Tash
Aw uses contradictory tales, fantasy islands,
silences, transformations, as well as stories of
political compliance, brutality, and silencing.
Malaysian Beth Y ahp’s *The Crocodile Fury*
(1992) uses the outsider figure of a crocodile,
a bandit, the creative wildness of the Other,
both outside and part of the self, to explore
histories of repression and abuse, romantic lies
and hidden passions. The figure represents
the metamorphosis from compliance to pirate,
renegade, maverick Other, the ever-changing
sea serpent or crocodile figure of fury which
refuses the wealthy man’s reign on the hill
he has stolen from its indigenous people, the
wealth he has stolen and imported. In the
convent, the young girl inherits the energies of
her once compliant bondmaid grandmother
and reacts both against the constraint of the
ways in which girls are meant to behave and
those in which colonial peoples are constrained
and redefined. “Only the natives who built it
left traces of a local presence in the rich man’s
mansion: their drops of sweat mixed in with
the foundations, their blood and crushed limbs
marking the beams that held the ceilings up”
(Y ahp 1992: 4–5). Finally there is a recognition
that it is necessary to let the ever-encroaching
jungle in, because it is a part of herself/
ourselves.

Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) sets a
pattern for narratives of coming to terms with
and moving on from painful ghostly returns. A
baby ghost re-enters the home and life of the
mother who sacrificed her to rescue her from
the violation and brutality of a life under
slavery, embodying the lacing of memory and
space with hidden histories. The haunting
must be exposed, voices heard, and the damage
moved on from.

Caribbean Gothic figures of duppies (ghost
figures trapped in containers such as bottles or
gourds), soucouyants (flying vampiric blood-
draining figures who leave their skins behind),
and zombies, a local trope, are used to express
trapped histories and spirits, dehumaniza-
tion and silencing through false education
and imposed power. Jamaican Erna Brodber’s
*Myal* (1998) (Myalism is an African religion)
exposes the misrepresentations of education and entertainment that zombify people. Magic
and zombies characterize the silencing and
dehumanization through education forced
on enslaved and indentured Jamaicans (see
zombies). School children were taught about
compliance and the beast-like qualities of
African-originated Caribbean people, while
the silenced Ella, who saw her own history
played back onstage as a coon musical show
by her white husband, discovers how to re-
educate and expose these contradictions,
finding her voice and her rights.

Canadian Caribbean writer Nalo Hopkin-
son uses Postcolonial Gothic and speculative
fictions that reread the past and the present
through projections into a future or alternative
reality. Hopkinson uses tropes of ghosts in
the body, metamorphoses, body swaps, vam-
pires, soucouyants, zombies, duppies, merpeo-
mple, witchcraft, and nested genre structures
in the text to engage with and dramatize
issues of oppression, silencing, and then re-
empowerment in relation to gender identity,
history, and ethnicity. Feminist postcolonial
viewpoints in *Skin Folk* (2001) infuse her
rewritten myths and fairy tales which origi-
nally depicted colonized peoples as alien to
others or more often completely ignored them.
In a rewrite of “Bluebeard,” “The Glass Bottle
Trick,” feisty Beatrice exposes her black
husband Samuel’s racially inflected, internal-
ized loathing which led to his murdering his
pregnant wives to prevent black children.
“Riding the Red” rewrites “Red Riding Hood”
and overturns compliance with patriarchal
paternalistic control of young girls’ sexuality
(the threat of being eaten alive by the wolf).
These women seek some time with “wolfie.”
Hopkinson uses creolized language to empha-
size reclamation of tales that historically
silenced women and those of African descent.
In *The New Moon’s Arms* (2007) she rewrites a slave crossing middle passage tale. The slaves deliberately avoid brutality, jump overboard, and metamorphose into merpeople, living a vibrant life.

We find the postcolonial Gothic wherever there has been imperial and colonial past, where places have been mapped and remapped, animals and people renamed, transformed, and translated. It speaks about and against the inherent inhumanities and contradictions of colonial power and the disempowerment and devaluing of others, using irony and horror, undercutting and opening out what seems solid and certain but is actually riddled with contradictions.

SEE ALSO: Atwood, Margaret; Canadian Gothic; Imperial Gothic; New Zealand Gothic; Zombies.

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FURTHER READING


Postfeminist Gothic

BENJAMIN A. BRABON AND STEPHANIE GENZ

Postfeminist Gothic emerged as a critical category in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, reflecting altered gender relations and changes in the feminist landscape. The concept of postfeminism is highly contested, with proposed definitions ranging from popular evocations of “girl power” to cultural analyses of backlash, academic discussions of postmodern/poststructuralist feminism, and political examinations of neoliberal individualism (Genz and Brabon 2009: 1–50). It is this definitional malleability that makes the conceptual alliance of postfeminism and Gothic particularly productive, with both terms exhibiting a penchant for haunting — a gap in the signification process that allows for multiple (and contradictory) meanings. Both concepts are bound up with ghosts of the past that constantly shadow the present and threaten to rematerialize. Just as Gothic is uneasy about
its relationship with history, postfeminism is troubled by its problematic ties to its past—feminism. As David Punter notes, “the code of Gothic is [...] not a simple one in which past is encoded in present or vice versa, but dialectical, past and present intertwined, and distorting [...] each other with the sheer effort of coming to grips” (1996: 198). Along these lines, postfeminism undoubtedly harbors a Gothic impulse, split as it is between backlash tendencies and progressive visions, representations of victimhood and agency.

Postfeminism has often been linked to female characters such as the Spice Girls and Helen Fielding’s heroine Bridget Jones, who has been embraced/condemned as the poster child of postfeminism. At the same time, it is also part of other “post-” discourses and, in this context, marks a change in the interpretation and understanding of gender categories (such as “woman,” “man,” and “feminist”). Similarly, in social and political explorations, postfeminism has been studied as symptomatic of a “post-traditional” period categorized by vivid transformations in fundamental social relationships and notions of agency. While some commentators have criticized the wide range of postfeminism’s interpretative possibilities, plasticity, and backlash trajectories, they also have acknowledged its importance and influence (see, e.g., Coppock et al. 1995). Postfeminist Gothic texts capture these incongruous forces, wary of the fact that “the resignifications of femininity cannot rid themselves of the threat of phallocentricty, the spectre of heterosexism, as they still function within the same cultural imagery,” a system of signs that continues to fashion women as inferior and powerless (Genz 2007: 73). As such, postfeminist Gothic embodies a series of critical conflicts of signification—spectral sites where meaning is called into question.

The origins of postfeminist Gothic can themselves be linked to a process of questioning, a line of thought that interrogates the female Gothic as a category and its associations with second-wave feminism. Ellen Moers’ conception of the term in Literary Women (1976) is closely related to the rise of feminist consciousness and feminist literary criticism from the late 1960s and 1970s. As she identifies, “the dramatically unfolding living literary history” of “the new wave of feminism, called women’s liberation” helped her to concentrate on “the history of women to understand the history of literature” (Moers 1978: xiii). It is this bond between second-wave feminism and the female Gothic that presents a critical obstacle for contemporary interventions into the analysis of Gothic and gender, particularly since the introduction of poststructuralist theories into feminist works during the 1990s. The arrival of the Third Wave and postfeminism has resulted in further probing of the female Gothic form and it has begun to be seen as “unsatisfyingly simple” (Williams 1995: 11). Even though Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace emphasize in their introduction to a special issue of Gothic Studies (2004) that “the term ‘Female Gothic’ is still a flexible and recognisable term” (Smith and Wallace 2004: 6), criticism of the female Gothic has been inclined to concentrate on its predilection for replicating women’s subordinate social position and victim status (Smith and Wallace 2004: 6). Diane Long Hoeveler reinforces this point in Gothic Feminism (1998), arguing that feminist criticism has fostered a sense of passivity by representing women as victims. According to Hoeveler, “discussions of the female Gothic, like analyses of ‘feminism’, have, unfortunately, uncritically participated in the very fantasies that the genres have created for their unwary readers” (Hoeveler 1998: 3). For Hoeveler, there is a direct connection between the female Gothic and the antifeminist perspective of “victim feminism,” as both rely on an ideology of “female power through pretended and staged weakness” (Hoeveler 1998: 7). In this sense, the female Gothic is complicit in the development of “victim feminism,” whereas postfeminist Gothic texts endeavor to contest and re-envision—although not always successfully—women’s victim status.

In this sense, then, while some critics have positioned postfeminist Gothic as a subset of
the female Gothic (see, e.g., Wallace and Smith 2009), the concept can also be said to fracture the critical lens of the female Gothic in its embrace of the “gender scepticism” associated with much poststructuralist criticism” (Meyers 2001: xii; see Brabon and Genz 2007). In particular, postfeminist Gothic texts rewrite the female Gothic plot’s broad contours that see “a heroine caught between a pastoral haven and a threatening castle, sometimes in flight from a sinister patriarchal figure, sometimes in search of an absent mother, and, often, both together (that is to say, we encounter variations on Ann Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance*)” (Miles 1994: 131). The postfeminist Gothic heroine reimagines the flight of the female Gothic heroine as her feisty, sexually assertive persona and “do-me feminism” approach are used to wrestle power away from the “sinister patriarchal figure” and, in so doing, resignify static ideas of propriety and conduct. Her trajectory embraces sublime contradictions, shunning the “pastoral haven” in favor of more “masculine” domains. In this context, postfeminism could be seen to effect a “flight from femaleness” in its rejection of the Gothic world and women’s victim status therein, and, accordingly, it threatens to develop into “anti-Gothic Gothic” (Meyers 2001: 144, 118). However, at the same time, seemingly stereotypical versions of femininity and/or hyper-femininity are often deployed by the postfeminist Gothic heroine in order to confront and problematize the thin dividing line – or liminal space – between her sexual object and sexual subject status. From Victoria in Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya; or, The Moor: A Romance of the Fifteenth Century* (1806) to the Borg Queen in *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996), the postfeminist Gothic heroine lives these contradictions as she is both unsexed and oversexed, powerful and subordinate. In this way, the postfeminist Gothic heroine exists within a domain of risk, seemingly conforming to the expectations of a patriarchal gaze while at the same subverting it. She is in many ways a good example of the figure of the over-reacher found within the male Gothic, rebelling against the laws of society and nature by engaging in a Faustian pact with the Devil.

Likewise, the trajectory of the hero in female Gothic is transformed in postfeminist Gothic works, and he too deals with the same predicament of “subjectivation” experienced by the postfeminist Gothic heroine (see Foucault 1977; Butler 1997). Within a postfeminist Gothic context, it is no longer sufficient to go along with the female Gothic plot that “make[s] the hero safe for the middle-class world by ritualistically wounding him” (Hoeweler 1998: 215) – “he now must engage with his own masculinity in order to ultimately emasculate [...] himself, retaining only a ghostly sense of the phallus, the echo of the amputated signifier” (Brabon 2007: 60). For example, in urban Gothic tales such as Bret Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho* (1991) and Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club* (1996), violent and horrific displays of hegemonic masculinity end up being turned toward the self, leaving the postfeminist Gothic hero of each text confined by his own masculinity. In this respect, the postfeminist Gothic hero is far closer to the Gothic heroine and her use of “her body as a signifying surface” to “say things [that] the mind cannot admit” (Ellis 2000: 53). For the postfeminist Gothic man, the body itself becomes a site for self-destructive acts of definition as “he is trapped between the loss of his essentialist quality of masculinity and his attempt to reassert a strong masculine identity” (Brabon 2007: 60). Although the postfeminist Gothic hero is sadistic and cruel, he is also a masochistic and tragic figure.

Postfeminist Gothic texts leave the reader with a series of critical contradictions that reflect the contested nature of both postfeminism and Gothic – providing backlash and progressive developments. Aware of the fact that we are no longer in the second wave of feminism, postfeminist Gothic as a category responds to the shifting landscape of feminism’s form in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In this way, postfeminist Gothic opens up new subject positions for both the hero and heroine of the female Gothic (and its readers for that matter), moving beyond binary
Poststructuralism and the Gothic

JULIAN WOLFREYS

"Poststructuralism" is conventionally understood by many critics as an academic category that defines an approach to interdisciplinary scholarship. This, in turn, draws from a variety of discourses and disciplines – chiefly linguistics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, certain Marxist and feminist “theories” and epistemological models, and particular branches of continental philosophy – in the formal (hence the “structural” in “poststructural”) and sometimes historical or material (these are contentious terms for the more empirically minded) analysis of aesthetic objects, chiefly texts of various kinds. At best, poststructuralism might, in the words of Jane Tompkin, “be described as a challenge to the accepted model of reading and criticism” (1988: 733). Tompkin goes on to argue that poststructuralism “collapses” the “discrete entities” of reader, method, text, and interpretation, into a “single, continuous act of interpretation,” all becoming “part of a single, evolving field of discourse” (1988: 733). It does this, moreover, by insisting that reader or subject and text are “culturally constituted by interpretive frameworks or interpretive strategies that our culture makes available to us, and these [...] are the only way that we have of conceiving who we are or of having a self” (1988: 734). What goes for us goes for the literary text and the world in which we live.
So far, so good (perhaps) and Tompkin’s model will be returned to in the conclusion. However, as with all umbrella terms, the notion of poststructuralism is inaccurate inasmuch as it tends toward homogeneity; those who usually speak of poststructuralism as if it were a largely undifferentiated body of thought, theory, and critical practice do so, whether they be supporters or detractors, in a manner that pushes to the side or seeks to silence the very many differences and heterogeneous aspects of the range of discourses that are taken to inform poststructuralism at the cost of producing a single meaning or ontology for the idea of “poststructuralism.”

Moreover, “poststructuralism” is employed most benignly as a convenience term, and is largely taken to have developed as an academic theoretical mode of reading or analysis following the reading and translation of a variety of texts becoming visible in the Anglo-American academic institution from the mid-1960s onwards over a period of roughly twenty-five to thirty years, from French thinkers and critics such as Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Hélène Cixous, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan, to name only the most obvious (see theory). Many of the names here are French, or associated with French, specifically Parisian, intellectual and academic discourse from the 1960s to the early 1990s; thus, “poststructuralism” is assumed to be largely French in origin, even though the term itself is not employed by French thinkers, nor is it even one that is recognized as accurate.

What, you might not unreasonably ask, has this to do with the Gothic? If we continue with the fiction of the existence of “poststructuralism” (or, at least, if we admit to the appearance of a “poststructural” critical practice in the English language) then what can be given as an answer to that question is that, from the 1970s onwards, certain critics whose work, rightly or wrongly, has been determined as “poststructuralist” – that is to say, that work which has brought to bear certain “theoretical” models of thinking drawn from the French thinkers already named, along with particular others – sought to engage with, and thereby produce new readings and so new understandings of, the Gothic informed by continental philosophical, linguistic, and psychoanalytic epistemologies.

“Poststructuralism” is not a word this author would choose to use, hence the caution and skepticism employed here. What remains will identify, in a limited fashion, key aspects of one critic’s work that might usefully be reoriented toward the interpretation of the Gothic.

Of the European critics whose work is most immediately germane to the reading of the literary text, and whose names have been associated with the idea of “poststructuralism,” Julia Kristeva and her interpretative model of psychoanalytic semiotics is of particular interest, particularly as she develops in her earlier publications the reading of structural pairings and oppositions that pattern symbolically and give meaning to the social subject, often from a gendered perspective. Drawing on notions of the uncanny (see uncanny, the), the double (see doubles), and the abject (see abjection), the former being particularly associated with Freud (see psychoanalysis), Kristeva develops interpretative strategies singularly germane to similar aspects of Gothic narrative. When, in Powers of Horror (1982), Kristeva argues that “the fear of which one can speak, the one therefore that has a signifiable object, is a more belated and more logical product that assumes all earlier alarms of archaic, non-representable fear” (1982: 34), she provides a fundamental framework within which any determinable figure, event, or image that causes fear in a Gothic narrative can be read as a “belated” signifier, which, despite its “local” interpretability, points to that which is the primal root of dread or horror and yet remains unnamable. Making distinctions in Revolution in Poetic Language (1974, translated into English in 1984) between the orderly or rational and the irrational or heterogeneous, the conscious and unconscious, the normative and the poetic, and the semantic and the semiotic, Kristeva argues that the latter terms emerge or erupt against the former;
where there is the logical, the irrational will emerge; where the symbolic – often patriarchal and repressive – order serves in the hegemonic determination of “normative” social relations, this will be undermined through the forces of heterogeneity, excess, abjection, confusion, and that which is fluid or mutable as opposed to anything the significance of which is supposedly strong and stable.

At a structural and symbolic level, such pairings and oppositions can easily be read onto Gothic narrative and its use and manipulation of many such tropes, embodied in narrative events or through character behavior. Typically, the Gothic novel relies upon the dissolution of order and control, through a narrative journey or adventure into places where logic and rationality give way to disorder, fear, and anxiety and the – usually – female subject is immersed in an excessive, confused world of castles, ruins (see Architecture, Gothic), thunderstorms, ghosts, madmen, and, not infrequently, Mediterranean Catholics whose sensual appetites overcome the logical side of their psyches to be made abject and fearful, to feel rather than to think, before the conclusion of such narrative excess, in which order, rationality, and Enlightenment stability is reintroduced.

Clearly, it might be suggested that there is a kind of “structuralism” *avant la lettre* about the typical, or stereotypical, Gothic narrative, which makes it ideal for a dismantling and reassembling in the act of reading and interpretation, in the wake of theories that stress linguistic, cultural, and psychological binary oppositions as determinant formal constituents in social, hierarchical organization and cultural perception and orientation of ourselves as social subjects, determined by normative cultural codes. But there is more. Another aspect of Gothic that involves the reader all the more fully in its processes of confusion, destabilization, and eventual reordering is its “confusion” between the reader position and the character or protagonist position. Put simply, when we read a Gothic model, we are kept in a state of suspense, in a figurative darkness commensurate or parallel with the literal darkness in which the protagonist finds himself or herself for much of the novel. We are given no more insight or access to knowledge than the hero or heroine, and the structure of the novel is often as labyrinthine as the structures of Gothic architecture – the castles, the châteaux, the abbeys, and the wild mountain landscapes in which much of the action takes place.

This remark might remind some readers of those introductory observations of Jane Tompkin, cited at the outset. The Gothic collapses discrete entities and positions; it refuses orderly methodological procedure or sequence; it collapses distinctions between subject positions; and, perhaps most significantly, the Gothic can be read as working because it insists that, and relies on, two important processes. First, to read Gothic narrative is to enter into a “single, continuous act of interpretation,“ the reader, like the protagonist, becoming “part of a single, evolving field of discourse” (Tompkin 1988: 733). Second, in breaking down the reader and protagonist’s epistemological control over the world and its interpretation, Gothic insists that we are “culturally constituted by interpretive frameworks or interpretive strategies that our culture makes available to us, and these [...] are the only way that we have of conceiving who we are or of having a self” (1988: 734). You might think this is simply a “poststructuralist” analysis of Gothic. But, as even the most well-known parody of Gothic makes plain, Gothic makes Catherine Morland’s of us all, and so-called poststructuralist attention to disorder, confusion, excess, abjection, and so forth only foregrounds what already takes place. Like Gothic, whatever goes by the name “poststructuralism” immerses its readers only to enlighten ultimately; like Gothic, such critical practices are designed to make us better readers.

SEE ALSO: Abjection; Architecture, Gothic; Doubles; Psychoanalysis; Theory; Uncanny, The.
“Protestantism” is a catch-all label (first used in 1529) employed to focus the variety of dissenting movements across Western Europe triggered by Martin Luther’s 1517 protest against the Church of Rome’s orthodoxy in ninety-five theses which he (allegedly) nailed up on the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. Luther’s ideas were taken on, modified, and codified by a variety of thinkers in Holland, Germany, and Britain, and most influentially in Switzerland and France by Zwingli and Calvin.

The principal characteristics of Protestantism include a return to the Bible as the source of authority instead of the Pope and the priesthood, which led to a rejection of the Vulgate, the Latin version made by St. Jerome, and new translations from the Greek and Hebrew into the vernacular languages of Europe. In German, the version by Luther himself, and in English the translation by Tyndale, are both milestones in the development of the vernacular. Resulting points of doctrinal change include: the abolition of the confessional and the referral of all problems to the individual’s conscience and direct relationship with God; the reinterpretation of the Eucharist as an act of remembrance, not a Real Presence; the rejection of the doctrine of Purgatory and the principle of intercession with saints; a vernacular liturgy, instead of the Latin mass; and the reinterpretation of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body after death as symbolic, not corporeal. The degree of corporeality in the doctrine of the resurrection, which has a bearing on questions of heresy in beliefs about ghosts and phantoms in particular, is the subject of a great deal of controversy through the ages, which involves interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians in particular (Sage 1988: 52ff, 62–8, 236, n. 4).

The Reformation spread across Europe, particularly among the northern nations, causing violent division and resulting ulti-
mately in the massive destruction of the Thirty Years’ War. This conflict shrank the Hapsburg (Roman Catholic) territories of the old Holy Roman Empire, established at the Peace of Augsburg, until there was a north–south split recognized by all the exhausted parties in 1648 at the Treaty of Westphalia which finally achieved recognition of the Reformation countries. To speak only of Western Europe, Reform had affected in turn Germany; the Netherlands, where the Dutch Reformed Church had freed itself from the Catholicism of the Holy Roman Empire; Switzerland; France, where the Calvinist Huguenots had risen; Scotland, where the Calvinist Kirk had defied the Established Church; and England. Even in Ireland, which the Tudor missionaries had largely failed to convert, and which remained devoutly Roman Catholic, a legally established Irish Church had been founded, and Dissent had made its way from Scotland into the North.

After a century and a half of upheaval, the social and political organization of protest began in earnest. By 1670, the Reformed faiths in Europe had begun to be “confessionalized” (i.e., had identified and stabilized their beliefs) and the new divisions in Europe were evident to everyone: church years and calendars had been reinvented and the borders now represented a complete set of rifts in time, space, and beliefs. The corresponding social pact after the Civil War in Britain is the Glorious Revolution of 1688, in which a modern contractual political state was created on principles of Enlightened self-interest and (strictly limited) religious tolerance and a new social identity emerged for the Protestant Churches in their various geographical regions, which split communities into “Anglican” (i.e., the state church established by Henry VIII when he broke from Rome), “Roman Catholic,” and “Dissenting.” Protestant Dissenters, often called since Tudor times “Puritans,” included Baptists, who were Calvinists; and Methodists, who were another variety of Calvinists under the leadership of John Wesley; and Quakers, many of whom had crossed to America. The world of Dissent was the world of “chapel” rather than “church.”

The new Protestant political state was founded on religious tolerance, but it was not without the mutual suspicion of its varied kinds of religious groups. Dissenters did not have their ears cropped any more, or their hands severed; but they equally did not have the franchise, were not allowed to be educated at the universities and were obliged to create their own schools, and were thus almost as discriminated against as Roman Catholics. In 1741, the Enlightenment philosopher David Hume labeled Catholics “superstitious” and Dissenters “enthusiasts” (Hume 1964): enthusiasm was to be avoided, almost equally, by the rational, as a dangerous form of religious excitement, which could lead to heresy (Miles 2002: 86–9). This taboo makes an opportunity for transgressive Gothic novelists to exploit these “irrationalities,” beginning with Horace Walpole in 1765.

Militant protest demands propaganda. As soon as it came into being, Protestantism launched a colossal propaganda war, using the full range of Gutenberg technology, across the borders and divisions, full of popular stereotypes and images of the Other, whether it be Established, Dissenting, or Roman Catholic. This material, which is a field of study in itself, ritually uses terror and outraged horror, projected in verbal or visual cartoons, as a mode of address. Propaganda also rewrites history, and these popular materials fueled suspicion and resistance. For example, after Henry VIII’s reign there occurred a brief period of Roman Catholic rule under Mary Tudor, in which Protestants were burnt alive at the stake. Mary came to be called “Bloody Mary,” and during her rule, a Dissenting Protestant in exile from Scotland, John Foxe, went to the Netherlands and began compiling what purported to be first-hand “testimonies” of the outrage and horror of these events. This book, The Acts and Monuments of the English Martyrs, known simply as “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs,” shared by Anglicans, and often given to children, became universally popular anti-Catholic propaganda
for centuries, achieving an almost canonical status. As late as 1850 Cardinal Newman was wearily complaining: “We must have a cornucopia of mummeries, blasphemy, and licentiousness – of knives and ropes, and faggots; and fetters, and pulleys and racks, – if the Protestant Tradition is to be kept alive in the hearts of the population” (Newman 1892: 141).

The repeated images of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel, frequently set in a Southern European context, overlap with this type of popular material which exploits a traditional set of suspicions. For example, the appearance in English and European fiction of the Inquisition as a reference point or an image or setting, is often an image of fear and outrage, connoting a “totalitarian” attack by the empire of Rome on civil liberties: in the Inquisition, the accuser never comes face to face with the accused, thus also violating a principle of Protestant adversary law (Kliger 1947; Sage 1988: 139–41).

The Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation began soon after the Lutheran protest, in Italy and Spain, with the foundation by Ignatius Loyola of the Society of Jesus, which received its Bull of Foundation from Pope Paul III in 1540. The Jesuits refused to adopt a uniform like the friars, the Benedictines, the Franciscans, or the Dominicans, and they rapidly acquired a reputation across Europe for spying, stealth, and devilish cunning. Their motto is humorously supposed by Protestants to be not ad maiorem dei gloriam (“for the greater glory of God,” which is what it is) but “the end justifies the means.” Wilkie Collins, for example, alludes to this common prejudice in his 1871 anti-Catholic novel, The Black Robe: “In one word, the Catholic system here showed to perfection its masterly knowledge of the weakness of human nature, and its inexhaustible dexterity in adapting the means to the end” (Collins 1885: 235–6). The popular argument among Protestants that Jesuits are “equivocators” derives, at least in part, from the testimony and cross-examination of the Jesuit Father Garnett in the Gunpowder Plot trial, which became a source for the famous play on the word in Shakespeare’s Macbeth (Act 2, scene 3). The deathbed speech of Ignatius Loyola is sometimes quoted, that each member of the order should be, with respect to their obedience, “perinde ac cadaver” (“as a corpse”). These associations give rise to a suspicion of a systematic lack of civil obedience, which was a recurrent suspicion of Roman Catholics in general up to the twentieth century (Trevor-Roper 1976: 230; Sage 1988: 16–17).

Jesuits ran the Spanish Inquisition and later the Roman Inquisition, often from behind the scenes, while the Dominicans (sometimes punningly “translated” as “domini canes” – “the dogs of the Lord”) fronted the inquisitorial action itself. The Jesuits, a missionary order, were the advance guard of the propaganda war for the Counter-Reformation. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, along with the Inquisition, they were banned in various countries, including France and Britain. There was outrage in Britain and France when Frederick the Great invaded East Prussia (Poland) and did not ban them, on the pragmatic grounds that their academically excellent schools (they trained through the use of theater) would provide a sound education for a new generation of German citizens.

Anti-Catholicism is a part of the rhetoric of several of the prominent Gothic novelists of the late eighteenth century in Britain (for example, Radcliffe, Lewis, and Maturin) and Germany, which in the eighteenth century was split between Protestant Prussia and the Roman Catholic lands of the Holy Roman Empire. Germany also produced in the later eighteenth century a voluminous and powerful Gothic novel tradition (alluded to in Jane Austen’s famous list of “horrid” novels in Northanger Abbey), which took full advantage of the climate of conspiracy and suspicion produced, in the eyes of some, by Frederick the Great’s notoriously Enlightened policies of religious and secular tolerance, which were much more far-reaching than those of Britain, and then, at the end of the century, the weakness and superstition of his successor, Frederick William. Germany in the last decades of the eighteenth
century was a byword for secret societies of all stripes (Ayrault 1961; Hall 2005: 149–63). Some of the prominent writers of German Gothic include Friedrich von Schiller, Carl Grosse, J. D. H. Zschokke, Tieck, Benedikte Naubert, Clemens Brentano, Baron Fouque, and E. T. A. Hoffmann (see German Gothic).

Calvinism is another feature of Protestantism that became an important theme in the Gothic novel. One of the theological shifts in the Reformation was the huge increase of power and responsibility given to the individual conscience, unmediated by a priesthood. Calvinism in particular sought to provide a series of procedures for first stimulating, and then managing, guilt; just as Luther had first stimulated, and then rigorously suppressed, the freedom of a Christian individual (Marcuse 1972). When Louis IV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the Huguenot diaspora began. This group of merchant Calvinists changed their names and came to Dublin and London, soon setting up businesses in banking and the silk trade. In the nineteenth century, there is what one commentator refers to as “a Calvinist sublime” (Haslam 1994) present in the work of several Irish Gothic writers: Maturin, Le Fanu, and Stoker (see Irish Gothic). In the Scottish context, Calvinism occurs in both the Edinburgh lives and the Gothic fictions of Hogg and Stevenson; in The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) Hogg parodied “Antinomianism” (Greek for “in opposition to [the] law”), a radical form of moral and political anarchism based on a selective critique of Luther and Calvin’s doctrine of “justification by faith alone” (Drummond and Bullock 1973; Sage 1988: 74–5, Mack 1999).

The nineteenth century saw no abatement, but rather an increase in the popular stereotypes of the propaganda war, but in England the “Anglicans” – the Established Protestant “High Church,” some of whom had descended from the old “nonjurors” and felt an instinctive sympathy toward Roman Catholicism, a condition represented in the stereotyped line drawings of Punch as a lugubrious, bony, effete young Puseyite – began to have an identity crisis. In the decades of the mid-century, from the 1830s onwards, came the Tractarians, the Oxford Movement, and the “going over” of Newman to Rome in 1845, which was greeted by many Anglican Protestants with a mixture of disgust and excitement (O’Malley 2006). On the other hand, Protestant Dissenters in the nineteenth century – the Methodists, the Baptists, and all the other many sects that sprang up in the industrial cities – had become socialized types, as one can see from the work of Dickens, who in the Gothic labyrinth of Bleak House (1850) uses the old theatrical stereotype of the greasy hypocrite in the figure of Mr. Chadband.

With the advent in Europe of ultramontanism (i.e., expansionism from Rome beyond the Alps), Rome itself grew more intransigent, and a series of Bulls and Decrees were issued by Pope Pius IX (1846–78), including the so-called Papal Aggression of 1850 and the “Syllabus Errorum” (List of Errors) of 1864, ending up with the declaration of Papal Infallibility (1870). Humiliated by the gains in Italy of nationalists and liberals, Pius had set his face against liberalism, and ultramontanism had triumphed, triggered in the early century by the fanatical French mystic, Joseph de Maistre. In the meantime, the crisis of masculinity among Anglican Protestants carried on into aestheticism and Modernism: the Anglican poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, for example, after Oxford went over to Rome and became a Jesuit. Gladstone disestablished the Irish Church in 1868. Oscar Wilde was another Oxford youth who began as an Irish Protestant and, after his trials, in which he played a role strongly reminiscent of Christ, ended up (on his deathbed) as a Roman Catholic. Bram Stoker, on the other hand, who married Florence Balcombe, Wilde’s first love, sought in Dracula (1894) to recoup the damage done to God and Masculinity by the failures of Protestantism, Gothicizing the pro-Catholic cult of chivalry and the gentleman, initiated by Burke in 1793, into a Protestant masculine warrior-polemic, inoculated by infusions of American blood, against polymorphous perversity and
Psychical investigation is the practice, developed in the late nineteenth century, of using empirical means to research phenomena that appear inexplicable according to known scientific models. Such phenomena, which today are better known as "paranormal," include communication with spirits, hauntings, clairvoyance, and telepathy.

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**Psychical Investigation**

CATHARINE REDFORD

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Sidgwick and his colleagues formed the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). The Society continued the group’s initial aim of maintaining high standards of scientific inquiry into paranormal phenomena, but it was decided that its investigations should be expanded to include wider psychical happenings. Six separate committees were formed, with each one taking responsibility for a different area: thought-reading; mesmerism; Reichenbach's experiments; apparitions and hauntings; physical phenomena; and the recording of these subjects' histories.

The SPR published its Proceedings from 1882 and a Journal from 1884 as public interest in its psychical investigations grew. Initially it was formed of both Spiritualists and those who were undecided or skeptical, but by 1886 internal disagreements had resulted in many of the Society’s Spiritualist members leaving. This is not to say, however, that psychical investigation was divorced from religion altogether, and there remained members who wished to see the SPR’s experiments provide proof of life after death, thus uniting theology with science.

Coinciding with the public’s desire for all things unexplained came a new wave of Gothic literature in the late-Victorian and early-Edwardian periods (see victorian gothic). From the telepathy in Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897) (see stoker, bram) to the exploration of the trance state in Rudyard Kipling’s short story “Wireless” (1902) (see kipling, rudyard), the influence of psychical research on contemporary literature soon became apparent. Arthur Conan Doyle, one of Spiritualism's most well-known supporters, used the theme of psychical investigation in his novel The Land of Mist (1926), which follows two journalists, Enid and Malone, as they investigate various occult phenomena. Not only do they both come to believe in the Spiritualist movement but it is also revealed that Enid herself has mediumistic powers; the novel concludes with her father – the great cynic, Professor Challenger – proclaiming that the existence of the spirit world is “impossible to doubt” (Doyle 1926: 278). The novel also acts as a guide to psychical investigation, with the reader following the protagonists as they learn about mediums, rescue circles, and spirit doctors. In Algernon Blackwood’s John Silence series (1908), this “physician extraordinary,” endowed with the gifts of telepathy and clairvoyance, sets out on a number of psychical adventures, which see him – among other things – visiting a haunted house (see blackwood, algernon).

Some of the work produced by the SPR, such as Myers’ Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death (published posthumously in 1903), combined the occult with new theories of psychology and the idea of a subliminal consciousness. This, too, was reflected in the literature of the time; in Henry James’ The Turn of the Screw (1898) (see james, henry), for example, it remains unclear whether the novel’s “ghosts” are real or the product of the hysterical governess’ mind. In The Haunted House (1859), written by Charles Dickens and five other collaborators, a group of friends agree to stay in a supposedly haunted house over the festive period, arranging to meet on Twelfth Night to report any ghostly happenings that they have experienced. Dickens contributed the section entitled “The Ghost in Master B.’s Room,” which attributes the supernatural beings encountered by his psychic investigator to mere childhood memories (see dickens, charles).

From the 1920s onward, psychical investigation has been mostly transferred to a formal laboratory setting, first with the formation of Harry Price’s National Laboratory of Psychical Research in 1925 and later with the scientific experiments conducted by J. B. and Louisa Rhine. Investigations such as these are now more likely to be termed “parapsychology,” and there is no assumption in this field that psychic phenomena have paranormal origins. Just as psychical investigation inspired a wave of texts concerned with the occult during the late nineteenth century, so too is contemporary literature influenced by parapsychology, with Liz Jensen’s The Rapture (2009), for example, attributing the psychic experiences of the novel’s protagonist to the electroconvulsive therapy used on her.
SEE ALSO: Blackwood, Algernon; Dickens, Charles; James, Henry; Kipling, Rudyard; Mediumship; Spiritualism; Stoker, Bram; Victorian Gothic.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING

Psychoanalysis
ROGER LUCKHURST

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, there was a revolution in psychology. The dominant Victorian model of mental disturbance or lunacy was initially conceived in a moral framework but was gradually joined by a scientific, evolutionary perspective. Madness became less moral weakness than a form of biological regression, a loss of the most recently acquired, and thus most fragile, faculty of reason. Although it was held that the healthy will could still master physiological impulses, the mechanism of the body was often regarded as determining the development of the mind, particularly in children, women, and the lower races. From the 1870s, a number of pioneers began to explore the possibility that the psyche might develop and act independently of biology – to some extent, at least.

This “ideodynamic” revolution was prompted by observation of patients suffering hysteria and disorders of memory, the symptoms of which could be replicated by artificially induced trance states. Their symptoms might appear in somatic forms, but they proved to be curable ideationally. When Jean-Martin Charcot, the leading neurologist of his day, confirmed hypnosis as an objective phenomenon in 1876, this new science of mind gained some legitimacy after a century of being associated with the quackery of Mesmerism. The idea that psychical life might be stratified and not simply coincident with the conscious self produced numerous schools of thought. From Pierre Janet came the notion that a separate memory chain might develop and dissociate from the dominant mind, located in what he called the “sub-conscious.” Janet worked with the English psychical researcher Frederic Myers, who in the 1890s developed a theory of the “subliminal consciousness,” the notion that we constantly receive strange (sometimes even supernatural) signals from “below the threshold” of the conscious mind. Hippolyte Bernheim in Nancy developed a new treatment of patients through hypnotic suggestion, which he called “psycho-therapeutics.” Meanwhile, in Vienna, a doctor who had visited and worked with Charcot in Paris in 1885 developed the even stranger idea of the dynamic “unconscious.” This was Sigmund Freud. He customized the circulating ideodynamic ideas and treatments, largely abandoning hypnosis for
what one of his patients called “the talking cure.” Once he had made this move, Freud coined the term “psychoanalysis” in 1896.

This history is important to recover, because Freud was prickly about his debts to others and wished to be regarded as sui generis. He polished the origin story of his movement, often removing close allies from the narrative (such as his one-time protégé Carl Jung) when they veered too far from his theories. Although many of his ideas were products of his milieu, Freud was remarkably successful at shaping his reception as a lone genius. After years of being considered an eccentric figure in Viennese medical circles, Freud worked to ensure psychoanalysis would survive as an institution, leaving a huge body of theoretical and clinical writings. Psychoanalysis was to have a remarkable influence on Western intellectual life. Freud lectured in America in 1910, but his ideas were mainly picked up across Europe after World War I and he was much feted by the time he died in London, a refugee from Nazism, in 1939. Psychoanalysis became one of the central paradigms of Western thought for nearly fifty years, its influence in psychology waning in the 1970s after pharmacological breakthroughs and the shift of the discipline to new biological paradigms. In the humanities, Freud’s influence, in part because of his unusual and extensive reliance on myth and on literary and cultural sources as objective evidence, has continued to be important. Among these sources, Gothic and supernatural literature were significant. Indeed, it is no coincidence that Freud’s psychodynamic theory emerged at the same moment as a significant Gothic revival, for it is an intensely Gothic psychology. Psychoanalysis has often been used to explain the enduring appeal of the Gothic, but it may be that psychoanalysis is better explained itself as part of a longer tradition of the Gothic dethronement of the Enlightenment subject.

At the core of Freud’s theory was a foundational split of the psyche between the conscious (with the preconscious, a storehouse of accessible memory) and the unconscious mind. Another tripartite model – id, ego, and super-}

ego – was developed by Freud later. The split of conscious and unconscious was not pathological, restricted to the mentally disturbed, but structural and universal: it was what allowed the human subject to come into social being. For Freud, the infant was a bundle of instinctive hungers without limit, and the social self was effected by a founding “repression” of these exorbitant desires and instincts, this primary act creating the unconscious. As development continued, the mechanism of repression directed difficult, traumatic, or taboo material into the unconscious. The path of human development was a long and tricky one, however, and Freud’s treatment of hysteria and neurosis was to understand it as mainly the result of problems associated with repression. The conscious–preconscious system has no memory of, nor access to, the unconscious. In a model incomprehensible to Victorians, it was what cannot be remembered, what was somehow exterior to the ego, that became the most important part of the psyche in psychoanalysis. There may be no direct access to the unconscious, but the conscious mind was constantly haunted by vestigial signs or traces of it. Bodily hysterical symptoms or compulsive behaviors were clues to buried memories or forbidden ideas and dreams were the “royal road to the unconscious” (a famous phrase ascribed to Freud that he never in fact used in The Interpretation of Dreams). Their content was what he called “compromise formation” between unconscious articulation and the conscious attempts to censor or disguise content (Freud 1975). In more public discourse, jokes articulated transgressive unconscious material. Art and literature, too, could be forms of “sublimation,” at once a means of expressing and displacing unconscious desires. Freud’s technique as an analyst was therefore to act like a detective or archaeologist, or else a kind of literary critic or Rabbinical scholar studying the Talmud, sifting signs and symbols for the truth ingeniously concealed beneath the textual surface. To speak this truth, or rather to get the patient to speak and acknowledge these truths in the analytic session, was, so the theory went,
to effect a cure. Freud’s later, cautious sense was that such analysis might well remain always incomplete, always interminable. This has been part of the appeal of Freud to French theoreticians who questioned the limits of hermeneutic criticism and philosophy, such as Jacques Derrida. For all of Freud’s Victorian scientific confidence in his theory, his interpretations often remained strikingly self-aware of their provisional and limited status.

Freud’s theory of the material most subject to repression was what made his work so controversial. At the root of most psychological disturbances, Freud argued, was sexuality and its precarious trajectory through infancy, latency in childhood, puberty, and adult forms. He was much less interested in exterior traumatic impacts than contemporary psychical paradigms. For Freud, childhood was not an innocence lost at puberty with the biological emergence of secondary sexual characteristics. Instead, the infant pulsed with hungers that became entwined with libidinal desires that screamed for satisfaction. The infant was “polymorphously perverse” (Freud 1973: 246), pure pleasure principle. Socialization was about acknowledging the limits of these desires, or channeling them into expressions restricted by the reality principle. In his focus on “the family romance,” the bourgeois world of his patients was turned into a world of fierce yet often disguised sexual energies, desires, and terrors. There has been controversy over the extent to which Freud recognized the extent of actual incestuous acts in his treatment. By the end of the 1890s, Freud theorized only a universal set of fantasies about sexual relationships that he concretized by using the Oedipus myth. The male infant desired to possess the mother absolutely in an exclusive dyad, a demand met by the countermanding threat of castration from the father. Of this notorious “castration complex,” the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan would later pun that the nom du père, the name of the father, was also the non du père, the “no” of the father, since the paternal function was to inaugurate the subject with this act of repression. Normal sexual development in boys (girls went through a sort of equivalent “Electra Complex”) was meant to detach libidinal desire from the mother and redirect it toward new female object-choices, although these acts of transference tended to retain parental templates, so that love objects were often a repetition of childhood attachments. Freud’s Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905) certainly implied a normative route of heterosexual development. Sexual neuroses were the result of strange arrests or fixations along the way. Yet the route toward heterosexuality was very precarious and perverse outcomes so pervasive that Freudian theory often destabilizes any sense of norm. He might have regarded homosexuality as an arrested attachment, for instance, yet when presented with a lesbian to “cure” Freud refused to do so, arguing that her attachments need not be considered dysfunctional or abnormal. Indeed, Freud suspected that the constraints of modern civilization were actively inducing epidemics of hysteria and neurosis. As a result, the vision of the family romance in Freud’s case histories was one of dark pulsions of desire. In “Dora” (1900), the daughter of the house is subjected to all manner of sexual terrorism beneath the respectable veneer. In “The Wolf Man” (1918), neurosis is linked back to the exaggerated violent fantasies that the patient concocts to explain his glimpses as an infant of his parents’ act of coitus.

Later, Freud would envisage even darker instinctual longings in his dynamic unconscious. Alongside Eros, libidinal pleasure, was also Thanatos, the death drive. In one of his oddest essays, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), Freud speculated that some compulsive patterns (recurring nightmares, re-experiencing traumatic events, or compulsions to repeat damaging behaviors) were driven by an urge to master and contain painful psychic disturbances by returning to a beatific state without stimulus – a state, in fact, of death. Life, in essence, was a lengthy diversion between states of deathly quiescence. This model of psychical energies, in which deathly or traumatic material holds a paradoxical allure, has greatly
influenced psychoanalytic theorizations of the Gothic.

Fundamental aspects of the Gothic lend themselves so effectively to Freudian explanation as to suggest that they share historical conceptions of the subject and similar analytic modes. Horace Walpole claimed that the important early Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) originated with a nightmare. The disordered narrative, weird supernatural intrusions, and hybridization of ancient and modern forms is decidedly oneiric. The labyrinthine space of the Gothic castle, replete with dungeons, prison cells, and secret passageways, would become a standard psychoanalytic figuration of the dynamic psyche, the supernatural rents in reality and ghostly visitations of the unconscious. The historian Terry Castle (1995) has suggested that it is the plots and machinery of Gothic phantasmagoria that provide a language for beginning to describe a more complex sense of subjective interiority. More specifically for a Freudian, however, Walpole's fractured dream logic and imagery allow significant repressed material to leak to the surface. The thematics of *Otranto* harp continually on sexual terrorism, the hint of incest, and the perversion of patrilineal inheritance within a dynasty where the murderous fantasy of the family romance becomes literalized. Only supernatural intervention displaces the usurper of the proper paternal law. There is a dalliance with transgression that is finally contained: a common enough pattern of an irruptive id stamped on by the ego that is found in many iterations of the Gothic. Biographical readings further ramify the sexual terrors of Walpole's plot: the opaque allegory of *Otranto* has been read as a disguised sublimation of Walpole's political anxieties in 1764. The romance was written in the wake of his retreat from political life after being publicly accused of an "unsuccessful passion" for another man. Disordered Gothic form thus exemplifies the dynamic of repression, symptom, and anxiety explored by Freud.

The direct engagement of key psychoanalytic theorists with the Gothic genre began early. From a long and complex engagement since Freud, we might isolate just four concepts briefly to illustrate this: the double, the uncanny, vampirism, and the abject.

Freud's close ally Otto Rank was one of the first in his inner circle to turn to Gothic literature and cinema for illustrations of psychoanalytic concepts. In *The Double* (1914), Rank used the 1913 film *The Student of Prague* (directed by Stellan Rye and Paul Wegener and based on a Hoffmann tale) as a starting point, since he claimed it shared the logic of the dream-work. Exploring the tradition of doubles via Poe, Wilde, and Dostoevsky, Rank elaborated a theory of this deathly figure that tied it to Freud's psychical dynamics. The double, a folkloric harbinger of death and a persecutory figure in the Gothic tradition, was for Rank an expression of self-love intended to hold off a fear of death. In a psychic reversal typical of the Freudian economy, what begins as narcissism turns into intense loathing, which, projected outward onto the uncanny double, returns as a figure of ingenious persecution. In this reading, the double's demonic strategies of torment link persecution to repressed homosexual desire (the love of the "same"), in accord with Freud's theory of paranoia.

Rank's ideas in *The Double* fed directly into Freud's essay "The Uncanny" (1919), which tried to redefine the feeling of the *unheimlich* or "unhomely" in psychoanalytic terms as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (1985: 340). Freud disputed a reading of Hoffmann's classic Gothic tale "The Sandman" that had been offered by Ernst Jentsch in 1906. Jentsch read Nathaniel's madness as the product of "intellectual uncertainty" over the ontological status of his beloved object (driven mad by only belatedly realizing that Olympia is an automaton). Freud instead regarded "The Sandman" as an object lesson in the repetition of traumatic material, in this case circling around the primary threat of the castrating father. By this way of thinking, Hoffmann's tale reveals an "inner compulsion to repeat"
that Freud would shortly name the death drive, thus explaining the weird structural repetition in the narrative. Hoffmann also accessed primal fears that inanimate doubles (like dolls or corpses) may come to life again. Rational, enlightened minds, Freud suggested, are easily overwhelmed by the return of primitive emotions attached to childish ideas we had thought we had superseded. “The Uncanny” has proved a fertile essay for examining the strange logic of repetition and doubling that drives the Gothic. Collapsing text and method, Freud commented in passing that “I should not be surprised to hear that psychoanalysis, which is concerned with laying bare these hidden forces, has itself become uncanny to many people” (1985: 366) – and, indeed, Freudianism was often associated with other occult studies in the 1910s and 1920s. The Surrealist André Breton (1978) called Myers’ theory of the subliminal consciousness, which had direct links to Spiritualism and psychical research, a “Gothic psychology.” Psychoanalysis undoubtedly occupied the same terrain.

In 1931, Freud’s leading English follower, Ernest Jones, published his collection On the Nightmare, which included chapters on the vampire and the werewolf. For Jones, these folkloric figures articulated contradictory fears and desires. The vampire embodied a melancholic longing to be reunited with the dead (the love of the living for the dead placed in the revenant who comes back), a desire that might easily be disguised through inversion into an implacable and sadistic hatred. The promise and punishment of sexual transgression, displaced upwards on the body to the penetration of the neck by the contaminating sexual other, has become a standard psychoanalytic reading of the vampire. In strict Freudian terms, though, Gothic monsters are effective not when they can be reduced to a single sexual meaning but rather when they act like dream symbols, an enigmatic rebus that can condense many contradictory affects into a resonant image. Jones had no patience with the occult interests of Freud’s inner circle, and wrote to interpret and debunk the survival of primitive superstition. His essay, however, launched a thousand critical accounts of the sexual economy in folklore and the popular Gothic.

Post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory has continued the engagement with Gothic forms. The French analyst Julia Kristeva, for instance, combined Freudian psychodynamics with the anthropological studies of Mary Douglas on rituals of purification to formulate the notion of abjection that has been influential in more recent psychoanalytic readings of the Gothic. The boundaries of the sub-ject are formed in the act of expulsing the ab-ject, all those bodily fluids (blood, urine, feces, phlegm, etc.) and hybrid objects (corpses, or problematic others such as foreigners or menstruating women) that have been highly charged with social taboos. The dynamic of attraction and repulsion or love and hate toward these objects is held in an ambivalence and reversibility now familiar from Freud’s conception of the psychic economy. Theories of abjection have been tied to forms of “body horror,” of extreme or explicit representations, that have been significant in Gothic texts since the 1970s.

For a time, psychoanalysis was the default critical method for apprehending the Gothic mode. Since the 1990s, however, a historicist turn has grasped psychoanalysis as a particular instantiation of a general psychodynamic turn at the end of the nineteenth century that ought not overly to privilege Freud. Queer theory has continued readings of the sexual dissonances of the Gothic, but through critical frameworks provided by more materialist critics, such as Michel Foucault. There was always a question about what a narrow Freudianism might exclude from accounts of the genre, and with the passing of Freud’s influence in psychology these questions have become more urgent. If pure Freudianism is now rare, its symbiotic relation to the Gothic remains significant.

SEE ALSO: Abjection; Doubles; Dreams; Hypnotism; Incest; Queer Gothic; Secret Histories; Sex; Supernatural, The; Uncanny, The; Vampire Fiction; Walpole, Horace.
Psychological Thrillers

CHRISTOPHER PITTARD

The psychological thriller has a twofold relationship to the Gothic. The first is in terms of its generic history as a literary relation of detective fiction, a genre created out of a rationalist approach to the more supernaturally inflected mysteries of the Gothic (the crucial figure being Edgar Allan Poe, who worked in both genres). Whereas the detective story focused on the rational explanation of events and narrative closure (deconstructionist accounts of the genre notwithstanding), the psychological thriller concerns itself more with questions of subjectivity and the psychological basis for transgression, and makes no guarantees regarding narrative resolution. The second relation lies in the very terminology of the genre. The fascination of Gothic fiction with interiority and subjectivity (reflected in the predominance of psychoanalytic criticism of the genre), combined with an intended readerly response of shock and awe, immediately makes Gothic fiction a psychological thriller, if not the more narrowly defined “psychological thriller.” Thus, when Sally Munt identifies the characteristics of the genre as “a dissolving sense of reality; reticence in moral pronouncements; obsessive, pathological characters; the narrative privileging of complex, tortured relationships” (Munt 1994: 20), she also provides a good working definition of the literary Gothic.

David Glover characterizes the thriller as a text that “persistently seeks to raise the stakes of the narrative, heightening or exaggerating the experience of events by transforming them into a rising curve of danger, violence or shock” (Glover 2003: 137). This is similar to the frequent critical characterization of the Gothic as a literature of excess, focusing on heightened sensation and experience, be this prompted by the sublime (for the Romantics) or the overwhelming experience of modernity (for the late Victorians). But the psychological thriller’s movement is doubled; the upward narrative trajectory identified by Glover is matched by a metaphorically downward movement into the psyche (this metaphorical trajectory owing much to Freud’s model of the creation of the unconscious as an act of downward repression). In this respect, and like much Gothic literature, the term “psychological thriller” is itself doubled and doubling, attempting to reconcile a tension between different narrative directions, and a philosophical dualism.
(questions of mind as opposed to the thrills of the body).

The historical origins of the psychological thriller can be dimly perceived in the naturalistic Gothic of the later eighteenth century, particularly in the work of Ann Radcliffe. Thus the “explained supernatural” of novels such as *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) move the narrative focus from supernatural events themselves to the psychological states necessary to read natural phenomena as such, although this shift is more a critique of sensibility than a concerted engagement with the psychology of transgression (see **radcliffe, ann**). A more persuasive case can be made for James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), which emphasizes abnormal psychological states and questions of ambiguity and subjectivity in relation to criminal acts (see **hogg, james**). Defined more narrowly, one of the earliest psychological thrillers was Marie Belloc Lowndes' *The Lodger* (1913), the story of a London landlady who believes her lodger to be the “Avenger,” a fictionalized Jack the Ripper. The novel traces the unease caused by the development of her suspicions and the tension inherent in her subsequent defense of his apparently murderous actions (an almost sexual attraction is subtly implied), and the claustrophobia invoked in the text makes it not so much an example of urban Gothic as what might be termed “domestic Gothic” (see **domestic gothic**). The gender politics of *The Lodger* are significant; Munt notes that the psychological thriller is often regarded as a particularly feminine form (as opposed to the masculinity of the thriller), and argues that its development as a discrete genre in the 1950s was the response of female writers to wider political conservatism, the Cold War, and a McCarthyist witch hunt (itself a Gothic term) for the “enemy within”: thus the thriller genre was influenced by a movement inward “towards the family, and even the self, in a growing psychological imperative” (Munt 1994: 18). In the US, the development of the genre by female writers was consolidated in the 1950s by Patricia Highsmith. In the same manner that the Gothic focuses on physical imprisonment (from Radcliffe’s catacombs to the supernatural injunctions placed on the movements of the Count in Bram Stoker’s 1897 *Dracula*), Highsmith’s novels center on themes of psychological imprisonment, whether this be the homoerotic folie à deux of *Strangers on a Train* (1950) or the criminal paranoia of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955). In the UK, similar themes had already been explored in Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938), a revision of an earlier text on the fringe of the Gothic, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847). However, the novelist most closely associated with the psychological thriller in the UK is Ruth Rendell, many of whose earlier crime novels – most significantly *A Demon in my View* (1976) and *A Judgement in Stone* (1977) – had been psychological thrillers, exploring criminality as a consequence of social and sexual alienation. Similar themes are explored in more detail in the novels Rendell has written under the pseudonym Barbara Vine, exploring Gothic themes such as (often homoerotic) sexual desire (*A Fatal Inversion*, 1987; *Gallowglass*, 1990) and the threatening presence of the past (*The Brimstone Wedding*, 1995; *The Chimney Sweeper’s Boy*, 1998). Gothic terror, too, is a key part of these novels, although novels such as *King Solomon’s Carpet* (1991) deal with terrorism in a more contemporary sense.

It would be misleading, however, to characterize the psychological thriller as a predominantly feminine form (indeed, criticism of the genre such as Munt’s seeks to challenge such easy categorizations). Such an analysis overlooks some of the most successful practitioners of the genre; Thomas Harris’ *Red Dragon* (1981) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) are concerned not only with the psychology of the criminal, but also the complicity of the agents of law with such states of mind. John Scaggs has noted how the duality of Hannibal Lecter – both an imprisoned animal with a feral sense of smell, and a psychologist of genius (Scaggs 2005: 117) – draws on similar doublings in the Gothic, particularly the use of comparable terms of comparison in Robert Louis
Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). The cannibalistic Lecter’s characterization as a connoisseur of distinction is an extended play on the idea of “taste,” especially in a third novel, *Hannibal* (1999) (somewhat ironically, perhaps the least sophisticated novel of the three). Such themes bear comparison with another significant psychological thriller, Bret Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho* (1991), in which an affluent devotee of consumer capitalism leads a double existence as a brutal murderer of women, a split registered textually through alternating numbing descriptions of expensive consumer products with startlingly graphic accounts of misogynistic murder. Ellis’ novel, like all of the psychological thrillers mentioned above, stresses the genre’s modernity and move toward interiority. These Gothic texts are no longer concerned with the exterior sublime, but with the terrors of the banal, more likely to take place in the shopping mall than the crumbling castle.

SEE ALSO: Domestic Gothic: Radcliffe, Ann; Hogg, James.

**REFERENCES**


**FURTHER READING**

Queer Gothic
MAX FINCHER

“Queer Gothic” is a relatively new term in Gothic studies that has arisen from recent critical theory, in particular the intersection between feminism, deconstruction, and queer theory. Readings of Gothic texts as queer texts range from the eighteenth century to contemporary narratives.

The American critic Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick was among the first scholars to stimulate an interest in feminist criticism of the Gothic; her early work provided the seeds for later queer readings of the Gothic (Sedgwick 1985). Sedgwick argued that the Gothic novel had close links to male homosexuality in the eighteenth century. The correspondence and biographies of Horace Walpole (see Walpole, Horace), William Beckford (see Beckford, William), and Matthew Lewis (see Lewis, Matthew) suggest that these authors may have been attracted to men, and George Haggerty (1986) explored this possibility further. In her study Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, Sedgwick suggests that the contemporary phenomenon psychologists have identified as “homosexual panic” (a man’s recognition of his own unconscious desires for men and repudiation of them by transforming his desire into a phobic impulse) is present in the Gothic novel. She reads James Hogg’s The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) as an example of homosexual panic in its use of doubles and its theme of paranoia and persecution (see doubles; Hogg, James). She argues that homophobia is “terroristic” in its structure, and isolated and parochial.

Sedgwick’s work on the Gothic was particularly concerned with what she described as “the shape of the entire male homosocial spectrum and its effects on women” (1985: 89). “Homosocial” is a key critical term queer theorists use to describe one social structure of how male bonding works; it can also be found in fiction. Specifically, the identifiable “homosexual” or “queer” is marked out (typically by his effeminate traits) and is repudiated and rejected. Desire between men is sometimes triangulated through the presence of a woman, or else it is negated and finds expression in misogynistic behavior and competitive rivalry. Most importantly for readings of Gothic texts that are queer, homosocial desire is often unspeakable and invisible. Queer Gothic readings often read spectrality (see Spectrality) as signifying how queer desire is, like the supernatural, invisible, evanescent, haunting the familiar, “straight”-forward bonds between men and women.

It is important to note Sedgwick’s observation of a “spectrum”; this is a helpful idea in terms of understanding how being “queer” is different from being described as a socially...
identifiable type, such as “homosexual.” In the 1990s, “queer,” historically a pejorative adjective, was reclaimed by gay and lesbian political activism, particularly in the United States. As a mark of active self-empowerment, queer resisted the description “homosexual,” with its institutionalized negative history (principally through psychoanalysis). Sedgwick’s definition of queer is also a useful starting point: “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, or anyone’s sexuality aren’t (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (Sedgwick 1994: 8). Typically, queer Gothic refers to those instances in Gothic fiction where we can read desire between two men or two women. But “queer” can refer to a whole plethora of desires, including incest and sadomasochism, that go beyond heterosexuality. Importantly, critics marshal the definitional elasticity of queer to examine (some might argue anachronistically) desire and representations of fictional relationships before the invention of the terms “heterosexual” and “homosexual” in the late nineteenth century, as Michel Foucault identified (1976).

Following Sedgwick’s lead, queer theory was closely linked to political activism by gays and lesbians in the 1990s, and quickly gained pace in the fields of literary and cultural studies. Another important theorist in the development of queer studies is Judith Butler, whose work discusses how gender is not inherent or stable. Butler is interested in how gender is constructed through the law, philosophy, and language, and what happens when sex and gender become crossed (Butler 1990). One etymological root of queer is “to cross” or to transgress, as in from masculine to feminine. As such, those Gothic texts that are characterized by liminality (see LIMINALITY), particularly in blurring the boundaries between masculine and feminine behavior and the dead and the living, are transgressive and queer. Historically, Gothic has always been a queer genre, as Hughes and Smith argue, because it transgresses conventional social and sexual mores (Hughes and Smith 2009). Butler’s ideas upset the notion that “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality” are mutually exclusive identity categories. Her suggestion that sex and gender are not essential, unchanging facets of our identity but relational with points of slippage and inconsistency encouraged critics to look at those places in Gothic texts where codes of masculine and feminine behavior are exchanged or in confusion.

Sedgwick’s work on the closet and Butler’s theorizations of gender helped to open up the scope of texts that could be read as both problematizing gender and representing same-sex desire. Certain Gothic texts were ripe for queer readings. Clara Tuite examined how homoerotic desire between the monk Ambrosio and the cross-dressed ambiguous figure of Rosario/ Matilda “is buried under a tableau of a heterosexual libidinal excess” (1997) in Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796). Readings of vampire fiction (see VAMPIRE FICTION) began to address how the queer (male and female) is constructed as a monstrous, socially marginalized, predatory outcast that conventional society simultaneously rejects and needs in order to define itself. From the 1990s, both Anne Rice and Poppy Z. Brite have (controversially for some in the light of the AIDS pandemic) recreated the vampire as a self-consciously queer outsider figure in their fiction (see BRITE, POPPY Z.; RICE, ANNE).

Readings of Gothic texts as queer also focus upon how and where “the heteronormative” is destabilized or where representations of heterosexuality are problematic. The heteronormative is the assumption (often unconscious) that certain social structures (courtship, child-rearing, marriage, family) are a priori natural, normal, and privileged over other social/sexual/economic arrangements. Critics emphasize that the queerness of Gothic often resides where it is in fact least expected: in the family – not least because the Gothic has always been partly about dysfunctional families and homes that turn into prisons. For queer critics, the space where home becomes both a prison and threatening is symbolic of self-imprisonment.
and the closet. Heteronormativity is not confined to heterosexuals: gay men and lesbians participate in and (re)produce heteronormative values and practices as well. One such heteronormative structure is the way that the law uses the signs of bodily evidence to identify crime and to apply punitive justice. The impulse to categorize socially identifiable types, for example in the practices of physiognomy and psychology that gained prominence in the nineteenth century, is indicative of a patriarchal culture that wishes to identify and keep separate gender roles. As Max Fincher has argued, queering the Gothic does not mean that the literary critic needs to reproduce this heteronormative practice in literary criticism. The critic does not need to be like a detective looking for evidence, examining texts for signs of sexual practice to identify the queer crime scene (Fincher 2007). Nor is a queer reading dependent upon a psychobiographical reading framework, where the critic looks for evidence of an author’s sexuality in a Gothic text (Fincher 2007). Instead, one way to read eighteenth-century Gothic as queer could be to take a revisionist, new-historicist approach, making connections across disparate texts. The (homo)phobic discourses of suspicion and categorizing identity are present in the Gothic novel, which is preoccupied with reading the body. Even the straightest of writers – for example, William Godwin – might reveal the ways in which men imagined and expressed affection for one another obliquely, for example through the sexualized connotation of the sublime (see sublime, the) in Caleb Williams (1794).

It should be emphasized that “queer Gothic” does not simply mean Gothic novels or films that deal explicitly with sexual relationships or desires between men. George Haggerty’s queer reading argues that the Gothic anticipates the history of sexuality, particularly as it was written by Sigmund Freud in relation to incest (see incest) and to what Freud described as the “polymorphous perverse” (Haggerty 2006). However, Haggerty argues that Gothic texts pre-Freud are more complex and queer, while twentieth-century Gothic texts problematize any neat division between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Haggerty uses Judith Butler’s interpretation of Freud’s essay “Mourning and Melancholia” to suggest that melancholia in the Gothic is related to an early loss of love between two men or women that is later buried. It is same-sex love, rather than desire, that is the real unspeakable taboo that cannot be expressed, and that is frequently transformed into violent destructive impulses (Haggerty 2006).

A recent collection of essays understands that queer Gothic might mean more than just sexual difference, and might include “a systematic stylistic deviance from perceived norms in personal style of artistic preference” (Hughes and Smith 2009: 5). Future research might consider when and how Gothic texts express a camp aesthetic, but in the sense that Fabio Cleto understands camp, as “the crisis of codes and signs, and of the cultural hierarchies that are inscribed in all ‘naturality of signs’” (1999: 24). One might consider texts in which masculinity and femininity are compromised and reversed. At the level of style, one could consider how postmodern and postcolonial Gothic texts express queerness as a resistance to non-linear, straightforward narrative, complicating the lines between signs and their interpretation. Lee Edelman’s theory (2004) of how the drive to reproduction is used to mark out the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality could be studied in relation to how children – particularly deviant, “evil” children – disturb and fragment the heterosexual nuclear family. Another possible area that researchers might consider is the early-twentieth-century ghost story, looking at the role of the hysterical bachelor narrator who is at the mercy of ambiguously gendered supernatural forces, often in the company of men and the absence of women. More attention might be given to the queer status of the spinster and the witch, women living on the margins of society whose supernatural powers threaten the patriarchal system of organized religion and the family. Critical analysis might
also look beyond literature to consider where there are instances of queer Gothic in popular culture narratives, such as music, television, and advertising. Steven Bruhm's essay (2009) in Hughes and Smith's collection gives a powerful reading of Michael Jackson's “Thriller” video, reading Jackson's death dance as a repetitive compulsion and defiant pleasure in the death drive as opposed to procreation. As long as the Gothic continues to be an ambivalent cultural form, one that half opens the closet door to the dark social anxieties relating to sexual desire, it will always be queer.

SEE ALSO: Beckford, William; Brite, Poppy Z.; Doubles; Hogg, James; Incest; Lewis, Matthew; Liminality; Rice, Anne; Spectrality; Sublime, The; Walpole, Horace; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING
The connections between race, racial difference, and an anxiety about the alien Other are, to a large extent, inseparable from the origins and evolution of the Gothic genre. Beginning in the eighteenth century and up to the present, the real world of colonial and postcolonial experience finds significant links in the discourse of race in Gothic texts (see Imperial Gothic; Postcolonial Gothic).

In A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757), Edmund Burke’s often faltering attempts to gain an overview of the relationship between the sublime and terror exemplify this assumption about the Gothic nature of racial Otherness. He writes of the shock experienced by a young man on first seeing a black woman, remarking that “upon accidentally seeing a Negro woman, he was struck with great horror at the sight” (Burke 2008: 130). Burke explains that, having only recently gained his sight, the boy’s reaction to the woman could not have been learned and suggests that this extreme aversion to her race was, in fact, natural. However extraordinary Burke’s assumptions are, they reveal much about how in prevailing ideas regarding the locus of terror (which were so invaluable to the early Gothic writers) the racial Other was unequivocally inscribed as alien and terrifying. The Other became a useful “code” to signal the often conflated and unspecified presence of the transgressive and horrible.

Early Gothic texts such as William Beckford’s Vathek (1786) and Charlotte Dacre’s Zofloya, or The Moor (1806) introduced elements of transgression through the inclusion of exotic racial Others. These characters operated as convenient symbols/tropes of degeneracy and barbarism and provided elements of horror that were understood – without the need for extensive explanation (see beckford, william). Beckford’s Caliph is described as indulgent and corrupt, drawing on many uninformed cultural assumptions and an antipathy toward racial difference that primed Beckford’s readers for the rapid degeneration of Vathek’s character. Similarly, there is no need for the author to explain Carathis’ predilection for necromancy or the incongruous presence of her one-eyed, cannibal Negro slaves, who provide some of the more disturbing elements within the text’s Orientalized setting. Beckford describes how “The negresses [...] leered with exquisite delight at the sculls and skeletons” (1983: 31). The image of these ghoulish black women excavating rotting corpses has an added poignancy given the fact that Beckford, like many of his peers in the eighteenth century, relied for his vast income on Caribbean slave plantations where stories of cannibalism and voodoo abounded. Indeed, it can be argued
that many of the “factual” reports of slave uprisings in Jamaica and Haiti, such as Tacky’s Rebellion (1760), used a Gothicized vocabulary of horror and transgression, blurring the permeable boundary between fact and fiction in racial discourse.

Likewise, Dacre’s Zofloya provides the shocking prospect and horror of interracial relationships. The text is contradictory: on one hand Zofloya conforms to the paradigm of the “noble moor” found in Shakespeare’s Othello (1603) and Aphra Behn’s Oroonoko (1688), repeating the illicit eroticism of a white woman’s interest in a black man. Set against a real world of abolitionists and antislavery propaganda, the descriptions of Zofloya focus on his body and mirror aspects of contemporary slave narratives. On the other hand, despite her groundbreaking depiction of a sexualized and daring female protagonist, Dacre shows that it is Victoria’s “perverse” attraction for the black Other that is her undoing. The exchanges between Victoria and Zofloya are marked by her growing physical and psychological dependence on him. She remarks “Tis strange, Zofloya, – I know not why, but thou soothest me ever and attracts me irresistibly” (Dacre 1997: 199). Victoria becomes defeminized as she acknowledges Zofloya’s “superiority” and this becomes the most destabilizing theme of the text. Even before he is “revealed” to be Satan “under the semblance of the Moorish slave” (Dacre 1997: 267), Victoria is already “enhorrored” by his transformation. It is her subservience to the black Other that is her ultimate transgression and, in explaining away Zofloya’s beauty as a devilish disguise, Dacre reinforces the impossibility of any natural attraction for the racial Other.

One simple explanation for the presence of the racial Other as a destabilizing element in texts such as Vathek and Zofloya lies in the fact that the rise of the Gothic coincided with a growing awareness of empire and an underlying anxiety concerning the threat of other races. Postcolonial critics have commented on the peripheral place of empire in mainstream texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so it is intriguing that the popular idiom of Gothic novels should engage with the topic of race and racial threats so frequently. In fact, as we progress through the nineteenth century, Gothic literature provides us with instances of the centrality of race and related topics such as miscegenation, invasion, and subjugation and, arguably, becomes a rare location of what Mary Louise Pratt calls the “contact zone” in which “subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present” (Pratt 1992: 8), albeit in a fictionalized space.

The many Gothic narratives that are set in a colonial context provide examples of this potential contact. These “imperial” Gothic texts are invariably concerned with the discovery of terrifying races or incomprehensibly barbarous practices that occur in dystopian locations. Charlotte Smith’s The Story of Henrietta (1800) is one such text. Set against the backdrop of a Jamaican plantation, Smith’s novella draws heavily on racial prejudice and stereotype. The “wild” and “shrieking” slaves are defined by their belief in superstition and Obeah (this association proved hard to shake, as is evident in many early horror movies – such as Jacques Tourneur’s 1948 classic I Walked With a Zombie – in which the Caribbean is a perennial site of Obeah, witchcraft, and voodoo). Indeed, the whole island is depicted as a location of distress and terror where murderous Maroons subvert authority and Henrietta only narrowly avoids the terror of being kidnapped and raped by her slave, Amponah. His transformation from a reliable servant to a sexual predator reinforces not only the duplicity and lasciviousness of the black Other but also his impenetrable and indecipherable nature.

H. Rider Haggard’s She (1886) and Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847) both continue the theme of the nightmarish nature of the racial Other. Haggard’s Ayesha is an ancient, spectral Queen belonging to a long forgotten race and who is supernaturally suspended in time in her African kingdom. She fascinates the colonial explorers with her beauty, thus luring
Leo and Holly to potential doom. In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha’s temporary beauty rapidly dissembles as she slides into insanity – which Rochester hints is the result of her faulty and possibly miscegenous Creole background. These unstable women appear “white”; however, their exoticism and sexual threat is linked to their proximity to racial Otherness.

Many other renowned Gothic texts have direct references to race, and critics such as Howard. L. Malchow, Patrick Brantlinger, and David Punter have brought this connection to the fore. For example, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) is underpinned by the idea that the Count is the last of his race and this topic occupies much of his dialogue with the captive Harker in the opening chapters of the novel. The Count’s “arrival” into the London metropolis arguably highlights a thematic anxiety about racial pollution that chimed with the increasing presence of colonial “invaders” in Britain. Ex-slaves in the dock areas of Liverpool and Bristol and Asian Lascars and Chinese immigrants in the East End of London had been arriving in steady numbers since the eighteenth century and the Count’s gravitation toward the metropolitan center reflects this same trajectory of the alien Other. Similarly, for Victor in Shelley’s *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) it is the potential threat of “a race of devils” that would “make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror” (Shelley 2003: 170) that fills him with fear. It is the notion of being overrun by an alien race, a common anxiety in British imperial discourse, that forces him to abandon the assemblage of a mate for his Creature, thus sealing his own doom (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft).

Much critical attention has been given to Gothic literature’s theme of the threat of post-Darwinian degeneracy. H. G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) and R. L. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) can be linked to contemporary debates in evolutionary theory and later notions of eugenics and racial categorizing. Other “imperial” writers such as Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, and Arthur Conan Doyle inscribe the “dark places” of empire and their inhabitants as both physically and psychologically disturbing – full of savages, fakirs, cannibals, magicians, witch doctors, and any number of other racial stereotypes that induce terror, horror, or supernatural elements. These authors’ texts extended the codified use of race to reflect on increasingly real crises as the British Empire fragmented and moved toward a postcolonial era.

It is when Gothic is adopted and adapted by postcolonial writers, however, that it becomes a vital platform from which to address questions of race and representation. There are several reasons why the Gothic is so suited to reflect racial Otherness. One of the strengths of Gothic literature is the way in which it acts (and always has) as a counterpoint to a single unified and universal metropolitan voice. It has always allowed the possibility of racial Otherness, albeit negatively inscribed and often unexplored. Authors as diverse as Wilson Harris, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Erna Brodber, and so on (the list is extensive) have all written recognizably Gothic texts to explore race and create a framework of expression for a wide range of postcolonial perspectives. These writers use elements of the Gothic in complex ways. Rushdie and Harris, for example, challenge the entire structure of the Gothic narrative by writing texts that uncannily transgress the boundaries of fictional texts. A second approach engages with the broader postcolonial challenge to redress the entrenched cultural views of other races as horrible, nightmarish, and superstitious. Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) is a good example of this “unpicking” and attempt to give complex views of the racial Other, challenging the oversimplification of race that “writes back” to earlier Gothic texts such as *Jane Eyre*.

Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) signals a third and significant development in the connections between Gothic and race. It allows the unspeakable nightmare of slavery not simply to be written back but to be entirely revised. Morrison’s novel examines how the Gothic text acts as a liminal space in which the atrocity
of slavery can be broached. Beloved gives an insight into the cruelty and suffering that cause the central character, Sethe, to break the most fundamental bonds of the mother–child relationship as she commits infanticide to release her daughter from the prospect of dehumanizing slavery. This transgressive act of love and/or attempt to gain control results in Sethe's haunting. When the child returns as the eponymous succubus, Beloved, she can be read as the embodiment of the human horror of African slavery. Beloved consumes Sethe's world both literally and metaphorically and Morrison uses Beloved's supernatural presence to signal the pervasive and destructive effects of slavery on a whole race. When Sethe is finally freed from Beloved, it takes the collective will of the women of the community to do so and, significantly, not with words but through voices – “The key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words” (Morrison 1988: 308) – and it is the Gothic elements of this text, pushing at the boundaries of meaning, that allow this narrative to go beyond words in order to make sense of the inexpressible. Morrison’s text signals the significance of notions of the uncanny and unhomely to create narratives that reflect on the real horror of slavery and residual effects of racial subjugation and carve out the next step in the ongoing discourse between race and Gothic.

Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert’s comment that the “Caribbean learned to read itself through Gothic fiction” (2002: 233) finds resonance when applied to broader issues of race and highlights not only the way in which it is possible to “read” Otherness using the Gothic discourse but also the potential to redress and transform images of race through the postcolonial Gothic text.

SEE ALSO: Beckford, William; Imperial Gothic; Postcolonial Gothic; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft.

REFERENCES

FURTHER READING

Radcliffe, Ann

DALE TOWNSHEND

As significant as Horace Walpole’s originating gestures in The Castle of Otranto (1764)
undoubtedly were, it was Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), more than any other writer, who consolidated, enriched, and developed the Gothic mode in British fiction during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For many, in fact, her name was synonymous with the “first wave” of Gothic writing in its entirety: as Sir Walter Scott in his retrospective appraisal of her work in 1826 put it, “Mrs Radcliffe has a title to be considered as the first poetess of romantic fiction” (Williams 1970: 103); of all authors, Scott continued, Ann Radcliffe had the most decided claim “to take her place among the favoured few, who have been distinguished as the founders of a class, or school” (Williams 1970: 110). In famously dubbing her as “the Shakespeare of Romance Writers,” Nathan Drake in his Literary Hours: Or, Sketches Critical and Narrative (1798) praised the writer in the most rapturous terms possible: Ann Radcliffe was to Gothic romance what the national Bard was to the institution of English letters. Drake’s assessment was by no means an isolated case: Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s review of The Mysteries of Udolpho published in Critical Review in August 1794 cited a four-line extract from Thomas Gray’s “The Progress of Poesy: A Pindaric Ode” in order to argue that, though “such were the presents of the Muse to the infant Shakespeare,” and although “perhaps to no other mortal has she been so lavish of her gifts, the keys referring to the third line [“Of horror, that and thrilling fears”] Mrs. Radcliffe must be allowed to be completely in possession of” (361). Radcliffe’s ability to conjure up the responses of horror, terror, fear, and suspense was seemingly as effective as Shakespeare’s own. In Thomas De Quincey’s words, Radcliffe was “The Great Enchantress” (1862: 74) and, as countless published responses to her work attest, this perception of the writer’s almost supernatural powers of description seems to have prevailed among most of her contemporary readers. Even T. J. Mathias, though a vociferous critic of the Gothic productions of Matthew Lewis, Charlotte Smith, and others in his four-volume satire The Pursuits of Literature (1794–7), would pay encomiastic tribute to Radcliffe in the fourth book as “the mighty magician of THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO, bred and nourished by the Florentine Muses in their sacred solitary caverns, amid the paler shrines of Gothic superstition, and in all the dreariness of enchantment [sic]” (Mathias 1799: 58). Radcliffe’s apparent mastery of Gothic fictional technique, coupled with her stature as the most original but also the most frequently translated, imitated, adapted, and plagiarized romancer of the 1790s, reduced to silence even those critics who, like Coleridge, Mathias, and Scott, railed elsewhere against what they perceived to be the Gothic mode’s disastrous aesthetic, subjective, sociological, and political effects.

Ever since Christina Rossetti abandoned her attempts at writing a biography of Radcliffe in 1883, scholars have been daunted by a dearth of primary evidence where details of the writer’s life are concerned. Notoriously shy and retiring in her own lifetime, Radcliffe appears neither to have cultivated strong personal attachments with many of her literary contemporaries nor to have bequeathed to posterity a rich archive of epistolary correspondence. Her extant diaries, published piecemeal both during her lifetime and after her death, are more outward-looking travelogues, self-consciously intended for the eyes of others, than privately recorded reflections upon her personal experience; her unpublished commonplace book from the last years of her life, now held in the Boston Public Library, is largely given over to an account of her declining health and the medical treatment she received at the hands of her physician, Dr. Scudamore. Furthermore, the close involvement of Radcliffe’s husband, William, in the composition of the two posthumous documentary sources that do remain – the first, the obituary printed in the Annual Biography and Obituary for the year 1824; the second, Thomas Noon Talfourd’s “Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe” prefixed to Radcliffe’s posthumously published Gaston De Blondeville (1826) – have led scholars to question their reliability: in both instances, a reputation-conscious
husband seemed to have presided over the careful manipulation of certain biographical details, even to the point of elision, skewing, and misrepresentation. Even so, considerable aspects of Ann Radcliffe's biography have been pieced together, with varying degrees of scholarly precision and accuracy, through the work of, inter alia, S. Austin Allibone (1870), Clara McIntyre (1920), Alida Alberdina Sibbellina Wieten (1926), Aline Grant (1951), Malcolm Ware (1963), E. B. Murray (1972), Pierre Arnaud (1976), Robert Donald Spector (1984), Deborah D. Rogers (1994, 1996), Robert Miles (1995), and Rictor Norton (1999). To date, Norton's *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* constitutes the most exhaustive and authoritative biography, and what follows below is a digest of some of the most salient findings presented there.

Ann Ward was born to Ann Oates and William Ward, haberdasher, on July 9, 1764, and christened on August 5 of that year in St. Andrew's Church, Holborn, London. Though her parents were humble London tradespeople, Ann was well connected through both the maternal and paternal lines. Her grand uncle, Dr. John Jebb, was a prominent Unitarian, and the young “Miss Nancy” was exposed to this and other sources of radical dissent within her immediate and extended family throughout her formative years. Seemingly keen to avoid controversy, however, Talfourd's “Memoir” of 1826 strives to suppress all intimations of Radcliffe's radical religious and political affiliations, maintaining instead that “she was educated in the principles of the Church of England; and through life, unless prevented by serious indisposition, regularly attended its services” (Talfourd 1826: 105). Having been unsuccessful in trade, Ann's father acquired through his wife's familial connections to Thomas Bentley, the business partner of Josiah Wedgwood, the position of manager of the new Wedgwood showroom in Bath. The Ward family moved from London to Bath in 1772, but the young Ann probably continued to reside on a more permanent basis in Chelsea and Turnham Green, London, with her uncle Thomas Bentley between the ages of seven and twelve, with only occasional sojourns with her parents in Bath. Though Radcliffe was long rumored to have attended the school run by Sophia, Harriet, and Ann Lee at Bath, it is more likely that, if she received any formal education at all, this would have been in London. On January 15, 1787, Ann Ward married William Radcliffe at the parish church of St. Michael in Bath, and the couple shortly thereafter returned to London to live. A graduate of Oriel College, Oxford, William had abandoned a legal career in order to pursue a career in journalism, first as editor for the radical *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (from January 1791) and then for the *English Chronicle* (from 1796); the pro-Revolutionary sentiments frequently expressed in the *Gazetteer* would have been utterly in keeping with the radical politics of Unitarian dissent that ran in both the Ward and Radcliffe family lines. In addition to these journalistic pursuits, William was also the accomplished translator of *An Introduction to Universal History* (1787) (from the Latin), and *The Natural History of East Tartary [...]* (1789) and *A Journey Through Sweden [...]* (1790) (from the French).

As literary-historical anecdote presents it, Ann Radcliffe commenced her own literary endeavors as a means of whiling away the long evenings she spent alone while her husband pursued his career in journalism. Her first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne: A Highland Story*, was published anonymously in London by T. Hookham in 1789. Set in “the north east coast of Scotland, in the most romantic part of the Highlands” (Radcliffe 1789: 1), the romance recounts the enmity between two ancient “Gothic” dynasties respectively residing in the two eponymous castles. Short though Radcliffe's first fiction is, it succeeds in setting in place a number of the themes that would preoccupy the writer throughout her subsequent, more extended romances. Paramount among these is the clash between two competing conceptualizations of marriage, one founded upon ancient aristocratic modes of privilege and property (Baron Malcolm's
unwanted advance upon the heroine, Mary) and the other a middle-class model based upon notions of romantic love (Mary’s betrothal to the refined but impoverished Alleyn). As in Radcliffe’s later works, the narrative eventually comes out in favor of modern bourgeois values—a significant ideological aspect of her fiction that has received the critical attention of Mary Poovey (1979), David Punter (1980), Robert Miles (1995), and others. But this only occurs after the nightmarish playing out of what, following their appearance in Radcliffe’s fictions of the 1790s, would become some of the most recognizable and enduring tropes of the early Gothic mode: sibling rivalry, political illegitimacy, female incarceration, subterranean vaults and secret panels, narrow escapes, “miraculous” parent–child reconciliations, and felicitous marital celebrations. Readers of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne were reserved in their assessments: presuming that the anonymous author of the text was a man, a reviewer in Town and Country Magazine opined in October 1789 that “In this story we find an elegant display of fancy and romantic imagination, but the author is totally unacquainted with the manners of the people among whom he lays his scenes” (469). According to the Monthly Review of December 1789, Radcliffe’s romance, though affording “a considerable degree of amusement,” could be relished only “by the young and unformed mind” (91).

Radcliffe published her second work of fiction, A Sicilian Romance, with T. Hookham in London in 1790, again maintaining her anonymity while courageously foregrounding her feminine authorial persona as “The Authoress of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne.” Turning away from ancient Scotland, Radcliffe set her second novel in late-sixteenth-century Sicily, recounting a tale about the ancient dynastic house of Mazzini. Using the device of a narrative transcribed in an ancient manuscript, Radcliffe reveals her indebtedness to such earlier Gothic writers as Horace Walpole (see Walpole, Horace) and Sophia Lee; in particular, her treatment of the fate of the two young heroines Emilia and Julia directly recalls Lee’s treatment of a similar theme in The Recess (1783–5), a parallel that did not go undetected by the novel’s first reviewers. While developing several of the themes treated in Radcliffe’s first fiction, A Sicilian Romance also introduces the technique of the “explained supernatural,” a narrative turn whereby apparently ghostly activity is eventually given rational, material explanation, and one that would subsequently come to distinguish Radcliffe’s Gothic mode from other fictional treatments of the supernatural in the period. It was this particular aspect of Radcliffe’s technique that proved extremely popular with her countless imitators in the 1790s, including writers such as Isabella Kelly, Anne Kerr, Regina Maria Roche, Eleanor Sleath, and Sarah Wilkinson (see Wilkinson, Sarah). Significantly, the emulation of Radcliffian style and technique was not limited exclusively to women: though looking to Shakespearean precedents for the introduction of a real ghost in his first novel, Ethelwina (1799), T. J. Horsley Curties would respectfully invoke the influence of “Udolpho’s mighty Foundress” in the preface to his second novel, Ancient Records (1801). Frequently imitated though it was, the Radcliffean formula also rapidly became the object of critique: Jane Austen would parody the explained supernatural in Northanger Abbey (written in 1798 but not published until 1818), while Walter Scott, in his review of The Fatal Revenge: Or, the Family of Montorio (1807) by Dennis Jasper Murphy (see Maturin, Charles Robert) in 1810, would register his strong disapproval “of the mode introduced by Mrs. Radcliffe and followed by Mr. Murphy and her other imitators, of winding up their story with a solution by which all the incidents appearing to partake of the mystic and the marvellous are resolved by very simple and natural causes” (Scott 1810: 344). Contemporary reviews of A Sicilian Romance, though, were largely favorable. According to Scots Magazine in September 1790, the novel “exhibits romantic scenes, and surprising events, in elegant and animated language” (438). As the Monthly Review of the same month put it, “The writer possesses a
happy vein of invention, and a correctness of taste, which enable her to rise above the level of mediocrity” (91).

Radcliffe’s third novel, *The Romance of the Forest*, was published by T. Hookham and J. Carpenter in London in 1791. Here, for the first time, Radcliffe’s attention narrowed to focus on the plight of a single heroine, Adeline de Montalt, and her sufferings across three volumes of narrative. With Shakespeare’s Prince Hamlet as her avatar, Adeline is forced to confront, albeit at several removes, the brutal murder of her father by his brother. With suggestions of ghostly activity explained away in the course of the narrative, the real source of the heroine’s suffering, it turns out, is more physical than supernatural, variously manifesting itself as spatial incarceration, economic objectification, patriarchal aggression, and near-violation. With the eventual vanquishing of these horrors, though, comes the familiar restoration of bourgeois normality, as Adeline and her hero Theodore enter into a felicitous, companionate marital union at the narrative’s close. As contemporary responses to *The Romance of the Forest* attest, Radcliffe had, with this fiction, successfully secured her reputation as the greatest modern writer of prose romance. Maintaining that, with this publication, the hitherto still unknown “authoress” had “greatly exceeded her first work,” the *Critical Review* of April 1792 praised Radcliffe’s deft handling of mystery and suspense: “One great mark of the author’s talents is, that the events are concealed with the utmost art, and even suspicion sometimes designedly misled, while, in the conclusion, every extraordinary appearance seems naturally to arise from causes not very uncommon” (459). Praise was also forthcoming from a critic in the *Monthly Review* of May 1794 by the London publishers G. G. and J. Robinson. 

Radcliffe’s next romance, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *A Romance; Interspersed with Some Pieces of Poetry*, was published in four volumes in early May 1794 by the London publishers G. G. and J. Robinson. In an age in which authors were generally paid no more than £20 for the relinquishing of copyright to their booksellers or publishers, Radcliffe’s securing of £500 from Robinson for *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was unprecedented; it was a publishing phenomenon that rendered her crucial to the rise of the professional female writer in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Set in the sublime reaches (see sublime, the) of southern France and central Italy, *Udolpho* details the plight of its young heroine, Emily St. Aubert, at the hands of a series of misfortunes, including the death of her parents, her separation from her beloved Valancourt, her forced relocation to Italy, and her veritable imprisonment by the villainous Signor Montoni in the eponymous Italian castle. Repeatedly figuring scenes in which women become the objects of male-inflicted control, manipulation, violence, and near-rape, *Udolpho* charts the path of the heroine’s resistance to the legal, economic, and physical exigencies of patriarchy, setting particular store by the rational fortitude Emily comes to demonstrate in the face of seemingly supernatural occurrences. Like the earlier *Romance of the Forest*, *Udolpho* epitomizes what the feminist criticism of Ellen Moers (1978), Claire Kahane (1980), Juliann E. Fleenor (1983), Kate Ferguson Ellis (1989), Alison Milbank (1992), Anne Williams (1995), and others has come to term the “female Gothic” (see female gothic): a woman-centered
narrative detailing the heroine’s suffering at the hands of manifold patriarchal violences. Eventually released from Udolpho and the nightmarish “Gothic” past for which it stands, Emily is reconciled to her reformed but also emasculated sentimental hero in order to take up felicitous residence at her familial and national place of origin in the narrative’s closing sequence. The moral of the piece, Radcliffe’s authorial voice concludes, is to demonstrate that, “though the vicious can sometimes pour affliction upon the good, their power is transient, and their punishment certain; and that innocence, though impressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune” (Radcliffe 1794: IV 428).

The critical reception of Udolpho was nothing short of rapturous. According to the Analytic Review (June 1794), Radcliffe’s romance had not only met readerly expectations but far exceeded them. Consequently, “It is not enough to say, that the Mysteries of Udolpho is a pretty, or an agreeable romance”; “The design,” this reviewer continues, “has ingenuity and contrivance; the style is correct and elegant; the descriptions are chaste and magnificent; and the whole work is calculated to give the author a distinguished place among the fine writers” (140). Turning to the poems included in the text, however, the reviewer opined that some of Radcliffe’s verses abounded “too much with monosyllables” (144). Indeed, together with her frequently prolix descriptions of sublime scenery, or what a review in the Gentleman’s Magazine of September 1794 referred to as “the too great frequency of landscape-painting” (834), it was the poetry that Radcliffe interspersed throughout Udolpho that became one of the sole objects of critique, if not in the poems’ own terms, at least with regard to their distracting placement within the narrative. But these were small detractions in an otherwise overwhelmingly positive response. British Critic in August 1794 heaped “encomiums” upon Udolpho for its “extraordinary portion of ingenuity” (111), while Coleridge, who had articulated problems with Radcliffe’s “exuberance of description” (360), had no reservations in hailing Udolpho in a later entry in the Critical Review in November 1794 as “the most interesting novel in the English language” (359).

The money secured from the copyright of Udolpho enabled Ann and William to travel to the continent, and in June 1795 G. G. and J. Robinson published Radcliffe’s reflections upon her travels, both at home and abroad, as A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, Through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany [...]. Though, generically, A Journey does not qualify as “Gothic,” the text not only prompts consideration of the relationship between Gothic romance and travel writing but also affords crucial insight into Radcliffe’s liberal political sympathies. The financial success of Udolpho was trumped by the £800 that Radcliffe was paid by the London publishing firm T. Cadell Jnr. and W. Davies for the copyright of her next work of fiction, The Italian, Or the Confessional of the Black Penitents. A Romance, published in London in three volumes in late 1796 or early 1797. In part a response to, and corrective revisioning of, Matthew Lewis’ The Monk, The Italian concerns the inter-generational conflict between the Marchesa di Vivaldi and her nefarious accomplice, Father Scheldoni, and the heroine Ellena Rosalba and her hero, Vincento di Vivaldi, the Marchesa’s unfortunate son. Retold in numerous bluebooks and chapbooks (see bluebooks), The Italian was also adapted for the stage by James Boaden as The Italian Monk in 1797. Though critical praise was forthcoming in the reviews published in such journals as Monthly Review and Monthly Mirror (both March 1797), critics were more inclined to register their disappointment with the text. According to the Analytical Review (May 1797), the reader’s familiarity with the turns of the explained supernatural had robbed this distinctively Radcliffian technique of all its effects. Coleridge echoed these sentiments in the Critical Review in June 1798, albeit while commending, in the spirit of several other reviewers, the distinct lack of the lengthy, sublime natural descriptions that had characterized Radcliffe’s earlier
fictions. For the *English Review* (December 1796), too, Radcliffe’s method was perceived as being in danger of becoming dull and tired; though not entirely lacking in genius, *The Italian*, as a whole, had failed to soar to the aesthetic heights of *Udolpho*. In the words of *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* of September 1800, *The Italian* was “inferior to most of Mrs. Radcliffe’s other performances” (30); as the *European Magazine* of January 1797 put it, “In this romance we do not think Mrs. Radcliffe has been so successful as on some former occasions” (35).

These impressions go a long way toward explaining what appears to have been Radcliffe’s concerted withdrawal from the literary scene after 1797. Even if, as Jacqueline Howard has speculated, Radcliffe may have continued to write and publish at least two later fictions anonymously (2011: 45–73), Radcliffe’s reputation by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century had begun to wane. According to Talfourd’s “Memoir,” Radcliffe and her husband William spent portions of 1797 travelling through parts of England, visiting Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight in 1798; sections from her travel journals during this period were posthumously published in Talfourd’s biography. In the face of her veritable “disappearance” from the publishing scene after *The Italian*, rumors of her madness, incarceration in an institution in Derbyshire, and even death began to abound from 1800 onwards. Low-end publishers of Gothic fiction sought to exploit Radcliffe’s silence through the fabrication of such authorial names as Mary Anne Radcliffe; *The Poems of Mrs. Ann Radcliffe*, an unauthorized anthology of her poems taken mostly from *The Romance of the Forest* and *Udolpho*, was published by J. Smith in London in 1816. While, as Norton argues, it is not inconceivable that Radcliffe, in an attempt to recover from an episode of mental illness, had retreated (possibly without her husband) to Windsor, she would eventually return to London to die there from asthma and related bronchial infections and complications on February 7, 1823, in her fifty-ninth year; she was buried on February 15, 1823 at St. George’s Church, Hanover Square, London. Though probably completed as early as 1803, Radcliffe’s last novel, *Gaston De Blondenville, Or The Court of Henry III* […] was published three years after her death by Henry Colburn in London in 1826; Talfourd’s “Memoir” was prefixed to the publication, a four-volume set that also included *St. Alban’s Abbey, A Metrical Tale* and other Radcliffian poems. With *Gaston*, Radcliffe had eschewed the Southern European settings of her major romances, returning to the ancient British Gothic past first explored in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*. Stylistically different from much of her earlier work, too, *Gaston* abandons the technique of the explained supernatural so as to introduce, for the first and last time in the Radcliffian oeuvre, a “real” ghost (see *supernatural*, *the*). Radcliffe’s essay “On the Supernatural in Poetry,” patently an extension of the aesthetic arguments put forward in the framing narrative to *Gaston*, was published as a fuller, independent essay in the *New Monthly Magazine* in January 1826. Encompassing, among other things, a discussion of Shakespeare and the Burkean aesthetic of the sublime, Radcliffe’s essay was crucial in the formulation of the distinctions between horror and terror, a difference that continues to structure and inform much critical activity in the field of Gothic studies today.

**SEE ALSO:** Bluebooks; Female Gothic; Maturin, Charles Robert; Sublime, The; Supernatural, The; Walpole, Horace; Wilkinson, Sarah.

**REFERENCES**


Radcliffe, A. W. (1826) *Gaston De Blondeville, Or The Court of Henry III [...] St. Alban's Abbey, A Metrical tale [...] To Which is Prefixed a Memoir of...*
Perhaps the most marginalized cultural form in academic study, radio drama yields riches for scholars of the Gothic. From its inauguration in the 1920s, radio grew in popularity at a phenomenal rate and would soon develop broadcasting formats and genres that remain recognizable (including in the visual media) to this day. Alongside the sitcoms and soap operas, radio had a particular interest in horror. In our screen-dominated culture, radio has tended to be belittled as a “blind” medium and yet, paradoxically, it is this quality that makes it such an effective form, not least where the Gothic is concerned. The complex poetics of radio mean that it has the potential to give the listener an intensive experience. Nothing can capture the uncanny experience of utter darkness as effectively as radio. Similarly, the interplay between script, sound effects, music, and the performer can be highly evocative in the creation of locale, mood, and atmosphere.

The play often described as the first written expressly for radio – Richard Hughes’ A Comedy of Danger for the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) in 1924 – is a case in point, being a thriller set in a coalmine during a power cut. However, it was in the United States that a...
fascination with Gothic radio developed especially rapidly. Although eclipsed by the furor surrounding the 1938 “War of the Worlds,” Mercury Theatre on the Air (featuring Orson Welles) produced a distinguished adaptation of Dracula earlier the same year. Adaptations could also form the basis of serials: in the 1930s and beyond there have been several serialized dramatizations of Frankenstein and Jekyll and Hyde that have amounted to many hours of airtime (a luxury hard to imagine in cinema or even television). However, Gothic radio was particularly well-suited to an intensive “dark ride” approach to short experiential drama. This is most evident in the long-running series of, typically thirty-minute, dramas frequently presented and framed by character-hosts that were aired by US networks of the “golden age.” Inaugurated by The Witch’s Tale (1931–8), other series followed the formula to equal or greater success including The Hermit’s Cave (1935–44), Inner Sanctum Mysteries (1941–52), The Mysterious Traveler (1943–52), and the adventure series Escape (1947–54). The repertoire of these and other shows could feature literary adaptations from Bram Stoker, Robert Louis Stevenson, and numerous Edgar Allan Poe dramatizations (works like “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Pit and the Pendulum” being extremely well-suited for radio interpretation). However, the high demand for horror radio meant that creators were obliged to look further for source material and we can find refreshing adaptations of John William Polidori, Edward Bulwer Lytton, Théophile Gautier, Prosper Mérimée, and Algernon Blackwood.

Horror radio is also distinguished by its original writing: in particular Lights Out (1936–47) and Quiet, Please (1947–9) produced innovative and distinctive examples of Gothic radio. Both series were created by the writer-producer Wyllis Cooper but Lights Out would be indelibly associated with his successor Arch Oboler. Frequently taking the combined role of writer, producer, and presenter, Oboler exploited the potential of the form with horror tales that could be gruesome and nihilistic yet laced with a deliciously sardonic humor. Boris Karloff made some notable appearances on Lights Out and other performers associated with horror found radio to be a valuable forum. Particularly noteworthy is the Peter Lorre showcase Mystery in the Air (1947), a series of adaptations of Poe, Maupassant, and other writers featuring virtuosic performances by Lorre. Aside from horror shows, the Gothic can be found creeping into other areas of the airwaves. Comedy shows can be found enjoying forays into the “dark side,” especially around Halloween. Although typically associated with “radio noir,” hard-boiled crime, and whodunits, the popular series Suspense (1942–62) could also present more Gothic tales: in “Fugue in C Minor” (1944), Vincent Price plays the owner of a mansion with a diabolical secret; “The House in Cypress Canyon” (1946) is a startling tale of lycanthropy; and there was also a surprisingly early adaptation of H. P. Lovecraft, “The Dunwich Horror” (1945). As part of the war effort, John Dixon Carr donated a number of his Suspense scripts to the BBC in order to create a new series and in so doing instigated a British radio institution: Appointment with Fear (1943–55). The quintessential ingredient of the series was the host, “The Man in Black,” originally performed by Valentine Dyall and reincarnated by actors such as Edward de Souza in revivals of the series (as Fear on Four/The Man in Black) in the 1980s and 1990s, and by Mark Gatiss in the twenty-first century. The formula has remained unchanged: thirty-minute dramas framed by the macabre yet charismatic host. However, while the early series featured Poe adaptations and enigmatic murders, the terror tales of the Gatiss era can center around satnavs and the internet.

With the rise of television, US broadcasters turned away from radio and a vibrant culture was consigned to history. The UK has been more fortunate, principally with the commitment of the BBC, and the production of radio drama has continued unabated. Indeed, radio stars of the US golden age such as Vincent Price were given the chance to return to radio
drama thanks to the BBC horror series *The Price of Fear* (1973–5, 1983). Whether classic adaptations, book readings or all-new series, the Gothic has never been far from the British airwaves. More recently, digital culture has produced a new lease of life for Gothic radio with vast amounts of old radio plays available as downloads or webcasts as well as a new age of experimental adaptations and soundscapes. New Gothic radio drama has continued with Paul Evans’ *The Ditch* (BBC 2010) – a play about uncanny sounds hidden in landscape recordings – while Mike Walter’s “interactive” BBC radio drama *The Dark House* (2003) featured three separate characters within the same story with listeners able to vote online for which character they wanted to “accompany” on their eerie adventure. Gothic radio’s potential remains undiminished: its formidable ability to combine imagination and suggestion to create the uncanny reveals that radio’s ostensible disadvantage – visionlessness – is, in fact, its greatest coup.

SEE ALSO: Drama; Film; Poe, Edgar Allan; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Stoker, Bram.

FURTHER READING


Reeve, Clara

ANGELA WRIGHT

Clara Reeve’s (1729–1807) most recognized contribution to the Gothic genre came in the form of her novel *The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story* (1778). She was, however, a prolific writer, and was equally renowned in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for poetry and critical essays that intervened in debates upon the role of romance, women’s education, and the French Revolution. Born in Ipswich in January 1729, she was the eldest daughter of Nicholas and Hannah Reeve. Her father was a curate to the Parish of St. Nicholas in Ipswich, and encouraged her to read newspapers, classical literature, and scientific pamphlets from a very young age. She did not marry and, in order to support her independent living apart from her family, she took to writing in earnest in the 1770s. Her first literary endeavor, published in 1769, was a collection of poetry; her second, an English version of John Barclay’s *Argenis* entitled *The Phoenix* (1772) revealed her classical study and lively interest in politics.

In 1777, Reeve published anonymously *The Champion of Virtue* at Colchester, and, as she records in the preface to its second edition of 1778, she was “encouraged” by friends to republish it with her authorship acknowledged, and at their “earnest solicitation” to change the title from *The Champion of Virtue to The Old English Baron* (Reeve 1778: viii). In subtitle and preface, it revealed its indebtedness to Horace Walpole’s second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (see *walpole*, *horace*). Like Walpole’s *Otranto*, the “Gothic Story” that is recounted in *The Old English Baron* emphasizes simultaneously the Whiggish connotations of patriotism in “Gothic,” and the tale of usurpation which we now recognize to be a staple of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction. On the first page of the preface, Reeve immediately synthesizes an acknowledgement of her indebtedness to Walpole with a definition of what precisely she takes as “Gothic”:

This story is the literary offspring of The Castle of Otranto, written upon the same plan, with a design to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and modern Novel, at the same time it assumes a character and manner of its own, that differs from both; it is distinguished by the appellation of a Gothic story, being a picture of Gothic times and manners. (Reeve 1778: iii)

This is not as self-effacing as it may first appear, for Reeve emphasizes that her “story’s” Gothic
origin differs substantially from both “the ancient Romance and modern Novel.” Walpole had by contrast insisted upon his story being a blend of both the romance and the novel in his second preface to *The Castle of Otranto*. Further on in the preface, Reeve proceeds to take issue with Walpole’s “violent” use of “machinery,” arguing that “Had the story been kept within the utmost verge of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention” (Reeve 1778: vi).

In quest of literary credibility, then, *The Old English Baron* pursues a Gothic tale that is less ostentatious in its show of the supernatural. While Walpole had reveled in giant helmets and walking suits of armor in *The Castle of Otranto*, Reeve struck a more moderate chord with her cautious and equivocal engagement with supernatural effect (see supernatural, the). The tale begins with the knight Sir Philip Harclay having experienced a dream where his dead friend Lord Lovel appeals to him to rectify the consequences and causes of his murder. In the dream, the ghost leads Harclay to a dungeon in Castle Lovel which contains a bloodstained suit of armor. The placement of this ghostly visitation within the frame of a dream neutralizes the improbability of the supernatural content, but as Sue Chaplin has observed, it is “clearly intended to communicate a certain ‘truth’ to the readership regarding the ownership of Castle Lovel” (Chaplin 2007: 80). The “truth” that Sir Philip is tasked to discover is that the rightful legal heir of Castle Lovel, Edmund, has been displaced. The novel traces the process of uncovering the bloody murder, and rediscovering the legal claim of Edmund to the Lovel estate. Once this has been established, the novel concludes upon a particularly didactic note, emphasizing that the story is “A warning and proof to late posterity, of the justice of Providence, and the certainty of Retribution” (Reeve 1778: 220). This is the novel’s Gothic crux, in essence, that retribution will and must intervene in order to restore rightful primogeniture. Its “warning” was directed to those who might doubt the English national values that were grounded in this Gothic message. In relation to this, James Watt has perceptively positioned *The Old English Baron* as a “Loyalist Gothic romance” which participated in the broader contemporaneous aim of reimagining “national identity” in Britain. Watt argues that “the supernatural in Reeve’s work plays a significantly benign and predictable role in the service of the hero, troubling only those characters with an interest in concealing Edmund’s legitimate status as the rightful heir of Lovel Castle” (Watt 1999: 48–9). Its relegation of the supernatural to such a minimal role was undoubtedly influential for later Gothic romances, particularly those of Ann Radcliffe (see radcliffe, ann) where the supernatural that seems so certain and terrifying during the central parts of the narrative is rationalized once the crisis of usurpation has been resolved.

After publishing *The Two Mentors: A Modern Story* (1783), which, as its subtitle suggests, was grounded more prominently in contemporaneous and domestic concerns, Reeve then turned to a critical work that was intended to work through the distinctions between her two pieces of fiction, entitled *The Progress of Romance* (1785). This essay takes the form of a Socratic dialogue between two female characters, Sophronia and Euphrasia, and a male character called Hortensius. Espousing the masculine skepticism of romance that was pervasive in the mid-eighteenth century, Hortensius is prepared to listen to Euphrasia’s counterarguments as she delineates what she views to be the key distinctions between the romance and the novel. Euphrasia begins by asserting that “Romance or heroic fables are of very ancient, and I might say universal Origin” (Reeve 1785: 13). Euphrasia is clearly closest to the viewpoint of Reeve, as the author herself asserts in the preface that “Romances are of universal growth” (Reeve 1785: xv). The ensuing dialogue clearly shows the struggle of legitimizing romance in the 1780s; Reeve’s Euphrasia wishes to systematize the study of romance, but has to endlessly redefine and refine her definitions of romance in the face
of Hortensius’ skepticism. Perhaps in spite of itself, what The Progress of Romance reveals is the porous nature of the boundaries between romance and novel. The debate, however, is important in the role of the Gothic in the eighteenth century, as it crystallizes the pressures inherent in defending romance against a skeptical audience who wishes to dismiss it as an outmoded and irrelevant genre. Euphrasia’s cautious defense of romance emphasizes that it must be scrutinized and regulated carefully for moral purposes before it is embraced. Such caution demonstrates the pressures that authors faced in legitimizing their use of romance. Despite the circuitous nature of the arguments presented in The Progress of Romance, Reeve’s arguments were clearly influential in determining the very careful levels of moral propriety exhibited by female authors such as Ann Radcliffe, Eleanor Sleath, and Maria Regina Roche in their Gothic romances of the 1790s.

While accounts of Reeve’s contribution to the development of the Gothic genre often conclude at this point, there is more to be said about her further works. In 1787, we know that she was working upon a “ghost story” entitled Castle Conor: An Irish Story which, in the preface to her subsequent novel The Exiles; or, Memoirs of the Count de Cronstadt (1788) she claims was stolen from her in the coach between Ipswich and London. What is most remarkable about this discussion of the lost ghost story is the extraordinary lengths to which Reeve goes to warn about literary theft. As the reviewer of The Gentleman’s Magazine noted of her novel The Exiles, however, it was clearly indebted to the French author François Thomas Marie Baculard d’Arnaud’s Mémoires, pour servir à l’histoire du comte de Cronstadt, taken from his collection Les Épreuves du sentiment. Reeve, however, chose not to acknowledge this indebtedness, instead inveighing against the potential theft of her own manuscript in the preface.

The later essays and fiction of Reeve demand further examination, for they highlight the literary dexterity of a very able writer. Translator, essayist, novelist, educationalist, theorist, Clara Reeve was remarkable for the confident and forthright manner in which she intervened in some of the most controversial debates of her time. As the author of what is debatably read as the second Gothic novel, The Old English Baron, Reeve both admitted her indebtedness to Walpole while she sought to refine his originating model. In her critical work The Progress of Romance, Reeve has a female character, Euphrasia, who seeks to rectify Hortensius’ misguided thinking upon the form of romance. Her later work was also characterized by a similarly thoughtful and articulate repositioning of women; alongside Wollstonecraft, she published in 1792 Plans of education; with remarks on the systems of other writers; in a series of letters between Mrs. Darnford and her friends. Between the covers of this educational treatise, however, Reeve sought to point out that, “The Revolution in France will be a standing lesson to Princes and to People of all countries; it is a warning to Kings, how they oppress and impoverish their people” (Reeve 1792: 214). An early advocate of the French Revolution, Reeve later deplored its descent into violence. Memoirs of Sir Roger Clarendon, the natural son of Edward Prince of Wales, a historical Gothic romance of 1793, explores through its analysis of this particular period of English history whether there can ever be any legitimate use of violence.

In later life, Clara Reeve declined to publish a new edition of her book The Progress of Romance (1785), declaring in a letter to Joseph Cooper Walker that, “I have written 21 volumes, beside pamphlets,” but “after seventy years of age, an old woman is good for little, writing for the press is out of the question” (cited in Kelly 2004). She apparently had several drawers full of material and could not decide whether to save or burn it, but “referring to the proverb that a prophet is not respected in her own country, thought it would ‘all go to the flames’” (Kelly 2004). She died in Ipswich in December 1807, leaving behind a remarkable body of work.

SEE ALSO: Radcliffe, Ann; Supernatural, The; Walpole, Horace.
REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Reynolds, G. W. M. (George William MacArthur)

MARK BENNETT

Remembered by a contemporary obituary as “the most popular writer of our time” (G. W. M. Reynolds 1879) and yet, until recently, forgotten by the majority of readers and critics, the career of G. W. M. Reynolds (1814–79) is appropriately marked by contrasts. His writings enjoyed a phenomenal circulation, yet their sensationalism and association with the populist tastes of an emergent mass reading public limited their cultural visibility. His successes often adapted others’ works, yet Reynolds nevertheless cultivated a distinct authorship that coalesced into a formidable brand identity (King 2008: 55). He was a well-known political agitator – addressing multiple Chartist meetings in 1848 and editing the radical *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper* between 1850 and 1862 – yet his literary sensationalism alienated contemporaries, and subsequent critics have found the reconciliation of Reynolds’ fiction and politics equally challenging (Carver 2008: 159–61).

Reynolds’ placement in the Victorian Gothic is significant, but also ambiguous, falling between the lower-class Penny Bloods and the later Sensation Fictions whose concern both with exposing illicit domestic secrets and articulating the protean potential of identity and social status is variously anticipated across Reynolds’ work (see James 2008: 199; Law 2008: 203). His numerous depictions of violent and resourceful women also anticipate famous sensational (anti)heroines (see *sensation fiction*; *victorian gothic*).

Reynolds’ earliest work filters Gothic elements through the genre of Newgate fiction, focusing upon criminal characters (both guilty and innocent) and incorporating descriptions of various real penal institutions. The Newgate format subsequently informs the portrait of the urban criminal underworld offered in Reynolds’ *Mysteries of London* series (Carver 2008: 150–5); however, other features distinguish Reynolds’ early use of the genre as his own. Not only had Reynolds resided in France between 1830 and 1836, he had also been arrested and imprisoned at least once by the end of the decade (Collins 2009; Humpherys and James 2008: 2). This imaginative capital is exploited by his early novels – almost all of which incorporate French settings – enabling Reynolds’ preferred authorial posture: that of a knowledgeable guide to the esoteric scenes on display.

Reynolds’ initial success was also founded upon two Dickensian adaptations. However, in contrast to other writers whose imitations
self-effacingly plagiarized Dickens’ originals (see James 1963: 45–71), Reynolds situates himself as an erstwhile competitor: prefacing a collected serial with reviews “warn[ing] Boz to look to his laurels” (Reynolds n.d. [1838–9]: iii). Both Pickwick Abroad and Master Timothy’s Bookcase (1841–2) also find Reynolds developing his characteristic chains of interlinked narratives, places, and characters; indeed, the latter owes more to Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) than the Dickensian serial Reynolds regarded as “a decided failure” (quoted in James 1963: 67). Its titular bookcase is supernaturally bequeathed to Sir Edward Mortimer as a means of providing universal knowledge through the manuscript histories of anyone whose secrets the hero desires to penetrate. What follows is a chain of Gothic stories, interspersed with Mortimer’s own travels, and tending to demonstrate that, rather than enriching and affirming an understanding of the world, transparency reveals it to be a tissue of artifice, deception, and imposition. The correlative to this is Mortimer’s own subjective erosion as his insight causes him to appear monstrous and insane, ultimately seeing him assasinated upon the mistaken assumption of his own criminality.

Master Timothy’s marriage of panoramic scope and detail with a skeptical Gothic optic anticipates The Mysteries of London and The Mysteries of the Court of London (1844–55). Reynolds regarded these as one “encyclopaedia” of tales and the Gothic serves throughout as a “unifying master Genre” (Humphreys 2008: 123, 131): in addition to the urban machinations of debauched aristocrats, capitalists, and lower-class criminals, classic Gothic plots are also reworked in the abduction and extortion suffered by heroines and the transition of a clergyman from sublime chastity to predatory libertinism. The representative first series combines Reynolds’ touristic approach – offering “to guide those who choose to accompany us [...] to a city [...] whose characteristic features are as yet unknown” (Reynolds n.d. [1846–8]: 75) – with a focus upon its object’s unique ambiguities. The extensive doubling of Reynolds’ city (see Carver 2008: 153–4) is visible from the outset, his preface declaring that London may be summarized by the duality: “WEALTH and POVERTY” (Reynolds n.d. [1846–8]: 2) and his central narrative device simultaneously exploring the same space through the morally polarized careers of two brothers. However, what is most characteristic of Reynolds’ representation of the city’s complexity is its liminal, epistemologically protean quality, sustained through the eruption of anachronistic traces into the city’s porous architecture (see Mighall 1999: 27–77) and the mobility and duplicity of its resident villains. These are epitomized by the Resurrection Man, whose crimes associate him with both upper- and lower-class criminals and whose trade consists in the destruction and perversion of the signifiers of discrete identity: commodifying the body, annulling its memorialization, and disseminating it across the urban space. This threatened erosion of subjective integrity is characteristic of The Mysteries’ Gothic: replicated in the experiences of heroes such as Richard Markham and Eliza Sydney – each inveigled into forgery and thus socially depreciated themselves – or in those of Ellen Monroe, whose fall is narrated through her body’s aesthetic exploitation by different artists until copies of her exist across the city. Ellen herself then becomes one of Reynolds’ many interesting heroines, her ambiguous status granting her a kind of empowerment. Coming to the hero’s aid in male disguise, she takes up a pistol “with pride and satisfaction” (Reynolds n.d. [1846–8]: 320), foreshadowing the fascination with female violence to follow in the Sensation Novel.

From 1845 Reynolds’ Gothic work began to appear primarily in the periodicals he edited, competing with the Penny Bloods published by Edward Lloyd (James 2008: 187). Reynolds Miscellany opens with Wagner the Wehr-Wolf (1846–7), its title and theme bearing an obvious echo of Lloyd’s current Varney the Vampire (1845–7). It is Reynolds’ avowed intention, however, to “steer a middle course” between “useful articles” and “light reading”
(Reynolds 1846: 16), collecting the two within an ostensibly respectable periodical format. Thus while works such as Wagner offer a dense amalgamation of Gothic tropes, their contents (Wagner provides a detailed and sympathetic, albeit lurid, account of sixteenth-century Ottoman society) and their synergy with surrounding materials maintain Reynolds' posture as "a tireless educationist" (James 2008: 189).

The combination and juxtaposition of politically charged pedagogy and sensational fiction remains a challenging aspect of Reynolds' career, yet it is also part of what makes his use of the Gothic so characteristic. Reynolds' adaptation of the Gothic as a popular genre and a rhetorical register is key to his endeavors within the separate fields of popular fiction and journalism and informs a sociological outlook within which they overlap. The use of melodramatic characters and situations made his works accessible and appealing while at the same time serving, through their juxtaposition with interpolated commentary and reportage, as synecdoche for the critical exposure of what the author identified as sociopolitical realities (Humpherys 2008: 129–31). The pedagogy of Reynolds' journalism is matched by fictions which guide the reader in vicarious tours through detailed imaginative expanses of history and geography. However, such pedagogy itself is often revisionary (Diamond 2008: 92), forming a synergy with the fiction's own Gothic preoccupation with deception, façade, and the fallacy of appearances: the emphasis in both cases is upon alert skepticism and self-instruction in lieu of received knowledge. For Reynolds, always an informer and an entertainer, the Gothic thus translates the world for purposes of both diversion and critique: appealing to working-class readers for whom the "barrier between the fictional and political was always highly permeable" (Haywood 2004: 172).

SEE ALSO: Commodity Gothicism; Crime; Penny Dreadful; Sensation Fiction; Urban Gothic; Victorian Gothic.

REFERENCES


Howard Allen Frances O’Brien (1941–) was born to an Irish Roman Catholic family in New Orleans in 1941. Named after her father, she adopted the name Anne on her first day at school and became Rice when she married her husband Stan in 1961. She has published over thirty novels to date, the best known of which are The Vampire Chronicles. Her work is usually categorized as an example of Southern Gothic, this being a subset of American Gothic, although there is evidence throughout Rice’s fiction and nonfiction that complicates such definitions. She became an atheist in early adulthood, returning to Catholicism in 2002, but rejected organized religion again in 2010. Her work changes in relation to her personal, spiritual, and religious status but the complexities and blurring of the concepts of good and evil are constantly examined.

Rice’s vampire fiction forms part of a revival of interest in vampires during the 1970s in literature and film. The Vampire Chronicles themselves have been heralded as instigating a change from traditional vampire literature. Her vampires are aware of a sense of morality, struggling to draw distinctions between good and evil suggestive of Rice’s own upbringing as a Roman Catholic. Rice’s vampires are postmodern figures of the contemporary world, even if they have their origins in the historic past, and have empathetic personalities, desires, and motivations. In interviews, her autobiography, and her authorized biography, Rice asserts that they are metaphors for outsiders to society. Sympathy for them is elicited by the narrative device of allowing vampires to tell their own stories: in the first of the Vampire Chronicles, Interview with the Vampire (1976), Louis’ tale of his life and his “making” by the vampire Lestat presents an understandable, attractive character. His interviewer is so enthralled by the story that he desires, too, to become a vampire. Subsequent novels such as Blackwood Farm (2002) are often reported or “told” narratives while Vittorio the Vampire (1999), of the New Tales of the Vampires series, is purportedly written by the vampire as an autobiography. These narrative forms allow direct identification with the vampire: for the first time in vampire literature, the vampires themselves provide the “real” story, and this story is often one of a struggle for goodness. In the recent publication The Wolf Gift (2012), a revisioning of the tradition of the werewolf, the Morphenkinder are humans with the capacity to transform at will into wolf people with the express purpose of killing and eating other humans who are clearly identified as “evil.” Rice’s “monsters” are presented as knowable beings that embody the anxieties and perils facing humanity itself.

Rice’s narrative strategies, although not admired by all, remain one of the signatures of her vampire fiction and have been copied extensively since. Her novels detail characters...
who are set apart from humanity, and much of her work looks at those who are outsiders and Othered, exploring the perspectives of those who have been marginalized. Her work features alienated figures who are either not human or unhuman: the Taltos, a nonhuman race who predate humans in the *Mayfair Witches* trilogy, as well as ghosts, spirits, demons, and more recently angels, wolf people, and Jesus Christ. Treated sympathetically, the majority are portrayed as victims to circumstance, violence, or abuse. The child of an alcoholic mother, Rice details neglect and victimhood throughout her novels. Her vampires are not representative of the Gothic villain, but embody the victim and, to a certain extent, passivity: most of them were “made” without their consent. As such they are more closely aligned with the imperiled heroine of the female Gothic, and as George E. Haggerty (1998) notes, to be a vampire is to be already penetrated. Now that the monsters and vampires have a voice they are no longer unknowable creatures of terror and horror, and so Otherness is an ambiguous state here: not least because the monsters she depicts are beautiful, seductive, and often compelling.

Rice herself has always been said to feel like an outsider. Her biographer, Katherine Ramsland, argues that Rice’s Roman Catholic upbringing conflicted with her burgeoning sexuality, fantasies of masochism, and feelings of alienation, and Ramsland links these with the eroticism and homoeroticism apparent in much of the fiction (Ramsland 1991, 1996, 1997). Alternative sexuality was initially explored by Rice in her early foray into sadomasochistic pornography in five books written in the mid-1980s under two pseudonyms, A. N. Roquelaure and Anne Rampling. Although after her return to Catholicism sex is sidelined in novels such as *Of Love and Evil* (2010), in her earlier work alternative sexualities are often detailed and are an important part of *The Vampire Chronicles*, the *Mayfair Witches* trilogy (1990–4), and *The Mummy* (1989). Rice offers representations of pain as pleasure; male–male eroticism; sexual relations with ghosts, spirits, and demons; necrophilia; rape; eroticized relations with mothers and children, and also with echoes or mirrors of the self. In *Blackwood Farm* (2002), Quinn as a vampire-human has sex with a female ghost, a servant, a witch, and a spirit; this last being is his exact double and the revenant of his twin from whom he fed in the womb and who died in early infancy. Rice’s vampires are at least bisexual and most are positioned as “queer.” In Rice’s novels, queerness is a celebration of difference beyond the imposition of categorical identity, and the reader is invited to at least accept, if not embrace, alterity. As a (disillusioned) Roman Catholic, Rice is concerned with conceptions of the flesh, the spirit, the rituals and beliefs around transubstantiation whereby bread and wine is transformed into the body, the flesh, and blood of Christ. Rice explores the idea of the drinking of blood and the transcendence of the flesh, its mutation and its metaphysical and physical desirability. Sexual encounters cross gender and species lines, highly eroticized for characters and readers alike, emphasizing physical beauty and the overwhelming nature of desire.

Throughout her novels identity is constructed primarily through association with creativity, knowledge of history and ancient mythologies, wealth and material gain, familial inheritance, the pursuit of individual pleasures and love, as well as through the representation of the desiring and desirable body. All of the novels exhibit the attractions of the flesh, of materiality and the visual through frequent description of architectural specificities and lush vegetation, as well as sumptuous and highly colored artifacts, materials, and bodies. Reversing the usual Gothic trope of the terrors of the great house, in Rice’s novels such locations and their contents are minutely detailed, representing the best of history and human achievement in architectural and commodity form. Such spaces are idealized: they are not sites of entrapment but of possibility and liberation. They also represent the importance of family and wealth. Ramsland (1991: 337) has recorded how, to Rice, financial security is crucial and this is
prominently displayed throughout the novels. Although gesturing to the tragedy of poverty as it affects localized racial and ethnic societies in the texts, more evident is how money (in vast unspecified quantities, usually) enables the enactment of desires. Wealth makes possible creativity, study, exploration, and facilitates the consumption of the body. But money must be used for the “right” reasons. Failure to do so results in destruction, as is the case with the repellent Henry in *The Mummy*. Described as one in whom “the evil is unchecked” (1989: 111), he is killed and boiled in bitumen, remade into a fake mummy to be sold to tourists, the West reconfigured as a reproduced Orient for Western consumption: the ultimate commodity.

Family money is of particular importance: the accumulation of wealth for the family as well as philanthropy. Rice is concerned with family structures, however, in ways that sometimes conflict with the American ideal. There is a tension between the nuclear and extended family form, as well as between blood ties of different sorts. In *Interview with the Vampire*, an unorthodox nuclear family is formed around the two central adult male vampires, both of whom function as mother and father, and the rage-filled, infantilized vampire Claudia. The Mayfair clan in *The Witching Hour* (1990), the first of the *Mayfair Witches* series, form a vast dynasty and much of the book details their history. Heritage and blood ties (in all meanings of the term), are vital in *The Vampire Chronicles* too, with lineage traced back thousands of years. The vampires, witches, and the secret society of the Talamasca form alternative, biologically different and specifically chosen family groupings (see *secret societies*). Rice examines what it means to be family and to be forced to try to fit into a pre-given family, or to have the power to choose one’s own connections. Family and love, it seems, can be found anywhere, yet the question of parentage, lineage, and ancestry remains contested in her work. There is a certain joy in the idea of dynasty, but there is also a challenge to ancestry in echoes of decadence, greed, hypocrisy, and ownership. The pull is frequently between individuals and their emotional and blood connections, often framed within a distinction between the American individualistic tradition and the older European systems of ancestry and inheritance.

The action of Rice’s books is often split between America and Europe, and also between the present and the past, and very many of her novels are set in the cosmopolitan, ethnically diverse and European-associated city of New Orleans. Rice herself sees New Orleans as separate from America, an Other to the media-obsessed popular culture basis of the modern United States. In this way her work can be related to the Southern Gothic which is usually seen as a mode through which to explore the vexed question of the terrors of racial conflict in America. However, although many of Rice’s works make use of the location of New Orleans, rarely does she deal with this issue. More usually nonwhite characters reinforce a representation of the racial Other, perhaps the one aspect of her work that fails to offer a challenge to dominant discourses. In *The Mummy* Samir is visibly uncomfortable when obliged to wear Western clothing, while donning Bedouin costume allows Ramses to “disappear” into the Egyptian market place crowd, provided he hides the blue eyes that signal his difference from them (Rice 1989: 245). Throughout her novels Europe and Egypt are portrayed as superior to America in terms of history and a desirable heritage (including a material heritage of artifacts) that gains credit from its mythology and longevity. Notions of the rightful place of an Old World paternalistic aristocracy and royalty in class relations are continually reinscribed, in opposition to a picture of American liberation and democracy. Tommy in *Blackwood Farm* is sent to school at Eton in present-day England, and much of the action in the novels is located in a European and Eastern past (even early-hominid Africa in *The Wolf Gift*), valorizing the European and the pre- and early-modern. But Rice is not always at odds with American attitudes, particularly in relation to the pleasures of consumption,
and in the often triumphant ascendancy of the individual.

The work of Anne Rice is marked throughout by ambivalence to dominant authoritarian social and cultural discourses. At times embracing the ideals of freedom from constraint, subverting imposed definitions and boundaries, her fiction still stresses the imperatives of responsibility. While offering possibilities in alternative sexualities and gender categories that are empowering for men, Rice more often than not produces a representation of the woman as heterosexual and thoroughly embedded in the binary of the good and bad mother, notably in *The Queen of the Damned* (1988). Her fiction challenges generic boundaries, sometimes entirely conventional in the romance tradition, and at others weaving together fairy tale, mythology, horror, and the erotic in a complex and occasionally internally conflicting mix that obliges the reader to review prior certainties. Sexual activity is described in voluptuous terms, as beautiful bodies consume other beautiful bodies in a hedonism that conflates the erotic, the seductive, and the commodity, but it can be misleading to regard her work as reducible to this. Rice’s fiction, with its fascination with the supernatural and supernatural existence, is populated with figures representing the sublime in that they inspire awe and, in their desirability, terror. But immortality is as much a curse as a blessing. Rice’s work might be at the popular and populist end of the spectrum of Gothic literature, but it provokes questions about the nature of existence and desire that have a place in the best of Gothic writing.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Female Gothic; Popular Culture; Roman Catholicism; Secret Societies; Southern Gothic; Sublime, The; Supernatural, The; Terror; Vampire Fiction; Werewolves.

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FURTHER READING


Riddell, Charlotte

BENJAMIN F. FISHER

Fluctuating literary tastes create irony regarding the works of Charlotte Riddell (1832–1906). While she lived, Riddell’s novels, mainly non-supernatural fiction about urban commer-
cial life, received the greatest attention. Since the late twentieth century her supernatural fiction (short stories and novellas) has attracted the most attention, almost as if the novels were not worth notice. Riddell numbers among several Victorian women who published Gothic tales (see ghost stories). She obviously turned to and published such writing, from the late 1860s on through several decades, for financial remuneration. Her ghostly fiction surpasses the huge numbers of weird tales aimed at thrilling readers eager for customary Christmas-story fare, but insufficiently artistic for lasting appeal. Research concerning Riddell is sometimes baffling because initially she used pseudonyms: R. V. M. Sparling, F. G. Trafford, Rainey Hawthorne. Later, she could not remember precisely what she had published or where a given item may have first appeared.

Riddell’s first known supernatural stories, “Hertford O’Donnell’s Warning” – later retitled “The Banshee’s Warning” – and “A Strange Christmas Game” appeared respectively in the London Society Christmas issue and the Broadway Annual 1868 (both in 1867). Following a trend established largely by Dickens’ special Christmas issues of his periodicals, stories that divided thematically between sentimental and lurid fare, Riddell’s supernatural fiction often features dysfunctional relationships, for example, betrothals, marriages, and other familial relationships (see Dickens, Charles). Thus “Hertford O’Donnell’s Warning” centers on O’Donnell’s leaving Ireland, and the mother of his illegitimate son, to commence medical practice in London. His subsequent betrothal to a rich heiress ends when he hears the wail of a banshee – always a signal of death in his family – only to discover that a young man brought to him for medical treatment is his son, whom O’Donnell can’t save. O’Donnell’s superstition prompts the end of his engagement and his marriage to his former beloved. The wealthy heiress offers financial support to the other woman, and all ends well. Despite any sentimentality, enough psychological gloom reinforces the psychological realism in this story, in which Riddell obviously drew on her own Anglo-Irish heritage to create a convincing story, which is matched by a similar chronicle of Irish banshee superstition in “Conn Kilrea” (in Handsome Phil and other Stories 1899) (see Irish gothic). Inheritance, sexual troubles (always presented in veiled terms), and financial considerations furnish other reiterated themes. The wet footsteps of Paul Murray’s discarded beloved in “A Terrible Vengeance” (in Princess Sunshine and other Stories 1889) inexorably pursue and bring about his death. Hints of bigamy enrich these and other Riddell works. Haunted houses understandably recur in the Riddell canon (in which “house” may imply more than just an architectural structure) and often figure prominently, for example in “Nut-Bush Farm,” Walnut-Tree House,” and “The Old House in Vauxhall Walk” (all in Weird Stories 1882) or The Uninhabited House (in Routledge’s Christmas Annual 1875). Riddell’s characters are often victims of more plausible psychological terrors than many other characters in supernatural tales, who are mere cardboard figures in action-driven plots. In this respect Riddell may derive in part from Poe (see Poe, Edgar Allan), whose works she quotes or cites in significant contexts, and from other authors whose Gothicism is founded in realistic psychological characterization.

Riddell’s supernatural tales are usually contemporary in theme and settings – no forbidding eerie castles in the Apennines – creating settings, atmospheres, and characters to which Victorians could easily relate. Therefore the terrors they feature harbor no raw head and bloody bones, ghosts dragging clanking chains, or ruinous castles. Instead Riddell resembles other writers in her era, such as Wilkie Collins, Dickens, and M. E. Braddon, in domesticating Gothic tradition – that is, bringing it near the doorsteps of readers in her day, and thereby giving her terrors substantial verisimilitude. Riddell’s ghostly stories typically begin in ordinary circumstances, with the protagonist seeking employment or a home. Whether the conditions relating to that home seem to be those customarily connected with relocation,
or whether the site is from the outset reputedly mysterious, perhaps rumored to be haunted, strange events gradually unfold to disturb the new occupants or employees. In stories such as “Walnut-Tree House” and “The Old House in Vauxhall Walk” or the novellas The Uninhabited House and The Haunted River (in Routledge’s Christmas Annual for 1877) the ghost functions ultimately to bring about solutions to mysteries connected with murders (see apparition). The multiple narrative technique in The Uninhabited House, especially the faulty memory of Hal, the first-person narrator who provides overarching unity to the story, make this unfolding of envy, murder, and robbery, which the ghost of the murdered man brings into the open, one of Riddell’s greatest accomplishments in supernatural writing.

The Disappearance of Mr. Jeremiah Redworth (in Routledge’s Christmas Annual for 1878) also subtly blends ghost story with psychological plausibility. Another tale of murder for financial gain, along with ill feelings among family members and others closely connected to Redworth’s family, followed by the apparition of Mr Redworth frightening survivors as it works toward clarifying why Jeremiah Redworth was murdered, this piece shows no falling off in Riddell’s artistry.

Riddell’s supernatural fiction reflects Victorian life: gaining and losing fortunes, and the often nefarious thought and actions motivating plotters for wealth and status, along with issues of identity such as Hertford O’Donnell’s family mystery, the abuse of wards by guardians, ownership of property, financial concerns dictating personal conduct, ambiguous betrothals and marriages – and much more.

SEE ALSO: Apparition; Braddon, Mary Elizabeth; Dickens, Charles; Collins, Wilkie; Ghost Stories; Irish Gothic; Poe, Edgar Allan.

FURTHER READING


Rohmer, Sax

ANNE WITCHARD

Sax Rohmer (1883–1959) was the pen-name of Arthur Henry Ward, best remembered for his series of novels featuring the villainous Chinese mastermind Dr. Fu Manchu. Rohmer’s evil genius possesses “all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect,” and, “with all the resources of science, past and present,” plots world domination from his hidden lair concealed deep within the fog-bound labyrinth of London’s Limehouse Chinatown (1913: 84). The fiction of the late-Victorian Gothic revival asserts that the greatest threat to Britain and its empire lurked within the imperial metropolis itself (see imperial gothic). Along with Count Dracula and the werewolves, mummies, and other monsters of fin-de-siècle London, Dr. Fu Manchu has become an enduring icon of the Gothic.

Dr. Fu Manchu had his direct literary precedent in a novel by M. P. Shiel, The Yellow Danger (1890), in which the supernaturally clever Dr. Yen How is bent on the destruction of the West by an alliance of the yellow races (see race). Rohmer, however, claimed to have got his inspiration from journalistic forays into Limehouse on the trail of a tong boss,
Mr. King. In *The Yellow Claw* (1925) he would use the name Mr. King for another Chinese villain based on the real-life case of deported “dope king,” restaurateur Brilliant Chang, who was charged with supplying cocaine to flapper Freda Kempton on the night of her death. An earlier novel, *Dope: A Story of Chinatown and the Drug Traffic* (1919), was also inspired by a notorious legal case involving illicit drugs and a chorus girl’s death (see drugs and alcohol). As Rohmer states in *Dope*, “that the Chinese receive stuff in the East End and that it’s sold in the West End every constable in the force is well aware” (1919: 172). The East End–West End division of the capital offered a microcosm of Britain’s imperial project and Rohmer’s writing confirmed the reiterative racial stereotyping that projected society’s anxieties onto its immigrant populations. Gothic Orientalism colors Rohmer’s description of London’s Whitechapel Road:

Poles, Russians, Serbs, Roumanians, Jews of Hungary, and Italians [...] mingled in the throng. Near East and Far East rubbed shoulders. Pidgin English contests with Yiddish [...] Sometimes a yellow face showed close to one of the streaming windows; sometimes a black-eyed pallid face, but never a face wholly sane and healthy. (1916: 94–5)

The neighboring Chinese quarter, unlike the noisy, squalid throng of Whitechapel, is as “inscrutable” and foreboding as its occupants, “dark, narrow streets and sinister-looking alleys lay right and left of them [...] In the dimly lighted doorway of a corner house the figure of a Chinaman showed as a motionless silhouette” (1916: 94–5). Chinese Limehouse would provide a backdrop for the secret machinations of Rohmer’s various Far Eastern tongs and crime syndicates, most notably Fu Manchu’s Si-Fan cult.

Rohmer began his career writing sketches and serials for magazines (see magazines). His first published work was a short story, “The Mysterious Mummy,” for *Pearson’s Weekly* (1903). An interest in Ancient Egypt and mummy curses led him to accumulate a large library on Egyptology and the occult (see mummies; occultism). Much of his fiction – for example, *Brood of the Witch Queen* (1918), *Tales of Secret Egypt* (1918), and *The Green Eyes of Bast* (1920) – drew on this esoteric lore. It is rumored that his passion for Egyptology led Rohmer to join the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, whose members included Aleister Crowley, Arthur Machen, and W. B. Yeats, but this is untrue. Other sources infer that Rohmer also belonged to the Theosophists and that his family doctor and mentor in occult studies, Dr. R. Watson Councell, initiated him into the Rosicrucian Society (see rosicrucianism). Rohmer wrote a preface for Councell’s book *Apologia Alchymiae* (1925) and published some serious occultist works of his own including *The Romance of Sorcery* (1914), a nonfiction study of various Magi, and a theosophical novel, *Orchard of Tears* (1918).

According to his biographer and friend Cay Van Ash, Rohmer was a serious student of the occult who, were it not for the fact that he had to earn his living by writing fiction, would have devoted more time to his studies. Nevertheless, Rohmer found time to practice astral projection and Tarot card divination and he credited a session with his wife’s Ouija board for inspiring the creation of Fu Manchu. On being asked how he might best make money, it spelled out C-H-I-N-A-M-A-N (Van Ash and Rohmer 1972: 72).

The first Fu Manchu story, *The Mystery of Fu Manchu* (1913), was serialized in the wake of the Boxer Uprising and the anti-Manchu revolution in China, and agitation in the East End over Chinese cheap labor – dramatic events that were given lurid coverage in the press. “Conditions for launching a Chinese villain on the market,” Rohmer would recall, “were ideal” (Van Ash and Rohmer 1972: 75). Rohmer’s fiction drew on his background in journalism to blur the boundaries between “nightmare and news story” (1972: 26). Throughout his prolific writing career, Rohmer maintained ties with the Metropolitan police and the British government, and, according to Van Ash (1972), worked for British military
intelligence during World War II. The Fu Manchu books and their radio, television, and film adaptations made him one of the most well-paid writers of the 1920s and 1930s.

Given their unequivocally racist sentiment, it is remarkable that the books are still in print today. Clive Bloom explains Fu Manchu's longevity in *Cult Fiction* (1996), observing that the Sinophobic message of Rohmer's books is sustained by Gothic tropes in three key ways: the notion of hidden conspiracy (a subversive and mysterious pan-Asian brotherhood holding arcane knowledge operates out of Limehouse), the notion of a parallel supernatural plane of existence, and the notion of eternal recurrence derived from Egyptian mythology:

Greeting! I am recalled home by One who may not be denied [...] Out of fire I came – the smoldering fire of a thing one day to be a consuming flame; in fire I go. Seek not my ashes. I am the lord of the fires! Farewell. “FU-MANCHU.” (Rohmer 1913: 341)

The recurrent echoes of earlier race prejudices and fears are discernible in assertions about China’s repressive totalitarian state, and about her aspirations to become an economic superpower. Rohmer’s archetypal sinister Oriental, “the yellow peril incarnate in one man” (1913: 14), gave tangible shape to the supposed threat to the West by a Sino-Japanese alliance and undoubtedly continues to tap into a Sinophobia that remains close to the surface of the Western psyche.

SEE ALSO: Drugs and Alcohol; Imperial Gothic; Magazines; Mummies; Occultism; Race; Rosicrucianism.

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FURTHER READING


**Roman Catholicism**

**VICTOR SAGE**

Catholicism (from Greek *katholikos*, meaning “universal”) signifies an all-embracing system of belief. The epithet Roman means “at Rome”; it is used in two principal ways. First, it denotes the symbolic and literal geographical center of Western (Latin) Christianity, founded on the association with St. Peter, the disciple of Christ, martyred and buried at Rome, which marks it off from Greek Catholicism, based originally in Byzantium (later Constantinople). Second, the post-Reformation significance of “Roman” refers metonymically to a specific set of established orthodoxies, and a specific authority structure, headed by the Pope in Rome. What follows below, for historical reasons, will be mainly using the second, post-Reformation sense. The adjective form “Roman,” however, connotes one or two other things, worth noting, for example the Latin civilization of the ancient world (Republic and Empire), and so the term often gives to Catholicism an implicit connection to imperial tradition, and the post-imperial geography of Europe, which is frequently present in the second sense above. The long history of the early Catholic Church is a search for a (literal and figurative) territory of absolute, imperial authority against schism and heresy (MacCulloch 2009: 78–228) which the advent of Protestantism from 1517 onwards tempered, through war and conflict, into a
narrower, more defensive phase of dogma (see Protestantism).

Literary history places the origin of the Gothic novel (or “romance”) in Horace Walpole’s 1764 text, The Castle of Otranto, which he subtitled “A Gothic Story.” Imperial Rome was sacked by Visigothic King Alaric and his troops in 410 CE. The term “Gothic” is a catch-all for the primitive culture of the Northern tribes who carried out this outrage, in which many of the precious records of the ancient world, some of whose remains were contained in Christian monastery libraries, were destroyed. Alaric and his tribes were called “barbarians,” a name that connotes one who exists beyond the borders of classical, or rational, civilization. In fact, Alaric was an Arian heretic, a Christian, of an Alexandrian (Eastern) kind, not a Pagan, so the “barbarian” label already seems to be tied to the politics of Catholicism, the borders of belief and the Others, the people who lie beyond such borders (see MacCulloch 2009: 221, 305). This is the most obvious sense in which Walpole was using the term “Gothic” to characterize the fiction of his own narrative, ironically reflecting the prejudices of his day, as rude, primitive, irrational, precivilized, medieval (i.e., nonclassical, belonging to the “dark ages,” etc.), and heretic. His story is set in thirteenth-century southern Italy in a Roman Catholic, pre-Reformation, feudal fiefdom, consisting of a castle and a monastery overlooking the Adriatic, in a part of Italy run by the Spanish Kings of Aragon. Walpole’s audience is post-Reformation, largely Protestant, worldly, urban, and at least incredulous, if not skeptical; socially, the product of the so-called “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, in which religious toleration had been implicit in the Restoration of the Stuart Monarchy, a royal family whose allegiances to Roman Catholicism had been a source of traditional distrust in England since Tudor times (see Walpole, Horace).

Walpole was an eighteenth-century London Whig, the son of the prime minister of the day, and a Member of Parliament, who was a keen antiquarian, learned, a collector, whimsical, ironical, Francophile (but a lover of the ancien régime, not the philosophes), and full of perverse humor. He delighted in the fact that he found himself at odds with his readers, from whom he hid himself behind a cloak of pseudonymity, passing himself off as the translator, William Marshall, Gent., of a historical document written by a Catholic priest, one Onuphrio Muralto, between 1095 and 1243 and found, in 1529, in the library of “an ancient catholic family in the north of England” (Walpole 2001: 5). His mid-century audience had been recently trained in the 1740s by the philosopher David Hume into an attitude of “modern” enlightened skepticism about the belief in miracles, an attitude of incredulity which a series of Anglican Protestant divines scrambled, in pamphlet after pamphlet, to adapt to their own “rational” theology. In Hume’s code, Roman Catholicism was “superstition” (Miles 2002). Walpole, who loved to tease his readers, alludes with flattering irony to their disbelief, even in his first, fake preface: “Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events, are exploded now even from romances” (Walpole 2001: 7). This is the world of the first “Gothic Story”: the Roman Catholic world of the late Middle Ages, which the disbelieving eighteenth-century reader is (mockingly) challenged to enter or reject: just to make things easier, he inserts rational probability into this frame of “superstition.” But behind the façade of historical documentation Walpole wrote a satire of all organized religion, as his comments to his friend William Cole in 1771 suggest:

I hope the satire on Henry VIII will make you excuse the compliment to Luther, which like most poetic compliments does not come from my heart – I only like him better than Henry, Calvin, and the Church of Rome, who were bloody persecutors. (Walpole 2001: 106)

What is surprising, here, is the even-handedness of Walpole’s heretical critique.

The rhetoric of the eighteenth-century Gothic romance that Walpole founded finds
a space for itself at the edges of three belief systems, all of which have a European reach, and which contradict each other in a variety of ways: the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the Protestant tradition, and Roman Catholicism, the oldest of the three. What the different discourses of these belief systems share is a search for authority.

We owe to Catholicism the spread (if not the entry) into European consciousness of the popular myth of the vampire, so familiar in the Gothic. More precisely, we owe the dissemination of this superstition to the influence of the Enlightenment on religious discourse and, in particular, the assimilation with “reason” of the Roman Catholic search for authority. In 1746, the Benedictine Dom Augustin Calmet, biblical scholar and Abbot of Senones, published his *Treatise on the Vampires of Hungary and the Surrounding Regions*, in which he sought to lay to rest, from the point of view of the Catholic Church, the increasing numbers of stories of the Undead. This was meant to be Roman Catholic propaganda against the Greek Orthodox Church: the stories come from areas in Central Europe like Serbia where the Greek Church had made inroads on Roman Catholicism and, in the words of one commentator, “the Church’s ruling on the corruption of the body [i.e., in the doctrine of the Resurrection] had become ambiguous.” There may even have been a “saturical reversal of the Roman Catholic Communion service” in some of these stories (Frayling 1992: 25). Calmet’s book, which with an Enlightenment legalism examined the credibility of all the stories it could find, was so severely criticized for its open-mindedness that he had to revise it. However, it had an unintended effect: it became a best-seller for the wrong reasons, and took its place as the bible of the Gothic, the first encyclopedia of vampirism. The translation was reissued in England in 1850, edited by the Reverend Henry Christmas; Dickens had a copy of it in his library (see *vampire fiction*).

In the arena of propaganda, Enlightenment polemics fueled religious heresy, and the Gothic positioned itself on these borders. Beginning with Walpole’s ironical study of legitimacy, the eighteenth-century Gothic novel specializes in exposing this theme of the search for authority: Schiller in 1786–9, in *Der Geisterscheher* (*The Ghostseer*), takes his readers to Venice, exposing them to a contemporary Roman Catholic conspiracy surrounding a German Protestant Prince who thinks of himself as “Enlightened,” but who is merely ignorant of the world. This time the story was not a historical romance, but fabricated out of contemporary newspaper reports and witness accounts in Germany about the Sicilian con man, Cagliostro, who had managed to “spirit away” a diamond necklace from Marie-Antoinette. The novel poses as a warning to the princelings of upright Protestant Northern Europe about the devious ways of the Southern Roman Catholic Church, but in reality it is a much deeper study of the limits of “Enlightenment” and the vanity of “Reason” – and its fragmentary form refuses to draw the line between “fantasy” and “authority.” In this novel, Schiller invents a form of the “explained supernatural” (often attributed to Ann Radcliffe), in which “explanation” generates anxiety rather than allaying it (Barkhoff 2012) (see *schiller, friedrich von*).

In France Diderot, whose sister, to his anger, became a nun, wrote *La Religieuse* (*The Nun*) in 1760, a proto-Gothic novel that demonizes the conventual system and that became a source for the anticlericalism of Maturin in *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Diderot’s novel went far beyond popular outrage at what goes on in Roman Catholic convents; it is also a modern study of automatic behavior, including sexual behavior, using the convent as a kind of Cartesian laboratory in which to study the uncanny, carceral impact of belief systems (Sage 2002). Radcliffe, on the other hand, who like Walpole set her novels back in time into the late middle ages going up to the earlier eighteenth century in Southern Europe, treats her convents like the vanishing-points of natural landscapes in which the identity of the individual is “veiled,” filling them with Burkean obscurity and sublimity. But she too uses the
context of Catholicism (her convents are frequently refuges) as a stage-set for dramas of epistemological doubt and anxiety, and her female characters’ search for authority pervades the delaying tactics of her narratives, until the supernatural is “explained” and “superstition” finally recognized, if not avoided. In all these cases of eighteenth-century Gothic, Roman Catholicism, the traditional enemy of philosophical reason, or Christianity in the shape of dissenting or established Anglican Protestantism, is used as an alibi for a narrative of horror or terror which is often registering the incomplete authority of those other two terms (e.g., “Enlightenment” or “individual conscience”) in this triad of belief systems (Miles 2002) (see Radcliffe, Ann).

At the end of the eighteenth century, when the first phase of the Gothic novel was reaching its height, came the second revolution that greatly affected the place of Roman Catholicism in Europe – the French Revolution of 1789. Up to that point in England, between upheavals, roughly from the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 to the Gordon Riots of the 1780s, there had been some progress in relaxing the penal laws under which Roman Catholics suffered. In 1778 they were allowed to buy land and inherit it legally, provided they formally denounced by oath all Stuart claims to the throne and denied the Pope’s civil authority. This Act also ended their prosecution by means of informers. The 1791 Act opened the professions to Roman Catholics, though they were still barred from the universities. They were also allowed by this Act to worship at registered places of worship, if the clergy officiating took an oath of allegiance (Purves 2009: 21, n.45).

These “Relief Acts” show how seriously the traditional threat of civil disobedience from Roman Catholics was taken to be by the authorities in the eighteenth century. Of course, there was a great difference between the relatively well-to-do Roman Catholics who lived on the mainland and were confidentially advised to worship discreetly in a chapel in their own country houses, and the millions of starving Catholic tenants of a rack-renting absentee landlord class across the Irish sea. Even so, Catholics in mainland Britain still did not have the franchise. However, not all representations of the cloisters were full of horror and hostility: there was still a sentimental pro-Catholic tradition, triggered by French writers like Baculard d’Arnaud, and by Alexander Pope’s “Eloisa to Abelard,” which survived from the earlier eighteenth century among popular Gothic novelists (see Purves 2009: chapter 2).

It was the Whig Edmund Burke, who in his youth in 1757 had given to literature (and the Gothic in particular) a new theory of the Sublime, of terror and horror, who found himself once again writing about these matters, but this time about the French Revolution and (prophetically) about the Terror to come, in his remarkable counter-revolutionary text, Reflections on the Revolution in France (1791). Although he was part of the Whig hegemony, Burke was an Irishman who, as Conor Cruise O’Brien puts it, wrote both as a “Whig” and as a “Jacobite” (see O’Brien’s Introduction to Burke 2004: 46–7). His book mounts an extraordinary rhetorical defense of the values destroyed by the mobs in Paris, via a gallant “chivalrous” account of Marie Antoinette, and a defense of “superstition,” the Old Religion, Roman Catholicism (Burke 2004: 269–70). Burke, as an Irishman, had his eye – among other things – on the plight of those starving fellow-countrymen of his across the water. Burke preached war, and a “long war” (O’Brien in Burke 2004: 56, 60–1) with revolutionary France.

This account helped to trigger two decades of sympathy for the refugees from across the Channel, even for refugee-priests (though Burke was disappointed they did not start agitating as soon as they landed at Dover); and the chivalric nationalism of Burke’s account began gradually to appeal, even to the Tory Right, especially when his prophecies about the Terror came true. Of course, it was the French who landed in 1798 in Killala Bay. But despite or perhaps because of this, the movement for Roman Catholic emancipation carried on: in 1793, Irish Catholics gained the franchise. The Duke of Wellington, mindful of the Irish
problem, made their emancipation his cause after his defeat of Napoleon. In 1817, they were admitted to all ranks of the army and navy. And finally in 1829, the Emancipation Act allowed Roman Catholics to sit in Parliament, subject to a new oath they had to swear. During this time, Sir Walter Scott’s new historical romance Waverley (1814), much more Catholic-friendly, with its romantic attraction to the failed revolutions of the Jacobites, began to diminish the sales of the old eighteenth-century Gothic mode, and literary history marks its commercial end with Melmoth the Wanderer (1820), a novel written in Dublin that acts as an encyclopedia of the old Gothic and that caught on like a wild fire in post-Napoleonic France (see MacCulloch 2009: 821–6, 837, 935–7).

But in Britain the old problems about heresy and the civil obedience of Roman Catholics reared their heads even more in the nineteenth century in the post-Emancipation period, due partly to the intransigence of Pius IX, who introduced the doctrine of papal infallibility (1870) just as he was presiding over the loss of the Papal States in Italy, and partly to the new imperial threat of the French Empire, and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in France (see MacCulloch 2009: 821–6, 837, 935–7). This was the age of Anglo-Catholicism, the Oxford Movement, nostalgia for all things medieval, Pugin, the “defection” of Cardinal Newman to the Roman Catholic Church in 1845, and a new mixture of envy and paranoia about the authority of the Roman Catholic Other, an authority parodied in the belated threatening Gothic of Irish Protestant writers like Le Fanu (Sage 2011) and Stoker, or minutely defamiliarized in the antiquarian dark epiphanies of the high Anglican M. R. James. Oscar Wilde’s career, which finished on a death-bed conversion to Roman Catholicism, epitomized the particular contradictions of the late-nineteenth century modernist period.

SEE ALSO: Maturin, Charles Robert; Protestantism; Radcliffe, Ann; Schiller, Friedrich von; Vampire Fiction; Walpole, Horace.

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FURTHER READING


For most historians, “Romanticism” describes several coterminous movements, not always in agreement, in England and much of Europe between the early 1780s and the late 1830s (with American variations coming somewhat later) that encompassed literature, the visual arts, music, philosophy, criticism, and even political reform. These movements shared a renewed “faith” in the transformative and emotional power of the individual and collective imaginations generally reminiscent of “the marvelous, the imaginative, and the unashamedly fictitious” in the old narrative “romances” of “the Middle Ages and the Renaissance” (Eichner 1972: 11). Since Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615) had parodied the conventions of medieval quest romance, the adjective “romantic,” first used in the West around 1650, was often employed pejoratively and connected with the “improbability of the world of romance,” given the latter’s penchant for supernatural interventions into earthly endeavors and the exaggerations of “normal” human behavior in its idyllic adventures (Eichner 1972: 4–5). But certain positive associations connected with “romantic” (such as “extravagantly devoted, chivalrous, [faithfully] naïve”) never really died out, and these became linked quite positively, in the course of the eighteenth century, with the “picturesque” of the landscape painters of France and Italy – for many the “regions of romance” from which the old quests came – ranging from Nicholas Poussin (1594–1665) to Claude Lorrain (1600–82) and Salvator Rosa (1615–73) (Eichner 1972: 5–8). This sort of “picturesque,” in which ruins and figures from legend often appeared in intensifications of the current natural world, combined a “sense of the past” always lingering nostalgically with “intimations of the infinite” that lent “spiritual” suggestions to an already idealized physicality (Eichner 1972: 8). By 1749–50, then, the poet William Collins in England could describe as explicitly “romantic” the scenes he previews for a fellow poet from Scotland as the latter journeys home: “’Tis Fancy’s land to which thou sett’st thy feet; / Where still, ’tis said, the faery people meet / Beneath each birken shade on mead and hill” and “Such airy beings awe the untutored swain” that “thy sweet muse [can] the rural faith sustain” (Collins, “Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland” in Clery and Miles 2000: 41–6).

It is thus not really surprising that another Englishman, Thomas Warton, in his 1754 *Observations on the Faerie Queene*, offers the first clear demarcation of the “romantic” as an aesthetic and a style, linking it to all the
elements just noted as they appear in the many texts that fed into Spenser’s epic-chivalric romance of the 1590s, and distinguishes it sharply from the “classic,” the once Greek-and-Roman realm of the supposedly rational, controlled, balanced, abstract, and “sculpturesque” (Eichner 1972: 7–8). This distinction, with some added elements from both empirical and idealist senses of how the mind works internally, became adopted most fully in Germany and France, especially in the critical prose of Friedrich and A. W. von Schegel and in Germaine de Staël’s De l’Allemagne (1813) (Eichner 1972: 6–11). Yet it gradually crept back into England, partly by way of these very influences, even though the English use of “romantic” continued to be multiple in its meanings and erratic in its uses (Whalley 1972: 164–99). By 1816, William Hazlitt could review a translation of Schlegel by agreeing that the “romantic” style of art is the “peculiar spirit of the modern,” even as it reworks tendencies from a once-buried past, given Schlegel’s compelling “distinction” between “the classical and the romantic”:

The one is conversant with objects that are grand and beautiful in themselves, or in consequence of obvious and universal associations; the other, with those that are interesting only by the forces of circumstances and imagination [...] in that] they excite a more powerful and romantic interest from the ideas with which they are habitually associated [...] [T]he one dwells more on the immediate impressions of objects of the senses – the other on the ideas which they suggest to the imagination [...]. The Muse of classical poetry should be represented as a beautiful naked figure; the Muse of modern [i.e., romantic] poetry should be represented clothed, and with wings. (Hazlitt as reprinted in Whalley 1972: 210–11)

Such a sharp contrast is good evidence for Harold Bloom’s claim in 1968 that early-nineteenth-century “romantic” writing, though certainly not the only kind of writing there was, is an “internalization of quest romance” wherein the “poet takes the pattern” of once-supernatural quests or legends “and transposes them into his own imaginative life” (Bloom 1971: 15), countering a self-satisfied classicism – and in more immediate and homespun “clothes” – with the “wings” of internal association and imaginative expansion that once seemed to be supernaturally “out there” in the world of old romance. As the later nineteenth century and the centuries since have come to see this drive in a great variety of works from the 1780s to the 1830s and beyond, “Romanticism” has come to designate the wide-ranging artistic, philosophical, and sometimes political enterprise and belief system, admittedly taking many different forms and full of conflicts among its practitioners, that attempts to enact or explain this “internalization” and its production of new visions in which observations about the rapidly changing present (the “clothes”) are colored, or even gloriously distorted, by associations applied to them from the distant or recent past (the “wings”).

Although this particular “ism” was never used in England at the time, Hazlitt is able to describe such an emerging “Spirit of the Age” in a book of criticism with that title by 1825. One “pure emanation” of this “Spirit” for him, an “innovation” that set much of the rest in motion, is the Lyrical Ballads (Hazlitt 1967: 252–3). This 1798 collection of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (revised by the former in a second edition in 1800) built on age-old verse styles re-emphasized in Thomas Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765, and itself a recovery of short “romances”) by including occasional nods to the archaic supernatural but overwhelming these with ballads mostly on the ravages of rural life in the face of current socio-economic changes and on how these could be understood and redeemed in verse to the point of “poetic pleasure” (Coleridge and Wordsworth 2008: 27). This book, especially as revised, was indeed influential enough by 1815–16 that Coleridge spent considerable time in his Biographia Literaria (1817) explaining its genesis and in the process further defining Romanticism, without the full word, in prose that came to have a lasting influence of
its own. In *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XIV, he agrees with A. W. Schlegel's and Hazlitt's sense of the “modern romantic” in seeing the *Ballads* as striving to balance “two cardinal points”: “exciting the sympathy of the reader” by an “adherence to the truth of nature” and yet “giving the interest of novelty” that can be added “by the modifying colours of imagination” (Coleridge 1965: 168). To that end, Coleridge remembers, he agreed to write ballads “supernatural, or at least romantic” in that term’s older senses – most notably “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” which began the *Ballads* in 1798 – directed at “interesting [readers’] affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real”; Wordsworth’s pieces, by contrast, as his coauthor reconstructs them, set out to “excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind’s attention” to the “wonders of the world before us” even in conditions of penury and loss, but only insofar as the “film of familiarity” in our customary perceptions is lifted by an imaginative heightening that turns all perceived entities into “inexhaustible treasure[s],” even if some of them are tragic (Coleridge 1965: 168–9). In saying all this, Coleridge echoes a revision by Wordsworth of the 1800 *Ballads* preface where the “object” of “these Poems” is to “throw over” their “common [...] situations” a “certain colouring of imagination” by which the “ordinary” acquires an “unusual aspect” due to “the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement” (Wordsworth 1988: 281–2).

This quintessential paradox, which combines a sense of the mind drawn from Enlightenment empiricism with the romance revival alongside a sublimation of sociopolitical insights that for some were too revolutionary in the 1790s, turned out to be the fundamental contradiction in a great deal of British writing that soon followed, however different its initial points of focus became. This was the case even in the Oriental romances of Robert Southey and Lord Byron commenting on modern Europe from a fictive distance, the metrical and then prose narratives of Walter Scott that juxtaposed backward thinking and early-modern characters caught in history’s real tugs of war, and several thousand volumes of lyric poetry by both woman and men between 1798 and 1832 that revealed an “intense engagement with the possibilities of form opened up by” the “new history of poetry in England” inaugurated by Warton and Percy, among others, in the eighteenth century (Curran 2010: 218–19). Members of the group known much later as the “second generation of English Romantics” – P. B. and Mary Shelley, Lord Byron himself, John Clare, Leigh Hunt, John Keats, Felicia Hemans, and Letitia Landon, among others – may have variously disagreed with the later, more conservative politics, and what Keats came to call the “Egotistical Sublime,” of Wordsworth and Coleridge as the 1810s progressed to the 1820s. But these younger writers kept developing, if differently, the *Lyrical Ballads*’ intensity of physical and local focus interwoven with quasi-mythic, recollective, and imaginative exaltation always accompanied at some level by sublimated political longings and critiques (hardly surprising in the postrevolutionary times of the Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath). What else is Keats doing in his 1819 “Ode to a Nightingale” when his persona desires to escape from the “fever” and “fret” of intermediate sensations drawing him toward disease and death into the hidden and, he hopes, eternal song of a bird already mythologized in “ancient days” (II. 23, 64)? His speaker finds that the very sensations he would set against such recollections of romance must accompany any flight with the bird “Through verdurous glooms and mossy ways” and must therefore pull him back, much as his middling class-standing might, into an unrequited longing for a “plaintive anthem” that “fades” – yet in a “vision, or a waking dream” that still remains poised between local perception and imaginative transcendence (“Do I wake or sleep?”; II. 40, 75, 79–80, all in Keats 1970: 525–32).

If all of this is true of Romanticism, however, it would seem that the “Gothic” should lie at
the deepest foundations of it, both among the immediate precursors that built up to it and in the many re-enactments of Gothic writing that continued alongside it and within it. After all, Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s claims in both the *Biographia Literaria* and the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* sound very much like those of Horace Walpole when he defines the “Gothic Story” in his 1765 preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). He boldly presents this tale as starting a new “species” of “romance” in which all “witnesses to the most stupendous phenomena” (Coleridge’s “supernatural”) “never lose sight of their human character” and so behave like “the mortal agents in a drama fashioned according to the rules of probability,” just as Coleridge claims about his “romantic” poems in the *Ballads*. Yet there is not such a “strict adherence to common life” (though there is some) for Walpole that “the great resources of fancy” are “dammed up” as in some neoclassic rules of literature; instead the “powers of fancy” are “given liberty to expatiate through the boundless realms of invention” (a free association of ideas in a Wordsworthian “state of excitement”) so long as “Nature” is not so “excluded” as to allow complete “improbability” (Walpole 1996: 9–10). Of course, Walpole is mainly trying to justify the internal debates of the characters in his “Story,” all nearly as realistic and “modern” as those in the middle-class novels of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett in the 1740s and 1750s, even as he people encounter gigantic armored fragments resembling a statue on the tomb of the castle’s original owner (Walpole 1996: 19–21), a ghost walking out of a portrait of the current owner’s (Manfred’s) grandfather (26), and the animated skeleton of a dead hermit who knows secrets about the distant past (106–7), ingredients of “ancient romance” from the Middle Ages now transmogrified several centuries later (9). Yet the fundamentals of the “Gothic Story’s” stated aims manifestly forecast the similar interplay of realism and the supernatural, the immediate perceptions of nature versus the “colourings” of imaginative associations, blended theoretically and poetically by Wordsworth and Coleridge and then carried on in different ways by others. The “Gothic” as Walpole defines it is therefore among the basic ingredients of the English Romantic movement, one of several fundamental dimensions within it and theories behind it that continued to be developed by Romantic authors well into the nineteenth century.

Indeed, I would also argue that the roots of Romanticism in “Gothic” elements go back even further than Walpole. The “Gothic” directly invokes “ancient romance,” for example, particularly the kind focused on unrequited love as much as chivalric quests, and Greg Kucich has reminded us that “medieval” as much as Walpolean “romance” was internally pulled between “nostalgia for a fading feudalistic society,” including its assumptions about spiritual interventions into earthly events, and “the pressing realities of a new social order moving toward a secular, economic modernity” (Roe 2005: 464–7). Those tensions, as basic to romance itself, it turns out, as they are to the Gothic and Romanticism, appear as long ago as Chrétien des Troyes’ *Lancelot* and *Perceval* (1160–85), Thomas Malory’s *King Arthur* (1485), and of course Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (1590, 1595) and as late as Walpole’s time in Richard Hurd’s *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) or in Percy’s *Reliques*, major symptoms of the medieval revival and the other kinds of “romance” nostalgia that flourished in England from the 1740s on. Then, too, there is the connection noticed by John and Anna Laetetia Aiken in “On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror” (1773) when they see *The Castle of Otranto* as a “modern attempt” to arouse the “delight” that can come from “dwell[ing] upon objects of pure terror,” a “paradox” attainable in the arts only “by a sublime and vigorous imagination” (the Aikens in Clery and Miles 2000: 127–9). Here the Aikens make explicit the link between the “Gothic Story” and *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) by Edmund Burke. This treatise redefines the “sublime” (the loftiest level of
writing since the ancient Greeks) as “the strongest emotion the mind is capable of feeling” because it is really based on “terror,” an “apprehension” of possible “pain or death” aroused by “immense distances,” dark “obscurity,” incipient violence, towering or ruined old buildings, and intimations of God-like “power” as these are perceived and interpreted by the subjectivity of an author or audience (Burke 1990: 36, 53–5, 113, 62). Such threats can be pleasurable for Burke, as the Aikens realize, only if they are rendered “at certain distances” or “with certain modifications” in aesthetic productions (Burke 1990: 36–7), just the way Walpole balances the terrors in *Otranto* with some of the “beauties” and “eloquence” of his chief model, Shakespeare (Walpole 1996: 11). Those adjustments are possible in Burke’s eyes because mental affects such as the sublime and beautiful can be produced by the “primary” sensations of “perception” being transformed and expanded “by the secondary pleasures of the imagination,” which add in associations of ideas formed out of previous impressions (Burke 1990: 22). This infusion of new sensations by the thought combinations known to a reflective imagination is, of course, what Wordsworth and Coleridge greatly depend on for their “colourings” that make the supernatural impinge on the natural and vice versa. Even while they inherit and transform Walpole’s attempted interplay of “ancient” and “modern,” which also exacerbates a tension basic to “old romance,” Wordsworth, Coleridge, and other Romantics continue and modify Burke’s “terrible sublime” and its way of aestheticizing fear to produce something like the imaginative “expatiation” promulgated in the first “Gothic Story.”

At the same time, however, despite all this deep grounding of Romanticism in the Walpolean and Burkean Gothic, British Romantic writers frequently disparage the best-known manifestations of what the Gothic in literature was by the end of the 1790s. Wordsworth’s 1800 *Ballads* preface forcefully distinguishes even Coleridge’s poems in that collection from the “frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges” of “extravagant stories in verse” that Gothic had come to include, partly because it thus helped readers to deal with the stormy “national events” of the late eighteenth century (Wordsworth 1988: 284) and partly because, by then, Gothic had readily imported some of the post-*Otranto* plays, poems, and fictions that came out of Germany’s anticlassical Sturm und Drang of the 1770s and 1780s (see Clery and Miles 2000). Coleridge, too, in a 1797 review castigates the most flagrantly Gothic novel of that time – *The Monk* (1796) by Matthew Gregory Lewis, a hyperbolic extension of Walpole’s anti-Catholicism with its own echoes of the German Schauerroman – as appealing to a “low and vulgar taste” with an eroticized blend of what is “most awfully true” in religion with “all that is most ridiculously absurd in superstition” (Coleridge in Clery and Miles 2000: 187–8). Michael Gamer thus argues rightly that “gothic writing,” particularly from the late 1790s into the early 1800s, becomes “blamed” in British “periodical[s]” and “essay[s]” for all the inconsistencies “in literary production and consumption” that came with increased urbanization and fervid ideological debates in the wake of the American revolution of 1775–83 and the French Revolution begun in 1789 (Gamer 2000: 67). For the first-generation Romantic aspiring to a “high culture” status positioned above such literary descendents from *The Castle of Otranto* (now “lower culture” for the Romantic aesthetic), the hyperbolic conventions of the Gothic that openly mix the “ancient” and “modern” appear dangerous because they “blunt the discriminating powers of the mind” in their proliferation by the mid-1790s (Wordsworth 1988: 284) and “level” classes of people, different belief systems, and distinct generic styles “into one common mass” that allows the “order of nature” to be “changed” from one norm to another “whenever the author’s purposes demand it” (Coleridge in Clery and Miles 2000: 186). When Coleridge thus finally defines the “vital” and organic qualities of the “primary” and “secondary” imaginations that bring about
the “multeity in unity” of the best writing – and hence the best in Romanticism – in Chapter XIII of his Biographia Literaria, he sets these capacities as they truly appear in poetry off from works of the more mechanical “fancy” in which “fixed and dead” images are simply “associated” in a “mode of memory” (Coleridge 1965: 167). By employing exemplary figures so like the Gothic’s antiquated specters to distinguish this latter faculty, Coleridge makes clear that the Gothic as he knew it is thrown down into a lower classification of art and thought in order that what we now consider Romanticism is defined over against the Gothic as its degraded, monstrous Other, not one of its sources, remarkably like the highly Gothic creature in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (that supreme instance of the Romantic and the Gothic interacting, first published in 1818).

And yet there is just as much irony in this Romantic disparagement of the Gothic as there is in the former being rooted in the latter and both being rooted in a “romance” as full of internal conflicts as they are. The truth is that English Romantic authors frequently use Gothic elements in their own works, acknowledging their debts to what they called the “terrorist school” (Clery and Miles 2000: 182–3), even as some of the same writers explicitly condemn it in their criticism. Wordsworth waxes visibly Gothic in his verse “Fragment of a ‘Gothic’ Tale” (1796), portions of “The Thorn” in the Lyrical Ballads, and “Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle” (1807), while Coleridge more explicitly does so, not just in his “Ancient Mariner” but also quite fulsomely in Christabel, published in 1816 after Wordsworth rejected it for the second edition of Lyrical Ballads (Coleridge and Wordsworth 2008: 30–1). Mary Darby Robinson, already a “terror” novelist in Hubert de Sevrac (1796), scatters Gothic echoes liberally through her Lyrical Tales (1800), written often in direct answer to the Lyrical Ballads; Lord Byron, after aping the “Oriental Gothic” of William Beckford’s Vathek (1786) in quasi-Eastern poems such as “The Giaour” (1813), returns directly to the Walpolean mode in the closet drama Manfred (1816), named after the central Prince in Otranto, and the half-satirical hauntings in Cantos XV and XVI of Don Juan (1824); P. B. Shelley, having imitated the Gothic directly in his early novels Zastrozzi and St. Irvyne (1810–11), calls up its features throughout his remaining career in “Alastor” (1815) and his tragedy The Cenci (1819) to such a degree that his involvement in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) has become more understandable than it used to seem; and Keats, unabashedly fond of the 1790s romances of Ann Radcliffe while also seeking admission to the pantheon of the classical poets, reinvokes the Gothic poems collected by “Monk” Lewis in Tales of Terror and Wonder (1801) in the very pieces named in the title of his collection of 1820: Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems (see Hogle 2003: 206–7). In these cases, along with numerous others, the Gothic is a thread made of conflicted, inconsistent fibers, just as Coleridge said in 1797, that keeps being woven in and out of Romantic writing even when the writers of the latter strive to rise above it and cast it down.

What really, then, besides what we have noted, best explains the deep-seated, yet obviously troubled, relationship between the Gothic and the Romantic? Coleridge helps us begin to answer this question in his review of The Monk by calling attention to the Gothic’s blatant combination of inconsistent genres and styles and therefore to the tendency of the apparent “ground” under it to keep shifting in a way that disrupts any aesthetic forcing of “multeity” into “unity.” Such a view hearkens back directly to how Walpole’s “blend” of “ancient” and “modern romance” in his “Gothic Story” produces ghosts, settings, and behaviors from supposedly medieval times that are really hollowed out in their process of actually dealing with quite eighteenth-century quandaries, with the meaning behind such spectral images being distanced into a terrifying obscurity akin to the yawning gulf between image and its absent meaning in Burke’s terrific “Sublime.” When the ghost of a usurping prince who had been a steward (Manfred’s grandfather) steps
out of a picture in *Otranto* as more the shade of a mere image than an image of a full body (like the Ghost in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* that it clearly recalls: see *counterfeit*), it reflects the Enlightenment and Protestant suggestions made in Walpole’s first preface of 1764 that such “preternatural events,” many of them echoes of old Catholicism, “are exploded now even from romance” and should therefore be read as void of substance now (Walpole 1996: 6), as mere signs of meanings removed from them, even though, as the second preface says, they do give the “fancy [...] liberty to expatiate through the boundless realms of invention” in ways understandable in an eighteenth-century readership that both longs for and wants to leave behind the belief systems of “romantic story” (Walpole 1996: 9–10). This evacuation of substantial truth from antiquated images and postures allows the emptied-out icons that result to become the repositories of more current interests, particularly the literate public’s ideological indecision, reflected in the portrait-ghost’s combination of vacuity and haunting power, over how much of past social orders to reject versus how much of them will and should continue. By these means, Walpole’s “blend” of “ancient” and “modern” establishes the *modern Gothic*, itself an oxymoron, as a hyperbolically fictional realm for dealing, in disguise, with the unresolved ideological quandaries, the unsettled and unsettling Janus-facedness (one source of the underlying fear that Gothic arouses), in the increasingly middle-class audience for such works in the mid-eighteenth century and since. That is why E. J. Clery can accurately read *Otranto* itself as “figuring” a “contradiction” still being worked through at its time “between the traditional claims of landed property” grounded in waning aristocratic assumptions “and the new claims of the private family” being advanced by rising middle-class ideologies in the 1760s (Clery 1995: 77). As it happens, this capacity in the Gothic for vividly, if indirectly, addressing tugs of war between older and newer belief systems only intensifies as the “terrorist” school of fiction and theater accelerates toward the end of the eighteenth century, particularly in such 1790s texts as *The Monk*, where a sixteenth-century friar strives to achieve a kind of middle-class self-determination leading to religious and sexual freedom but is forced to do so only within the terms of the antiquated and superstitious order that still controls his thinking (see Hogle 1997). The logically incompatible registers that play this struggle out in the extreme Gothicism of this book are really what explain the features of it that Coleridge fears and rejects, since this betwixt-and-between-ness is anathema to Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s more “high romantic” quest for such multiplicities to be resolved and subsumed in imaginative transformations of the more immediately real.

Even so, this same propensity in the Gothic to intensify the backward-and-forward pulls even in old romance is what accounts for its ongoing role alongside and within the very Romantic writing that sometimes claims to transcend it. Just as the “Gothic Story” does in itself, the Gothic when it appears in Romanticism, as one of its founding, underlying dynamics returning from repression, enables, even as it also destabilizes, the Romantic attempt at imaginative transfiguration by hauntingly containing, and thus suggesting while obscuring, the unresolved ideological contradictions that could (and sometimes do) disable the ultimate vision of unity that the “Romantic” ultimately seeks. We can already see that ironizing process in the “Romantic Gothic” of Ann Radcliffe, so influential on Keats and many others, in the 1790s. As Mary Poovey has shown in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), the Radcliffean process of female education (including its support of an enlightened imagination) that would overcome all threats to its middle-class ideal to reach total resolution is haunted, even in the final explanations, by Gothicized manifestations of the acquisitive capitalism and longings for once-aristocratic powers that lie behind all middle-class efforts to separate private bourgeois living from what makes it possible (see Poovey 1979). Moreover, numerous Romantic poems written in the
wake of Radcliffe repeat this kind of internal contradiction in their own ways. Examples range from Coleridge’s *Christabel*, where a ghostly doubling of the “pure” heroine by a more powerful (and vampiric) female points to the furious debates at the time about the nature and potentials of women (see Hogle 2005), to Keats’ “The Eve of St. Agnes” (1819–20), in which the desires of lovers inside an old aristocratic house to escape antiquated structures of class and strictures on sexuality run up against the longings for those structures and strictures that they, Keats, and his audience both feel and resist (see Hogle 2003). While many further examples can be offered from this period, the nature of the Gothic–Romantic relationship becomes especially clear in the text that many still see as the best definer of Romanticism: the *Biographia Literaria*. In the very chapter (XIII) in which Coleridge separates the higher Romantic levels of organic “imagination” from the “mechanical fancy” that he associates with the “lower” Gothic, he argues his way to these conclusions—which are based, he has already admitted, on several eighteenth-century English and German works on the philosophy of mind—by interrupting his prose with an italicized letter (supposedly sent to him by someone else but written by the author) in which he likens his journey through the philosophical labyrinths leading to his final ideas to wandering, terrified, through a “Gothic cathedral […] in palpable darkness […] where what I had supposed substances were thinned away into shadows” (Coleridge 1965: 165–6). This explicitly Walpolean and Radcliffean intrusion actually harbors what Tim Milnes (without much noticing this Gothicism) has seen as Coleridge’s inability to actually resolve the “conflicting theoretical imperatives” he is bringing to bear at this moment (see Milnes 1999: 127). Coleridge’s italicized “letter” renders and obscures an ideological tangle in which some of his philosophical precursors fade into rejected “shadows” while others emerge as having more “substance” and vice versa, all in a Gothicized return of repressed inconsistency that Chapter XIII of *Biographia Literaria* half confesses but finally claims to transcend in distinguishing the Romantic “imagination” from “fancy.” Anglo-European Romanticism, it turns out, despite the many differences within it (which the Gothic sometimes serves to point out), is consistent in using the Gothic from which it arises to sublimate and sequester the most persistent contests of the time between fading and emerging systems of belief. As a result, the many contributions that this interplay of movements has made, as indeed it has, to Western and other civilizations has always been—and always will be—shadowed by the “Gothic,” the Frankensteinean Other that carries with it, like the Creature does for its creator, the conflicted uncertainties from which Romanticism arises and keeps trying to distance itself.

SEE ALSO: Beckford, William; Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Counterfeit; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Shelley, Percy Bysshe; Sublime, The; Walpole, Horace.

REFERENCES


At the beginning of the seventeenth century, two anonymously published pamphlets appeared within a year of each other in Kassel, Germany, promoting the existence of an ancient and mysterious secret fraternity that aimed for a synthesis of the sciences and a reform of Europe’s political, religious, intellectual, artistic, and philosophical thought. Now known as the Rosicrucian Manifestos, these early allusions to the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross started a wave of interest that has had repercussions in literature, myth, and legend up to the present day. These first two Rosicrucian manifestos were the *Fama Fraternitatis, or A Discovery of the Fraternity of the Most Noble Order of the Rosy Cross* (1614), which had been circulated as a manuscript as early as 1610, and the *Confessio Fraternitatis, or The Confession of the Laudable of the Most Honourable Order of the Rosy Cross, written to all the learned of Europe* (1615). DATING the order’s existence back as early as the fourteenth century, the pamphlets laid bare its principles, goals, and convictions, and invited kindred spirits to contact them via their own publications on the subject. Many attempts to contact them were made – some by famous names, such as René Descartes – but apparently none managed to attain an answer from the elusive order. It is thus a matter of ongoing debate for scholars of the topic whether an original Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross ever really existed or whether it might have been an elaborate hoax after all. Regardless of the initial truth of the fraternity’s existence, the pamphlets caused immense excitement and laid the foundation for many allegedly “Rosicrucian” societies to appear afterward.

The manifestos were soon to be followed by a third publication, this time not in the form of a pamphlet but as a novel: the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1616). The same mysterious society of neo-alchemistically-oriented humanists were at the book’s center. According to the legend promoted in the manifestos, Christian Rosenkreutz, born in 1378, was educated and raised in a German monastery. As a monk he undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, on which he received his esoteric teachings and became an initiate into the mysteries of alchemy. Upon his return to Europe – after having become proficient in Arabic and having studied the Cabala and...
occult sciences (see occultism) – he tried to teach his new-found knowledge and reaped nothing but rejection. This eventually led him to founding the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, consisting of no more than eight members during Rosenkreutz’s lifetime, which is alleged to have spanned an impressive 106 years. Each of those initial members vowed to have no profession apart from healing the sick without payment, to keep the society a secret for a hundred years, to wear no special garment but to dress according to the custom of the respective country they were in, to meet annually at a prearranged place, and to find a suitable replacement for himself before his death. “The word C. R. should be their seal, mark and character” (Mulvey-Roberts 1990: 4). Much lore regarding the order’s dealings in alchemy has been attached to the Rosicrucians, including the legends concerning the philosopher’s stone and thus the elixir of life, which gave birth to the figure of the Rosicrucian immortal in English literature.

While it is commonly assumed that all three manifestos were penned by the theologian Johann Valentin Andréä (1586–1654), only the Chymical Wedding can definitively be traced back to him, he having claimed authorship in his autobiography. Andréä later described the work as a “ludibrium,” commonly translated as a parody or farce (whereas Frances Yates (1972) wanted to move the interpretation closer to dramatic allegory), and indicated that the author had probably not quite anticipated the seriousness with which the Chymical Wedding was received. Marie Mulvey-Roberts, in Gothic Immortals, finds Andréä’s work to be a forerunner of the Rosicrucian novels she analyzes (1990: 6). Examples of this subgenre treated in the monograph are William Godwin’s St. Leon (1799), Percy Bysshe Shelley’s St. Irene, or The Rosicrucian (1810), Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus (1818), and Charles Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) (see GODWIN, WILLIAM; MATURIN, CHARLES ROBERT; SHELLEY, MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT; SHELLEY, PERCY BYSSHE). Those “Gothic Immortals” are unified in having to bear the crux of immortality eternally alone as well as being “culpable of having cheated the great leveller, death” (1990: 2). Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535), Paracelsus (1493–1541), and John Dee (1527–1608) are mentioned by Frances Yates (1972) as key Rosicrucian figures (Mulvey-Roberts 1990: 4).

Rosenkreutz’s biography in the Chymical Wedding differs in some respects from the Fama and Confessio. The latter two do not mention his full name, but refer to a mysterious C. R. or F. C. R. instead. Andréä’s novel depicts an aged and less-than-heroic Christian Rosenkreutz, who is not a role model in any real sense. Moreover, the book contains thinly veiled references and allusions to the secret science of alchemy, as Monika Hauf has shown extensively in Der Mythos der Rosenkreuzer (2000). Not only the title’s reference to chemistry but also the romance’s plot itself, including many alchemistic proceedings and goings-on, point toward the theme’s allegorical significance. Hauf furthermore draws on Frances Yates’ seminal work, The Rosicrucian Enlightenment (1972), for the contemporary political background of the manifestos’ publication. Mulvey-Roberts likewise refers back to Yates, quoting the association between the Rosicrucian Enlightenment and Lutheran Reformation, while stating that “the Rose-Cross symbolism was evocative of the Protestant backlash to Hapsburg hegemony preceding the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War in 1620” (Mulvey-Roberts 1990: 3).

There are many possible explanations for the choice of the combination of the two terms “rose” and “cross” as the brotherhood’s name. Some theories draw associations to the symbols on Johann Valentin Andréä’s and Martin Luther’s coats of arms, both of which portray some combination of the rose and the cross. That Andréä was a Lutheran makes this explanation more likely. Other theories connect the symbolism of the Knights Templar (a red cross on a white background) to the rose and the cross, or dive into these elements’ alchemical significance to explain their meaning in the context of the fraternity.
Apart from the presence of Rosicrucianism in Romantic and Gothic literature mentioned above, the society’s symbolism has survived in other forms, the most often cited of which being the Freemasons. A number of modern-day sects and secret societies invoke the Rosicrucian body of thought as part of their own teachings. For instance, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn famously declares an affiliation, while the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) does so even more explicitly.

SEE ALSO:  Godwin, William; Maturin, Charles Robert; Occultism; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Shelley, Percy Bysshe.

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FURTHER READING


Ruins

DIANE LONG HOEVELER

“I dote on ruins,” says a character in Eliza Parsons’ Lucy (1794), “there is something sublime and awful in the sight of decayed grandeur, and large edifices tumbling to pieces” (Parsons 1794: I, 233). The mania for Gothic ruins in novels written during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries can be said to be bookended by two specific historical events: the dissolution of the monasteries throughout Britain by Henry VIII from 1535 to 1539 and the excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum that began in earnest in 1748. The first event, with its architectural and religious focus, led to a surfeit of passages in Gothic novels about melancholy, nostalgia, and mourning over lost beliefs and traditions. The second event, with its scientific bravado and sense of discovering and decoding the secrets of lost worlds, led to a desire for acquisition, power, and mastery over the external world, qualities that spoke to an emerging capitalistic and bourgeois spirit interested in acquiring status-markers. The author of the first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole, toured Herculaneum in 1740 and was impressed with how thoroughly intact it was. In fact, he contrasted the lost city to Rome, where most of the discoveries had been “made in a barbarous age, where they only ransacked the ruins in quest of treasure” (Walpole 1948: 18, in a letter to West, June 14, 1740, sent from Naples). In contrast, Walpole was pleased that the city was being preserved as a historical relic, at least it seemed that way initially. Respect for preserving the vestiges of the past was one thing; commodification of architectural ruins as prestigious status-markers became increasingly the motivating factor in the construction of his faux medieval estate Strawberry Hill (see walpole, horace).

The prominence of the Gothic ruin in British Gothic literary works has long been explained as part of the drive toward the numinous or a manifestation of the Burkean dimension of the sublime (see sublime, the). For instance, in his General Character of the Gothic Literature and Art (1818), Coleridge observed that:

Gothic art is sublime. On entering a cathedral, I am filled with devotion and with awe; I am lost to the actualities that surround me, and my whole being expands into the infinite; earth and air, nature and art, all swell up into eternity, and the only sensible impression left is “that I am nothing!” (quoted in Varma 1957: 15)

But it would have been much more likely during this period to enter a demolished Gothic cathedral that had been destroyed and
ransacked by Cromwell’s troops during the dissolution. Within a generation of that event, however, there was rage, resentment, and genuine antiquarian angst about the horrendous loss of historical and cultural treasures caused by the widespread violence and destruction (Macaulay 1953: 343). The ruined Gothic cathedral, like Tintern Abbey, or the ruined monastery and abbeys at Melrose, Glastonbury, or Faversham, became by the end of the seventeenth century “admonitory receptacles of a vanished yet recoverable past” (Aston 1973: 254). By the end of the eighteenth century, Gothic novelists were full participants in this nostalgic antiquarianism, touring not only Britain, but also France, Italy, and Spain in search of lost monasteries as well as Roman and secular ruins.

Ecclesiastical and architectural ruins overrun by natural growth dominate the Gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe and her followers, sometimes as an occasion for musing about the superstitious era of Catholicism, and sometimes as an opportunity to reveal her heroine’s sensitivity to the sublime and picturesque (see Radcliffe, Ann). In both cases, the ruin is an occasion to provoke emotion in the characters, to reveal “taste,” which in turn reifies the characters’ breeding and refined sensibilities. Similarly, Michael Sadleir has noted that the ruin is “in itself a thing of loveliness” since it symbolized “the victory of nature over man’s handiwork” and therefore had the power to move “to melancholy pleasure minds which dwelt gladly on the impermanence of human life and effort” (Sadleir 1927: 7).

In addition to the British fascination with ruins, the French were equally enthralled with the phenomenon of the ruined ruin. François René Chateaubriand can perhaps be seen as the originator of the romantic ruin, “the ruined ruin,” a structure that “suggests that even the record generated by destruction can pass away” (Blix 2009: 177). In an event that is somewhat analogous to the British dissolution of the monasteries, the royal tombs at Saint-Denis, Paris were destroyed by the revolutionaries in 1794, revealing “that the historical thread has been broken, and even the memorial of the bygone monarchy has been wiped away” (Blix 2009: 177). This event itself expresses the modern anxiety that history can indeed be lost, for if even the mighty are not immune from the ravages of time, no one is. Chateaubriand also represents one aspect of the romantic quest to recover lost civilizations and glorious achievements of the heroes of the past. On his 1811 trip to Sparta he tried to find the grave of Leonidas: “I screamed with all my power: Leonidas! No ruin repeated this great name, and Sparta herself seemed to have forgotten him” (quoted in Blix 2009: 178). In seeking the ruin, then, the artist is seeking to preserve the written or architectural trace from the losses that time has sketched on its surface: “An impossible wish to remember emerges from the acknowledgment of loss, and the modern historian is condemned to drawing traces of lost traces, second degree traces, doubly hollow, to counter the material erosion of the record” (Blix 2009: 178). Finally, one can point to Comte de Volney, in his Les Ruines (1791), who asked: “Who knows if on the banks of the Seine, the Thames, or the Zuyder-Zee [...] if some traveller, like myself, shall not one day sit on their silent ruins, and weep in solitude over the ashes of their inhabitants, and the memory of their greatness?” (Volney 1795: 15).

SEE ALSO: Radcliffe, Ann; Sublime, The; Walpole, Horace.

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The term “Russian Gothic” has only comparatively recently enjoyed real currency in critical studies of Russian literature. “Gothic” is commonly used in connection with, for instance, certain early works by Dostoevsky or even his later more famous novels, which include elements or traces of the Gothic. Otherwise, what we term “the Gothic in Russian literature” had remained, with rare exceptions, submerged beneath the headings of “Russian Romanticism” or “the fantastic.” This comes partly through the vicissitudes of Soviet literary criticism, during the more depressing stretches of which even “Romanticism” and “Dostoevsky” were dirty words and critical energies were not expended on the Gothic or supernatural.

A certain input from folklore, and such further native medieval ingredients as chronicles and saints’ lives apart, Russian Gothic derives from an amalgam of European influences: the English Gothic novel, the tales of Hoffmann, the French fantastique and frénétique traditions, and various schools of European idealist and esoteric thought. Gothic fiction itself extended to, or shaded into, psychological analysis, the uncanny (as outlined by Freud and reapplied by Tzvetan Todorov), horror (and/or “terror”), the fantastic (Todorov again), and the marvelous.

Various extraliterary cultural models were internationally shared, in addition to a primal Gothic or medievalist nostalgia. Pan-European literary images derived from the engravings of Piranesi (particularly the Carceri d’Invenzione); his impenetrable imaginary prisons and impossible blueprints, affecting Gothic writers from Walpole in England to Vladimir Odoevsky in Russia, paralleled in their labyrinthine mental processes the most complex features of Gothic architecture.

Psychologically, accentuation may fall on character analysis (commonly of villainy) or on crisis of identity, sometimes introducing the doppelganger theme (often a supernaturally or a psychically induced “double”). Strong elements of dream and fantasy are contained within the style of “fantastic realism,” a term particularly associated with the later Dostoevsky. Greater concentration on setting may define “historical Gothic” or, if contemporaneous, “society (or social) Gothic”; other emphases again lead to “horror” or “criminal” Gothic.

The “carnival world” of the Gothic prompts consideration through the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin. A further subdivision is identifiable as “artistic Gothic”: Gothic elements are involved...
with, or subordinated to, themes from art or music, bringing into play artistic works or figures. Beyond such widely attested categories of the European Gothic tale, vestigial Gothic traces are to be found throughout mainstream realist European (and Russian) fiction over the whole of the nineteenth century, leading toward a subsequent Neo-Gothic revival, deemed coincidental with Symbolism and fin-de-siécle Decadence.

The involvement of a classical pantheon of deities (demons, or diabolism) can be found in certain eighteenth-century Russian texts. The first Russian Gothic story proper is The Island of Bornholm (1794), by Nikolai Karamzin, a Sentimentalist turned historian. Under the influence of English and European Pre-Romanticism, Karamzin’s stories emphasize Sentimentalist and historical themes, with a tinge of graveyard Gothic (in his famous tale Poor Liza of 1792). In just one instance, The Island of Bornholm, this formula is reversed, resulting in a predominantly Gothic tale with Sentimentalist trappings.

Gothic works in Russia remained rare before the 1820s. The romantic poet Vasily Zhukovsky twice reworked Bürger’s “Lenore” into Russian versions – Svetlana (1808–12) and Liudmila (1808) – and much later produced a translation (Lenora, 1831). Clara Reeve’s The Old English Baron was translated into Russian as early as 1792. French translations of English Gothic fiction were commonly known in Russia (where the educated élite read mainly in French), with Russian translations from English fiction frequently made from the French. Ann Radcliffe’s novels appeared in Russian in the early 1800s, leading a wave of Gothic translations, along with certain works of others falsely attributed to her (including Lewis’ The Monk and The Romance of the Pyrenees, by a certain Catherine Cuthbertson). Obscure English authors of popular Gothic achieving early Russian appearances include Anna Maria McKenzie and George Walker.

The occasional Russian critic had traced a “fantastic” tradition in Russia. This had been a somewhat negative category to critics such as Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky, but was more frivolously approached by Osip Senkovsky, who wrote, as “Baron Brambeus,” such tales of his own. Eastern influences (Senkovsky was himself an Orientalist), folkloric motifs, and the fairy tale all fed into the Russian fantastic, along with the idealist philosophy of Schelling and the impact of the Gothic and the ballad: fate, revenge, and the intervention of other-worldliness. This tradition is traceable to the stories of Pogorelsky’s cycle The Double, or My Evenings in Little Russia (collected 1828); it then continues up to 1844, with publication of Odoevsky’s valedictory three-volume Works.

“Are there really such things? . . . [as Russian novels],” the aged Countess of Pushkin’s The Queen of Spades (Pushkin 1997: 76) asks her nephew. Russian fiction indeed matured slowly in the early nineteenth century and any heyday of Russian Gothic fiction fell during its second quarter. Aleksandr Bestuzhev, under the pen-name “Marlinsky” (following his role in the Decembrist uprising, 1825), published, under the impact of Radcliffe, Scott, and Irving (plus Shakespeare and Schiller), several Gothic tales in the 1820s and early 1830s, mostly still unknown in English. These include “The Traitor” and “Castle Eisen” (both 1825); and a trio of “mature” stories from the early 1830s: “An Evening at a Caucasian Spa in 1824,” “The Terrible Fortune-Telling,” and “The Cuirassier.” Marlinsky combines strong Gothic elements with historical settings and folkloric motifs. “The Cuirassier,” however, progresses to near-contemporaneity, a sophisticated narrative technique, and the fullest range of Gothic motifs.

Another writer pouring Romantic-Gothic motifs into popular fiction was the historian, dramatist, and journalist Nikolai Polevoy. His tale “The Bliss of Madness” (1833) is a pot-boiler of overt Hoffmannism (complete with a framing device of friends reading a Hoffmann tale). An obsession with a woman believed to comprise half his soul leads the protagonist to madhouse doom in a narrative bestrewn with occult trappings, conjuring an Italian atmosphere in St. Petersburg, and motivated
with card-sharpening and fortune hunting. The main trio of characters in the embedded tale (sensitive artistic man, mysterious young woman, and demonic father-figure) are to be found in Gogol’s “Terrible Vengeance” and recur in Dostoevsky’s “The Landlady.”

Mikhail Lermontov, by the end of a brief and stormy literary career (1841), had left two unfinished works of Gothic fiction: Vadim and Shtoss. The latter is a tale of mystery and demonic card-playing, begun just months before his fatal duel. Vadim (written 1832–4), the principal product of Lermontov’s prose juvenilia, comprises a chunk of historical novel of the Pugachev rebellion, apparently influenced by Scott and Hugo. A slightly grotesque concentration on beggars and mutilation combines with motifs of the monastery, confinement, torture, and a labyrinthine cave, described in detail suggestive of both Gothic architecture and fiction.

Gogol, the other major prose writer of the period, incorporated Gothic settings or features into a number of his Ukrainian and Petersburg tales. An important example of the artistic Gothic is his Hoffmannian “The Portrait” (1835, revised 1842), which projects a struggle of good and evil into the creative process, highlighting the eponymous evil-eyed and cursed painting.

However, the most impressive body of fiction approximating to a genuine form of Russian Gothic writing perhaps belongs to Odoevsky. This includes several stories contained within his philosophical frame-tale Russian Nights (first integral publication 1844), along with several independent tales or novellas (see ODOEVSKY, VLADIMIR). Additionally, Odoevsky wrote shorter Gothic stories, such as “The Apparition” (1838), which could be taken as a whimsical reworking of Hoffmann’s “The Entail.”

Four years before Lermontov, Aleksandr Pushkin (in 1837) cut short his literary career through a fatal duel. No text can rival The Queen of Spades as undisputed Russian Gothic masterpiece. Neither has any comparable short Russian text (a mere thirty pages) been accorded such massive critical attention. This story can be read as a Gothic tale par excellence, as Gothic parody, or – given that it is a widely recognized prime example of the pure fantastic – in almost any number of yet further ways (society tale, psychological study, numerological puzzle). Among possible sources tapped by Pushkin can be numbered Hoffmann’s The Devil’s Elixirs and “Gambler’s Luck” – both featuring hallucinations or obsessions with cards. The epitome of the “Petersburg tale,” The Queen of Spades extends from its near contemporary metropolitan Russian setting back to the 1770s and geographically west, to the Paris of the Ancien Régime and the pseudo-occultism of the Count Saint-Germain. Economic drive, sexual exploitation, idée fixe, the clash of two eras, and the judgment of fate all engage in this condensed virtuoso performance.

In the 1840s, Dostoevsky, allegedly having read Radcliffe while still a child, opened his career with a strong Gothic flourish, offering “The Double” (1846) and “The Landlady” (1847). However, his near encounter with a Tsarist executioner and a decade of Siberian exile turned him toward political conservatism and psychological realism; nevertheless, residual Gothic elements are apparent throughout his oeuvre, making something of a return in stories of the 1870s and his final novel, The Karamazov Brothers. Similarly, another realist master, Turgenev, included a sprinkling of Gothic-fantastic tales amid his works, including “Phantom” (1864), the late story “Clara Milich” (1883), and the earlier “Faust” (1856). Still within the 1840s, A. K. (or Aleksey) Tolstoy had published vampire tales. Madness was widespread in Russian fiction, from Pushkin through to Vsevolod Garshin’s “The Red Flower” (1883) and Anton Chekhov’s “Ward No. 6” (1892). Other writers essaying something resembling a Gothic style include Nikolai Leskov and Aleksey Apukhtin. In the subsequent fin-de-siècle ambience, even the medical realist Chekhov turned to Gothic phantasmagoria in one tale at least, The Black Monk (1894), thereby closing an exact century of Russian Gothic (starting with Karamzin).
The demonic (or forms of diabolism, or the satanic), witchcraft, and other Gothic appurtenances continued to resurface in Russian literature, even into the Soviet period (notably in the writings of Mikhail Bulgakov), while St. Petersburg (renamed Petrograd, Leningrad, and finally again St. Petersburg) continues to exercise its own Gothic-type mystique. Indeed, the “St. Petersburg text” in Russian literature (Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky, on to Andrey Bely and beyond) could even be said to qualify as a subcategory of its own: “St. Petersburg Gothic.”

SEE ALSO: Dostoevsky, Fyodor; European Gothic; German Gothic; Odoevsky, Vladimir.

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FURTHER READING
Sade, Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de

Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de Sade (1740–1814), is often regarded as the most scandalous writer of his time, and indeed of any time before the twentieth century. He certainly led a scandalous life. He was frequently incarcerated, first in various prisons (including ten years in the Bastille) and later, for thirteen years, in the asylum at Charenton (see asylums). The accusations against him included many crimes of violence, principally against young women, some of whom were prostitutes and some probably not, of which he was almost certainly guilty.

But it was less the actual violence of his behavior that excited opprobrium and punishment than the series of sexual and sexually related perversions which he both practiced and advocated in a long series of literary works (see sex). The most obvious, of course, is the perversion which has taken his name, sadism, which consists in the taking of pleasure from the pain of others; but de Sade's practice and thinking went further than this, promulgating a complete freedom in matters of sexuality and physical relations, a freedom that would include sodomy and pedophilia. De Sade also sought a connection between this extreme personal libertarianism and a political stance during the tumultuous years of the French Revolution and its aftermath, when he was briefly a far-left member of the National Convention: he has been regarded as an early exponent of an extreme version of socialism, claiming, as Karl Marx was to later, that the real social struggle was not between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie but between the combined forces of the state and the disenfranchised working class.

Few of his works could be classified as Gothic in a clear sense. His most famous novels are Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue, Juliette, The 120 Days of Sodom, and Philosophy in the Bedroom. They are a unique mix of pornographic episodes and rhapsodic philosophizing. It can be argued that they are Gothic in the sense that they take up the theme of the persecuted maiden, but they carry this persecution to extreme lengths, making even the works of Matthew Lewis appear tame by comparison (see lewis, matthew). Perhaps more importantly, there is neither use of nor interest in the supernatural; on the contrary, the novels appear to combine a ruthless emphasis on carnality with an extreme and sometimes absurd extension of reliance on the abstract, reasoning mind.

De Sade himself said that he was well aware that he was not writing Gothic novels. In fact, his attitude to the Gothic, about which he knew a great deal, was complex. On the one
hand he could be on occasions quite disparaging of it, particularly for its reliance on other-worldly machinery and its sexual inexplicitness; but on the other he is also on record as holding Lewis and Ann Radcliffe (see radcliffe, ann) in high regard. However, his significance in the context of Gothic fiction is considerable, and stems particularly from his early grasp of the connection between Gothic, in its 1790s form, and contemporary European events, principally the French Revolution itself. The apparent exaggerations, the fears, the terrors of Gothic were, he wrote, a necessary and inescapable accompaniment to the more real and frightening terrors of revolutionary turmoil; thus Gothic was not to be treated as some kind of literary aberration but rather as an inevitable concomitant of the times through which Europe was living. In diagnosing this connection – and indeed, at one level, providing an explanation – of the development he was very much ahead of his time; his views have since become generally accepted as part of the etiology of early Gothic fiction.

To an even greater degree than the classic Gothic, de Sade’s work has caused dissen- sion among cultural critics, and particularly among the many varieties of feminism. Andrea Dworkin (1979), for example, takes the conventional line that de Sade’s works directly conduce to violence against women; but writers as diverse as Simone de Beauvoir (1953), Susan Sontag (1967), and Angela Carter (1979) (see carter, angela) have preferred a more nuanced approach, seeing de Sade’s libertarianism as one that is capable of creating spaces for women and also of encouraging attention to the wider violations of the state, without which there can be no escape from gender inequality.

In his later years, while at Charenton, de Sade wrote a number of plays, and the liberal director of the asylum encouraged their staging, with other inmates playing the roles; thus de Sade came into contact with an early form of creative therapy, a situation that has been best represented in Peter Weiss’ (1965) play usually known as the Marat/Sade. This has in turn led renewed attention to de Sade’s own psychological interests; whether better described as a criminal or as a madman, or indeed as neither, it is clear that he had a great deal of insight both into his own condition and also into its relations to the “perversions” that characterized the unjust, persecutory, volatile society around him.

Some would say that he was therefore an exemplar of that society; others that his work constitutes a series of large-scale satires on the apparent normalcy of the everyday world. Whatever the truth of these opinions, and whatever the relative validity of de Sade’s often contradictory views on the Gothic, there can be no doubt that as Gothic has itself become more extreme and explicit and as its monsters have come out of the shadows – in the form, for example, of serial killers and deranged cannibals – so have the Gothic tradition and its Sadeian equivalent moved closer together.

SEE ALSO: Asylums; Carter, Angela; Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann; Sex.

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FURTHER READING

Scandinavian Gothic

YVONNE LEFFLER

There is a Gothic tradition in Scandinavian literature, lasting from the early nineteenth century to the present day, where the stories are located in Scandinavia, and the Gothic castle or haunted house is replaced by the Nordic wilderness, the vast dark forest, the snow-covered Nordic mountains, or the icy stormy sea. Regional folklore and local traditions are used to enhance the Gothic atmosphere, and the protagonist’s dark side is often bound to and triggered by the wilderness and the pagan past of the region.

Although Scandinavian writers developed their own kind of Gothic writing as the Gothic genre became popular in Scandinavia in the late eighteenth century, they were still a part of a European tradition, as Yvonne Leffler (1991) claims. At that time many of the famous English, German, and French novels and short stories were translated into Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian. Ann Radcliffe’s The Italian (1797) and Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796) were two of the most widely read novels in the early nineteenth century (see Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann). Writers like Eugène Sue, É. T. A. Hoffmann, and Edgar Allan Poe became popular later on (see Hoffmann, E. T. A (Ernst theodor amadeus); Poe, Edgar Allan). Bernhard Ingemann’s tale Varulven (The Werewolf) (1834) and Victor Rydberg’s Vampyr (The Vampire) (1848) are more or less built on Polidori’s The Vampyre (see Polidori, John). Several women writers wrote in the tradition of female Gothic. In Hin Ondes hus (The House of the Devil) (1853) Aurora Ljungstedt refers explicitly to Ann Radcliffe’s novels, Karen Blixen calls her short stories Seven Gothic Tales (1934), and Inger Edelfeldt’s Juliane och jag (1982) as well as Mare Kandre’s Aliide, Aliide (1991) are all, as Mattias Fyhr (2003) has shown, structured as Gothic romances (see Female Gothic).

In that way many Scandinavian works are densely intertextual. The writers place themselves in a Gothic tradition and take for granted that their audiences are familiar with the genre. At the same time they are eager to remind their readers that their stories take place in a Scandinavian environment. Some illustrative examples are Bernhard Ingemann’s short novel De underjordiske (The Subterranean Ones) (1817), Victor Rydberg’s novel Singoalla (1857), and Selma Lagerlöf’s The Treasure (1925). All are located in a specific local environment and refer to what a Scandinavian reader can recognize as historical facts. Ingemann’s story takes place on the island of Bornholm, between Sweden and Denmark, and depicts certain historical battles; in Rydberg’s novel the narrator stresses that what he is about to tell has taken place at an old castle at a certain lake in Sweden; and Lagerlöf’s novel is situated at well known places on the Swedish West Coast. But as in most Scandinavian Gothic the authentic setting is only there as the backdrop to another story, a story of the evil forces in nature and within human beings. In Singoalla the moon, the Nordic night, and the pagan blood rituals gradually achieve a profound symbolic significance. The combination of these elements adds a mystical edge to the love between the knight and the gipsy girl, Singoalla, in a way that turns the love story into a vampire tale à la Gautier’s La morte amooreuse (1836). In Ingemann’s and Lagerlöf’s stories the Nordic scenery and the powers of nature play the part of independent
characters. In *De underjordiske*, the subterranean creatures are Nature: the earth, the sea, and the forest. In *The Treasure* the unmerciful winter landscape is the principal driving force of the plot, when it seems to take possession of three Scotsmen and turn them into amoral bloodthirsty werewolves. As in most Scandinavian Gothic there exists a complex relationship between character and landscape, and a fusion between inner and outer reality, the present time and the hidden past. The horror is the wilderness and its pagan past. Unlike most British and American Gothic, Scandinavian Gothic does not revive the feudal past of the Middle Ages but looks further back in history, often to the pagan premedieval period before Christianity was introduced in Scandinavia.

Although the twentieth century in Scandinavian literature was very much a time of the realist novel there is a group of texts that has been marketed as horror stories or ghost stories since the nineteenth century. The titles and beginnings of these stories make the reader expect an uncanny tale. But although writers use the narrative technique and the themes of the fantastic and Gothic genres, in the end they nonetheless make their narrators deliver a natural explanation for those events or phenomena that earlier seemed unexplainable or supernatural. In Mauritz Hansen’s tale “En spökhistoria” (A Ghost Story) (1855), the first-person narrator is the one who has been frightened by the ghost but he still tries to find a natural explanation for the strange things that happened to him one winter’s night when he was traveling in the Norwegian countryside. Also Ingemann’s “The Werewolf,” Rydberg’s *The Vampire*, and Andreas Marklund’s *Skördedrottningen* (The Harvest Queen) (2007) are good examples of explained mysteries. In Ingemann’s and Rydberg’s stories the protagonists believe themselves to be a werewolf and a vampire, respectively, and therefore destined to kill the women they love. In Marklund’s novel a young scholar, Olof, reveals that by birth he is destined to serve the destructive death goddess known as “the Harvest Queen.”

In all three stories we eventually get a medical explanation for the young men’s behavior and in all cases the killing monster is reduced to a madman, a tragic antihero suffering from a delusion.

In Scandinavian literature there is also another group of Gothic tales that are not immediately recognized as such. Instead they introduce the reader to a fictional world that in every way seems to work as our own everyday world. But at some point something happens that sets the normal rules aside. It is this second category of texts that is the most common in Scandinavian nineteenth-century literature, especially in Swedish literature. Emilie Flygare-Carlén is known as an early realist novelist but she frequently uses Gothic elements. Her novel *The Rose of Tistelön* (1842) could be described as a combination of a domestic novel and a crime story, centering on the murder of a customs officer and his crew. In one way the novel could be read as a psychological thriller but there are elements that demand a different kind of reading. The composition is such as to create a Gothic atmosphere and the characters are obviously subject to forces beyond their control. An insane boy, who witnessed the murder, appears progressively as a supernatural or monstrous being, who persecutes the murderers’ family and eventually gets the murderers punished. However satisfying this closure may be, the reader is left hesitating between a natural and supernatural explanation, between a reading based on a realist or a Gothic code.

In the early twenty-first century supernatural elements and horror effects have become more frequent in Scandinavian literature and film and the protagonists have become even more an integral part of the wilderness. In Michael Hjorth’s film *The Unknown* (2000), which is inspired by Myrick’s and Sánchez’s film *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), the Swedish forest is transformed into a claustrophobic horror scene for a group of young scientists sent to investigate a remote fire-ravaged area in the northern forest. The scientists’ work,
their investigation, and their documentation of it, is gradually threatened by an unknown alien force as the landscape, the forest, starts to act as a living organism. The scientists’ modern scientific ideas are more and more challenged by an ancient primitive force in nature. Also in John Ajvide Lindqvist’s novel Harbour (2010) there is a complex relationship between landscape and character, space and focalization, external environment and internal mental state, the present time and the forgotten past. The male protagonist Anders is haunted by the mysterious disappearance of his little daughter on a cold winter’s day out on the frozen sea. Although the horror centers on the recent past and the memories of a recent traumatic event, the ultimate cause of what happened is connected to a pagan pact between the inhabitants of the archipelago and the sea far back in history. When Simon tries to find out what happened to his daughter he also uncovers the secret of the island and its dark past.

The Gothic boom in Scandinavian literature and film during the last decades has resulted in a diversified use of Gothic elements. Ajvide Lindqvist’s vampire novel Let the Right One In (2007) takes place in a modern suburb outside Stockholm and the vampire motif is used to reveal social problems in the modern Scandinavian welfare state, such as segregation, child abuse, bullying, and pedophilia (see vampire fiction). However, in Tomas Alfredson’s (2008) film based on the novel the social problems are placed in the background as well as the urban setting. The horror scenes, which show the attacks of the vampire Eli and his assistant, are more predominant in the film and they take place in the snow-covered forest residues left within the modern suburb. The snow and the forest are just as important for the vampire’s health as the darkness of the night.

Johan Theorin’s Gothic crime novels, for instance Echoes from the Dead (2008) and The Darkest Room (2009), are a successful combination of a modern crime investigation and a haunted Gothic place, where old conceptions of supernatural powers and hidden crimes activate repressed memories of a hidden past (see crime). Roar Uthaug’s film Cold Prey (2006) is a modern zombie parody and Anders Banke’s film Frostbite (2006) has been classified as a vampire comedy. In both films the standard elements of the zombie and the vampire film are playfully exaggerated, but Uthaug’s and Banke’s films are still good examples of Scandinavian Gothic, set in a specific Scandinavian environment (see zombies). In Cold Prey the snow-clad Norwegian mountains hide an army of Nazi zombies, which thrive on the savage merciless landscape and what occurred there during World War II. In Frostbite the master vampire is a specialist in hematology working in a modern hospital in a small Swedish town north of the polar circle in the immense darkness of the arctic winter. In these modern horror comedies dark desires are bound to and triggered by the landscape and a historic past connected to or part of the surrounding wilderness. To lose control over the wilderness and its uncivilized past still represents the real horror in Scandinavian Gothic.

SEE ALSO: Crime; Female Gothic; Hoffmann, E. T. A (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); Lewis, Matthew; Poe, Edgar Allan; Polidori, John; Radcliffe, Ann; Vampire Fiction; Zombies.

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**Schiller, Friedrich von**

VICTOR SAGE

Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) was born in Marbach, in the Protestant Duchy of Württemberg, in the old Holy Roman Empire. His father was a field surgeon whom the family were allowed to visit on duty during the Seven Years’ War, so the children saw military life at an early age. Schiller himself, whose intellectual capacities were brought to the attention of the Duke of Württemberg, was taken away from his family and boarded at the Karlsschule, Stuttgart, whose rigorous regime bore many of the features of prison life (Alt 2004: 20–1). Lights were kept burning in the dormitories to discourage masturbation; reading by them was forbidden. But the young Schiller was already organizing his fellow pupils as actors in clandestine dialogues and plays that he wrote himself. In 1780, he was obliged to follow his father into the profession as a regimental doctor. Subsequently, he fled into Law, which enabled him covertly to read and write, often in the hospital because he was sickly. Duke Eugen was the ruler of a court in the Holy Roman Empire, a position that gave him absolute power over the bodies and souls of his pupils, and he took a strong interest in the personal thoughts and feelings of individuals. Thus, throughout his schooldays, Schiller had an intimate personal experience of the absolute nature of feudal power, which clearly stimulated his rebellious desire for freedom. In 1781, he secretly wrote his play *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*) for the theater in Mannheim. Mannheim was over the frontier, and thus beyond the Duke’s jurisdiction. Schiller was obliged to sneak out of Württemberg over the border at night in a coach without a pass to see the performance of his own play. Subsequently, he was arrested at the Duke’s behest, jailed, and forbidden to write anything other than the
medical textbooks of his calling. He fled Stuttgart the next year and first took up a post in Mannheim, then settled in Weimar to write. In 1789, he was appointed Professor of History and Philosophy in nearby Jena, where he wrote several important works of history, including a history of the Thirty Years’ War. While in Jena, he married Charlotte von Lengefeld (1766–1826), with whom he had four children. He returned to Weimar in 1799, when his friend Goethe persuaded him to write more plays. The result was the rise of a new phase of German drama. In 1802, the Duke of Weimar ennobled him. He died from consumption at the age of forty-five, at work on his unfinished play *Demetrius*.

In his first, enormously successful, phase as a writer, Schiller made two crucial interventions in what was to become the German Gothic. The first was his play, *Die Räuber*, which depicts the dissolution of a noble family through the diabolical machinations of a younger brother, Franz Moor, against the old Duke his father and his elder sibling, Karl, the hero of the play. Karl Moor is also rebellious against his father and intensely idealist. In addition, he reads Milton’s Satan as a hero (in a passage that was later suppressed), like the English radical Romantics Blake and Shelley. Altogether, this structure of ideas makes a connection with the English Gothic and Romantic traditions. Schiller wanted particularly to explore the relation between sublimity and evil; he wrote, for example, in the introduction to his play: “Miltons Satan folgen wir mit schaudernodem Erstaunen durch das unwegsame Chaos” (We follow Milton’s Satan with shuddering astonishment through impenetrable Chaos) (Schiller 2001: 5). It is the grandeur, the ambition, of Satan that attracted Schiller, like the English Romantics, because it has tragic force. After being abandoned by his father, Karl takes to the Bohemian Forest and becomes a Robin Hood-like bandit. The play was a sensation: Karl’s rebellion against his father and tragic ending were read as a revolutionary statement against the ancien régime and the play soon transferred to Paris, where it was a great hit. Schiller was made an honorary citizen by the revolutionary council. In England, “The Robbers” was somewhat nervously caricatured as “The Rovers” by The Anti-Jacobin, a magazine funded by Pitt’s government.

Schiller’s second founding intervention in what became the German Gothic was *Der Geisterseher* (The Ghost-Seer) (1786–9), which he wrote as a popular serial for his own magazine of the arts, *Thalia*. Schiller soon wearied of this project and he never finished it, leaving the story in fragments and “leaking” its ending to his readers via an editorial note. It was published as a single-volume text in 1790. This tantalizingly unfinished story, to his embarrassment, proved another massive hit with the German public, and it immediately sent a crowd of writers scurrying to their desks to emulate (or finish) it. Thus, the German conspiracy novel (*Geheimbundroman*) was born. Schiller’s story concerns the visit of a narrowly educated, young Protestant prince from a minor court in Germany to Venice, where he is immediately beset by a Roman Catholic conspiracy to usurp his possible throne-to-be, led by a mysterious shape-changer dressed as a monk whom the Germans christen “The Armenian” (cf. Alt 2004: 56). The novel’s dramatic structure refracts its narrative through two narrators and the testimony of a number of witnesses, so that the truth is always in doubt. The text presents itself as a form of Enlightenment didacticism, but its mystery and ambiguity thematize the question of “explanation,” thus inventing the Gothic form of the “explained supernatural” before Ann Radcliffe, to whom discovery of this mode has often been attributed (Sage 1990: 75; Murnane 2012: 10–44).

These interventions belong to the pre-Kantian phase of Schiller’s complex career, before he turned to an examination of history. After his disillusionment with the French Revolution in 1793, and after he had read Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* (1790), he also wrote two important essays on the Sublime, the first in 1793 (“On the Sublime: Towards the Further
Development of Some Kantian Ideas”) and the second (“On the Sublime”) composed between 1794 and 1796 and published in 1801. In these essays, we can see how important notions of terror are to Schiller’s search for tragic form, and how he rejects Burke’s passive, eighteenth-century idea that terror becomes aesthetic through the safety of the observer (Hinnant 2002: 122ff). For Schiller, who retains the idea of terror as a driving force in the human subject, the Sublime became a dynamic, moral process motivated by terror of the overwhelming Other that is found in the midst of a political and social process of struggle, not merely in the “safe” (i.e., artificial, framed) situation in which the subject contemplates the inevitability of disaster as an aesthetic phenomenon. Schiller retained a possibility of melodrama in the intensity of his emotional representation of fear, but at this point he moved from the Gothic to the tragic, harnessing the paradox of the necessity of freedom, which he had encountered experientially as a young man, to the search to represent the tragic process in a modern form.

SEE ALSO: German Gothic; Protestantism; Roman Catholicism; Sublime, The; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING


Science and the Gothic
MARTIN WILLIS

The importance of the supernatural to the various forms of the Gothic suggests that Gothic’s relationship to science may be marginal. Yet from the late eighteenth century up to the present day science and technology have been central themes of Gothic fiction and film; either explicitly through an investment in scientific scenarios for Gothic plots or implicitly in the collision between reason and emotion, or between the rational and the fantastic (see TECHNOLOGIES). It was in the nineteenth century that Gothic’s interest in science reached its zenith, inspired both by the emerging cultural representation of the scientist as courageous explorer and by the increasing impetus of the Industrial Revolution (see Victorian Gothic).

While one of the first novels to declare itself Gothic – Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764) – had very little interest in science, Ann Radcliffe’s innovations in the genre in the 1790s were clearly influenced by Enlightenment rationalism’s reinvigoration of the scientific method (see RADCLIFFE, ANN; WALPOLE, HORACE). Although rarely drawing out scientific or technological themes in the plots of her romances, Radcliffe structured her novels around a series of supernatural events that were continually subject to scrutiny and eventually found to be the product of false
or inadequate knowledge. *The Italian* (1797) exemplifies this particularly scientific epistemology in Vivaldi’s obdurate determination not to accept the events that shape his life as beyond understanding but rather as products of a system of which he is presently ignorant, but that he might yet come to know. By interweaving the supernatural and its associated terrors with the scientific method of objective observation leading to rational knowledge, Radcliffe inaugurated a generic convention in the Gothic that remains in place in the twenty-first century.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) is acknowledged as the first novel to explicitly inscribe science with Gothic potential (see *shelley, mary wollstonecraft*). Exploiting Radcliffe’s conventions to depict the tragic Romantic hero as a scientist as well as the Romantic quest as a search for esoteric knowledge, Shelley interrogated science through the genre of the Gothic. Importantly, in addition to examining the character of contemporary science, *Frankenstein* made science itself Gothic, attaching to scientific conventions the tropes of the Gothic in ways that seemed natural extensions of scientific truths rather than the artificial employment of generic criteria. For example, Victor Frankenstein’s laboratory practice, partly enacted in the charnel house and partly in a solitary and secretive garret, appears to represent accurately the characteristic occupations of the amateur scientist who works within either domestic or other nonscientific spaces, yet it is obviously saturated with Gothic conventions drawn from Walpole and Radcliffe and used in those works to attack conservative institutional authority. By being articulated as Gothic (as well as being investigated by Gothic fictions), science holds an equivocal place as both the vehicle for Gothic plots and the very essence of the powerful antihumanism that Gothic fiction often depicts as disrupting social harmony.

As science fulfilled this role in Gothic fictions across the early and mid-nineteenth century, Gothic writers also expanded on it and gave it greater depth and character. Wilkie Collins’ sensation fictions (*The Woman in White*, 1860; *The Moonstone*, 1868) asked questions about the ethics of scientific practice, most especially around sciences of the mind (see *collins, wilkie*). Yet Collins also questioned the role of science as purveyor of the Gothic by employing it to unlock Gothic plots and to discover and make safe Gothic secrets. In a similar vein, Charles Dickens in *Bleak House* (1853) invited readers of the Gothic to consider how scientific knowledge might improve the human condition while at the same time he drew on his own understanding of contemporary medicine to heighten the horrific consequences of infection left unchecked (see *dickens, charles*). The position of the scientist also came under scrutiny, especially after that term came into more general usage in the middle of the nineteenth century. In the work of Edward Bulwer Lytton, Collins once again, George Eliot, and of course Robert Louis Stevenson, the various roles and responsibilities of the man of science were examined and placed under fictional pressure (see *bulwer lytton, edward; stevenson, robert louis*).

Just as the themes of science varied considerably, so too did the fields of science most commonly reimagined in fictional contexts. After 1859, evolutionary theory, especially Darwinian modes of evolution, found fictional outlet in some of the most important Gothic works of the later nineteenth century, such as Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and H. G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) (see *wells, h. g. (herbert george)*). In these and in other works, science gives the impetus for narratives of personal human failure and amoral quests for knowledge. The life sciences, and especially medicine, also play a key part in Gothic fictions of this period. Edgar Allan Poe’s several short stories on mesmerism, Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) all have medical science at their core (see *le fanu, joseph sheridan; poe, edgar allan; stoker, bram*). Often these Gothic fictions employ similar tropes of medical knowledge, plotted in
two ways: either the ignorant provincial doctor unable to diagnose the correct infection and thereby begin the process of defense against the Gothic interloper, or the over-reaching medical practitioner whose zealous desire for knowledge leads him into dangerous ethical waters from which the Gothic will be unleashed (see *medicine and the gothic*).

The applied sciences also form a key part of Gothic fiction's engagement with science. Technological development, and its main nineteenth-century object, the machine, were successfully employed in the early years of the century in the work of German writer E. T. A. Hoffmann, whose stories “The Sandman” (1816) and “Automata” (1818) were hugely influential in shaping the use of human automata in later Gothic fiction and film (see Hoffmann, E. T. A. (*Ernst Theodor Amadeus*)). Mechanical objects often became either Gothic objects or objects opposing the influence of the Gothic in later fiction: from Dickens' spectral trains (and train employees) to Stoker's antivampiric typewriter.

By the final decades of the nineteenth century, the Gothic had become so closely associated with science that critics often talk of its interpenetration with another genre, science fiction. Kelly Hurley, for example, has wondered whether fictions such as *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* should actually be “classed as science fiction” (2002: 191) rather than as Gothic. Certainly the fin-de-siècle period revealed the truth of Markman Ellis’ later claim that “writers of fiction in the gothic mode found creative opportunity in science” (2000: 122). H. G. Wells is a key figure in this discussion of generic crossover: his self-styled scientific romances (which include *The Island of Dr. Moreau*) were undoubtedly influenced by both the Gothic romances of the late eighteenth century and the new vibrant fictions, led by Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, that took science as their starting point. Other writers besides Wells also saw the potential for a more scientifically focused form of imaginative writing: for example, Arthur Machen, whose novel *The Great God Pan* (1894) offered a Wells-like vision of experimental medicine, or H. Rider Haggard, whose Egyptian novels, following *She* (1887), offered chapters on classical archaeology as well as a fictional narrative (see Machen, Arthur).

The crossover between Gothic and science fiction remained most explicit in the twentieth century in film rather than fiction. From Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) through *Alien* (1979) to *Blade Runner* (1981), the cross-generic tropes of science fiction and the Gothic clearly run. All these filmic interrogations of the role of science in the modern world draw inspiration from a traditional Gothic ontology where powerful autocracies led by amoral figureheads oversee a dysfunctional society undermined by secrecy, paranoia, and violence. It may also be argued that contemporary Gothic television, such as *Torchwood* (BBC, 2006–), operates in a similar scientific landscape, offering a technoparanoia born out of a more contemporary obsession with surveillance society.

Fiction does still figure in this context. The work of postindustrial “cyberpunk” science fiction writers such as William Gibson also clearly draws on Gothic romance. Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984) implies the role of romance in its title, as well as in its focus on transnational adventure through sublime landscapes in the Radcliffean tradition. More often, though, late-twentieth-century Gothic fiction with an interest in science pays homage to its Victorian predecessors. Sarah Waters’ *Affinity* (1999), for example, considers mid-Victorian spiritualism through the lens of the Gothic, but with a twentieth-century authorial sensibility. Similarly, but with greater complexity, Patrick McGrath’s *Asylum* (1998) is set in the 1960s but draws a portrait of psychiatric medicine that is, at least in part, Victorian (see McGrath, Patrick). Similarly, McGrath’s *Martha Peake* (2000) reimagines the beginnings of the professional study of human physiology in the eighteenth century through the sinister figure of the anatomist Lord Drogo. The tendency in such works is to bring
contemporary insight to bear on the role of science in the past (and therefore to comment also on its social condition in the present).

Science's role in the Gothic is a product of the immediate post-Enlightenment, so much so that modern Gothic, from Radcliffe to the present, would not be modern without science. As a Gothic theme, science is infinitely malleable, able to be dangerous, authoritarian, democratic, heroic, or subversive. As a trope of the Gothic, science is almost always constructed as a synecdoche for knowledge: knowledge as a tool supporting individual agency or as a social and cultural state suggestive of either harmony or disruption. Science's extraordinary flexibility means that it does not require the supernatural in order to be considered Gothic. Its own instantiation of the fantastic, its evocation of wonder within the objectivity that characterizes its writing and practice, is a constant reminder of its already Gothic potential to offer both the rational and romance.

SEE ALSO: Bulwer Lytton, Edward; Collins, Wilkie; Dickens, Charles; Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Machen, Arthur; McGrath, Patrick; Medicine and the Gothic; Poe, Edgar Allan; Radcliffe, Ann; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Stoker, Bram; Technologies; Victorian Gothic; Walpole, Horace; Wells, H. G. (Herbert George).

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Scottish Gothic

CAROL MARGARET DAVISON

The relationship between Scotland and Gothic literature has been complicated since their earliest association in the eighteenth century, when Scotland was generally regarded, in part as a result of the popularity of James Macpherson’s Ossian poems, as a Romantic object rather than a site of Romantic production. Two major strains of Scottish Gothic literature emerged during this era, both of which marshal the supernatural and other Gothic conventions such as the double and the return of the repressed to excavate and explore issues relating to Scottish history, politics, and identity. In the first, an image of a sublime yet picturesque “Gothic Scotland,” a primitive and benighted locale plagued by clan warfare, furnishes the setting of Gothic works written largely by non-Scottish writers that proliferated between the 1790s and the 1820s. In the second, Scottish writers themselves turn to the Gothic, commencing in the 1810s, in order to engage with the established “Gothic Scotland” image and other national issues. Three primary historical phenomena recur in these narratives featuring the recrudescence of suppressed and/or contested histories: the Covenanting movement of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whose members fought to retain Scottish Presbyterianism as Scotland’s sole religion; the Act of Union of 1707, which united the English and Scottish parliaments and reclassified Scotland as “North Britain”; and the First and Second Jacobite Rebellions of 1715 and 1745–6, which sought to restore the Roman Catholic Stuarts to the Scottish throne.

The role played in Scottish Gothic literature by historiography, perhaps the keystone of Scottish Enlightenment thought, cannot be overestimated. The idea of stadial history – a historiography of progress advanced by Adam Smith and fellow theorists William Robertson, Lord Kames, and John Millar that has been called one of the Scottish Enlightenment’s hallmarks – also served to accommodate and support the Union. Brought to bear on British history, this theory figured pre-Union Scotland as being in a dark age of feudalism, helping to justify both the Union and the aggressive English legislative program for Highland “Improvement” (read pacification) subsequent to the Second Jacobite Rebellion. Transferred to the pages of Scottish Gothic literature, feudal Scotland is invested with a certain terror as an emblem of England’s benighted past that, forever straining against England’s border, continues to haunt her progress. The other popular narrative sleight of hand employed in relation to Scotland and history involved, as James Macpherson’s Ossian poems illustrate, a denial of Scotland’s modern developments and a rendering of it as a nostalgic, history-less locale, a truly Romantic and pastoral domain immune to the passing of time and the onslaught of industrialization. In this way were threatening historical phenomena deemed incompatible with British identity and values such as those of the Jacobites tamed for acceptable inclusion in the national imaginary.

Scottish Tour narratives, which also served the Union by evidencing the success of the Highland pacification project, were valuable fodder for the Scottish Gothic literature that followed. Punctuated by supernatural tales, legends of clan violence, and descriptions of sublime Highland scenery, Tour narratives proliferated between the 1760s and the 1780s and testified to the values of improvement in their representation of the Highlands, formerly a region of lawlessness and violence, as safe for tourism. Touring Scotland had become a popular enterprise on the heels of the Second...
Scotland notably acted as one of several settings in Sophia Lee’s historical Gothic novel *The Recess* (1783), but it was probably Ann Radcliffe’s *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), a bloody tale of disinheritance and internecine strife set in the Highlands during the Middle Ages, that opened the floodgates for the “Gothic Scotland” novels that followed (see Radcliffe, Ann). While Scotland became a locale of choice for the Gothic on the heels of Sir Walter Scott’s hugely popular Waverley novels, numerous Scottish-set Gothic narratives predate 1820, among them John Palmer’s *The Haunted Cavern: A Caledonian Tale* (1796), F. H. P.’s *The Castle of Caithness: A Romance of the Thirteenth Century* (1802), Horsley Curties’ *The Scottish Legend; or The Isle of St. Clothair* (1802), C. F. Barrett’s *Douglas Castle; Or, the Cell of Mystery, a Scottish Tale* (1803), Elizabeth Helme’s *St. Clair of the Isles; Or, the Outlaws of Barra* (1803), Mrs. Isaacs’ *Glenmore Abbey; Or, the Lady of the Rock* (1805), Francis Lathom’s *The Romance of the Hebrides; or, Wonders Never Cease!* (1809), and Mrs. Smith’s *The Caledonian Bandit; or, The Heir of Duncaethal. A Romance of the Thirteenth Century* (1811).

Written predominantly by English women and usually published by Minerva Press, Gothic Scotland novels figured a Highlandized “Scotland” as a natural and obvious Gothic locale replete with sublime scenery, innumerable ruined castles, and uncanny, Gaelic-speaking, Roman Catholic, banditti-like Highlanders (see sublime, the; uncanny, the). The Gothic’s transition from the Roman Catholic continent to British “home” territory could not have been smoother. A noteworthy gender dimension marked these works, as Scotland was frequently represented as ruled by morally and/or physically “monstrous” women. This phenomenon was probably influenced culturally by William Shakespeare’s memorably ambitious femme fatale, Lady Macbeth, and John Knox’s venomous diatribe, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), which, taking Mary Queen of Scots as its prime target, attacked the legitimacy of female authority. The choice of Scotland as the site for Victor Frankenstein’s creation of a female companion for his lonely, demanding Creature in Mary Shelley’s 1818 Gothic masterpiece, therefore, is not without significant precedent. Scotland’s position as a breeding ground for such monsters was also perhaps a function of women’s elevated social and legal status in that country in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. An interesting divergence from this monster trend may be noted in the works of Joanna Baillie, who brought the Gothic to bear on Scottish materials in 1810 with *The Family Legend: A Tragedy, in Five Acts*, a play produced with the assistance of Sir Walter Scott that underscores the role of its heroine, Helen, as a victim of the patriarchal clan system.

Commencing in the late 1810s, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, which fostered a sense of cultural nationalism, formulated a clinical and lurid tale of terror. Works by such Scottish contributors as John Galt, Michael Scott, Henry Thomson, and John Wilson influenced writers ranging from Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne to Charles Dickens and the Brontës. Both within the pages of *Blackwood’s* and elsewhere, many of Scotland’s most canonical nineteenth-century authors experimented with and developed their own compelling strain of Scottish Gothic literature. In foregrounding historiography – the principles, theories, and methods informing the writing of history – these works engaged, either directly or indirectly, with the contentious “Gothic Scotland” image. Some staged the incursion of disruptive, “atavistic” forces such as the Covenanters or the Jacobites who refused social marginalization and historical exclusion, and exposed the barbarity underpinning civilization. Several
took the form of complex filial allegories about the Union and, especially in their suggestion of a type of national schizophrenia generated by that event, exhibited a fascination with abnormal psychology.

Although some critics remain uncomfortable with the idea of a “Gothic” Sir Walter Scott, there is no denying his lifelong engagement with, and development of, the form. An acolyte of Matthew Lewis, Scott had imitated or translated five German dramas by 1799. He thereafter produced metrical romances riddled with Gothic motifs alongside two unadulterated Gothic tragedies (*The House of Aspen, A Tragedy* and *The Doom of Devorgoil: A Melodrama*, both 1830), and his critical essays on Walpole, Reeve, and Radcliffe for Ballantyne’s in 1823 reveal a consummate knowledge of the form. His adaptation of the Gothic to historical concerns constitutes one of the most notable legacies of his hugely successful Waverley novels.

Scott’s *Waverley* (1814), the first work in that lengthy series, serves as his first experiment with the historical novel but also provides a prime example of Scott’s ambivalent engagement with the Gothic. *Waverley* follows the adventures of Edward Waverley, a young Englishman who hails from a family with divided national loyalties, as he travels northward and becomes an unwitting actor in the 1745 Jacobite Rising. Scott deploys the Gothic ambivalently: his representation of the Highlands as a site of terror—an oneiric, foreign, Roman Catholic, unassimilable, and lawless space—relies heavily on Gothic atmospherics, while parody is also invoked in the suggestion that this perspective represents Waverley’s adolescent worldview. Scott also employs the Gothic to render and expose a terrifying and unpalatable side of history. He subverts Waverley’s and Colonel Talbot’s jointly held view that the English law is more protective than the Scottish of the individual’s rights and liberties and that the English are the least bloodthirsty nation. The wanton sacking of Waverley’s uncle’s mansion by the King’s troops, coupled with the execution of the Jacobite Fergus MacIvor for high treason at Carlisle, which involved his hanging (but not until death), disemboweling, and quartering, undermine those claims, as does Talbot’s lengthy justification of Fergus’ death sentence. Other Waverley novels involve a self-conscious preoccupation with Scottish historiography and evidence a similarly fascinating and complex range of Gothic strategies and reconfigurations. Premodern cultural energies, in the form of cultural artifacts, often erupt into contemporary scenarios, thus unsettling the concept of stadial history that these novels otherwise seem to embrace.

James Hogg may be credited with expanding the Gothic’s psychological horizons by importing some quintessentially Scottish ideas into the established recipe, such as the uncanny, a multivalent concept popular during the Scottish romance revival. Hogg experimented with Gothic fiction both in its short and long forms, but his *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) is generally heralded as his masterpiece (see *hogg, james*). This unique and chilling psychological portrait of theological fanaticism and terror set in Scotland between 1687 and 1712 during an era of political and theological upheaval is twice-told, each telling supporting two divergent readings—one theological, the other empirical—of the source of Robert Wringhim’s homicidal drives, madness, and eventual suicide. Wringhim’s flattering, duplicitous double, Gil-Martin, may be either the devil incarnate or an aspect of Wringhim’s fragmented self. In this and other Gothic-inflected works, Hogg challenges the idea of a monolithic and empirical account of Scottish history by naturalizing the supernatural and presenting equally viable worldviews and historical interpretations.

In his exploration of the treacherous psychological bifurcation produced in Calvinists who view the world as starkly divided and of the crimes that result from theologically induced repression, Robert Louis Stevenson extends James Hogg’s Calvinist Gothic experiments. Stevenson’s Gothic masterpiece, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886),
is a multifaceted allegory that exhibits the results of such repression in combination with other professional and social prohibitions. Its critique extends to both class and national issues, given the increasingly destructive union, characterized by “voluntary bondage,” of two selves – one a wealthy professional and the other destitute and depraved. With its convoluted revenge plot involving two warring brothers and a lucrative inheritance, Stevenson’s *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) is a similarly complex Gothic national allegory set against the backdrop of the Second Jacobite Rebellion (see Stevenson, Robert Louis).

Into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, even in post-Devolution Scotland (1989–), the Gothic has remained an extremely popular and trenchant form employed by a broad range of Scottish authors, including Iain Banks, J. M. Barrie, Elspeth Cameron, Alasdair Gray, Liz Lochhead, and James Robertson, to engage with controversial psychological and sociopolitical issues. Like their precursors, these narratives often deploy the supernatural and the fantastic, and frequently take the form of national allegories that foreground the issue of historiography. Historical collisions and collusions between England/Britain and Scotland are especially examined, with a special eye to Scotland’s complicity with and victimization within British imperialism and the British military establishment. Noteworthy themes and narrative patterns include perverse and problematic Oedipal/paternal relationships, doppelgangers, theological fanaticism, and the reconfiguration of Mary Shelley’s monster motif from *Frankenstein* (1818), particularly in relation to questions of gender roles and identity.

SEE ALSO: Hogg, James; Radcliffe, Ann; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Sublime, The; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING


Secret Histories

FAYE RINGEL

Every Gothic fiction contains a secret history: lost manuscripts, doubled lives, mysterious menaces, dreaded revelations. More narrowly, secret histories are fictional works that offer imaginatively coherent yet nonstandard explanations for events transpiring in consensus reality. John Clute coined the term “Fantasies of History” for “Tales which uncover a Secret History of the World [...] with the aid of fantasy devices [...] invocations of Elder Gods [...] fictional books [...] secret masters” (Clute 1997: 334). Secret histories are not confined to the Gothic genre: similar techniques and tropes may be found in autobiography, the secret history of a life, or in nonfiction that presents conspiracy theories as fact (see secret societies). Thrillers such as Dan Brown’s The Da Vinci Code (2003) and its imitators reveal secret histories, as do more ambitious works not generally considered Gothic such as Umberto Eco’s Foucault’s Pendulum (1988), John Crowley’s Aegypt sequence (1987–2007), and the novels of Thomas Pynchon and Don De Lillo.

Gothic secret histories may offer supernatural explanations for mundane events: Earth may be ruled by Satan, as implied by Matthew Lewis in The Monk (1795), or by hierarchies of witches and magicians, as in the occult romances of Dion Fortune and Dennis Wheatley. Secret worldwide organizations of vampires have been a staple since Anne Rice’s Interview with the Vampire (1976).

The rediscovered manuscript, a first-person narrative from beyond the grave, contains the secret history. An early example, Jan Potocki’s The Manuscript Found in Saragossa (1815), purports to be the discovery of a Napoleonic War officer. Edgar Allan Poe’s “MS Found in a Bottle” (1833) combines the Kraken, Flying Dutchman, and Maelstrom into a secret history of the sea. Forbidden texts such as Lovecraft’s Necronomicon drive Gothic plots. In Mark Z. Danielewski’s Gothic metafiction House of Leaves (2000), the forbidden book is a film.

The secret histories of cities are inscribed in their geography: labyrinths, hiding a monster within or beneath tangled streets. The monstrous may be represented by the criminal class, known since about 1900 as “The Underworld” (according to the Oxford English Dictionary), by street people, or by the super-rich. “City mystery” stories were popular in the mid-nineteenth century, including G. W. M. Reynolds’ Mysteries of London (1845) and Eugène Sue’s Mysteries of Paris (1845), while in America, vice flourished beneath Philadelphia in George Lippard’s best-selling The Quaker City (1845) (see urban gothic). Their modern equivalents can be found in From Hell (1999), Alan Moore’s graphic novel about Jack the Ripper, and China Miéville’s Un Lun Dun (2007) and Neil Gaiman’s Neverwhere (1997). Prague’s secret history may be better known than its reality, thanks to Gustav Meyrink’s The Golem (1915) and the writings of Franz Kafka. Miéville’s The City and the City (2009)
reimagines Kafka’s Prague as a noir police procedural. Moscow’s secrets are revealed in Bulgakov’s The Master and Margarita (1967) and contemporary émigré Ekaterina Sedia’s post-Communist Secret History of Moscow (2007) (see Russian Gothic).

The United States is especially prone to conspiratorial secret histories, as Hofstadter (1967) argues, encoding fears of Roman Catholics, Freemasons, or the newest immigrants. Henry James’ The American Scene relates his encounter with “the inconceivable alien” at Ellis Island (James 1907: 82). In Lovecraft’s “The Horror at Red Hook” (1927), alien cults corrupt Brooklyn; realist Thomas Wolfe also dreaded Red Hook’s immigrants, concluding that “Only the Dead Know Brooklyn” (1935).

Bucolic landscapes conceal secret histories of paganism, persecutions, and oppression. In Great Britain, eighteenth-century Gothicists sought medieval survivals in customs and architecture; Margaret Murray’s (1921) discovery of witch cults surviving in the countryside has inspired Gothic fiction and films such as The Wicker Man (1973). In New England, the secret history of Puritan hypocrisy, persecution of Indians, Quakers, and witches is revealed in Nathaniel Hawthorne, Stephen King, and Lovecraft (see New England Gothic). The secret history of the American South is the continuing legacy of slavery, inbreeding, and miscegenation (see Southern Gothic). Old World cults may survive in the New, as in Thomas Tryon’s Harvest Home (1973), Donna Tartt’s The Secret History (1992), and Elizabeth Hand’s Waking the Moon (1995). In Neil Gaiman’s American Gods (2001), immigrants have imported their ancestral mythologies, and old gods live in hiding (see American Gothic).

In the works of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler and the films based upon them, the noir detective, a disillusioned dark knight, uncovers the secret histories of San Francisco and Los Angeles. Batman, the most Gothic superhero, is their comic book equivalent. Contemporary novelists such as Michael Chabon and Jonathan Lethem combine a Gothic noir sensibility with conspiracies and urban fantasy.

Less critical attention has been given to the Gothic nature of the noir detective in print than in film. Recent critics have allegorized the Count’s vampiric invasion of Britain in Dracula (1897) as a secret history of Victorian anxieties over degeneration and reverse colonization (see Degeneration; Stoker, Bram). The variety of secret histories reflects critical disagreement over the politics of the Gothic mode: is it subversive, undermining received history and consensus reality – or revanchist, looking backward nostalgically and fearing challenges to Western hegemony in the present?

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Degeneration; New England Gothic; Russian Gothic; Secret Societies; Southern Gothic; Stoker, Bram; Urban Gothic.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Secret Societies

MARIE MULVEY-ROBERTS

But in Baruel [sic] I had heard only of Secret Societies that were consciously formed for mischievous ends; or if not always for a distinct purpose of evil, yet always in a spirit of malignant contradiction and hatred. Soon I read of other societies even more secret, that watched over truth dangerous to publish or even to whisper, like the sleepless dragons that oriental fable associated with the subterranean guardianship of regal treasures. The secrecy, [sic] and the reasons for the secrecy [sic] were alike sublime. The very image, unveiling itself by unsteady glimpses, of men linked by brotherly love and perfect confidence, meeting in secret chambers, at the noontide of night, to shelter, by muffling, with their own persons interposed, and at their own risk, some solitary lamp of truth [...]. (De Quincey 1858: 244)

Secret societies socialize secrecy and create parallel worlds, which invariably reproduce the forms and hierarchies of outside society (Simmel 1906: 462, 481–2). They are the shadowy doppelgangers of real life which many have viewed as a threat to the status quo. Whether members see themselves as guardians of a hidden body of secret knowledge, as benevolent fraternities, or as society’s antagonists through political, nationalist, or criminal agendas, secret societies are inevitably about exclusivity and power. The mythologies that surround them have been readily exploited by writers from the conspiracy theorist to the novelist.

Secret societies and clandestine tribunals are a common motif within Gothic fiction. As Walter Scott pointed out in his novel Waverley, or ‘Tis Sixty Years Since (1814), no novelist was “so obtuse as not to image forth a profligate abbot, an oppressive duke, a secret and mysterious association of Rosycruclians [sic] and Illuminati, with all their properties of black cloaks, caverns, daggers, electrical machines, trap-doors, and dark-lanterns” (1837: 82). The very presence of a secret society as an instrument of terror can Gothicize a literary text, while novelists have stoked conspiracy theories, as in, for example, the Illuminati’s indomitable march toward world domination.

Even though secret societies have been pandemic throughout history, they proliferated during the eighteenth century, a period that cultivated club culture. Other factors involved the reaction against Enlightenment rationalism, the rise of the Gothic novel, and the French Revolution. In 1797, Augustin Barruel published his Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism in which he blamed the Illuminati and the Freemasons for being instigators of the French Revolution. John Robison, who had been working independently along these lines, published later that year Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati and Reading Societies (1797). These texts provide a prototype for the secret society novel whose authors, as Mark Madoff argues, may also have drawn on the aesthetics of Edmund Burke, who wrote that “the more powerful, complicated, obscure, secretive, fictional and extensive an artificial structure – whether an imaginary structure or fictional conspiracy – the more admirably sublime it was” (quoted in Madoff 1980: 416).

Despite Jean-Joseph Mounier’s dismissal of the claims of Barruel and Robison in his book On the Influence Attributed to Philosophers, Free-Masons, and to the Illuminati on the Revolution of France (1801), conspiracy theorists continued to target the Illuminati and the Freemasons. The Illuminati originated as a group of freethinkers, known as the Bavarian
Illuminati, who embraced rationality and equality. Their founder was the law professor Adam Weishaupt of the University of Ingolstadt, who had set out to check the influence of his former educators the Jesuits. Markman Ellis describes the Illuminati as “political magicians” and “necromancers of revolution,” whose radical politics had been fertilized by “the alchemical culture of secrecy” (Ellis 2000: 153). Yet as a rationalist society, intent on social reform, which had attracted writers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, they were more a product of Enlightenment ideology than of an occult cabal.

In 1784 the despotic ruler of Bavaria, Karl Theodor, outlawed all secret societies, including the Illuminati. Nevertheless, they persisted as a textual presence within the anti-Illuminati novel, as in Friedrich Schiller’s serial narrative, *Spirit Seer: From the Papers of Count O*, which appeared in German in the journal *Thalia* three years after the ban (see Schiller, Friedrich von). Its success led to it being published as a book in 1789 and then translated into English by Daniel Boileau in 1795 under the title, *The Ghost-Seer; or, Apparitionist*. The narrative is about a Sicilian magician, whose skills in necromancy (see necromancy) are revealed to have a rational explanation. The fears aroused by the ghostly manifestations of this Cagliostro kind of charlatan are displaced by the conspiratorial machinations of a clandestine and “seemingly omnipresent secret society” (Andriopoulos 2008: 71).

The danger increases when the spirit seers [...] unite themselves into a society, and the combined association seeks to spread itself. Not only does it then become infinitely more easy for them to deceive (for several persons, living at different places and seemingly unknown or even hostile to each other, can produce the most incredible things by association to one end); but, in addition, *their purpose becomes more comprehensive, their power grows*, and as a consequence the unfortunate victim is drawn more deeply into his deception and much less likely to ever escape from it. (Schiller, quoted by Andriopoulos 2008: 74)

The Ghost-Seer gave rise to a new subgenre of Gothic literature, the secret societies novel (*Geheimbundroman*). Examples include C. M. Wieland’s *Peregrinus Proteus* (1791–6), Jean Paul’s *Invisible Lodge* (1793), Ludwig Tieck’s *William Lovell* (1795), and Cajetan Tschink’s *Victim of Magical Delusion; or, The Mystery of the Revolution of P—L. A Magico-Political Tale. Founded on Historical Facts* (1795). Tschink’s novel, which takes place during the Portuguese Revolution, was translated into English by Peter Will, who was also the translator of *Horrid Mysteries*, published the following year. The original was Carl Friedrich August Grosse’s *Genius: Aus den Papieren des Marquis C* von *G* (1791–5), a highly successful German novel, which was translated into two English versions, the other being *The Genius or The Mysterious Adventures of Don Carlos de Grandez* (1796). *Horrid Mysteries*, which was the abridged version, gained prominence as one of the “Northanger Novels” (Sadleir 1927: 18) mentioned in the list of fashionable Gothic reading recommended by Isabella Thorpe to Catherine Morland in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1818). The narrative tells of how Marquis Carlos de G— gets embroiled in a secret society promoting murder and mayhem, which may be seen as a surrogate Gothic castle in which “the victims are pursued through a sinister political underworld and enmeshed in a labyrinth of conspiracy” (Thomson and Frank 2002: 42). He resists by fleeing the country and setting up a rival society, but to no avail. The novel inspired portrayals of the Illuminati and similar brotherhoods in the highly popular and cheaply produced Gothic bluebook industry (see bluebooks). These include the anonymously published *The Midnight Groan; or The Spectre of the Chapel* (1808) and *The Mysterious Spaniard, or The Ruins of St. Luke’s Abbey* (1807).

*Horrid Mysteries* had enthralled P. B. Shelley, who had read Barruel’s *Memoirs* about the Bavarian Illuminati (see Shelley, Percy Bysshe). His fascination with the notion of the secret society is ridiculed in Thomas Love Peacock’s parodic *Nightmare Abbey*, where he is
lampooned as Scythrop, who “slept with Horrid Mysteries under his pillow, and dreamed of venerable eleutherarchs and ghastly confederates holding midnight conventions in subterranean caves” (Peacock 1818: 22). Another comic moment at Shelley’s expense is when Scythrop, while pretending to be a member of the Illuminati, flings off his calico dressing gown and accidentally exposes himself to a lady.

Within popular representation, the Illuminati and the Inquisition (see inquisition, the) were virtually interchangeable since both were seen as nefarious underground and subversive organizations, which sanctioned punishment and even execution through their secret tribunals (Miles 2002: 52). One of the earliest Gothic treatments of both occurs in Schiller’s The Ghost-Seer. The Inquisition also found its way into later classic Gothic novels as in Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796), Ann Radcliffe’s The Italian or the Confessional of the Black Penitents (1797), and Charles Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) (see lewis, matthew; maturin, charles robert; radcliffe, ann). The secret tribunal made its English debut in a translation of Benedikt Naubert’s novel Hermann von Unna (1788), set in the fifteenth century, which was dramatized as The Secret Tribunal by James Boaden and performed at London’s Convent Garden in 1795. In Walter Scott’s Anne of Geierstein: or the Maiden of the Mist (1829), set at the end of the Wars of the Roses, the hooded judges of a secret court condemn to death Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy. It has been claimed that the novel helped inspire the founding of the Ku Klux Klan in 1865 in Tennessee. Secret societies and cabals posed a particular threat to governments with their subversive political, social and legal alternatives, and frequently unknown superiors.

The Tory statesman Benjamin Disraeli wrote about secret societies in his novel Lothair (1870) and even raised the question of their European influence in Parliament:

There is in Italy a power which we seldom mention in this House [...] I mean the secret societies. [...] It is useless to deny, because it is impossible to conceal, that a great part of Europe – the whole of Italy and France and a great portion of Germany, to say nothing of other countries – is covered with a network of these secret societies, just as the superficies of the earth is now being covered with railroads. And what are their objects? They do not attempt to conceal them. They do not want constitutional government; they do not want ameliorated institutions [...] they want to change the tenure of land, to drive out the present owners of the soil and to put an end to ecclesiastical establishments. Some of them may go further [...] (Disraeli in the House of Commons, July 14, 1856, quoted by Webster 1924: epigraph)

Disraeli’s friend and fellow-politician was the novelist Edward Bulwer Lytton, who had also been intrigued by secret societies. Allegedly, he was in possession of a number of Rosicrucian titles, though his membership has never been proved (see rosicrucianism). He had even been voted Honorary Grand Patron of the English Rosicrucian Society, the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, without his knowledge or consent. The Rosicrucians or Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross first came into public view with the publication of two anonymously written manifestos, the Fama Fraternitatis (1614) and the Confessio Fraternitatis (1615), which set out the rules of the society and provided a life history of their legendary founder, Christian Rosencreutz. Rosicrucianism drew on cabalistic and alchemical secret teaching. Members were reputed to have the powers of immortality and invisibility, attributes that embody the perpetual existence and elusiveness of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross and indeed of the phenomenon of secret societies in general. Rosicrucians are the subject of two of Bulwer Lytton’s novels, Zanoni of 1842 and A Strange Story published in 1862, where the Rosicrucian characters have discovered the secret of eternal life through the alchemist’s philosopher’s stone and elixir vitae.

Between these two dates, Thomas De Quincey (see de quincey, thomas) published in 1847 two essays on secret societies following on from his series of essays under the title of
“Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin of the Rosicrucians” (1824) for the *London Magazine*. These were a rehash of an 1804 work by the German philosopher J. G. Buhle. *Zanoni* is about two Rosicrucians, the eponymous hero and Mejnour, both of whom have lived for centuries. The latter mentors a young Englishman called Glyndon, who longs to drink the *elixir vitae*, but ultimately fails in the attempt. *A Strange Story* tells of how the occultist Malgrave, whose life has been prolonged by the magical elixir, seeks out Dr. Allen Fenwick for his scientific knowledge, which he hopes will help him recreate the formula. Fenwick reluctantly co-operates but demonic forces destroy Malgrave’s chances by overturning the cauldron in which the potion is bubbling.

The Rosicrucian novel was first identified by Edith Birkhead in 1921. The genre is marked by the ideas of the society and characterized by mortal immortals, whose perpetuity appears throughout Gothic fiction. Exponents include Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*, P. B. Shelley’s *St. Irvyne: or The Rosicrucian* (1810), Mary Shelley’s “The Mortal Immortal” (1833) (see *shelley, mary wollstonecraft*), and William Godwin’s *St. Leon* (1799) (see *godwin, william*). Once again, these English texts are predated by Schiller’s *The Ghost-See*, which has a Rosicrucian character “no sword can wound, no poison can hurt, no fire can burn him, no vessel in which he embarks ever goes under. Time itself seems to lose its power over him” (quoted in Andriopoulos 2008: 72). Stefan Andriopoulos describes this “elusive and preternaturally powerful figure as a literary personification of a corporate association or secret society that is immune to physical attacks and ailments” (2008: 73).

A far less elusive and more visible secret society than the Rosicrucians is Freemasonry. From the eighteenth century onwards, Freemasons in Masonic regalia have paraded in public processions. Though their rituals and symbols have been concealed from public view, enough has been known about the society for authors who were not members to encrypt Freemasons’ secrets into their writing. For example, William Burgan (1995) decodes allusions to Freemasonry in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, first serialized in 1860–1, and has argued that possible references to Thuggee, the Kali-worshipping strangling sect, in Dickens’ unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* are “masonic ironies” (1995: 258) (see *dickens, charles*). The best known example of Gothic literary Freemasonry is “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846), a short story written by another non-Freemason, Edgar Allan Poe (see *poe, edgar allan*). Buried within the tale is a macabre Masonic irony as when Fortunato, an unlucky Freemason, is walled up alive by Montresor, who uses a trowel, which is the symbolic tool of the master of the lodge for spreading brotherly love. The Freemasons traced themselves back to the great cathedral builders of the Middle Ages, who constructed those sublime Gothic edifices (see *sublime, the*). But these operative workers had little connection with the speculative or symbolic society, which was founded in 1717. This Augustan gentleman’s club metamorphosed into the political networks which proliferated during the French Revolution. During this time, conspiracy theories were spawned, resurfacing most markedly in the 1880s when Freemasons were blamed, among others, for the Jack the Ripper murders in the East End of London, as reflected in Alan Moore’s graphic novel *From Hell* (1999) (see *comics and graphic novels*).

The attraction of secret societies flourished around the turn of the twentieth century with a cluster of writers joining the esoteric Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Unusually among secret societies, women gained admission on an equal basis with men. The most celebrated member was the poet W. B. Yeats, while the most notorious was the black magician and writer Aleister Crowley (see *crowley, aleister*). Other members included Algernon Blackwood and Arthur Machen (see *blackwood, algernon; machen, arthur*), whose novels and short stories delve into the magical, mysterious, and ghostly. How much they might have been inspired by the arcana of this secret society is a matter for scholarly debate.
During the 1920s author, occultist, and fascist Nesta Helen Webster became a reincarnation of Barruel by reviving fears about the Illuminati and the Freemasons in works such as *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (1924), which resembled Gothic fictions with their discourses of paranoia and evident intention to arouse anxiety in the reader. Conspiracy theories again proliferated following the publication of Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson’s trilogy on the Illuminati in 1975. By popularizing the genre of conspiracy fiction, these novels paved the way for Umberto Eco’s *Foucault’s Pendulum* (1988), where characters invent a conspiracy theory and become embroiled with the mysteries of the Knights Templar and the Cabala. The novel is a compendium of secret societies and esoteric orders including the Elders of Zion, the Assassins of Alamut, who were the subject of an unfinished romance of 1814 by P. B. Shelley, and the Cathars, whose history is fictionalized in Charles Maturin’s *The Albigenses; A Romance* (1824) (see secret histories).

Not content with merely describing secret societies, some writers have become members while others invented their own, as in the Order of the Phoenix, set up to combat Lord Voldemort and the Death Eaters in J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter novels. In his graphic novel, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (illustrated by Kevin O’Neill, 1999–2006), Alan Moore goes one step further by forming “a secret society” (Smith 2007: 254) out of characters from various Gothic novels, whose heroic task is the protection of the British Empire. Members have been gathered together by Mina Harker from Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), who has recruited R. L. Stevenson’s Mr Edward Hyde along with his alter ego Dr. Jekyll; Hawley Griffin, the hero of H. G. Wells’ *Invisible Man* (1897); Allan Quatermain, the protagonist of H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885); and Captain Nemo, plucked from the novels of Jules Verne. This secret society is so exclusive that it not only exists within the pages of Moore’s graphic text, but also draws its membership from Victorian Gothic fiction by co-opting characters out of the pages of the novels without the consent of their authors (see Victorian Gothic).

**SEE ALSO:** Blackwood, Algernon; Bluebooks; Comics and Graphic Novels; Crowley, Aleister; De Quincey, Thomas; Dickens, Charles; Godwin, William; Inquisition, The; Lewis, Matthew; Machen, Arthur; Maturin, Charles Robert; Necromancy; Poe, Edgar Allan; Radcliffe, Ann; Rosicrucianism; Schiller, Friedrich von; Secret Histories; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Shelley, Percy Bysshe; Sublime, The; Victorian Gothic.

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“Sensation fiction” comprises a range of Victorian novels depicting the disturbance of a contemporary and supposedly normative domestic sphere by individuals whose conduct or presence there is detrimental to its integrity and whose own identity is often ambiguous. The genre achieved particular notoriety in the 1860s and its features are exemplified, to an extent, by three novels published at the beginning of that decade. Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1859–60) relates the struggle to preserve its heroine, Laura, from the machinations of her husband, Sir Percival Gylde, and his associate: the corpulent, amiable, but sinisterly effective Count Fosco (see Collins, Wilkie). Their plot to incarcerate Laura in an asylum while her sickly double, the eponymous woman, dies under her name is countered by the hero’s painstaking reconstruction of a narrative chain that reaffirms her identity. In Ellen Wood’s *East Lynne* (1861), Isabel Carlyle undertakes an adulterous affair with an aristocratic suitor. Subsequently abandoned and disfigured, she covertly re-enters the family of her husband (now remarried) in the guise of a governess. In Mary Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), the title character is revealed to be a bigamist from a lower-class background who, when threatened with the reappearance of her first husband, preserves her new status through an impulsive attempted murder (see Braddon, Mary Elizabeth).

The Gothic provenance of such narratives was recognized by the Victorians themselves. In an early review, the young Henry James provided an enduring description of this link, writing that “the terrors of ‘Udolpho’” were being surpassed by “the mysteries which are at our own doors” (James 1865: 593–4). A range of formal and thematic connections with earlier Gothic texts are indeed evident in the sensation novel’s concern with the disruptive emergence of latent materials or agencies – particularly concealed personal histories – and its focus on the vulnerability of women, either to the schemes of a Fosco or the neglect of a legal system such as that which disowns the heroines of Collins’ *No Name* (1862). Antagonists such as the flamboyant Fosco and Lady Audley, whose portrait is likened to that of a “beautiful fiend” (Collins 2003: 71), also inhabit a Gothic tradition of villains who are variously excessive, suggestively monstrous, and foreign to the world of the heroes. Their conduct, meanwhile, invests Victorian modernity with a clandestine threat, existing in spite of a society that, in Fosco’s own disconcertingly logical explanation “is as often the accomplice, as it is the enemy of crime” (Collins 2003: 235).

However, sensation fiction also significantly reworks its Gothic inheritance. Characterized, in the terms of Winifred Hughes’ pioneering study, by “the violent yoking of romance and realism” (Hughes 1980: 18), sensation fiction’s juxtaposition of the Gothic and the quotidian makes the experience of such disjunctions a thematic concern, shifting the Gothic’s focus onto modernity’s “haunting sense that legibility cannot be imposed on a populace and a landscape subject to the hectic rhythms of decay and replacement, ruin and reconstruction” (Radford 2009: 122). Accordingly, the stability of conventional categories, both social
and literary, is called into question through the persistent implication that apparent coherence masks a protean potential.

Versions of the classic Gothic site are present, but their signifiers are liable to be reoriented, as at Braddon’s Audley Court, which playfully replaces the presence of a coherent Gothic past with an architectural incoherence within which secret chambers exist only as curiosities to be discovered by a child at play. Instead it is Lady Audley’s own chamber that provides one of the house’s otherwise quaint secret passages with a Gothic referent. However, the chamber’s most disturbing content is its absent mistress’ unfinished portrait, a work in the modern Pre-Raphaelite style whose overwhelming detail endows its subject with a suggestive monstrosity and replaces the coherent presence of a villainess with an image of vivid realism disconcertingly overwhelmed by its own representational excess. In this way, the painting provides a fitting correlative for the subversive performative identity of Lady Audley at the same time as its likeness stuns her former husband into a pivotal realization. Other novels effect a similar transition from the ancestral to the contemporary as the repository of significant content. The Woman in White’s Blackwater Park, includes a Radcliffian “half ruined wing” (Collins 2003: 203) in which one of the heroines is temporarily held. However, the narrative’s most crucial secrets are not to be found within the ancient house, but within the new town of Welmingham, whose “unfinished crescents and . . . dead house-carcasses” replace the Gothic ruin with the alienating experience of modernity’s ongoing incompleteness (Collins 2003: 483).

Sensation fiction also reworks established subgenres such as the “female Gothic” (see female gothic). For example, in “burying” her husband at the bottom of a well, Lady Audley defends herself from outraged masculine authority by reversing the female Gothic’s own burial, figurative or literal, of heroines and their maternal ancestry. Such revisions may remain ambivalent, however. Tamar Heller sees Collins’ adoption of the female Gothic as a platform for social critique but also argues that Collins suppresses its full potential in order to maintain his own identity as a masculine professional, so that his novels are “paradoxically Gothic plots” in which the Gothic itself is contained “as the site of subversion and literary marginality” (Heller 1992: 8). Alison Milbank also finds Collins’ use of the female Gothic to be hesitant, as the heroine’s opposition to malignant aristocracy is replaced with the “dogged determination and use of the law by a rising middle class” whose world is sustained by the “verifiable texts” – the work of masculine editors – wherein female voices are frequently marginalized (Milbank 1992: 79). Milbank also argues that Collins adapts the male Gothic to replace masculine with feminine invaders but retains the guilt and/or punishment suffered by such transgressors (Milbank 1992: 53). In light of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that Braddon’s antiheroine is ultimately punished with her own burial in “the living grave” of a Belgian Maison de Santé, explicitly likened to those Catholic convents that formed an earlier female Gothic staple (Braddon 1998: 391). Thus, the sensation novel gestures toward established Gothic plots in a way that simultaneously revises and reiterates them.

The Gothic’s character archetypes are also significantly reworked within sensation fiction. Aristocratic villainy may be present, but its credentials are typically spurious and its coherence as a locus for villainy complicated accordingly. Lady Audley provides an obvious example of this, but the status of Collins’ Glyde and Fosco is also ambiguous: the former is exposed as illegitimate, while the latter’s plethora of aristocratic titles defeats clarity through their very excess – an effect underlined by the Count’s death in peasant disguise. Meanwhile, the genre’s characteristic troubling of the line between legitimate and illegitimate occupants of the domestic world is enhanced by the fact that several novels generate a subversive sympathy for the invader. Magdalen Vanstone is the ostensible heroine of No Name as she attempts
to retake a status and identity lost through the shortcomings of her parents’ will. However, just as this implies the fragility of a subjectivity contingent upon external certification, it also sees Magdalen resorting to disguise and imposition to achieve a mercenary marriage with the legal heir. As such, her conduct is not dissimilar to that of sensational villainesses such as Lady Audley. Lady Audley herself, meanwhile, initially err by presuming to be a heroine: instead of remaining in impoverished domestic stasis, awaiting her husband’s return from masculine adventure, she embarks upon her own narrative, which is, of course, the one that both the reader and the novel’s protagonist are most interested in.

The conduct of the novels’ heroes may be similarly ambiguous. In constructing the narrative that restores Laura Fairlie’s name and estate, Walter Hartright ultimately achieves many of the villains’ own ends: becoming master of Limmeridge and father to its heir. Furthermore, his methodology echoes that of his opponents: confronting their spurious version of events with his own, a narrative that may thus be “written so as to justify a piece of exploitation” (Maunder 2005: 9). Braddon’s Robert Audley achieves success through a similar process of assembling and deploying material capable of debunking the villainess’ spurious history, yet his detection is dependent upon circumstantial evidence leading, not to Lady Audley’s open prosecution, but to her private incarceration. Lady Audley’s madness is questionable, however: the medical professional employed to examine her asserts the pragmatic rationality of her actions and is finally prevailed upon to commit her, not on the basis of visible insanity, but through the shocked realization that “she is dangerous!” (Braddon 1998: 379). Her incarceration may be less suggestive of the domestic world’s objective cleansing than of its control by whichever party is better able to assert their determination of its occupants and events. Madness is itself a significant feature of the sensation novel’s ambiguous characterization. For villains such as Lady Audley and Charlotte Norris in Wood’s St. Martin’s Eve (1866), social imposition and clandestine behavior are married to an ambiguous mental identity that complicates key questions of criminality and gender characteristics, reflecting mid-Victorian uncertainties over the “highly speculative nature of specifying and diagnosing madness” (see Radford 2009: 93–104). Moreover, the madness of a figure like Lady Audley is not only ambiguous but also covertly implies that other means of organizing the domestic world may be sufficiently flimsy to require this means of diverting the villainess’ threat by denying her normative status (see Matus 1995: 192–3).

In the sensation novel, then, the quest to restore and safeguard a domestic world frequently proceeds through the arbitration of its constituent narratives, particularly the personal histories of its occupants. However, the Gothic’s characteristic exploration of the ambiguous potential of framing devices and the challenging emergence of fragmentary narratives becomes, in the sensation novel, a concern with ongoing processes of narrative fabrication, recovery, and assemblage, played out between heroes and villains whose objectivity may be equally uncertain. Robert Audley’s incarceration of his stepmother is ambiguously justified by his determination of her character, while the narrative chains of The Woman in White and The Moonstone (1868) present one arrangement of information despite comprising diverse voices, whose multivalence of evidence and perspectives invites a reading against the editorial grain (see Taylor 1988: 202). Additionally, the worlds and their narrative correlatives that emerge through a sensational editor-hero’s efforts are often incapable of fully coming to terms with their most Gothic components and agencies. The exact nature of Lady Audley’s secret (which may refer either to her criminality or hereditary madness) is never wholly determined. Similarly, Anne Catherick, the woman in white herself, remains “a signifier of absence” (Milbank 1992: 96) who initiates Hartwright’s text and yet “goes down into the impenetrable gloom” (Collins 2003: 555) therein.
The sensation novel’s thematic focus on the potential for permeability and slippage in the categories organizing the modern world was mirrored in the challenges posed by its own literary emergence. Its association with the 1860s in fact owes as much to contemporary responses identifying a seemingly subversive new genre as it does to the publication of the novels themselves. As Richard Nemesvari observes, the appearance of sensation fiction occurred at a point of “epistemological crisis” for the Victorian novel and the critical response worked to determine the sensational as “an improper genre against which to define an acceptable realist standard” (Nemesvari 2006: 15, 18). However, not only was the genericity of sensation fiction diffuse and its genesis subject to contemporary dispute (see Radford 2009: 1, 5) but the material presence of its texts could also prove ambiguous, activating class anxieties associated with fictional consumption in the domestic sphere. With apparent connections to subliterary “penny blood” fiction, sensation novels “encourag[ed] the middle-classes to participate in the proletarian mode of weekly serialisation” (Law 2000: 24) while their contents threatened, as W. Fraser Rae wrote of Braddon, to make “the literature of the kitchen the favoured reading of the drawing room” (Rae 1865: 104–5) (see penny dreadfuls). Serialization for a middle-class audience also meant that sensational fiction could be found within periodicals that thereby came to combine “the ‘respectable’ and the ‘scandalous’” (Wynne 2001: 1). The coherence and regularity of the domestic world thus appeared undermined both within and without the sensation novel, whose textuality could be as troubling as its narratives’ implications (see victorian gothic).

This crossing of a boundary between the real and the fictional in fact represents a key feature of the genre. The term “sensation” itself referred both to the novels’ sensational revelations and their concomitant ability to literally provoke sensations of shock and excitement in the reader: “preaching to the nerves” in a psychologically damaging manner that cultivated and supplied “the cravings of a diseased appetite” (Mansel 1863: 495–6). Meanwhile, defenses made claims for the novels’ realism: the “sensational” author, Charles Reade, dubbed the genre a “Matter of Fact Romance” (Radford 2009: 2) while one article in Dickens’ All The Year Round claimed that “life itself is similarly sensational” (Anon. 1864: 14–17). What both perspectives have in common is a sense that the spheres of contemporary life and Gothically inflected fiction are not discrete: either the latter physically impacts upon the occupants of the former or the two are interwoven from the outset. This effect is heightened by the sensation novel’s insistent modernity, incorporating frequent references to numerous contemporary objects and debates. Serialization also played a part in this enmeshing of sensation fiction with the modern world, providing an active arena for intertextual interaction between journalism and fictional parts that allowed the latter to offer “an important response to the issues of their day” (see Wynne 2001: 1–3). An associated feature was the genre’s frequent appropriation of sensational crimes and scandals reported in contemporary newspapers, a famous example being Collins’ use of details from the 1865 “Road Murder” in The Moonstone. These qualities added to the ambiguous overlap between the real and the fictional in another sense: arousing a fear that sensation fiction might disconnect readers from reality and miring those readers within an imaginative world formed by their reading until “all higher studies are neglected, and the duties of life left unfulfilled” as readers freely and voluntarily occupy their minds with material appropriate only to the “dire necessity” of a courtroom (Paget 1868: 124).

The sensation novel’s large audience of female readers was thought to be particularly susceptible to this confusion, either being unable to properly distinguish between accurate and sensational representations or, more worryingly, reveling in the genre’s “grotesque falsification of lived experience” (see Radford 2009: 67, 87). The ambiguous position of the
sensational heroine or villainess was thus replicated in the figure of the female reader who might be either a vulnerable victim of dangerous fiction or engaged herself in undermining the integrity of the contemporary world. Women’s uncertain position, both as readers and subjects of sensation fiction, reflects contemporary debates in which “woman, womanhood and womanliness all became contested terms” while “femininity itself was put under the spotlight as an inherently problematic state” (Pykett 1994: 44–5). This context illuminates the sensation novel’s frequent identification of female characters as focal points for ambiguity within the domestic sphere. Characters such as Isabel Vane and Lady Audley not only move between classes but also cross conventional domestic and familial roles: Vane becomes a servant to her own children while Lady Audley is barely older than her stepdaughter. The greatest anxiety, however, arose from sensation fiction’s implication of an unstable, performative aspect in both biological and socialized femininity. A figure such as Lady Audley not only suggests that a woman might be a deadly antagonist in spite of the veneer of domestic charm; her characterization also converts the Victorian feminine ideal itself into an object of disturbance as it becomes apparent that “indoctrination in the female role has taught her secrecy and deceitfulness, almost as secondary sex characteristics” (Showalter 1977: 165). In a characteristically ambiguous fashion, the sensational villainess suggests either that modern domesticity may merely veil a persistent Gothic threat or, worse, that it might itself produce it.

Combining a fictional exploration of the modern world’s ambiguities with a challenging material presence within that world itself, sensation fiction may ultimately be regarded as a doubly Gothic manifestation within Victorian culture. Its relocation of the Gothic at modernity’s “own doors” also explored the vulnerabilities and contingencies of the surrounding cultural architecture, calling “social, textual and even organic categories into question” (Radford 2009: 2) through narratives whose contemporaneity and disconcerting implications were enhanced by an intractable incorporation with the world beyond their pages.

SEE ALSO: Braddon, Mary Elizabeth; Collins, Wilkie; Crime; Female Gothic; Law and the Gothic; Penny Dreadfuls; Victorian Gothic.

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Anon. (1864) The sensational Williams. All the Year Round (February 13), 14–17.
Sensibility

ELIZABETH WRIGHT

Sensibility was a fashionable concept in philosophy and literature that was largely confined to the second half of the eighteenth century. It arose as a reaction to the emotional austerity of Augustan logic and reason and was a precursor to the Romantics, though Northrop Frye argues for seeing the age as having its own "distinct kind of aesthetic" (1956: 144). Works that fall into the "age of sensibility" are also called "sentimental" and many critics use the terms interchangeably.

A concrete definition of the word was never fully achieved by contemporaries and has caused much modern critical debate. Between 1740 and 1790 novelists, playwrights, poets, philosophers, and the popular press were assiduously attempting a coherent explanation. The term was generally associated with fineness of feeling, intuition, empathy, sympathy, and benevolence. It was often described as a moral feeling, or as a sixth sense that: "[taught] men to feel for others as for themselves" ("On Delicacy of Sentiment," 1778). Thus, the age of sensibility also saw a rise in philanthropy and a growing emphasis on a more loving connection between the sexes. It was, in addition, increasingly associated with powerful feelings and strong reactions not only to the sorrows and joys of others but also to objects, events, and the natural world. Responses to "the Sublime" at this time, partly thanks to Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* of 1759, were considered indicative of the ability of humanity to relate emotionally to perception. Those with the power to feel terror, wonderment, and awe when contemplating nature or monolithic architecture were considered to be more finely tuned human beings, and the ability of nature or great art to effect positive change in the human body and soul was lauded (see sublime, the).

The origin of sensibility and sentiment, particularly in its links with morality and ethics, is related by many critics to the moral philosophy of such figures as Anthony Ashley Cooper, David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Adam Smith; and by others to the theological debates of seventeenth-century Latitudinarians such as Isaac Barrow, Samuel Clarke, and John Tillotson. It is also attributable, as George J. Barker-Benfield (1992) and Paul Langford (1989) note, to the rising middle classes, who wanted a language that would stand against the decadence of the aristocracy and be indicative of their desire for good morals and manners.

Novels, plays, and poems from the "age of sensibility" take as their subject deep emotional reactions to suffering, virtue, pathos, and the sublime, and often contain moral and ethical reflections. It was believed that the humanity of mankind was affirmed through provocation.
of sympathy, pity, and compassion for the suffering of others in such narratives, and that this would lead to good manners and charitable acts. Thus, the aesthetic output of this age “showed people how to behave, how to express themselves in friendship and how to respond decently to life’s experiences” (Todd 1986: 4). The Earl of Shaftesbury argued for a fusion between the human ability to feel sympathy and human aesthetic productions, and in his arguments suggested that beauty, feeling, and virtue are interlinked. Certainly the use of fiction and drama for moral instruction was picked up by Samuel Johnson in his essay for *The Rambler* (March 31, 1750) and Samuel Richardson in his preface to *Pamela* (1741).

The characters of such fiction and drama were often types: the idealized suffering woman rewarded by marriage; the melancholic but brave youth; the antihero; the loyal servant. These characters, subject to fainting, weeping, sighing, burning cheeks, and racing pulses, acted within largely unrealistic plotlines usually carrying a clear moral message designed to make virtue attractive and vice reprehensible. A narrative, it was supposed, could evoke sentiments and moral feeling in its readers more effectively than argument or philosophical reflection and thus effect the reform of society. Such works were largely aimed at (and often written by) women, the middle orders, and the impressionable young. As a consequence, sentimental novels, poetry, and comedy were simultaneously criticized for self-indulgent extravagance of action and feeling, hyperbolic language, and falseness of character. Contemporary critics of sentiment found fault with its feminization of feeling and saw it as a fashionable affectation. It was these negative aspects of sensibility and the sentimental novel that Jane Austen drew attention to in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), which highlighted the problems of leading a life of sentiment at the expense of sense; while in *Northanger Abbey* (1818) she mocked the sentimental Gothic romances of Ann Radcliffe. Other famous satires on the form include Henry Fielding’s *Shamela* (1741) and *Joseph Andrews* (1742).

Examples of the British sensibility novel range from over-blown romances to domestic realism and include Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740–1) and *Clarissa* (1748); Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766); Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* (1768); and Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771). Notable British poets of sensibility include Thomas Gray, Thomas Warton, and Edward Young, and the sentimental dramatists saw Colley Cibber, John Cumberland, Hugh Kelly, and Richard Steele among their numbers.

SEE ALSO: Radcliffe, Ann; Sublime, The.

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FURTHER READING
Sex

RUTH BIENSTOCK ANOLIK

The English Gothic officially begins with Manfred, the hero-villain of Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764), chasing his dead son's fiancée through the labyrinths of the castle in order to ravish her (see walpole, horace). His plan for sexual possession, consensual or otherwise, is motivated neither by love nor lust but by his passion for property and dynasty: to maintain them, he must engender a son. Unlike the romance novels of the eighteenth century, which forged conceptual connections between love, sex, and marriage, suggesting to female readers that men lived for love alone, the new Gothic mode showed its female readers the link between sex and danger, alerting women to the dangerous legal consequences of romance and sex. Under the system of coverture, a married woman was legally nonexistent, her identity subsumed, covered, by that of her husband; she could not possess property, children, or her own body. Rape too, played a part in this sordid system: until the Hardwicke Act of 1753, a woman who was raped was compelled to marry the rapist, thus ceding all her property to him. Walpole may have had personal reasons for highlighting the dangers of heterosexuality. There is compelling evidence that he was a homosexual and therefore had a personal stake in dark secrets, repressed and revealed.

New cultural developments of the eighteenth century also accounted for the distrust of romantic sex in the newly developed Gothic. In The History of Sexuality, Michel Foucault (1990) traces the evolving perceptions of marriage in the eighteenth century. In the early part of the century, the institution was regarded as a frankly economic system of alliances; later, however, the economic uses of marriage were hidden under the veils of romance. In Making Sex, Thomas Laquer (1992) explains the contribution of the Enlightenment, with its insistence on conceptual binaries, to sexual anxieties. The overarching binary of Enlightenment science and medicine – normative and nonnormative – indicated that sexual behaviors and identities that did not conform to a narrow definition were excluded from the ideal norm and from human society. The Gothic mode, the forum for rebellion against the various codes of the Enlightenment – as evidenced by the recurring trope of destroyed structures and walls – thus became the tool for revealing the hidden horrors created by social structures and for interrogating the conceptual categories that made them possible.

Following the lead of Walpole, writers of the female Gothic (by and for women, addressing women's concerns) continued the project of demystification, reminding female readers that sexual allure and attentiveness in a man were often a code for danger (see female gothic). Much of the oeuvre of Ann Radcliffe, the mother of the (Female) Gothic, is devoted to disentangling the notion of sexuality from romance. In The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), the infamously seductive Montoni, sexyly Italian and darkly handsome, is unveiled as a dangerous fortune hunter whose sole object is not romance, but property. By the end of the novel, Montoni is discredited, and Radcliffe settles Emily with a safer, more suitable, and far less sexy suitor.

The counter to the female Gothic, the male Gothic, developed by a number of writers including Matthew Lewis and Charles Maturin, worked in opposition to Radcliffe's aesthetics of subtle terror and discrete sexual tension (see lewis, matthew; maturin, charles robert). The male Gothic features explicit and violent scenes of sex, typically in its most shocking forms, rape and incest. The male Gothic thereby betrays its particular sexual anxieties. While the anxieties of the female

Gothic revolve around the dangers posed to women by the sexual codes of society, the anxieties of the male Gothic tend to focus on the dangers of the female body. While in the female Gothic the dark structures of castle, prison, and abbey emblematize the social structures that imprison women, in the male Gothic these vast, womblike spaces represent the mysterious engulfing female body.

Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796) illustrates the male fear of the repellent female body, and the angry and hostile reaction to this source of anxiety. The most malevolent woman of the text, the demonic Matilda disguised as a monk (one example of the homosexual subtext of the novel), seduces the monk Ambrosio. However, the most vividly horrifying female is the spectral Bleeding Nun, whose blood is an overdetermined signifier of female appropriation of the bleeding heart of Jesus, or frightening maternal power, or menstruation, the repulsive illustration of femininity run amok. The nun chillingly and recurrently rapes the character of Raymond who has mistakenly delivered himself to her “rotting fingers” (Lewis 1995: 163), her “cold lips” (Lewis 1995: 161), and the reptilian power of her phallic gaze. The repulsion and anxiety generated by the female body in *The Monk* account for the novel’s hostile treatment of women, always subject to defilement and corruption. The body of a prioress is reduced to bloody flesh by a raging mob; Antonia is brutally and incestuously raped by her brother, the monk Ambrosio: “in the violence of his lustful delirium [he] wounded and bruised her tender limbs” (Lewis 1995: 383).

Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya or, The Moor* (1806) also connects sexual possession to spiritual possession, as does Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Despite her gender, Dacre’s explicitly horrifying contribution to the literature of Gothic sexuality aligns her with the writers of the male Gothic. Unlike the typical virtuous and beleaguered heroine of the female Gothic, Dacre’s protagonist Victoria is sexually unfaithful and adventurous. Unfortunately, the beautiful, silver-voiced Moorish slave with whom she betrays her husband is actually Satan, who has taken possession of the body of the dead Moor. By the end of the novel, Satan/Zofloya has taken possession of Victoria’s soul as well. By concealing Satan within the body of the black slave, Dacre also reveals anxiety regarding the dangers of interracial sex; this anxiety, which finds voice in the Gothic over the ages, typically becomes most pervasive when national and racial integrity is under siege, as in the late eighteenth century, with the expansion of exploration and trade.

The Gothic mode and the Gothic representation of sexuality take a new turn with the publication of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in 1818. The iconic image of the haunted house is replaced by the contested body of the son created by Victor Frankenstein in an exaggerated literalization of the patriarchal model, without any maternal intervention or influence. Despite the excessive horror of her text, Shelley demonstrates her allegiance to the female Gothic: Victor is punished for repressing the maternal from human procreation. He finds himself repelled by the monster engendered by his solitary pride, and his own bride is killed by the monster. In fact, the monster shows greater human sensitivity than his creator in desiring a female partner so that he can procreate his own line (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft).

The mid-nineteenth century saw a blossoming of the female Gothic in the writings of the Brontës. Each sister presents a sexually alluring version of the dangerous and dark man: the traditional Gothic husband-villain in Anne’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848); the newer type of Romantic hero-villain, Charlotte’s Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (1847); and Emily’s hero-villain of *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Heathcliff, who breaks the patriarchal mold in that he is a social underling and possibly belongs to a racial minority.

As the Gothic moves from the wild Romantic era to the sedate Victorian, Gothic texts focus less on the personal danger of sex. Instead, the central dilemma of the sensation novel is the social threat posed by resistance to the codes of society. Wilkie Collins’ sensation
The Woman in White (1861), presents a dark patriarch who (like Radcliffe’s Montoni) is interested only in property and seeks to abject his wife’s body rather than to possess it. Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s Lady Audley’s Secret (1862) is similarly chaste, despite incidents of bigamy and murder. The lady’s ultimate secret is that she has breached the codes of decorum set for a Victorian lady (see sensation fiction).

The late nineteenth-century Gothic reserves its truly scandalous sexual secrets for homosexuality. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s Carmilla (1872), Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891), and Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) all provide suggestive and sensual clues that point to the dangerous but thrilling secret of homosexuality. Stoker’s Dracula, like Dacre’s Zofloya, also reveals cultural fears of foreign infiltration, sexual as well as cultural, at a time when such a threat seemed real. A now lesser-known novel, Trilby (1894) by George du Maurier, presents the fear of cultural penetration by foreigners through the infamous character of Svengali, the demonic Jew who possesses a young female singer, sexually and spiritually (see fin-de-siècle gothic).

With the gradual easing of social constraints upon women in the early twentieth century, there was less need for textual indications of sexual dangers guised in the veil of law. However, various social factors – shifting women’s roles, Freud’s focus upon the buried secrets of sexuality, and increased immigration – resulted in a new set of emerging sexual anxieties. With the lifting of Victorian repression, sexuality was no longer a taboo topic; transformations in the technology of the media allowed sex to be seen as well as discussed. A number of early films, including silent versions of Dracula and Trilby, were based upon earlier novels. The heterosexual tension of Stoker’s novel comes alive in the 1931 film, Dracula, starring Bela Lugosi. In one scene, Dracula holds the swooning Mina in a passionate embrace as he moves his lips (and teeth) toward her neck. Similarly, John Barrymore highlights the sexually magnetic aspect of the title character in the film Svengali (1931), while downplaying his repellent Jewish aspect. When Svengali grotesquely peers into Trilby’s mouth to view her singing apparatus, Barrymore gazes longingly at her lips and strokes her face. Paradoxically, then, the new media heightened the impact of the text by adding the visual dimension, while diminishing the horror of Gothic sexuality as the villains were “cleaned up” to protect audience sensibilities: hence, the beginning of a new, visually appealing, Gothic aesthetics. The figure of the “vamp,” developed by the actress Theda Bara, also illustrates the aestheticization of the traditional Gothic monster (see film).

While the vamp represents a stock figure of horror in the male Gothic, she drains male potency in a far more alluring way than does the Bleeding Nun.

Through horror films such as Dracula (1958), The Brides of Dracula (1960), and Dracula: Prince of Darkness (1966), Hammer Productions introduced lurid and visual detail (in color) into the genre of Gothic horror films. Dracula, Prince of Darkness promotes the sexually liberating benefits of Dracula’s bite; The Vampire Lovers (1970), inspired by Carmilla, vividly presents the lesbian vampire that Le Fanu could only suggest. By the 1960s, more serious projects intruded on the territory of Hammer films (see hammer house). Roman Polanski’s Rosemary’s Baby (1968), based on a contemporary novel by Ira Levin, brought new visual horror to the conventional Gothic trope of the woman whose body is possessed, socially and sexually, in order to perpetuate a dark (in this case satanic) dynasty. With Frank Langella’s sexy and stylish portrayal of the title character of Dracula (1979), the monster who derives his power through sexual potency replaced the supernaturally powerful and repellent monster.

The mid-twentieth century also saw a resurgence in Gothic literature. Daphne du Maurier’s Rebecca (1938) established that the power of the twentieth-century female monster was based on sex rather than on the supernatural (see...
DU MAURIER, DAPHNE). In *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), another nonsupernatural Gothic, Shirley Jackson deploys traditional tropes like the haunted house to investigate the postwar role of American women (see JACKSON, SHIRLEY). Ethnic American women writers were especially drawn to the mode as a way to explore their doubly marginal situation. In *He, She and It* (1991) Marge Piercy explores the erotics of a relationship between a woman and a cyborg/Frankenstein/golem figure, in a Jewish outpost of the future (see JEWISH GOTHIC). Gloria Naylor also invokes *Frankenstein* in her depiction of an exclusively heterosexual African American patriarchy in *Linden Hills* (1986). In her African American Gothic *Beloved* (1987), Toni Morrison taps into the Gothicized rhetoric of nineteenth-century female slave writers – like Harriet Jacobs and Hannah Crafts – to recall the Gothic horror of slave women whose bodies and children were subject to patriarchal possession.

As the twentieth century waned, films, television programs, and other artifacts of popular culture increasingly turned to the newly aestheticized Gothic tropes to address issues of contemporary life. The television show *V* (2009–11) illustrated the Gothicization of twenty-first-century immigration discourses, as alien invaders with malicious intent disarm humans through the powers of their seductive charm. Two popular television programs, *Moonlight* and *True Blood* (based on *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* novels by Charlaine Harris), focus on a sexually charged and potentially dangerous relationship between a human female and a male vampire (see TELEVISION). The *Twilight* film series (starting in 2008), based on the novels of the Mormon writer Stephenie Meyer, feature what the writer Lev Grossman (2008) calls “the erotics of abstinence.” Once again, a young woman is in love with a vampire; Robert Pattinson, who plays the role, has become a celebrity on the basis of his Byronic good looks and sex appeal. Here, too, the charged atmosphere is the result of the noble withholding by the beautiful male “monster,” who thinks more about the woman he loves than about his own needs. Even the contemporary world of fashion has been infiltrated by the twenty-first-century Gothic aesthetic. In an article on this phenomenon, *The New York Times* reports: “Rarely have monsters looked so sultry – or so camera ready” (La Ferla 2009). Vampire layouts in fashion magazines, including *W* and *Italian Vogue*, show glowing women with pasty faces, dressed in black.

And so, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, almost two hundred and fifty years after Walpole linked Gothic horror to sexual anxiety, the Gothic moves to another stage, breaking the link between sex and danger that Walpole forged. The signs that serve as codes for danger in earlier Gothic texts – difference, monstrosity, deathliness, sexual aggression – are read in contemporary culture as signs of exotic allure. In fact, in the highly sexualized culture of the twenty-first century, a whiff of Gothic danger and exoticism functions as a welcome counter to the overexposure and overfamiliarization of sex. This new stage clearly reflects the Gothic paradigm of the return of the repressed as we see the return of the romance novel, repressed by the Gothic in the eighteenth century. For despite the Gothic trappings, sexual attitudes revealed in contemporary Gothic texts are aligned with romance rather than with the Gothic: sex is safe, even when it looks dangerous. With the rise of the “new man” of the late twentieth century – kinder, gentler, better-groomed – we see the fall of the repellent and predatory Gothic patriarch. Yet the repression of traditional Gothic attitudes may yet erupt in future waves of horrifying, and even repulsive Gothic sexuality, in response to the ongoing, though changing, dangers of sex. Perhaps the twenty-first century, or the twenty-second, will see a radical shift in the always-radical, always-changing Gothic: a move (back) toward the original link between sexuality and Gothic horror.

SEE ALSO: Adultery; Du Maurier, Daphne; Female Gothic; Film; Fin-de-Siècle Gothic; Hammer House; Jackson, Shirley; Jewish Gothic;
REFERENCES


FURTHER READING

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851) was the author of six novels, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818, 1831), *Valperga* (1823), *The Last Man* (1826), *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830), *Lodore* (1835), and *Falkner* (1837). Besides these longer works, she also produced one novella, *Mathilda* (1819), and numerous essays and shorter pieces. Born in 1797, she was the daughter of the author, political campaigner, feminist, and educationalist Mary Wollstonecraft and the author and philosopher William Godwin (see *godwin*, william). Wollstonecraft died ten days after giving birth from complications related to the birth. The subsequent childhood and adolescence of Mary Shelley were somewhat peripatetic in nature. Godwin remarried a widow called Mrs. Clairmont in 1801. With the two children that the new Mrs. Godwin brought from her previous marriage, the son that she and Godwin had together, and Mary Wollstonecraft’s older daughter, Fanny, the household became overcrowded and fractious. Reportedly, Mary often felt sidelined by her stepmother, and grew to idealize her dead mother. Her adolescence involved a spell in a boarding school and two lengthy stays in Scotland with the family of Godwin’s friend William Baxter. In 1812, Mary met her father’s young acolyte Percy Bysshe Shelley in the family home in London (see *shelley*, percy bysshe). In spite of, or perhaps because of, her father’s vehement opposition to the match, she eloped to the continent with Shelley in July 1814, and then later married him in December 1816. Between 1812 and 1822, the year of Percy Shelley’s accidental death, the couple led a nomadic existence, moving between England, Italy, and Switzerland. There were a number of pregnancies for Mary during that decade too, but only one child (Percy Florence) survived to maturity.

Mary Shelley’s fiction is embedded within her philosophical Enlightenment heritage. As she herself somewhat defensively observed in the preface to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, “It is not singular that, as the daughter of two persons of distinguished literary celebrity, I should very early in life have thought of writing” (Shelley 1831: v). Her first and most famous novel, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, was initially published anonymously in 1818. Dedicated to her father (“William Godwin The Author of Political Justice”), the novel both endorses and challenges her father’s doctrines, especially his belief in the potential perfectability of man, articulated in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). *Frankenstein* challenges the Enlightenment insistence upon the fundamental benevolence of mankind. We see a creature who is not only abandoned by his ambitious creator, Victor Frankenstein, but also spurned by every other human creature that he encounters. Through its layered epistolary frame, *Frankenstein* presents three characters in isolation: Walton, the intrepid explorer who commences the tale; Frankenstein, the ambitious inventor; and Frankenstein’s unnamed and abandoned creation. While the third of these (the Creature) has no say in his isolation, the other two Promethean characters are shown to be isolated through their ruthless ambition and lack of concern for others.

The chilling tale of the revenge of a creature – sutured from dubiously obtained body parts – upon his irresponsible creator has made *Frankenstein* almost synonymous with the Gothic. Mary Shelley herself foregrounded the physiological effects of terror that it was intended to provoke in the preface to the later 1831 edition of the novel (see *terror*). There she claimed that her intention was to offer a tale to appeal to “the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror – one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of our heart” (Shelley 1831: ix). She also gestured back toward the Radcliffean tradition of the Gothic by referring to the "formation of castles
in the air – the indulging in waking dreams”
which, she claims, characterized her childhood
imagination. Her self-fashioning as an imagi-
native, dreamy child must be recognized as just
that, however, for it is difficult to determine
the extent to which this portrait is accurate or
astute self-promotion. In the same preface,
Mary Shelley also locates the origins of her tale
in a dream: “My imagination, unbidden, pos-
sessed and guided me” to envision “with shut
eyes, but acute mental vision” the inventor
Victor Frankenstein, “the pale student of
unhallowed arts” bending over the “hideous
phantasm” that he had created (Shelley 1831:
x). Drawing upon a vocabulary that by 1831
had come to be associated with Gothic effect,
Mary Shelley quite deliberately foregrounded
the seeming passivity of her authorship, award-
ing all agency to her imperious imagination.
She explained that

Frankenstein

was conceived

in the summer of 1816 during a sojourn at
Lake Geneva in Switzerland. Having rented a
house close to Lord Byron’s famous residence,
the Villa Diodati, Mary (who at that time was
still Mary Godwin, but who became Mary
Shelley later in 1816), Percy Shelley, and Mary’s
stepsister Claire Clairmont became friends
with Byron. One evening, having amused his
dinner guests by reading aloud Samuel Taylor
Coleridge’s Christabel (1797, 1800) and ghost
stories from Fantasmagoriana (1812), Byron
famously inaugurated a collaborative endeavor
where “each of the company present should
write a tale depending upon some supernatu-
ral agency.” This was the genesis of

Frankenstein,

as well as of John Polidori’s novella
The Vampyre (1819) and Byron’s own “A Frag-
ment,” published at the end of Mazeppa (1819),
which concerns the unexplained death of a
mysterious character called Darvell.

Despite Mary Shelley’s canny allusions to
the Gothic genesis of

Frankenstein

in the later
1831 edition, its terrorist credentials were not
received particularly well when it was first
published in 1818. While John Croker of the
Quarterly Review admitted that it contained
“passages which appal the mind and make the
flesh creep,” he refused to go further in praising
it, instead warning that the tastes of any reader
who did dare to appreciate it were “deplorably
vitiated” for it “inculcates no lesson of con-
duct, manners, or morality” (Croker 1818:
385). Croker seemed to be most disturbed by
the political implications of the anonymously
published novel’s dedication to William
Godwin. Sir Walter Scott, who has since been
identified as the anonymous reviewer of

Frankenstein

for the Edinburgh Magazine, was also
alert to the implications of the dedication, but
slightly more complacent about them, claim-
ing that it was “formed on the Godwinian
manner, and has all the faults, but many like-
wise of the beauties of that model” (Scott 1818:
249). In a manner that was remarkably similar
to the Marquis de Sade’s linkage between the
Gothic and political revolution in his 1800
Idée sur les romans Scott linked the wildness of

Frankenstein

to the “wondrous and gigantic,”
“rapid and various” events that were shaking
Europe. Citing the rise and fall of Napoleon
Bonaparte as an example, Scott questioned
whether the novel’s “outrageous improbabil-
ity” should be condemned, given that “the
favourite projects and passions of the times”
were themselves so “wondrous and gigantic”
(Scott 1818: 249). Percy and Mary Shelley had
been reading Erasmus Darwin’s versified trea-
sise The Temple of Nature in 1817 as they
worked on editing the drafts of

Frankenstein.

As Percy Shelley underlined in his preface to
the 1818 edition of

Frankenstein,

Erasmus Dar-
win’s unorthodox emphases upon sexual gen-
eration and biological evolution did influence
the composition of the novel. Darwin’s empha-
sis upon the materialist origins of life were
by no means unique; between 1814 and 1819
other “favourite projects and passions of the
times” (to borrow Scott’s terms again) included
the vitalist debate that was initiated by the sci-
entist John Abernethy in 1814 and later rejoined
by Percy Shelley’s own physician, William Law-
rence. While Abernethy analogized the “spark
of life” to electricity, William Lawrence dis-
agreed, instead emphasizing the natural, mate-
rialist source of life in his major work
Lectures on Physiology, Zoology and the Natural History
of Man (1819). Well known to the Shelleys, William Lawrence’s emphasis upon matter is undoubtedly writ large in Victor Frankenstein’s detailed recollection of torturing “the living animal to the lifeless clay” by collecting “bones from charnel houses” and other unspeakable “material” from the “dissecting room and the slaughter-house” (Shelley 1818: 36–7). Blended with this strong focus upon material sources, however, is a moral awareness of the transgressive nature of these experiments; Victor’s “profane fingers” probe the “tremendous secrets” of the human frame (Shelley 1818: 36).

While on the one hand Frankenstein appears to endorse Lawrence’s theories of organic matter in the vitalist debate, on the other it interrogates the ethics of probing such matter. In his introduction to Making Monstrous: Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory, Fred Botting observes that differing critical discourses “assemble their own monsters from the partial and dead signifiers that make up the narrative bodies of Frankenstein. Critics suture these fragments into their own commentary to produce new and hideous progenies that have lives of their own” (Botting 1991: 4). The parallels that Botting draws between the monster’s own genesis and the organic growth of criticism upon the novel foreground the richness of critical approaches to Frankenstein. With its reliance upon the Promethean myth and John Milton’s Paradise Lost, the mythic core of Frankenstein is, indeed, so flexible that accounts of the novel have ranged persuasively from materialist studies of Shelley’s progeny to psychobiological accounts. In 1951, Muriel Spark’s biography of Mary Shelley focused upon the pursuit narrative between the creator and creation, arguing that the Creature represented rationality in opposition to Frankenstein’s emotional reactions. In the same decade, M. A. Goldberg’s “Moral and Myth in Mrs Shelley’s Frankenstein” took a different direction, emphasizing the need for renewed literary attention to Mary Shelley’s Miltonic and Romantic intertexts (see romanticism). In 1977, Ellen Moers’ arguments upon “female Gothic” focused on Mary Shelley’s own maternal anxieties, grounding the novel in a psychobiological account that has since been pursued by a number of critics (see female gothic). Most notably, Anne K. Mellor’s Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters (1988) synthesizes the biographical with the scientific engagement of the novel in her response to the question of why an eighteen-year-old woman would “give birth” to this novel. Marilyn Butler’s 1993 essay “Frankenstein and Radical Science” and Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall’s co-edited collection Frankenstein’s Science (2008) concentrate more closely upon the varied and complex scientific debates of the time. The latter collection foregrounds the richness of scientific debate and advancement of the time, investigating both discovery and exploration. Other significant edited collections on this one novel include George Levine and U. C. Knoepflmacher’s The Endurance of Frankenstein (1979) and Stephen Bann’s Frankenstein, Creation and Monstrosity of 1994. Alongside Botting’s collection, these collections bring together a broad range of industrialist, historicist, psychoanalytic, and scientific readings of the novel.

The allegorical possibilities of Frankenstein are infinite. Its uniquely flexible mythic core and the circumstances of its composition have spawned numerous filmic and stage adaptations. Since Paul O’Flinn’s 1983 essay “Production and Reproduction” explored the audience-driven demands of Frankenstein’s early filmic adaptation, Shelley’s novel has continued to be reproduced both on the silver screen and on the stage. Most recently, in 2011, Danny Boyle directed a sell-out adaptation of it for the National Theatre, with two actors (Benedict Cumberbatch and Johnny Lee Miller) alternating the roles of Victor Frankenstein and his Creation.

Mary Shelley’s unique synthesis of Miltonic struggle, Enlightenment thinking, contemporaneous scientific theories, classical sources, and political allusion make her first novel particularly intertextual and resistant to one dominant narrative. This is the reason why Frankenstein has become paradigmatic of the
fragmented and intertextual nature of the Gothic novel. Its unique genesis during an evening of mutual literary endeavor has also rendered questions of its authorship particularly porous and contentious. Scholar Charles Robinson's examinations of the original drafts of *Frankenstein* held in the Bodleian Library in Oxford led him to conclude that Percy Shelley made around five thousand changes to the original, leading Robinson to argue in 2008 that the novel should now be credited as being by Mary Shelley with Percy Shelley. Another scholar, John Lauritsen, controversially argued slightly earlier in 2007 that Percy Shelley was the sole author of *Frankenstein*, provoking a strong defense of Mary Shelley's authorship, including by Robinson. The question of the authorship of *Frankenstein* is now becoming just as prone to dissection, analysis, and reproduction as the novel itself.

Any scholar who is in doubt of Mary Shelley's writing abilities need look no further than her later works. In their collection *The Mary Shelley Reader*, Betty T. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson argue that one of the central themes of Mary Shelley's oeuvre is “the redemptive value of a broad and humanitarian education.” This, they argue, goes “unrecognized, however, because most modern readers of Mary Shelley have not read enough of her works: they interpret the author on limited evidence, frequently on the basis of *Frankenstein* alone” (Bennett and Robinson 1990: vii). The same applies to Gothic scholarship on Mary Shelley. The interval between the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein* and the 1831 revised edition was prolifically occupied by Mary Shelley, especially after the death of Percy Shelley, when she was obliged to earn a living to support herself and her son through writing. *Mathilda*, published in 1819, prior to Percy Shelley's death, inaugurates a particularly strong thematic focus upon mourning and grief in her later fiction. It holds much in common with the themes of *Frankenstein*, in terms of the similar representations of the redemptive poet figures Henry Clerval and Woodville, the naturalistic portrayals of quasi-incestuous relationships between parents, and the heroine's dilemma with the creative role. *Mathilda* also differs substantially from *Frankenstein* in its far more introverted and personalized exploration of what E. J. Clery describes as “unnatural horror” (2000: 139). Whereas *Frankenstein* exhibits the destructive dangers of Promethean creativity, *Mathilda* by contrast transforms Mary Shelley's Gothic preoccupations by privileging passivity over activity, loss over living. This renewed focus upon loss is something that she pursues in “On Ghosts” (1824), *The Last Man*, and “The Mourner” (1829). All published after the death of Percy Shelley, these works contain a particular strain of elegiac tribute for Mary's poet husband. “On Ghosts,” composed just two years after Percy Shelley's death, neutralizes any potential terror that the idea of ghosts may carry by emphasizing instead the relational, familiar aspects of them. Here, Mary Shelley ponders upon the departure of a “friend” and the return to a place that he had inhabited: “He had been there; his living frame had been caged by those walls, his breath had mingled with that atmosphere, his step had been on those stones, I thought: – the earth is a tomb, the gaudy sky a vault, we but walking corpses” (Shelley 1824: 254). Ghosts here are not so much uncanny revenants as familiar objects that are an integral aspect of the living, breathing human subject.

Gothic strains can also be discovered in Mary Shelley's historical romances. *Valperga* (1823) and *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830) both return to eighteenth-century debates upon the relative merits of chivalry, history, and romance that proved formative to the Gothic. These two novels demand immediate comparison with Bishop Richard Hurd’s *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), Clara Reeve's *The Progress of Romance* (1785), William Godwin's “Of History and Romance” (1797), and Sir Walter Scott's “Essay on Chivalry” (1818). Both *Valperga* and *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* reappraise the value of chivalry, while at the same time they place female characters center stage in a gesture that, as Tilottama Rajan has observed, is indebted to...
the early historical Gothic romance The Recess by Sophia Lee (Shelley 1998).

While superficially Mary Shelley’s later fiction assumed generic parameters that differed greatly from Frankenstein, her fiction consistently exhibits a concern with appropriate and judicious reading. In Frankenstein both the explorer Robert Walton and the scientist Victor Frankenstein are shown to read inappropriate material, while the Creature’s piece-meal self-education is nonetheless broader, demonstrating some knowledge of the classics and classical history. What all three characters lack is the guidance of a parent who will take them carefully through the value of their reading. Victor Frankenstein speculates that, had his father taken the time to explain why the works of Cornelius Agrippa were dangerous instead of dismissing them as “trash,” then “It is even possible, that the train of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin” (Shelley 1818: 23). The overseeing of the formation of ideas remains a clear concern in all of Shelley’s fiction; the presence or absence of humanitarian educators to guide her protagonists is shown to be instrumental to their destinies. Mary Shelley was profoundly and consistently concerned with how the individual confronts and navigates crisis. Her correspondence testifies to why this was particularly important to her own challenging set of circumstances; her fiction both demonstrates the potential for happier endings while also accounting clearly for the genesis of its Gothic crises.

Mary Shelley died on February 1, 1851, leaving behind her a substantial and lasting body of work. The fascination with both her biography and her fiction endures.

SEE ALSO: Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Female Gothic; Godwin, William; Polidori, John; Romanticism; Shelley, Percy Bysshe; Terror.

REFERENCES
Shelley, Percy Bysshe
Catherine Redford

The Gothic writings of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) have often been marginalized by critics, and tend to be dismissed as juvenilia bearing little relation to his later, canonical work. Recent scholarship, however, has re-examined the Gothic prose and poetry produced by Shelley in his teenage years, reinstating these texts in the established corpus of Gothic literature and at the same time recognizing that the influence of the Gothic extended beyond his formative years.

Shelley was just eighteen when his first Gothic prose romance, Zastrozzi, was published in 1810, and this novel was closely followed by the publication of another, St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian, in 1811. Both novels are highly melodramatic and were poorly reviewed, with even Shelley himself later dismissing them in a letter to William Godwin on March 8, 1812 as “distempered” and “unoriginal” (Shelley 1964: I 266). St. Irvyne in particular contains a number of stylistic flaws: the novel consists of two separate plots that bear little relation to each other and the conclusion is weak, leaving a number of loose ends. It is never explained, for example, how Ginotti, who is seized by the devil and turned into a giant skeleton in the first plot, is able to reappear in the giant skeleton in the second plot as the mysterious stranger Frederic de Nempere, especially as these characters appear to exist in different times and places. Shelley also seems to have written a third novel, The Nightmare, in collaboration with his cousin Thomas Medwin, although this text is now lost.

Shelley’s novels are indebted to his childhood fascination with the occult. During his adolescence he read many of the Gothic productions produced by the Minerva Press, and, although critics remain undecided as to whether he wrote his own novels in seriousness or to parody these works, the influence of the Minerva texts upon his own early writing is clear. Zastrozzi is a tale of jealousy, murderous passion, suicide, family feuds, and revenge, with the identity of Zastrozzi remaining shrouded in mystery until the novel’s conclusion. St. Irvyne incorporates a range of conventional Gothic elements such as a band of outlaws, a castle, a pact with the devil, immortality, a midnight meeting at a ruined abbey, and bloodied corpses and skeletons. Both of his novels feature the themes of sexual desire and seduction as used by Matthew “Monk” Lewis, a popular Gothic writer particularly admired by the young Shelley (see Lewis, Matthew). These texts also demonstrate the influence of two other Gothic writers, Charlotte Dacre and Ann Radcliffe, to the extent that some of the scenes contain direct borrowings from their work (see Radcliffe, Ann).

During the period that Shelley was working on Zastrozzi, he was writing a volume of poetry in conjunction with his younger sister, Elizabeth, entitled Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire, which was published in 1810. Several poems in the collection contain distinctly Gothic elements, such as dark and stormy nights, death, graves, and ghosts. Four of the poems in particular are notably Gothic in theme and style: “Saint Edmond’s Eve” is the tale of the ghost of a wronged nun seeking revenge; “Revenge” recounts how a young woman is seized by a specter and taken to the world of the dead in revenge for the evil actions of her lover’s father; “Ghasta; Or, the Avenging Demon!!” alludes to the story of the Wandering Jew and concludes with the summoning of the spirits of the dead; and “Fragment, or The Triumph of Conscience” is concerned with the ghostly return of the murdered Victoria, complete with bloodied dagger in her hand. Like the early novels, the poems that Shelley contributed to this collection are heavily indebted to Lewis’ The Monk (1796), and also to his Tales...
of Wonder (1801). One contemporary reviewer (in the January 1814 edition of The Poetical Register) tersely remarked that “there is no ‘original poetry’ in this volume,” and it was commonly noted that “Saint Edmond’s Eve” was lifted wholesale from Lewis’ Tales. As a result of these observations of plagiarism, Original Poetry was removed from sale by Shelley’s embarrassed publisher, despite 1500 copies having being printed.

Shelley’s interest in the Gothic was by no means confined to his early works. In fact, the influence of this genre on his mature writings is evident throughout his adult canon. Shelley was part of the circle of second-generation Romantics, who, during the dreary summer of 1816 spent in Geneva, produced Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) and Gothic tales by Lord Byron and John Polidori (see Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Polidori, John). As critics have recently recognized, Shelley contributed significantly to Mary’s novel. It was after hearing Shelley and Byron discuss the principle of life and the concept of reanimation that Mary had the waking dream that inspired Frankenstein, and her journals indicate that she discussed the project in depth with Shelley. Shelley seems to have added four or five thousand words to the original text, in addition to changing the division of the novel’s chapters, and Frankenstein is now regarded more as a collaborative novel than as the work of a single individual (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft).

Shelley himself wrote an unpublished review of Frankenstein in which he linked the tale to a number of concerns – the mind, necessity, human nature – that feature prominently in his own poetry, often in association with conventionally Gothic themes. These include terror, dream visions, villains, and secret spaces, and occur in works as diverse as Alastor (1815), Mont Blanc (1816), The Cenci (1819), and Prometheus Unbound (1820).

SEE ALSO: Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Lewis, Matthew; Polidori, John; Radcliffe, Ann; Romanticism; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft.

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FURTHER READING

Sinclair, May
DIANA WALLACE

A transitional figure bridging the shift from Victorianism to Modernism, May Sinclair (the pseudonym of Mary Amelia St. Clair) (1863–1946) produced some of the most innovative ghost stories of the early twentieth century. Her Uncanny Stories (1923) engaged with the new insights of Freud, Jung, and Einstein to rework traditional forms, using the supernatural to explore and illuminate psychic states and internal consciousness. A successful and widely...
respected novelist, short story writer, poet, and philosopher in her own time, she was also an astute and generous critic who championed the work of some of the earliest Modernist writers, including H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot (see modernism). It was Sinclair who introduced the term “stream of consciousness” into critical discourse in a 1918 review of Dorothy Richardson’s Pilgrimage (Sinclair 1990).

The only surviving daughter of an affluent shipowner who became an alcoholic after his business failed, Sinclair had five older brothers, most of whom either emigrated or died young. Her parents separated and, after a year at Cheltenham Ladies’ College, where she studied philosophy with the headmistress Dorothea Beale, Sinclair remained at home with her strictly religious and controlling mother until the latter’s death in 1901. Her autobiographical novel Mary Oliver: A Life (1919) gives an account of the protagonist’s struggle to maintain a sense of self within a stifling mother–daughter relationship and in the face of a loss of religious faith. Sinclair’s first poems and stories drew on her studies in philosophy and her translations of Greek tragedies. Her early novels are works of psychological realism, often exploring the problems of Victorian marriage or, as in The Creators: A Comedy (1910), issues of creativity, gender, and class.

A supporter of women’s suffrage and a member of the Women Writers Suffrage League, Sinclair wrote a pamphlet, Feminism (1912), in answer to Sir Almroth Wright’s accusation that suffragists were merely hysterics. She had an early and informed interest in new developments in psychoanalysis and was a founding member of the Medico-Psychological Clinic, where Dr. Jessie Margaret Murray and Julia Turner used Freudian analysis to treat patients, including shell-shocked soldiers (see psychoanalysis). Sinclair was also a member of the Society for Psychical Research. In 1914 she went with a field ambulance to Belgium, an experience recorded in a published journal and used in several novels and stories. Her fascination with the Brontës led to her writing the first feminist study of their work, The Three Brontës (1912), as well as a loosely fictionalized version of their lives in the proto-Modernist novel, The Three Sisters (1914), which uses psychoanalytic models to explore the effects of repression and gender inequality.

The first of Sinclair’s supernatural stories, “The Intercessor” (1911), was also inspired by her sympathetic engagement with the Brontës. It rewrites elements of Wuthering Heights to depict Garvin, an archivist, who is able to intercede between the ghost of a dead child and her living mother, bringing about a symbolic reconciliation. Like those of Henry James, whose influence she acknowledged, and Virginia Woolf, Sinclair’s ghost stories mark a transition in the genre from physical to psychic hauntings. Published just four years after Freud’s “The Uncanny,” Sinclair’s Uncanny Stories brings together the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and Jung and the philosophies of Kant and Hegel in a sequence that explores the psychic consequences of varying kinds of love. Beginning with “Where Their Fire is not Quenched,” a tale of adulterous lovers condemned forever to repeat the boredom of their illicit liaison, the collection culminates in “The Finding of the Absolute,” a more benign account of adultery that dramatizes the debate between Kantian and Hegelian philosophies, restaging it within Modernist understandings of time and space. The later collection, The Intercessor and Other Stories (1931), included “The Villa Désirée” (1926), one of her most erotically explicit and symbolically subversive explorations of sexuality. In these stories, Sinclair’s spare, elliptical prose, her striking use of symbols and her experimentation with representations of time and space, as well as her concern with internal consciousness, all align her with her Modernist peers.

Sinclair was a prolific writer, publishing twenty-four novels, two works of philosophy, three collections of poetry, six volumes of short stories, and numerous reviews and articles. However, her reputation suffered a decline after the mid-1920s, due in part to the
Parkinson’s Disease that shadowed the last fifteen years of her life. It is only in the last couple of decades, thanks to the work of feminist critics such as her biographer Suzanne Raitt (2000), that Sinclair’s work has been reassessed and her importance acknowledged.

SEE ALSO: Feminism; Ghost Story; James, Henry; Modernism; Psychoanalysis; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING

Slasher Movies
GLENNIS BYRON

Slasher films were arguably the most influential and certainly the most commercially successful form of horror to appear during the late 1970s and early 1980s. While precursors of the slasher have been identified in such films as Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960), Tobe Hooper’s *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), and Bob Clark’s *Black Christmas* (1974), as well as in the Italian giallo of Mario Bava and Dario Argento, it is John Carpenter’s *Halloween* (1978) that is generally agreed to have inaugurated the form (see *Halloween* (1978)).

Carpenter introduced the first in the unholy trinity of antiheroes that dominate the “canonical” slashers. The six-year-old Michael Myers, as shown in an opening flashback, murders his sister on Halloween night, 1963; years later he escapes from a mental asylum to stalk teenager Laurie Strode and her friends. With this basic narrative, *Halloween* established what can be broadly defined as the slasher formula: a traumatic past moment creates a psychotic killer; the killer returns in the present, on a particular date, to the site of his or her crime to stalk and kill a group of teenagers; one girl, for whom Carol Clover (1992) later coined the term the “final girl,” survives to bring the carnage (temporarily) to an end.

Carpenter’s casting of Jamie Lee Curtis, daughter of Janet Leigh, as the final girl is of particular interest. Horror film in general is, of course, frequently self-referential, but this has been a particular hallmark of the slasher from its very inception. *Halloween* is replete with references and tributes to Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, from the casting of Curtis to the naming of the psychiatrist as Sam Loomis. *Halloween* is also credited with introducing what became
one of the most controversial features of the slasher film: the notorious prowling subjective camera, which visually positions the audience with the killer’s point of view. This looks back not only to Michael Powell’s *Peeping Tom* (1960), with its impaling camera, but also to the scene in *Psycho* in which Norman Bates peers through his spy hole at Marion in the shower.

Despite the now conventional association of slasher films with excessive displays of blood and violence, Carpenter’s *Halloween* is rarely graphic, relying instead on suspense and suggestion. It was Sean Cunningham’s *Friday the 13th* (1980) that introduced the explicit violence for which it became so notorious and that established the slasher obsession with the spectacle of death (see *Friday the 13th* (1980)). It is not the dead body but the very process of that body – slowly and in increasingly inventive ways – becoming dead that absorbs the camera. *Friday the 13th* also references *Psycho*: a group of teenage summer-camp counselors are murdered by what is thought to be the ghost of Jason Voorhees, a boy who drowned in the lake years ago; the murderer, in a reversal of Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, turns out to be the boy’s mother. Jason himself nevertheless rises from the lake in the film’s coda to snatch away one last victim, setting the scene for his endless returns.

With Wes Craven’s *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) (see *Nightmare on Elm Street, A* (1984)), the slasher film took another turn as, using increasingly elaborate special effects, it began to incorporate the supernatural (see supernatural, the). Fred Krueger, with his razor-fingered gardening glove and his morbid humor, now invades the dreams of his victims in order to kill rather than physically stalking them. Again, this is seen as a return of past trauma: Freddy, as he came to be known, was a serial child murderer who was once burned alive by an angry mob of parents.

Initial critical responses to these films and their numerous sequels were generally negative; the films were condemned for what was considered to be their formulaic repetitiveness, their exploitative displays of extreme violence, their misogyny and conservatism with respect to sexuality; and, most of all, for what was seen by many film critics as a dangerous identification with the point of view of the killer. The 1990s, however, saw a critical re-evaluation of the slasher subgenre, led most notably by Carol Clover’s *Men, Women, and Chain Saws* (1992). Most importantly, perhaps, as Clover was the first to point out, the process of identification in the slasher film began to be seen as highly unstable, with point of view shifting from the killer to the victims to the “final girl” herself.

Simultaneously with this increasing perception of slasher films as worthy of critical interest, they were given new impetus in the 1990s with the release of such films as Wes Craven’s *New Nightmare* (1994), the hugely successful and critically acclaimed *Scream* (1996), Jim Gillespie’s *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1997), and Geoffrey Wright’s *Cherry Falls* (2000). Variously identified as “neoslashers” or “postmodern slashers,” the films are characterized by a high degree of self-referentiality: parody now frequently comes to the fore. *Cherry Falls* continues the homage to *Psycho* with its killer wielding a knife while dressed as his mother; *New Nightmare* records what happens when the actress from the *Nightmare* series starts filming a new sequel and Freddy invades her real world. Relentless repetition becomes part of the pleasure of the films, testing and affirming the viewer’s own genre competence – particularly notable in *Scream* – where characters survive only if they know the rules of the game. The postmodern slasher also moved away from the world of fantasy or the supernatural, and the focus is less on the killer than on the group of young teenagers who, working together, to a great degree take over the functions of the “final girl.”

At the turn of the century, interest in the slasher appeared to wane with the increasing popularity of Asian horror inaugurated by *Ring* in 1998, the revival of the ghost story (*The Sixth Sense*, 1999; *The Others*, 2001) and the resurrection of the zombie (*Shaun of the Dead*, 2004). In the first decade of the twenty-first
century, elements of the slasher survived primarily in the “gorno” or “torture porn” of such films as Saw (2004), Hostel (2005), and Wolf Creek (2005). Nevertheless, it proved difficult to dispose entirely of Freddy, Jason, Michael, and company. As Rob Zombie’s Halloween (2007), Marcus Nispel’s Friday the 13th (2009), and Samuel Bayer’s A Nightmare on Elm Street (2010) seem to suggest, the genre entered a new and not entirely promising era of repetition as the slashers and their sequels succumbed to the curse of the remake.

SEE ALSO: Friday the 13th (1980); Halloween (1978); Nightmare on Elm Street, A (1984); Supernatural, The.

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FURTHER READING

Slavery and the Gothic
JANINA NORDIUS

The trauma of slavery has been a persistent presence in British and American Gothic fiction from soon after the genre’s inception. On both sides of the Atlantic, the rise of the Gothic largely coincided in time with the upsurge of the abolitionist movements, but, due to the different histories of Britain and the United States, slavery Gothic developed along different paths in the two countries (see RACE). In Britain, where many families owned properties worked by slaves in the Caribbean sugar colonies, the debate over slavery began to gain momentum in the 1780s, resulting in the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in 1807 and, in 1833, an act abolishing slavery altogether in the British Empire. In the United States, where slavery existed within the country’s own borders, the Atlantic trade was outlawed in 1808, but it was not until the 1830s that the antislavery movement grew to become an influential force, and it took another three decades and a civil war before slavery itself was finally abolished in 1865.

Several of the earliest British writers of slavery Gothic were women, writing in a sentimental mode and from a predominantly Eurocentric perspective. A favorite scenario is that of the white European visiting the slave colonies and being deeply shocked and ashamed at the brutality exercised over the enslaved by fellow Europeans. Yet at the same time, this seriously felt compassion blends both with patronizing condescension and a profound uneasiness at the enslaved’s cultural otherness and their alleged susceptibility to superstition. The possibility that the slaves might rise up and retaliate on their oppressors is also a standard source of terror in British slavery Gothic, especially after the 1760 rebellion in Jamaica and the 1791 revolution in San Domingo (now Haiti).

The Jamaican episode in Sophia Lee’s The Recess (1783–5), set in the Elizabethan age, when Jamaica was still a Spanish colony, is a case in point. Abducted to Jamaica by a ruthless planter, the heroine is saved by the outbreak of a slave revolt from being forced to marry her abductor, whose cruelty to the enslaved has helped to provoke the rebellion. Fearing for her life and for her virtue as she becomes the prisoner of the rebels, the terrified heroine nonetheless stands by her conviction that the ferocious brutality displayed by her captors is but the result of the inhuman treatment they have suffered under slavery, a treatment that has corrupted their once innocent but simple nature.

The motif of a slave revolt preventing a forced marriage, only to make the unhappy bride-to-be an equally unwilling captive of the rebelling Maroons, recurs in Charlotte Smith’s
slavery and the gothic

The Story of Henrietta (1800), set in late-eighteenth-century Jamaica. In this novella, Smith’s white characters voice their anxieties over issues such as the violence bred by the rebellion; the widespread practice of Obeah (an African diasporic religion practiced by the enslaved); the threat of crossracial rape (a fate that Henrietta escapes but not so, we are left to infer, the enslaved mothers of her Creole half-sisters); their own identities as white Creoles; and, not least, the inhumanity of slavery and their own shattering awareness of being themselves complicit in a system they detest.

Although Anna Maria Mackenzie casts an African king and his son as major characters in her epistolary novel Slavery (1792), the narrative perspective remains Eurocentric and both characters are apparently modeled on the European “man of feeling.” The novel displays a disturbing ambivalence concerning the moral justifications of slavery, as authoritative ameliorist voices condoning the system compete with the outraged narratives told by its sufferers, some of these clearly drawing on Equiano’s harrowing account of the Middle Passage (1789), others introducing the reader to the terror-laden landscape of a mind deranged by torment and degradation as the narration breaks down into incoherent fragments.

The many awe-inspiring versions of the story of Three-Fingered Jack, the Terror of Jamaica (see Paton 2008), which proliferated in Britain in the years around 1800, likewise center on an African protagonist. A robber intent on wreaking revenge on all white men for the wrongs done to himself and his race, Jack derives much of his reputed strength from being an alleged practitioner of Obeah. Practicing Obeah was a capital crime in Jamaica, as Obeah men and women were thought to take an active part in fomenting rebellion, a theme that is also at the center of Cynric R. Williams’ pro-planter novel Hamel, the Obeah Man (1827), set in the early 1820s. Replacing the sentimentalism of earlier British slavery Gothic with a style of narration inspired by German Schauer-Romantik, the author shows us a complexly and sympathetically drawn black protagonist sharing the scene with a hypocritical white missionary sent out from Britain, whose professed Christian egalitarianism (his “white Obeah”) is seen as far more threatening to the plantocracy regime than the uncanny rites of Hamel and whose personal villainy is shown to be all but infernal.

Although less intensely after 1833, slavery remained a motif in British literature, as seen for instance in Charlotte Brontë’s Caribbean character in Jane Eyre (1847), Bertha Mason, an icon of Creole decay, and in Domenica-born Jean Rhys’ rewriting of Bertha’s story in Wide Sargasso Sea (1966).

In the United States, where slavery was not abolished until the end of the Civil War and where its horrors were closer to home than had been the case with British overseas enslavement, slavery Gothic developed in several directions. The events in Haiti also had an impact in its northern neighbor, as seen, for example, in Leonora Sansay’s Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo (1808). Sansay gives a shocking account of revolutionary chaos and violence, which, the implication is, might just as likely happen in slave societies elsewhere. That the example of Haiti remained in vivid memory even after half a century is obvious from Herman Melville’s novella Benito Cereno, published in 1855. When the truth of the revolt on board the slave ship San Dominick finally dawns on the visiting Captain Delano, his complacent naïvety is seriously shaken, even though the ambiguity of the narration precludes any simple conclusion as to who is most to blame for the evils that have passed, the mutinous slaves or the enslavers. Melville’s investment of blackness and whiteness with moral values open to interpretation has a precedent in the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, for instance in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1838), a novel that critics such as Toni Morrison (1992) and Teresa A. Goddu (1997) have seen as implicitly engaging with contemporary American discourses on slavery and race.

Slavery Gothic took a new turn when African American writers began to tell their
own stories in writing. Slave narratives relating the writers’ trials during slavery and subsequent escapes to freedom – for instance, the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845), William and Ellen Craft’s Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom (1860), and Harriet Jacobs’ Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) – played an important part in the antislavery campaign. These narratives told not only of legalized physical violence against slaves (sometimes ending in the crippling or death of the victim) but also of families being split up, their members sold in different directions. They also reversed the myth of the oversexualized black male’s appetite for white women found in many earlier texts, by explicitly stressing the sexual exploitation of enslaved women at the hands of ruthless slaveholders. Finally, they emphasized how enslaved people suffered from a total lack of human rights.

Although presented as autobiographies, slave narratives often drew on tropes and conventions borrowed from Gothic romances to drive home the very real horror of the events described. This is especially so in Hannah Crafts’ purportedly autobiographical novel The Bondwoman’s Narrative, probably written in the 1850s but not published until 2002 by Henry Louis Gates. Crafts juxtaposes scenes of relative idyll with those of bestial torture and death; she relates tales of supernatural interference; and she gives some nightmarish pictures of persecution and imprisonment, including an episode of “white slavery” in which a woman who has passed for white all her life is discovered to have black ancestry, which makes her legally liable to be sold as a slave. Similarly, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s influential abolitionist novel Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852) transposes the classic Gothic plot of confinement, threats of rape and lethal violence, and uncanny terrors from the old castles and convents of Europe to the American antebellum South, in a Dickensian mix of sentimentalism, social commitment, and chilling horror.

Although the motifs of passing and miscegenation also occur in some of Charles Chesnutt’s writings set in the postbellum period, his contribution to slavery Gothic is mainly found in some of the stories told by the ex-slave Uncle Julius in The Conjure Woman (1899). Despite the humorous tone in which these tales are communicated to the reader by Julius’ white listener, the underlying reality of slavery’s misery casts the hoodoo (folk magic similar to Obeah), used by the conjure woman to alleviate the impact of that misery, in a less facetious light.

Throughout the twentieth century, the specter of slavery continued to haunt American literature. In the Southern Gothic works of William Faulkner, the present is always plagued by memories of a past fraught with horror and vile secrets. Absalom, Absalom! (1936), for example, traces the downfall of the South back to the institution of slavery on which its former prosperity was founded, revealing on the way a sordid history of racial hatred, mixed genealogies, murder, and betrayal (see SOUTHERN GOTHIC). In Beloved (1987), set in the 1870s, Toni Morrison charts the sufferings inflicted by slavery through her characters’ “rememories,” recovered from the limbo of willfully forgotten pains and sorrows. Centering on the escaped slave woman Sethe, who kills her baby daughter rather than seeing her returned to slavery, the story records the effects on Sethe’s family produced by the appearance, many years later, of a young woman who may or may not be the incarnated ghost of the murdered child. Moreover, the legacy of slavery still lives on in works of American Gothic that deal with racial discrimination and prejudice, even when set long after the legal abolition of this inhuman system (see AMERICAN GOTHIC).

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Race; Southern Gothic.

REFERENCES
Both the historical setting and the cultural register of Southern Gothic fiction are strikingly different from those that originally marked popular Gothic fictions of eighteenth-century Europe. This writing and the criticism which surrounds it demonstrate the Gothic as a textual machine in Pierre Macherey's sense (Macherey 1966). That is not to say that Southern Gothic literature uses a formula in the sense of plot (as the enduring structure of the romance) or of characters or other content (as, say, crime fiction). It may, in one sense, constitute a generic category. At the same time, however, the Gothic literary machine deploys a mechanism of identification and affect which is persistent and recognizable across genres, historical periods, and cultural registers. Macherey's sense of the production of literary meaning is useful here, in that it allows us to look at this work from a historical or cultural materialist position, to examine its cultural location, and at the same time to think through its use of those subjective effects that are most often considered psychoanalytically. The Southern Gothic can best be understood through a methodology that bridges the historical and the psychological.

The term Southern Gothic was used by contemporary reviewers in response to the appearance in the 1930s of short stories by William Faulkner and Eudora Welty. These stories contained elements of the grotesque and the uncanny, somewhat baffling to the Northern sensibility that dominated American letters at the time. Toward mid-century, the alternate term Southern Renaissance was increasingly applied to a generation of writers who together seemed to be producing a “new” kind of Southern writing. This writing articulated a regional identity at odds, on many levels, with dominant constructions of the nation. It also asserted the American South as the location of a unique set of stylistic innovations and

**FURTHER READING**


intellectual interventions in the Modernist short story and novel. This literature depicts, in general, small-town life in the Southern states of America, and is peopled variously by grotesque characters, buried secrets, uncanny elements, and ghostly presences. Superficially, it is for these latter reasons that the term Gothic applies. Apart from Faulkner and Welty, writers who can be placed in this category include Thomas Wolfe, Carson McCullers, Truman Capote, Flannery O’Connor, Walker Percy, Erskine Caldwell, and the playwright Tennessee Williams. Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1963) contains all the elements of a formula already well-established at the time of its publication. The whiteness of this list is immediately apparent, and one challenge to the category can be made by including certain works of Jean Toomer, Zora Neale Hurston, and Richard Wright which fit the definition in every respect. Critics such as Teresa Goddu (1997) point to Edgar Allan Poe as a link between the European Gothic and Southern American writing.

Southern Gothic fiction can be identified with naturalism, in writers such as Erskine Caldwell, and with high Modernism, in writers such as Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner. It very clearly responds to those experiments with form and fractured or alienated subjectivity that characterize the new high-art fiction of the early twentieth century. Thus in its cultural register it is very different from the popular culture phenomenon of late-eighteenth-century British Gothic and from those nineteenth-century periodical fictions we now categorize within the Gothic genre. Southern Gothic fiction often deploys the kind of radical experiments with subjective prose that are normally associated with the high Modernist project. Its mode of publication and contemporary critical reception reinforced this identification with high culture. However, these same kinds of narrative instabilities focused through perspectival shifts and unstable meanings also exist in genres such as the sensation novel, which are more readily associated with the popular Gothic

(see sensation fiction). The influence of Poe on Southern Gothic writing might sit somewhere between these two cultural registers.

Southern Gothic fictions share, and at times make conscious use of, a set of narrative effects established in English-language fiction in the late eighteenth century. They marry a psychological sense of self and other to the uncanny return of historical trauma in a mode immediately recognizable to readers of earlier Gothic fictions. This sense of self and other, of fractured identity, works at multiple levels in Southern Gothic fiction. Central characters are, in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s words, often “massively blocked off from something to which [they] ought normally to have access” (Sedgwick 1999: 13). So, too, is the scene itself, the small Southern town, the isolated and decaying plantation setting, the regional culture itself. They are abjectly semiseparate from the very nation within which they exist and are defined. These writers use the Gothic mode to speak back to America from within. The presence of the uncanny and the grotesque in their work quickly became identified with Southernness itself. It was a way of redefining or subverting national identity from a dissident Southern position.

The South of these novels is defeated, impoverished, and cut off. It is a place outside the rational light of modern America. After the Civil War, the southern states functioned as the abject of the American nation. They became the location to which a racial politics which was in fact constitutive of the nation itself was banished. They were the ghostly scene of the historical trauma of slavery, of the ruined rural economy, of the white colonizer. These fictions express this banished history, this cut-off identity, in the uncanny return of the historical revenant. Gothic effects, in their dependence on both Romanticist notions of the essential inner self, and on wider discourses of identity-based power (as race and gender, for example) are the perfect structure for the expression of the relation between self and repressed historical trauma.
(see romanticism). In *Gothic America*, Teresa Goddu demonstrates convincingly that the South and the generic term Gothic function as abjections for a nation whose racial violence belies the Enlightenment ideals on which it purported to found itself. The South, in its abjection, becomes an uncanny place, a location of Gothic effects.

This wider cultural history frames another, subjective, politics of the psychological self. The work of Capote, McCullers, Faulkner, and Welty is structured around the relations, in white American literature, between a fetishized blackness and the existential problem of the self and subjectivity. Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* is the best theorization of this literary dynamic (Morrison 1993). As these writers employ Modernist structures and stylistics to create a fractured, alienated sense of (white) self as loss, they place their protagonists against black characters who function as social, sexual, and racial others. The landscape of the segregated South is represented through the white psyche in such a way that black neighborhoods and workplaces become the location of uncanny horrors and ghostly returns. The brothel scene in Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward Angel* is one of many illustrations of this racial/psychological mechanism which is constitutive of the work generally categorized as Southern Gothic. Carson McCullers’ *The Member of the Wedding* presents the African American cook Berenice as both the indistinct, preverbal background of protagonist Frankie’s subjectivity and, radically for white American fiction, as a desiring subject in her own right. The tension between these two positions is one of the signal ideological instabilities of the novel. Such tensions are a marked feature of the Southern Gothic mode. White writers such as McCullers use the semiotic material of race—associations between blackness, entrapment, shadows, absence, fear, indistinctness, and the abject—to structure a set of effects that formulate the psychological self as horrific loss, repression, and return. This mechanism is at the same time a repetition of ideology and a resistance to it.

Another feature of the Southern Gothic, a marked assertion of sexual dissidence, is again shared in common with the high Modernist project more generally. Many key works are structured as *Bildungsromane*, and feature young characters who cannot, or refuse to, conform to gender. Joel Knox, protagonist of Truman Capote’s *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, is introduced to the reader as “too pretty, too delicate and fair-skinned” and with “a girlish tenderness” in his eyes (Capote 1948: 4). Capote consciously and deliberately uses established elements of nineteenth-century British Gothic to feminize Joel and position him as a passive heroine, entrapped in a decaying mansion with a horrific history (in this case, slavery). For female characters, gender dissidence often takes the inverse form of active, butch protest against femininity and the social structures that it supports. Harper Lee’s Scout Finch is perhaps the most widely recognized example here, though Eudora Welty, Flannery O’Connor, Truman Capote, and Carson McCullers all present similar butch female characters. Placed together with uses of racial subjectivity and the repetition of historical trauma, these novels formulate a queer protest against systems of racial violence that rest on fixed notions of white femininity.

Sexual dissidence is also allied to those grotesque elements that feature in Southern Gothic fiction as much as, or more than, ghostly presences. Traveling carnivals and circuses form a recurring feature of these fictions, providing an abject space where rules of meaning are suspended, and where “freakish” characters move threateningly into the center of narrative. These might be read in terms of the regional protest. The South itself, as Angelia R. Wilson (2000) has pointed out, is seen from without as a region peopled by the grotesque, the deformed, and the dysfunctional. At the same time, bodies that do not conform to dominant structures of signification—Frankie’s “too tall,” unfeminine frame and Berenice’s uncanny single blue eye in *The Member of the Wedding*, for example—function as disruptive presences which threaten orders of meaning.
Faulkner and McCullers are remarkable for their presentation of characters with perceptive and bodily disabilities, and for their attempts to present consciousness through, rather than against, these subjects. Through such foci, the relation between the grotesque and the uncanny, in bodies which mis-signify, becomes a challenge to social orders of meaning in the small Southern towns of these fictions.

Much recent work on Southern Gothic writing focuses on its place in the history of literatures of sexual dissidence. Works by O’Connor, McCullers, Capote, and Lee have recently been read in terms of sexual identities perhaps more fixed than those available at the time of their production. Readings in term of race and subjectivity tend, with one or two notable exceptions, to be presented separately from readings of sexuality. Yet one of the most marked features of this writing, and one inseparable from its use of Gothic effects, is the manner in which it marries sex-gender protest to the resistance of racial violence. Important critical works that have recently appeared focus on Black American Gothic, and the relations between race and Gothic effects in American literature generally. This might potentially complicate the term Southern Gothic, in viewing the relations among race, regionalism, Modernism, and Gothic mechanisms in American national literature as a whole. A final critical question might be raised around the endurance of the Southern Gothic mode as a literary machine. If writers of later generations, such as Harry Crews, William Gay, Pat Conroy, Larry Brown, and Cormac McCarthy, can be said to work in the Southern Gothic tradition, this may tell us something about the function Gothic effects continue to perform in relation to Southern literary identity. Likewise, critics do not consider the work of Southern writers of mass-market Gothic, such as Anne Rice, Charlaine Harris, and Sherrilyn Kenyon, to be “Southern Gothic.” The reasons may seem obvious, though there is no question that Southern histories and Southern identity inform this Gothic work. An exploration of precisely how these authors may not fit the critical category can tell us a good deal about the functions and cultural register of the category itself.

The Southern Gothic as literary/critical production redeployes established structures of genre as a system of meaning. Its persistent Gothic invocations of uncanny disruptions in orders of signification, both subjective and historical, allow Southern writers a partial route out of systems of power that have structured both national and regional culture. Like all literatures, it can think itself only partially out of ideology. It is at this partial limit that its Gothic effects arise.

SEE ALSO: Abjection; African American Gothic; American Gothic; Disability; European Gothic; Grotesque, The; Faulkner, William; Modernism; Queer Gothic; Race; Romanticism; Sensation Fiction; Uncanny, The; Williams, Tennessee.

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FURTHER READING
The increased number of staged spectacles on Gothic themes around 1800 is directly related to structural factors affecting the physical and legal configuration of contemporary theater.

In London, Drury Lane grew in size so much that after its 1792–4 rebuild conversational dialogue became difficult to hear. The most memorable individual casualty of this irreversible acoustic change was the tragic actress, Sarah Siddons (1755–1831). Siddons could no longer be heard. With Covent Garden and Drury Lane holding combined audiences of over 6,000 people, they increasingly relied on music and spectacle (see music). Paradoxically, these two royal “patent” theaters held a legal monopoly over performing the spoken word. To circumvent such theatrical hegemony, London’s other emerging theaters became centers of creative energy exploiting their restriction to mime and the musicalized drama known as burletta. The net effect was that the patent theaters imitated the repertoire of the more vigorous minor playhouses (the “illegitimate” stages). However, within Westminster (where the patentees were located), all new spoken text for the stage (including songs) had to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for censorship. Visual spectacle and mime remained free of this requirement. With non-verbal performance and plentiful music permissible routes for expansion, especially when theaters needed to mount a “mainpiece” and “afterpiece” every night, theatrical spectacles became increasingly popular.

One of the best indicators of this expansion – as well as signaling patent theater nervousness – comes in the diary entries of the Drury Lane manager, James Winston. Visiting the Lyceum Theatre, London, in 1804, he noted that Professors Schirmer and Scholl’s “Ergascope [is] far superior to Phantasmagoria,” and that their three shilling boxes undercut his prices. Winston recognized this gas and smoke spectacular would not catch on but neither did it infringe his patent or require licensing by the Lord Chamberlain.

In America, stage spectacles had a different genesis. In the absence of dramatic copyright in Britain, new London plays were staged in America, often within a year. Faced with a new republic made up of multilingual communities with little inherent affiliation to the British dramatic canon, American spectacles became closely linked to propagandizing the ideological and military integrity of the state. Typical would be the “representation of that grand spectacle […] The procession in the hour of the ratification of the Constitution of the United States of America, July 4th, 1788” performed at Philadelphia in 1802. In this, “The stage displays a view of Market street. Order of the Procession. No. 1 Twelve axemen; 2. City corps of dragoons; 3. French alliance; 4. Corps of Infantry, and so on to No. 87,” American variants of spectacle seamlessly encompassed civic and military aspects of the republic together with the representation of ideological and strategic alliances. Bloodshed was symptomatic of America’s founding and frequently re-enacted in stage spectacles. On July 4, 1811 the theater at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, staged the “Grand Spectacle” of The American Heroine [sic] Or The Glory of Columbia, featuring the Battle of Bunker Hill and death of General Joseph Warren. According to the playbill:

A battle commences, an ensign of the English and an American rifleman have a combat, the ensign tears the flag from the staff, and ties them round his body, fighting on. America fires a
With one of the Indian “chieftains” played by the dancer, equestrian acrobat, and harlequin John Durang (1768–1822), and the tableau featuring “the Goddess of Liberty” as well as “America,” this mixing of genres suggests how easily Gothic hybridity could be seamlessly interwoven with stage productions.

Contemporary Anglo-American theater took place on an enormous scale, attended by tens of thousands of people and featuring the national concerns of both Atlantic empires. At Boston, Massachusetts, in October 1812, William Dimond’s quasi-Gothic The Foundling of the Forest (1809), first staged at London’s Haymarket, appeared alongside The Constitution and Guerriere, a spectacle showing the sinking of HMS Guerriere by Captain Isaac Hull’s frigate, Constitution, off Nova Scotia that August. A week later the same spectacle was preceded by Matthew Lewis’ The Castle Spectre (1797) (see lewis, matthew). In much the same way, programmers in York, England, in 1801 scheduled The Castle Spectre alongside Tippoo Saib; or, The Plains of Hindostan, a military spectacle dealing with the long-running British conflicts with the Indian Mughal leader. Five days later, York staged James Cobb’s Indian Orientalist Ramah Droog; or Wine Does Wonders (1798), programmed with Lewis’ Covent Garden “Grand Ballet Pantomime of Action,” Raymond and Agnes; or, The Bleeding Nun (1797).

What should be clear from this account is that Gothic theatrical spectacles were staged across a huge theatrical network, morphing from their original genotypes to capture the latest concerns of empire and war. The density of the theatrical infrastructure supporting these dramas should not be underestimated. While Eugène Scribe’s staging of La Vampire (1820) at Paris might be a part of the scandalous heritage of Polidori’s novella (see polidori, john), it is more unexpected to find Bath Theatre Royal staging the “Grand Romantic and Traditionary Spectacle [...] called The Vampyre!” and playing it eighteen times in 1821. The Bath playbills promised “VAMPYRES” with “a young Female [...] whose blood is necessary to support their existence.” As the theater carefully puffed it, “This Piece was originally produced in Paris, where its effect upon the Audience was electrical!”

Staged spectacles could have considerable public impact. During a performance of The Bleeding Nun, or, Agnes and Raymond, in 1811 the wooden theater in Richmond, Virginia, caught fire. Most of the slaves in the gallery escaped through their segregated exit but nearly all the 680 – mainly white – people in the pit and boxes perished. As far away as York, England, abolitionist, antitheatrical evangelists drew immediate moral conclusions about America’s vicious South (see slavery and the gothic).

Gothic spectacle was the product of this type of materiality of the theatrical infrastructure. It adapted itself to the pre-existing format of spectacles, readily taking on global themes.

SEE ALSO: Lewis, Matthew; Music; Polidori, John; Slavery and the Gothic.

REFERENCE

FURTHER READING
Spectrality

JULIAN WOLFREYS

Spectrality appears a straightforward term, the normative sense of which has to do with ghosts. Along with ghosts come phantoms, phantasms, spooks, poltergeists, apparitions, and, less commonly, revenants. There is an entire “family,” as it were, of specters, various species belonging to the genus haunting (see apparition). Hardly a concept, the notion of spectrality employed in critical discourse has developed from the work of Jacques Derrida, most prominently his *Specters of Marx* (1994). To consign the specter, as trope and analytical figure, to this work alone though, is to miss the persistence of the spectral, and of quasi-related figures such as ghosts, phantoms, phantasms, revenants, arrivants, the Other, and the idea of a “hauntology” in general throughout Derrida’s writing, at least since *Dissemination*, published much earlier than *Specters* (see poststructuralism and the gothic; theory).

The phrase “the notion of spectrality” is used above because spectrality cannot be conceptualized. Anything that goes by the name of spectrality, the spectral, and so forth, cannot be made to form a coherent identity or theory of the spectral, without that which is spectral having always already exceeded definition. The idea of the specter, not to say spectrality itself, escapes being defined, even as one believes that one has borne witness to its apparitional instance. All that can be said of the spectral – and this relates to the critical thinking of the ghost, the phantom, and principals of haunting, without assuming that the terms are synonymous – is that there is, there takes place, an arrival from somewhere else, made manifest as a figure of otherness disrupting orders and systems of representation, logic, and so forth, and which, in arriving, returning, or coming to pass, traverses and blurs any neat analytical distinction.

What is it that troubles our perception or logic? Strictly speaking, that which is spectral is neither living nor dead; it is, moreover, neither simply a presence nor an absence; it crosses and recrosses such binary loci, as it does perceptions and conceptions of “here” and “there,” “past” and “present,” “visibility” and “invisibility.” Belonging to none of these, yet moving across the boundaries of each, the spectral is unavailable to, even as its motions, its very motif, worries at, and therefore solicits, not only the borders of such conceptual paradigms, but the very grounds on which logic and thought assume their figures to operate in the ontology of conventional thought and representation, be these materialist or metaphysical, theological or secular.

This being the case, spectrality demands a different thinking. Spectrality is available to reading – neither present nor a presence as such, its traces and their effects remain nonetheless at work, whether or not we perceive them – wherever there is a text, whether by text one implies its narrow sense (as in books, publications, writing on page or screen), or in the broader, Derridean sense of interrelated and interanimating structures or institutions.

If one is to apprehend the spectral a small but significant digression which will become an illustration of spectral logic is necessary: this relates to institutions such as universities, governments, churches, schools, and structures such as those pertaining to the laws and regulations of such institutions. These are textual inasmuch as their “meaning” is generated as a result of the interaction of the various histories, practices, and discourses that inform and make up such formations, whether these are “internal” to the given institution, or “external,” part of the broader cultural historicity, the contexts, out of which institutions, structures, and discourses come to be formed. Indeed, that there is no strict definition of the “internal” or “external,” of “interiority” or “exteriority” without recourse to and contamination by the other, in endless reciprocal manner, indicates a certain spectral work at work. And this is the case, too, if one tries to distinguish between practice and discourse, or practice and theory.
Coming back to the idea of the text in its narrow sense (as writing, publication, or perhaps image, photograph, or painting): every text is haunted. There is no narrative, no story, which is not, in essence or in spirit, a ghost story; even if, by this seemingly bold assertion, one indicates in passing that haunting, spectrality, can provisionally be acknowledged as being the work of the trait. There are traces for example that persist in any text as the ruins of culture and language, as the signs of a text’s historicity, the signs of its being generated as a singular manifestation at and of a given moment, but which is iterable subsequently, and which iterable renders the text as partly legible, partly illegible. Put more simply, one might read a text written and published in the eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth centuries. One might read a novel or poem, written in another language, reading it either in, say, German or French, or in translation. In each of these, there will be words, idioms, phrases, or cultural beliefs, local “logics,” conceptual assumptions, modes of thought, which have, in their time and in their place, served to make that text itself and no other, making it meaningful in a particular, singular manner. The vast bulk of the text remains transmissible and “translatable”; I can read, after a fashion, and with equal facility, Tristram Shandy (1760–7), a play by Shakespeare, a short story by Franz Kafka, or a poem by Paul Celan. I can watch Billy Wilder’s film Sunset Boulevard (1950), a film-text spectacularly spectral in its dependence on the traces of silent film, Hollywood culture, early Gothic films, and German expressionist cinematic experiment. All such texts are available to me, more or less, in significant semantic and cultural ways. Yet in each, there remain the remains, so to speak, of otherness, of the difference by which the text is partly legible, partly illegible, of the cultural, historical, epistemological Other; so many encrypted traces, they remain to be read and haunt the structure of the form in question.

So every text is marked by the signs of the spectral, every text is haunted. There is no reading without this. We live with specters. And all texts are disturbed, haunted, by such ghostly remnants, or revenants, which can return without being anticipated. Each text is embedded with the teletechnological recording of “voices,” which are, and remain, the signs of alterity in and of the very texts we read in any given moment. Thus any text is spectral; it is marked by the spectral because it oscillates with that which is neither present nor absent as such; every text is both phantasmic and material. So, to recap, like the question of specters, the textual reconfigures, when thought through, the limit between the living and the dead, announcing that limit, and every limit, border, or threshold, to be permeable; such a question presents itself in every textual encounter. It is not that the text is haunted by its author, or simply by the historical moment of its production. Instead, it is the very text itself that haunts and that is haunted by the traces that come together in this structure we term textual, which is phantasmic in nature, while paradoxically having an undeniably real or material condition and effect, if not presence. To tell a story, to produce some writing, is always to conjure ghosts – to call them up and attempt to lay them to rest; it is to open a space through which something other returns. Writing, narrating, these are, in effect, acts of anastomosis, opening a conduit to the Other and causing the possibility of an indirect communication. Whatever returns does so to inform perception, even though its revenance and resonance are not to be thought of as presences in the present as such.

In its power to disturb, thereby haunting meaning, identity, the stability of concept or presentation, the spectral cannot be contained any more than it can be explained by one particular genre or medium, such as the Gothic. It has the power to exceed, and escape, once again, any single narrative, mimetic or representational modality, genre, or textual form. Indeed, rather than any “thing” in itself, the spectral just is this movement, this return, this arrival and retreat that makes for the ghostly effect, and that announces its spectral efficacy.
As might be, if not clear, then appearing at the margins of the visible, what we call spectral has, in part, to do with the force of memory. To read is to receive constellated concatena-
tions of memories that have never been ours. To read fiction is to cause to appear figures, characters, who have never been “real” in any biological, fleshly sense, and yet who can exert on us the force of a materially existent being. In part, this is because the quasi-material conditions in which such imaginary figures exist, through the fictive and narrative mediums, is a discursive and semantic projection of the historical and material real (what naïvely we refer to as the contexts of a given text). The “real world” is therefore a phantasm itself. Thus a literary text is an archive of cultural memories, transmitted to us as readers, with the power to haunt as it is “brought to life” by imaginary beings. Aristotle understood this power. In memory, he knew, “we have one kind of tem-
poral perception that is oriented by what caused the affective picture” (Scott 1999: 126) which we see “in the mind’s eye.” Memory constitutes “an awareness of pastness and past impres-
sions” (Scott 1999: 126), as Marcel Proust and Thomas Hardy each knew, perhaps more than most. If we receive such phantasms at all, it is because the text, any text, can only be iterable and communicate because it refuses to remain buried as a discrete historical phenomenon, simply assignable or consignable as such. To put this differently, the spectral logic of narra-
tive, with its differential transmission of old stories and the visions they encourage through the force of difference, refuses to be assigned to dead letters or posthumous papers.

One novel illustrates this particularly well – Charles Dickens’ first novel, *The Pickwick Papers* (1837), a novel about relays and delays in posting and communication, and a novel also in which communiqués, the material man-
ifestation of spectral, absent voices, are wrongly delivered, misread, or simply go astray with various consequences. It is typical of those texts which, in the words of J. Hillis Miller, “can’t easily fit [...] into history. The best works are other to their times” (2004: 406). Despite its canonical status, *Pickwick* announces its own temporal, historical otherness, as well as its relation to other historical moments, this being signaled in the postal relay, but most immediately in the Dickensian ploy of an “editor” – Boz – who “orders” the posthumous papers of the Pickwick Club. In doing so, the novel dispels any cultural illusion that literature is “a medium for instantaneous and con-
tinuous transmission” (Siegert 1999: 248). *Pickwick* admits to the fact that literature is a discontinuous, haunted affair, proceeding by “intervals” that place the continuity and pres-
ence of “the subject in question” (Siegert 1999: 249). *Pickwick* stages an epochal suspension of its present through the circulation of the spectral traces of various pasts; in this, it an-
nounces nothing less than an engagement with the necessity of recognizing an inescapable encounter with fictionality, and therefore spec-
trality itself (Derrida 2003: 89).

At the same time, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* also remarks itself as being haunted by times that are not its own in other ways. Its editorial intervention into that which is announced as “posthumous” (all “papers,” all texts, are “dead” in this at least: that they remain as the traces of the absent author, they signal deferral, delay, absence, otherness, while remaining material, present, and transmissible into successive presents, and presences) is a simultaneous act of remembering and forget-
ting. This double act – effectively a mode of extended citation – in “conserving the traces aids in remembering and forgetting at the same time” (Agacinski 2003: 89). To archive or to edit is therefore to sublate, to suppress, and reserve the trace of the spectral, with the implicit promise that there will be a return, and thus a disruption of presence. In its very writing, *Pickwick* issues a cautionary reminder about the materiality of the literary text: despite our best efforts to decode it, put it to rest, the text will always remain Other, and thus remains to be read, to come, and to come back. But this reminder is nothing new. As Other, it announces
that which is to come by folding back on the past, and enfolding the past into itself. Like Boz, we have to live with and respond to phantoms.

Spectrality is irreducible to being a subject of literary analysis, though. Indeed, the problem of defining the spectral, of addressing spectrality, is encountered immediately because, for Derrida, the spectral is a concept without concept (Derrida 1997: 23). It is a concept or, more accurately, a quasi-concept, which, as Derrida observes apropos iterability, "marks both the possibility and the limit of all idealization and hence of all conceptualization"; "heterogeneous to the philosophical concept of the concept" (Derrida 1988: 118), spectrality resists conceptualization and one cannot form a coherent theory of the spectral without that which is spectral having always already exceeded any definition. Indeed, the condition of spectrality is such that one cannot assume coherence of identification or determination. Epistemological modes of enquiry implicitly or explicitly dependent in their trajectories and procedures on the apparent finality and closure of identification cannot account for the idea of the spectral. Having said that, though, consider what seems to be a definition and yet which articulates the experience of the undecidable in what Derrida names the classical or binary "logic of all or nothing of yes or no" (1988: 117): "ni vivant ni mort. C’est spectral" (1997: 12); the proposal is that the spectral is that which is neither alive nor dead.

The identification of spectrality appears in a gap between the limits of two ontological categories. The definition escapes any positivist or constructivist logic by emerging between, and yet not as part of, two negations: neither, nor. A third term, the spectral, speaks of the limits of determination, while arriving beyond the terminal both in and of identification in either case (alive/dead) and not as an oppositional or dialectical term itself defined as part of some logical economy. Paradoxical as this might sound, Derrida pursues his exploration in these terms, in response to asking himself what a specter might be, and what one might call by this strange name, specter (1997: 23)? Of course, says Derrida, the specter is something between life and death: “La question des spectres est donc la question de la vie, de la limite entre le vivant et le mort, partout où elle se pose” (the question of specters is therefore the question of life, of the limit between the living and the dead, everywhere where it presents itself) (1997: 23). Readable only in acts of textual oscillation as undecidable, the spectral is suspended “between the real and the fictional, between that which is neither real nor fictional” (1997: 24). We cannot resolve this haunting problem, the problem of haunting itself, for even as the figures of the text remain and return as held in suspension, so they also suspend our ability to read them, finally. Here is the experience of the undecidable. And so we continue to bear witness to the signs of spectrality, seeking to read that which resists reading, that haunts not only textuality, but also ourselves.

Moreover, the spectral cannot be consigned to a past, to supernatural beliefs or the Gothic novel, for instance. As Derrida also makes explicit, in the age of electronic media, and teletechnologies, the spectral proliferates. Derrida, connecting modern technology to the matter of reproduction (and so, implicitly, to matters of repetition and representation), explains: “when the very first perception of an image is linked to a structure of reproduction, then we are dealing with the realm of phantoms” (1989: 61).

The spectral nature of modern technologies of reproduction is highlighted by others. Speaking of the “tendency of television to decorporealize the vision that it is transmitting,” Samuel Weber remarks of television transmission that its realist mode hides its ghostly and phantomatic aspects (1996: 164). Avital Ronell addresses the spectral condition of television and of its haunting power which it uncannily perpetuates through the limitless dissemination of incorporeal images without origin (1994: 312–13). There is no simple first time
without a simultaneous displacement of the first time through reproduction. In this remark, we see mapped out that haunting is not some anterior effect. The ghost does not arrive after the fact, after the so-called reality of a situation. It is, we must understand before we proceed any further, the condition or possibility of any mode of representation. The spectral is that which makes possible reproduction even as it also fragments and ruins the very possibility of reproduction’s apparent guarantee to represent that which is no longer fully there.

Another way to approach this question of haunting therefore might be to suggest that all forms of narrative are spectral to some extent. Moreover, any medium through which we seek to communicate today that involves a narrativization of our identities in relation to others not immediately present is inescapably spectral. We might take Derrida’s speculation cited above further. Not only is it not the case that ghosts do not simply belong to the past and narratives told in the past – as in the phenomenon of the rise of Gothic fiction at the end of the eighteenth century. Instead, the proliferation of phantoms and the effects of haunting are undeniable aspects belonging to the identity of modernity. To borrow and develop a pun of David Punter’s on the nature of the Gothic (1999: 3), the spectral is the parasite within that site, or, more precisely, that parasite which we call modernity. Haunting exists in a certain relation to the identity of modernity that both informs the narratives we construct of modernity and those which are produced within the space and time of the modern; and it is a sign of the hauntological disturbance that, because of the various spectral traces, we can never quite end the narrative of modernity. We cannot with any confidence narrate to ourselves a teleology of the modern, whether we are seeking a narrative beginning or a moment of narrative closure. Haunting disrupts origin and eschatology. A specter haunts modernity, and the spectral is at the heart of any narrative of the modern.

Yet again, spectrality is irreducible to the apparition. The spectral effect is not simply a matter of seeing a ghost. Its process puts into play a disruptive structure or, recalling the idea of the phantom or phantasm as “gap,” a disruption that is other to the familiarity of particular structures wherein the disruption is itself structural and irreducible to a simple, stabilized representation. As Rodolphe Gasché remarks of the idea of the phantasm, “the phantasmatic “structure,” puts in play not the phantasm itself – there never could be one – but one of its figures [...] the phantasmatic is the space in which representation is fragmented” (1997: 172). The efficacy of spectrality is in its resistance to being represented whole or undifferentiated, or being “seen” as itself rather than being uncannily intimated. To “see” something is, however precariously, to initiate a process of familiarization, of anthropomorphizing domestication. The spectral movement that opens the “gap” already there is troubling because, despite the apparent fact of perception, the estranging “amateriality” of the spectral persists in its disturbance, even though we can only acknowledge its effect at the limit of comprehension, as it causes an “uncanny internal displacement” (Wigley 1993: 162).

Given the constant reference to Derrida throughout, it would be disingenuous to omit reference to deconstruction and the possible relation between deconstruction on the one hand, and spectrality on the other, both in relation, in this singular instance, to citation. Citation appears as traces, apparitions arriving from some other place. It announces, however obliquely, a relationship between spectrality and literature. They are the ghosts of writing that take place in the name, the authority, and institution of scholarship. Academic or critical writing is always haunted in the very act by which authority and identity are claimed. However, citation, far from being the remark of an absolute authority, constitutes and affirms a force of dislocation, an incapacity to close the system. While making the work of reading possible, citation renders any ontological coherence impossible through a certain phantom dysfunction or disadjustment. Risking a provisional definition of what takes place
internally within systems or institutions, deconstruction “often consists, regularly or recurrently, in making appear [...] a force of dislocation.” Deconstruction consists:

in remarking, in the reading and interpretation of texts, that what has made it possible [...] to effect a system is nothing other than a certain dysfunction or “disadjustment,” a certain incapacity to close the system [...] this dysfunction not only interrupts the system but itself accounts for the desire for system, which draws its élan from this very disadjoinment, or disjunction. (Derrida 2001: 4)

That displacement and disadjoinment that takes place in the name of deconstruction, and which deconstruction names as taking place, is unthinkable without the force of haunting or “the logic of spectrality [which is] inseparable from the very motif (let us not say the ‘idea’) of Deconstruction” (Derrida 1994: 178 n.3). This ghostly force of dislocation, dysfunction, or disadjustment within the unity of a system finds its appropriate visible figure in the intrusiveness of the citation, which arrives like some ghost in the textual machine, some poltergeist throwing business as usual out of whack and giving momentary disturbing manifestation and form to “the idea of the idea” (1994: 178 n.3). In short, citation materializes ideality. At the same time it performs and gives every time singular manifestation to the imminent revenance that haunts every word. Citation shapes itself in singular fashion and each time with a difference, through its iterable appearance to the contours of an otherwise invisible past, irretrievable event, or a disembodied and unrepresentable concept. And in as much as this iterable apparition takes form, then it might be ventured that all literature comes down to, and has the chance of a survival, according to the spectral logic of citation. Literature is citation. Literature is spectral.

SEE ALSO: Apparition; Poststructuralism and the Gothic; Theory.

REFERENCES
Spiritualism is generally concerned with the belief that spirits of the dead can communicate with the living. It also specifically refers to a religion that began in the late 1840s in North America and that centers on the same premise, that of spirit communication, albeit communication facilitated by mediums (see *mediumship*) in addition to other guiding principles. These principles, which set the founding philosophy of spiritualists, include, among others, the belief that there is life after death (the continuous existence of the human soul), a belief in our own personal responsibility, and a belief in God. In the beginning of the twenty-first century spiritualist churches could be found throughout the United Kingdom (about 350 churches), United States (about 100 churches at a conservative estimate), Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Although the religion began in the 1840s following the establishment of intelligent communication with a spirit entity through rappings (i.e., knocking sounds of no apparent natural origin), there are particular figures that feature earlier in the history of spiritualism due to similar beliefs in, and searching for, proof of an afterlife. Such figures include Emanuel Swedenborg, an eighteenth-century Swedish scientist, theologian, and astronomer, who famously made a transition from scientist to mystic as a result of his widely reported visions, spiritual insights, and messages from the spirit world. Franz Mesmer is also considered an important precursor since the development of his trance-inducing technique, Mesmerism, often caused participants to describe contact with otherworldly beings (see *hypnotism*). Swedenborg’s name appears again in the history of spiritualism due to a young American medium by the name of Andrew Jackson Davis who allegedly made contact with him through trance. Davis combined the tenets of Swedenborg and Mesmer by receiving many spirit messages from the former and practicing and lecturing extensively about the latter. It is possible Edgar
Allan Poe (see Poe, Edgar Allan) was inspired by Davis in writing "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" since it is documented that he attended many of Davis' lectures on mesmerism (Sova 2001: 85).

The true founding of spiritualism, however, is considered to have occurred on March 31, 1848 in Hydesville, New York. Two sisters, Margaret and Kate Fox (aged 15 and 12), made contact with a spirit via some mysterious rapping sounds. Over the course of the next few days a code was developed that enabled questions to be asked by the girls and a yes/no response given by the spirit. Slowly a narrative was built up that established the communicating spirit to be that of a peddler who had been murdered five years earlier and buried in the cellar (Doyle 1926: chap. 4). Word of the Fox sisters spread and the idea that it was possible to form home sёances where groups of people (known as "sitters") could meet and attempt to commune with spirits through a designated medium achieved instant popularity. In a very short space of time many societies of spiritualists were formed throughout America with these early forms of spiritualism initially seen by some as parlor-based entertainment (Pearsall 1973: 29). As a result, the messages experienced in the sёance room (i.e., spirit communication via rapping or from the medium directly) gradually gave way to more elaborate phenomena (e.g., automatic writing, table turning) with "mental mediumship" increasingly being replaced by "physical mediumship." Gauld (1982: 4) lists a whole array of physical phenomena that was reported by those attending such sёances, for example: object movement/levitation; direct voice phenomena (vocal apparatus placed on the sёance table, for example, a speaking trumpet, allowing spirits to converse directly with the sitters); apports (objects appearing from nowhere allegedly bought into the sёance room by spirit); spirit photography; and spirit materialization.

The movement also spread to Victorian England where the middle classes responded in a similar way, initially viewing it as an entertaining pastime. A journalist at the time reported "you were invited to 'Tea and Table Moving' as a new excitement and made to revolve with the family like mad round articles of furniture" (Pearsall 1973: 29). Mrs. Hayden, who originally brought spiritualism to England in 1852, was seen as one of the first spiritualist mediums at the time. There were many others (e.g., Florence Cook, D. D. Home, Eusapia Palladino) who, during the development of the religion, captured the imagination of the public. The movement also attracted the attention of various eminent figures who were initially impartial investigators but then later became serious advocates. Such figures included the chemist and physicist Sir William Crookes, biologist Alfred Russel Wallace, Nobel laureate physiologist Charles Richet, and author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Fontana 2005: 100).

Despite some high-profile exposure of fraudulent practices by other figures (e.g., conjurers Harry Houdini and John Nevil Maskelyne) and the confession in 1888 by Margaret Fox that their rappings had been a hoax (Irwin 2004: 14), and also the condemnation by various clergy at the time (e.g., Bishop Wilberforce's equating of spiritualism with witchcraft), it gained popularity based upon the religious implications of what lay behind the various phenomena produced in a darkened sёance room. Pearsall (1973: 32) describes the religious significance of spiritualism as a simple piece of deductive reasoning: "if the phenomena were not natural they were supernatural, if they were supernatural they came either from above or below, if they came from heaven they were good, if they came from the devil they were bad." The negative furor surrounding accusations of fraud or dismissive comments regarding its entertainment elements provoked an incentive for a more organized religion.

In 1853, the town of Keighley in Yorkshire was the first to have a spiritualist church and spiritualist newspaper in Britain (The Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph, published in 1855). The continued interest in spiritualism attracted those supporting the religious underpinnings either from a syncretic perspective (i.e., on an individual basis similar to the New Age
movement) or in a more formal organized way (i.e., the spiritualist church). In addition, scientific interest continued. For example, in 1871 William Crookes reported on spiritualism to the Royal Society and published his findings in the Quarterly Journal of Science. The British National Association of Spiritualists (renamed in 1884 as the London Spiritualist Alliance and now known as the College of Psychic Science) was founded in London in 1873. Five years later the Two Worlds spiritualist weekly newspaper was founded by Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten. Mrs. Britten was to become a key figure in the development of the spiritualist church in Britain in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was through her mediumship that in 1871, Robert Owen (the famous social reformer) had allegedly communicated the basis of the Seven Principles of Spiritualism, which were later to be adopted by the Spiritualists’ National Union (founded in 1901) as the basis of its religious philosophy.

SEE ALSO: Apparition; Hypnotism; Mediumship; Necromancy; Poe, Edgar Allan; Psychical Investigation; Supernatural, The.

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FURTHER READING


Stevenson, Robert Louis

RODERICK WATSON

Robert Louis Stevenson’s (1850–94) deeper engagements with the Gothic link to a specifically Scottish cultural genealogy, looking back to an oral tradition of supernatural encounters, to the terrors of Calvinist guilt and predestination, and to the tales of the Covenanting martyrs that were told to him as a sickly child by his nurse Alison Cunningham (see Scottish Gothic; Supernatural, The). This is not to underestimate his adult appreciation of the genre as a professional writer of romance, nor the influence of his period’s contemporary anxieties and his own darker and more personal fascinations (see Beattie 2009), all of which are evident in the mature work of the mid-to-late 1880s.

Stevenson’s most famous “Gothic gnome” – The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde – burst upon the public as a Christmas market “shilling shocker” in January 1886. He sent a copy to his friend W. H. Low with the comment “the gnome is interesting, I think, and he came out of a deep mine, where he guards the fountain of tears. It is not always the time to rejoice” (Stevenson 1924a: 67). That particular “deep mine” has proved to have many shafts, some of which lead to Scottish historical contexts of duplicity, hypocrisy, and crime (Deacon Brodie, Burke and Hare) (see Crime) while others trace the period’s fears about decadence, racial degeneration, and counter-Darwinian regression (see Degeneration). Thus Hyde is described as if “the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices: that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life,” and yet this creature also has a terrible energy and a “love of life” (Stevenson 1924d: 73). This vision of abjected bestial energy and gross materiality anticipates the darker and more personal vision Stevenson was to explore two years later in “Pulvis et Umbra,” in which the “monstrous spectre” of human life is seen as a “disease of the agglutinated dust” trapped
on a “rotatory island loaded with predatory life [...] more drenched with blood, both animal and vegetable, than ever mutinied ship, [that] scuds through space with unimaginable speed, and turns alternate cheeks to the reverberation of a blazing world, ninety million miles away” (Stevenson 1924c: 62). It is this bleak vision that gives a metaphysical or indeed a proto-existential focus to Stevenson’s Gothic writing.

The same insight had already appeared in “The Merry Men” in 1882 (Stevenson 1924b: 1–56), when what seems to be a tale of superstition and bad conscience on the part of an old Calvinist wrecker on a remote Scottish island shore in the eighteenth century brings the young protagonist to the edge of a cliff where he sees “God’s ocean” and indeed a sudden glimpse of the universe itself as “a world of blackness, where the waters wheel and boil” in such a turmoil that “thought was beaten down by the confounding uproar; a gleeful vacancy [...] akin to madness,” as if all humankind (like his demented uncle) were given over to a kind of drunkenness, “a wild and almost fearful pleasure, rather demoniacal than human” in the “roaring blackness, on the edge of a cliff above that hell of waters” (Stevenson 1924b: 41–2).

The same spirit appears in The Master of Ballantrae (1889), which offers a telling glimpse of contingency and ultimate dark absurdity in the causeless enmity between the rival brothers and their conjoined fate in a North American wilderness, not to mention the Master’s habit of making major decisions on the spin of a coin (see Watson 2004). It may well be this aspect of the book that speaks most tellingly to the modern reader, rather than the romance of Highland rebellion, pirate ships, and the more conventional Gothic tropes of the sinister Secundra Dass, death, and (failed) resurrection.

The Master of Ballantrae is equally notable for its engagement with unreliable narration, via the testaments of the Master himself and especially the servant Mackellar who tells the most part of the tale. In this respect the novel looks back to James Hogg’s seminal text The Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) which, according to Robert Miles, manifested “a new language for the self’s drives, conflicts and discontents” (along with Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer), via a “narrative method of voices referring back to each other, withdrawing vantage points outside the text’s teasing, problematic inner space” (Miles 2002: 116). The same device is even more marked in Jekyll and Hyde, with its nested narratives and documents, while the Gothic supernatural of “Thrawn Janet” (1881) is equally ambiguous because of how the story is told, and by whom. “Thrawn Janet” (Stevenson 1924b: 107–20) has all the features of one of Hogg’s folktales of the supernatural (see folklore) but, as with Confessions, its ambiguities also serve to challenge Enlightenment rationality and the assumptions and pretensions of literate and educated outsiders. If Gothic fiction in general has been a significant precursor (as with the tales of Hoffmann) to what we would now see as a postmodern concern with the uncertainties and instabilities of both rationality and textual authority (see contemporary gothic), then this is especially true of Hogg’s masterpiece and what Stevenson learned from him or the oral tradition he sprang from.

Textual instability and the instabilities of consciousness itself are closely interconnected in Stevenson’s mature work, from the fragmenting self of “Markheim” (Stevenson 1924b [1884]: 87–106; much influenced by his reading of Dostoevsky in French translation) (see dostoevsky, fyodor) to the hidden, dual and indeed multiple selves of Jekyll and Hyde, not to mention the unspoken understandings and veiled desires of the privileged professional, masculine bourgeoisie that are revealed in a queer reading of that text.

Somewhere between the “fountain of tears” and the “slime of the pit,” Stevenson knew that that “mine” ran deep, as he recognized in his essay “A Chapter on Dreams” (1888) (see dreams). This superficially light-hearted meditation on dreams and the imagination is a pre-Freudian exploration of the unconscious that
includes his own half-recognized analysis of what we would see as a strikingly Oedipal dream. Using the metaphor of “the Little People” or the “Brownies” (uncanny helpers from Scottish folklore), Stevenson discusses how closely the theater of the mind and its dreams are bound up with creation, and yet how obscure the true meaning of such impulses may be to dreamers themselves. The examples he gives often depend upon a conviction that meaning (sometimes “hellish”) is at one and the same time immanent and irrecoverable. What are these impulses, he asks, who are “the Little People,” and “who is the dreamer?” (Stevenson 1927: 50). The essay is best known as an account of how Jekyll and Hyde came to him, but it also mentions the genesis of what he called the “not very defensible story of Olalla” (1927: 52), his own venture into the genre of vampire tales, first published in 1885. The mechanics of “Olalla” (Stevenson 1924b: 121–67) are labored, but the true strength of the tale is in its haunting evocation of the atavistic drive of sexual attraction, dizzy with a strange degenerative power. At such moments the text is rich with an unacknowledged response to the possibility of female desire, simultaneously imbued with male horror and fascination. Completely at odds with the tale’s purported moral, the sexual confusions of the vampire legend have rarely been so powerfully evoked (see vampire fiction), while by comparison the usual tropes of blood and biting seems scarcely developed and almost entirely redundant. Stevenson acknowledged that he had provided the decaying castle setting in the remotest part of Spain, but confessed his debt to “the Little People” for the rest. Hints of the dead and the undead feature in “The Body Snatcher” (1884), but this is a lesser piece in the Gothic vein compared to Stevenson’s best work, in which the threads of Calvinist dualism, romance fiction, and late nineteenth-century decadence can be seen to generate a much more modern engagement with the unstable or multiple self, with unreliable narrators and ambiguous texts, with desire, the unconscious, and existential absurdity.

SEE ALSO: Crime; Contemporary Gothic; Degeneration; Dostoevsky, Fyodor; Dreams; Folklore; Hogg, James; Scottish Gothic; Supernatural, The; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING


Stoker, Bram

WILLIAM HUGHES

Abraham Stoker junior (1847–1912) was born into a Protestant family, resident in the north
Dublin suburb of Clontarf. His father was a minor official in the British civil administration of Ireland, though as the recent scholarship of Paul Murray (2004) has indicated, the family’s Irish antecedents predate the Act of Union and connect this self-confessed liberal advocate of paternalistic Victorian Home Rule to a more militant eighteenth-century nationalism. Educated initially at home and later at a Dublin day school run by an Anglican clergyman, the young author was inducted into the rituals and tenets of a common masculine identity that connected the middle and upper classes of Irish society with their English counterparts. The educative ideal of *mens sana in corpore sano* – a healthy mind within a healthy body – which Stoker proudly espoused as his personal credo in his 1906 biography of the actor Sir Henry Irving, functions as a perplexing parallel to the writer’s own youth and adolescence. A sickly child, at one stage blind and certainly unable to stand upon his own feet as an infant, Stoker grew to be a successful college athlete, and maintained his interest in athletics, rugby football, and weightlifting when he himself entered the Irish Civil Service in 1866. That said, his university career at Trinity College Dublin, where he was associated with Willie and Oscar Wilde and John Butler Yeats, was academically undistinguished. Though he did achieve recognition in the debating chamber, and was – uniquely – appointed both Auditor of the University’s Historical Society and President of the rival Philosophical Society, he did not graduate with “Honors in pure Mathematics” as he was later to claim, and his MA was awarded, as is customary at Dublin, Oxford, and Cambridge, without further study.

Stoker’s career within the Irish Civil Service, first in Dublin Castle and later in the regions, was somewhat more distinguished. He attained promotion, and in 1879 authored a standard textbook for petty sessions clerks. Prior to this, though, he had obtained a modest – though financially negligible – success as the author of short fictions typified by a mixture of fantasy, romance, and horror. The first of these, “The Crystal Cup,” was published in *London Society* in 1872, while three novellas – “The Primrose Path,” “Buried Treasures,” and “The Chain of Destiny” – were serialized in the Irish magazine *The Shamrock* in 1875. In the period between these fictional publications, Stoker was editing a short-lived popular newspaper, *The Irish Echo* (later renamed *The Halfpenny Press*), and was supplying, from as early as 1871, unpaid and for the most part unsigned theatrical reviews for the more established *Dublin Mail*. Stoker was to return to newspaper and journal writing at several points during his later career, writing biographies for the London *Daily Telegraph* and contributing articles on literature and theater to the mainstream British periodical, *The Nineteenth Century*.

It was Stoker’s interest in the theater that prompted his enthusiasm for Henry Irving, the English actor who would in 1878 persuade the author to leave his relatively safe post in legal administration in order to manage a London theater company. Irving was a radical figure in the theater of his day, despite the disdain at times expressed by George Bernard Shaw and others regarding the conservatism of his repertoire. As acting manager of the Lyceum Theatre in London’s Strand, Stoker became responsible not merely for the practical administration of the company but also its assets, publicity, and touring schedules. These involved him in extensive work, not merely in London and the provinces but also in the planning and day-to-day management of the company’s eight tours across the United States. What is especially surprising is that, during this punishing regime, Stoker turned from short fiction to the more expansive medium of the novel, and though he continued to publish shorter works, often with a supernatural or theatrical bias, the author was to write eight lengthy works prior to Irving’s death in 1905.

Irving’s death precipitated Stoker into both a personal illness, which appears to have been a stroke or succession of strokes, and a financial crisis. His extensive biography of his former employer, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906), is both a eulogy of Irving and an occluded autobiography of Stoker,
detailing as it does the latter's encounters with celebrities as diverse as the British politicians Benjamin Disraeli and William Ewart Gladstone, the poets Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Walt Whitman, and the writer and explorer Sir Richard Burton. Stoker, though, remained a prolific novelist, publishing a further three novels, a study of historical imposture, and numerous short stories, celebrity interviews, and topical articles. Stoker's death, in London at the end of a lingering illness, was attributed by his great-nephew Daniel Farson to tertiary syphilis (Farson 1975: 233–4). The author's death certificate, which concludes with the telling word "exhaustion," fails to provide conclusive evidence for this supposition.

Stoker's obituary in The Times intimated with perceptible distaste that, though the author was most likely to be remembered for his biography of Irving, he was also “the master of a particularly lurid and creepy kind of fiction, represented by Dracula and other novels” (Obituary, 1912). This assessment is a gross oversimplification, however. Of Stoker’s eleven substantial novelistic works, only five – Dracula (1897), The Mystery of the Sea (1902), The Jewel of Seven Stars (1903), The Lady of the Shroud (1909), and The Lair of the White Worm (1911) – can be considered as generically Gothic. The remainder – The Snake’s Pass (1890), The Watter’s Mou’ (1894), The Shoulder of Shasta (1895), Miss Betty (1898), The Man (1905), and Lady Athlyne (1908) – are heterosexual romances, albeit with heroes who often face Gothicized (though not necessarily supernatural) peril. In addition to these, the two volumes of short fiction published during the author's lifetime – Under the Sunset (1881), a collection of fables ostensibly for children, and Snowbound: The Record of a Theatrical Touring Party (1908) – embody in places scenes of horror and death that align them to classic Gothic sensibilities and aesthetics. The collection Dracula’s Guest and Other Weird Stories (1914) was published posthumously by the author’s widow, the title story being – allegedly – the cancelled first chapter of Stoker’s 1897 novel.

Under the Sunset appears at first sight a strangely uncompromising work for the children’s market, even given the peculiarities associated with other illustrated juvenile fiction from the period. Stoker’s work arguably has more in common with the Christian parables of Charles Kingsley than it does with the intellectual inventiveness of Lewis Carroll, though one story – “How 7 Went Mad” revolves upon a mathematical impossibility which would no doubt have appealed to the Oxford don. The timeless fantasy land that lies “under the sunset” has a biblical morality and, indeed, “The Rose Prince” is perceptibly a reworking of the Old Testament story of David and Goliath. Other works in the collection have more macabre implications, however. “The Invisible Giant” is a story of plague, morality, and judgment, and though it draws upon the paradigm of Noah’s saving a remnant of creation in his ark, the written and visual depictions of sudden death, and of the towering figure of pestilence personified, are striking. “The Shadow Builder,” likewise, evokes the bleakness of human life even where it testifies to the power of a mother’s enduring love, and “The Castle of the King” (an edifice that appears in the accompanying illustration in the form of a monumental skull) is likewise a pilgrim’s progress toward death and dissolution. If the morality of these works is unexceptionable, its presentation – as contemporary reviewers recognized – was at times disturbing.

Stoker’s adult novels, however, were from the beginning underpinned by a commitment to masculine endeavor and resourcefulness. Set in the rural west of Ireland, The Snake’s Pass is an adventurous romance in which the English hero must win the heart of the Protestant Irish heroine, the approval of her widowed father, and the trust of a demotic, Roman Catholic populace which embodies small but still significant signifiers of separatist nationalism. This he does by sheer physical prowess, paternalistic intervention, and strident opposition to the oppressive, backward-looking culture represented by the local money-lender, an
avaricious Roman Catholic. This myth of peaceful integration, which resembles more the Gladstonian Liberal conception of Home Rule than nationalist politics within Ireland, is but one example of Stoker’s attempts to envisage Ireland as a colorful nation of humor and welcoming community – the latter being given an ironic and macabre twist in the short story “The Man from Shorrox” (1894).

*The Watter's Mou'*, a comparatively short work, is set in coastal Scotland, and like Stoker’s Irish tales (and some of his novels) displays an inclination to reproduce dialect, which is – for some – irritating. Lacking the political undertones of *The Snake's Pass*, but retaining that work’s taste for honest manliness, high adventure, and human endeavor, *The Watter's Mou’* describes a coastguard’s fatal intervention in a smuggling plot. The death of both hero and heroine in the novel has a suggestion of fate about it, and Stoker was to return to this aspect of Scottish rural culture in *The Mystery of the Sea* some eight years later. *The Mystery of the Sea* is premised upon the existence of second sight or prescience, an occult ability shared by the hero and a local seer. If ghostly processions and presages of the future were not sufficient for the hero, he becomes romantically involved with an American heiress. She in turn is pursued by a rapacious band of kidnappers, and is further antagonized by a Spanish nobleman resentful of her financial contributions to the US Navy during the Spanish–American War of 1898. The Scottish setting here masks an Anglo-Saxon manifesto that sees the United States as the natural ally of Britain, and distances Spain, the land of both the Armada and the Inquisition, as an Othered nation due to both its historical Roman Catholicism and its racial links with the Moors. Masculine chivalry, though, unites the English and the Spanish gentlemen in opposition to the sexually predatory kidnappers, and this is most graphically rendered as the two strive to preserve the heroine’s virginity from the advances of an American Negro who almost succeeds in raping her. Scotland forms the backdrop, also, to Stoker’s comedic doppelganger narrative, “Crooken Sands” (1894), and is the setting for much of the action of *Lady Athlyne*, a romantic comedy of mistaken identity and unwittingly contracted marriage (see **comic gothic**). Scotland, and the Scots as a warlike nation are also important to the plot of Stoker’s Ruritanian Gothic romance, *The Lady of the Shroud*, this being a work which also depends in places upon the presence of second sight.

*The Lady of the Shroud* is, in many respects, a work that looks back to the author’s fourth novel – albeit frequently with a wry irony in its allusions. *Dracula*, with its persistent supernatural content, represents a departure from the works that preceded it, though other aspects of Stoker’s best-known work link the text with those that preceded and followed it. Certainly, there is heterosexual romance pursued through adversity here, though it is not so heavily stressed as in the author’s other novels. Stoker’s enthusiasm for Anglo-Saxon America is as heavily signaled here as it is in *A Glimpse of America* (1885), Stoker’s lecture-room eulogy to the American nation. Masculine chivalry is, likewise, stressed in *Dracula*, and the novel is also highly ambivalent regarding fin-de-siècle feminism, a movement that he shorthands through the figure of the New Woman. If the historical mythology of vampirism is crystallized not through the beliefs of the past but by way of modern anthropological readings of them, the physical consequences of undead predation are similarly intimated through that most contemporary of secular discourses, physiological medicine. Indeed, the whole novel fetishizes the contemporary, dwelling upon the advantages to be gained from the deployment of technology – the Kodak camera, the traveler’s typewriter, carbon-copied documents, the railways, and the telegraph – and warns fearfully of the threat of degeneration within the national breed by way of the then well-known polemics of Max Nordau and Cesare Lombroso (see
Degeneration). The Count is, variously, a criminal, a degenerate, an invader, and an infectious immigrant, and he is opposed by an emblematic union of Anglo-Saxon, professional, adventurous, and noble chivalry as keen to defend the embattled woman as it is to rid the nation of a threat as physical as it is spiritual.

The imperiled heroine – a standard component of the female Gothic – is central to Dracula, as much as it is to Stoker’s other fiction (see Female Gothic). In the wilderness adventure narrative of The Shoulder of Shasta, the heroine is menaced – and teasingly disrobed – by the claws of an American bear. In the historical romance Miss Betty, the heroine is more active in exposing herself to danger, confronting a highwayman whom she suspects to be her impecunious fiancé. In The Lady of the Shroud, however, the heroine is even more assertive, taking up arms in her nation’s struggle against a militarily aggressive neighbor. The Lady of the Shroud is superficially a Gothic novel, though its always present heterosexual romance plot develops ultimately into a political fantasy imbricated with a slightly clumsy science fiction adventure. The opening of the novel is couched in Gothic terms, its titular female vampire obeying the rules of her kind established in Dracula. On her mortality being revealed, though, she becomes an imperiled heroine rather than a predatory siren, and though her personal courage is demonstrated by prowess in battle, her marriage to the statuesque hero brings with it an enduring womanly submission, the sheer abasement of which accentuates the values of a previous century, presented as they are here in a twentieth-century England – is a foe as implacable as H. Rider Haggard’s She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed (see Mummies). This is, again, a technological fantasy, for the archaic ritual of resurrection is effected in the modern world with the assistance of railway transport and electric lighting, and its enactment is justified through reference to the knowledge it might reveal. Its implications, though, remain blasphemous, and the deaths of all but the narrator in the first edition of The Jewel of Seven Stars raise implications not present in the revised, and somewhat less bleak, second edition.

Stoker is arguably a difficult figure to place in Gothic, despite the canonical centrality of Dracula. His work lies not unequivocally within the genre, and if his non-Gothic works are frequently inflected with supernatural signifiers, his overtly generic writings are imbricated also with the romance plots which seem to inform the breadth of his fiction. In a sense, criticism has claimed Stoker for the Gothic, and has possibly artificially aligned his non-Gothic writings with the few unequivocally generic works he published in novel form (see Criticism). There is more, though, to Stoker’s

Outside of such violent scenarios, Stoker’s fiction does seem to display a peculiar obsession with female assertiveness. Chivalric masculinity and the containment of marriage is vouchsafed as the approved route for such female figures to be neutralized, though in The Man – a New Woman novel published years after the decline of that figure – the heroine has to learn from her own mistakes. There is little of the supernatural here, though the scenes of high adventure in the North American wilderness and upon the high seas proclaim a masculinity which the slight figure of the heroine is demonstrably unable to emulate. The Jewel of Seven Stars, however, presents quite a different prospect. This doppelganger narrative of a mumified Egyptian Queen and her contemporary body double is as teasingly erotic with regard to the female body as Dracula, The Shoulder of Shasta, and Lady Athlyne, though its ambitious female pharaoh – who seeks a bodily resurrection in early twentieth-century England – is a foe as implacable as H. Rider Haggard’s She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed (see Mummies). This is, again, a technological fantasy, for the archaic ritual of resurrection is effected in the modern world with the assistance of railway transport and electric lighting, and its enactment is justified through reference to the knowledge it might reveal. Its implications, though, remain blasphemous, and the deaths of all but the narrator in the first edition of The Jewel of Seven Stars raise implications not present in the revised, and somewhat less bleak, second edition.

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writings than popular romance, and more indeed than Gothic. In their characteristic preoccupations with gender, with technology, and with the uncertainty of a culture poised at the edge of a new century, his work is a telling index of the British fin de siècle.

SEE ALSO: Comic Gothic; Criticism; Degeneration; Female Gothic; Irish Gothic; Mummies; Protestantism; Roman Catholicism.

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FURTHER READING

Sturm und Drang
DOUGLASS H. THOMSON

The briefly lived Sturm und Drang movement in Germany (from the 1760s to the 1780s) both drew from British literary sources that inspired the first Gothics and later directly influenced such Gothic writers as Matthew Gregory Lewis, William Taylor of Norwich, Charlotte Dacre, and the young Walter Scott (see Lewis, Matthew). Usually translated as “storm and stress,” this revolt against ideas of classical order took its name from the title of a play by Friedrich Maximilian Klinger (1776) dramatizing the turbulent energies of the American Revolution. Broadly speaking, Sturm und Drang writers shared with their Gothic counterparts several key features: an exploration of extreme states of emotion; a fascination with nature in its wilder and more sublime manifestations (see sublime, the); a resistance to social conformity, usually in the form of an ever-restless and often over-reaching hero; and an evocation of the marvelous, drawing upon native and folk traditions of the supernatural (see folklore; supernatural, the). As is well known, Goethe and Friedrich Schiller (see Schiller, Friedrich von) would come to disavow their youthful affiliation with Sturm und Drang, but its fervent spirit left a mark not only on their mature works but upon those of British Gothic writers.

For its inspiration, the Sturm und Drang movement drew from a number of sources that challenged the prevailing aesthetics of neoclassicism. Edward Young’s Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality (1742), with its dark and melancholy sensibility, exerted an influence, but the impact of his Conjectures on Original Composition (1759) proved to be even more decisive. Young argues that true literary genius
resides not in servile adherence to classical prescriptions but in the originality of its inspired creator. Shakespeare furnished the most powerful example of Young’s thesis, and German writers turned with enthusiasm to study “the poet of nature,” whose works became available in Christoph Martin Wieland’s (somewhat quirky) prose translations (1762–6). German poets, seeking a native rather than a classical mythopoetics, turned to James Macpherson’s The Works of Ossian (1765), Thomas Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765), and Johann Gottfried Herder’s Volkslieder (1778), a wide-ranging collection of folk songs. Rousseau’s call for a return to nature uncorrupted by the modern political state also played a role in the German desire to unearth a more authentic, native (or, in other words, not French) idiom of literary expression.

Herder proved to be the seminal figure for the genesis and agenda of Sturm und Drang, as he organized these various sources into an argument advocating the creation of a nationalist literature. In two important tracts, “Fragmente über die neure deutsche Literatur” (Fragments of Recent German Literature) (1767) and Von deutscher Art und Kunst (Of the German Way and Art) (1773), he defined literary merit in terms of an artist’s responsiveness to specific material and historical conditions. In his essay on Shakespeare in Von deutscher Art und Kunst, he argued that, although Sophocles and Shakespeare may be radically dissimilar in form, both dramatists display genius in their rich representation of the culture of their times, including popular culture and its traditional genres of expression. To find Shakespeare lacking because his plays do not measure up to some abstract standard of reason or prescribed form ignores his “infinite variety,” a richness that comes not only from his originality (the Young thesis) but also from his receptiveness to the powerful cultural crosscurrents of the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages. Herder’s concluding address to Goethe rings with optimism and conviction: the time is right for a German Shakespeare, if he discards the shackles of the French school and gives honest voice to the national character.

Goethe answered Herder’s call with his Götz von Berlichingen (1773), a drama set in medieval Germany that draws upon Shakespearean tragedy in its depiction of a headstrong knight set against a morally compromised social order. Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (The Sorrows of Young Werther), perhaps the supreme example of the Sturm und Drang movement, followed in 1774. Its moody young hero, given to reveries about the peasant folk and to quoting from Ossian, famously commits suicide rather than live with unrequited love. Goethe also heeded Herder’s call for tapping into the native folk traditions with a number of exquisite ballads; the best-known among them, “Der Fischer” (The Fisherman) and “Erlkönig” (Erl-King), later provided the texts for some of music’s most haunting lied (art songs). Schiller’s first three plays, Die Räuber (The Robbers) (1781), Die Verschwörung des Fiesco zu Genua (Fiesco’s Conspiracy at Genoa) (1783), and Kabale und Liebe (Cabals and Love) (1784), express the spirit of Sturm und Drang in their criticism of social inequities and probing exploration of republican ideals. A number of lesser writers heeded Herder’s call for a nationalist literature, chief among them the members of the Göttinger Hainbund (Grove League of Göttingen) with its Musenalmanach (Muses’ Almanac) (1770–5). These enthusiasts, among them the Stolberg brothers (Christian and Friedrich), Johann Heinrich Voss, and Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Höltz, found inspiration in the poetry of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, especially his Der Hügel und der Hain (The Hill and the Grove) (1767), in which the simple, rural virtues of the German bard triumph over the classical muse. While not a member of the Hainbund, Gottfried August Bürger (see bürgers, gottfried) became another of the League’s idols: his supernatural ballads, unabashedly catering to popular tastes, perfectly capture the Sturm und Drang preference for the macabre and the marvelous. He also exerted influence in his role as editor of the Musenalmanach from 1775 to 1795.

Goethe and Schiller distanced themselves from the more enthusiastic effusions of the Sturm und Drang movement as they went on
to form the great achievement of Weimar classicism. Schiller’s sharply negative review of Bürger’s ballads in the Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung (General Literature Newspaper) of 1791 — an essay that can be read as Schiller’s veiled self-criticism of his earlier works — represents this reaction against Sturm und Drang.

In England, translations and adaptations of Sturm und Drang literature appeared in various guises: two of Walter Scott’s first publications were his translations of Götz von Berlichingen and Bürger’s “Der Wilde Jäger” (The Wild Hunter); William Taylor’s influential “Lenora” was followed by five other translations of Bürger’s ballad in 1796; and Matthew Lewis introduced Goethe’s poetry to English audiences with his translation of “The Erl-King.” Such adaptations of German literature played a role in the formation of the British Gothic.

SEE ALSO: Bürger, Gottfried; Folklore; Lewis, Matthew; Schiller, Friedrich von; Sublime, The; Supernatural, The.

REFERENCE


FURTHER READING


Sublime, The

MAX FINCHER

One of the most significant intellectual influences upon the development of Gothic literature was a renewed exploration of the concept of the Sublime in eighteenth-century aesthetics and philosophy. Early Enlightenment critics like Joseph Addison and John Dennis re-examined the principles of the Sublime, first described by a Greek critic (possibly the third-century CE Cassius Longinus or the first-century CE Dionysius of Halicarnassus) in a treatise “On the Sublime” (Longinus 2004). However, by far the most influential study for Gothic writing was a popular work by the philosopher and Tory politician Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757).

Burke’s essay still provides a good starting point to understand the Sublime. He advances the idea that the Sublime is both a set of aesthetic criteria that are immanent within natural objects and phenomena, and an affective response of the mind to these objects and phenomena. This emotional response to the Sublime was explored at length by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, in his “Analytic of the Sublime,” the third book in his Critique of Judgment (1790). In contrast to Burke, Kant does not argue that the Sublime exists in the individual properties of objects. Rather, the Sublime is an effect of the mind’s inability to reason through those ideas that cannot be expressed or contained by any adequate form of representation. For Burke, the root of the Sublime, either witnessed in nature or as imagined through art, has its primary origin in the experience of terror. Burke examines how the emotion of terror depends upon the imagination, and is cumulative. To experience the Sublime is (paradoxically) to feel a painful pleasure. Graveyard poetry of the mid-eighteenth century, including Mark Akenside’s poem “The Pleasures of the Imagination” (1744), had earlier anticipated Burke’s systematic exploration of the various emotions of the sublime. Both Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth took inspiration from Kant’s ideas of the sublime as the “unpresentable,” in poems that explore the transcendental effect of the natural world upon the mind, death, spiritual insight and the supernatural, and particularly the notion of what constitutes “God” (see GRAVEYARD POETRY; ROMANTICISM).
In Part Two of his enquiry, Burke identifies terror as “the ruling principle of the Sublime” (1990: 54) and categorizes both the physical and conceptual sources of terror that create the Sublime states of astonishment and rapture. These sources are obscurity, power and excess, privation, vastness, infinity, darkness, loud and intermittent sounds, and pain. Many of Burke’s examples argue that the Sublime is frequently to be found in nature, for example in beholding mountains, precipices, extreme weather (e.g., thunderstorms, tidal waves), magnificent ruins, extensive forests, caves, and darkness. Burke’s treatise is almost a blueprint for the geography of the early Gothic novel, which is often set in remote locations in wild landscapes. In the novels of Ann Radcliffe, her heroines, and by extension her readers, often express their feelings of “respect,” “reverence,” “admiration,” and “astonishment” when traveling through the Alps, Apennines, and Pyrenees, or when they are caught in seemingly endless, gloomy pine forests with thunderstorms. Simultaneously, they are also left speechless, unable to articulate their experience, along the lines of the Kantian Sublime. As Sir Walter Scott observed of Radcliffe, “in working upon the sensations of natural and superstitious fear, Mrs Radcliffe has made much use of obscurity and suspense, the most fertile source, perhaps, of sublime emotion” (quoted in Sage 1990: 60).

Burke’s essay is implicitly infused with his own conservatism and adopts an empiricist approach to the Sublime, attempting to find explanations in the physical world and our psychological responses to nature. He pits the Sublime and the Beautiful as antithetical to each other, an interpretation later commentators will argue is simplistic. Burke genders the Sublime as masculine, whereas Beauty, its opposite, corresponds to femininity. For Burke, the ultimate example of the Sublime is God. Obscurity, where “all is dark, uncertain, confused, terrible” (Burke 1990: 55) is a powerful source of the Sublime and, Burke argues, more effective in poetry and writing. However, one might argue that a sublime effect is also achieved in Gothic architecture and art. Many Gothic cathedrals, with their vast height and florid ornament, create a sublime effect through inspiring feelings of awe and astonishment at their excess (see architecture, gothic). The etchings of labyrinthine prisons, “The Carceri,” by the eighteenth-century Italian artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi, are Sublime. Piranesi’s etchings are full of half-seen, shadowy figures, and one is unable to see where one staircase leads or ends. The paintings of the German Romantic painter, Caspar David Friedrich, typically his pictures of mountains and ruined abbeys wreathed in fog, as in “The Wanderer” (1820) are examples of the Sublime in art. The drawing “Repos dans le Malheur” (Rest amid Unhappiness, 1945) by the French poet and artist Henri Michaux activates viewers’ imaginations through uncertainty, allowing them to shape the details of the monstrous half-human, half-animal figure in their own minds.

An important subtext of Burke’s and other writings on the Sublime, and which emerges in the Gothic novel at the turn of the nineteenth century, is that the discourse on the Sublime can be interpreted as embodying a displaced language concerned with sexual desire and sexual politics. The language used to describe the physiological response to the sublime—“thrill,” “transport,” “breathless,” “ravishment,” “rapture”—is not so dissimilar from an amatory discourse of seduction and sexual desire found in fiction. The sexually repressed but fanatically devout Ambrosio, in Matthew Lewis’ novel The Monk (1795) responds to the portrait of the Madonna in both sublime and sexual terms. Ann Radcliffe’s descriptions of her heroines being trapped in labyrinthine castles perched on mountain peaks, such as Emily in the villain Montoni’s castle in The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), have been interpreted in terms of eighteenth-century sexual politics, reflecting both a desire and resistance to patriarchal power structures.

As well as Kant, other British writers developed Burke’s ideas. Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s essay “On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror” (1773) is one of the first critical
essays to attempt to explain how the Sublime functions specifically in Gothic fiction, particularly as it was developed in the novels of Radcliffe and her imitators in the 1790s. Barbauld advances Burke’s philosophical contouring of the Sublime by examining how an appreciative response to the Sublime is indicative of a moral, noble, or virtuous character. Barbauld’s essay also attempts to rationalize why we enjoy experiencing the thrill of terror. Our delight and appetite for “objects of pure terror” that should, ordinarily, repel us, is a moral conundrum, a “paradox of the heart” (Barbauld 2006: 131). She attempts to explain this paradox by arguing that the reader or viewer does not, in fact, derive any real pleasure from reading or seeing scenes of terror, but from the reiterated narrative conventions of Gothic fiction and “the excitement of surprise from new and wonderful objects” that stimulate the mind’s imaginative capacity (Barbauld 2006: 132). This occurs when the supernatural is introduced and terror becomes lost in amazement. Barbauld formulates a relational vector: the more wild or terrific a scene in fiction or visual art, the greater the pleasure that is derived. However, Barbauld qualifies this by asserting that if these depictions are “too near common nature,” perhaps by which she means real life, then they cause “an over-balance of pain” (Barbauld 2006: 132).

The Scottish poet and critic James Beattie also highlighted the moral dimensions to the Sublime, reminding readers that the grammatical origin of the word Sublime was “elevation” or “loftiness.” In his essay “Illustrations on Sublimity” (1783) Beattie explores how the experience of the Sublime is the most powerful in the realm of human art, especially in poetry and painting. Beattie’s reflections on Sublime characters are also important to understanding our responses to Gothic villains. Characters that are morally ambivalent and complex, which disturb any neat boundaries between “good” and “evil” characteristics, inspire astonishment. Consequently, “we sometimes admire what we cannot approve,” but only in an imaginative work of fiction, Beattie argues, in contrast to real life (Beattie 1996: 183). Beattie cites John Milton’s Satan in Paradise Lost as the original example. More often than not, such “sublime characters” have a monstrous quality to them, as in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, whom we both pity and fear. The satanic hero-villain, from Father Schedoni in Radcliffe’s The Italian (1797), Mr. Rochester in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847), and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights (1847), is painted with a particular set of physiological and behavioral attributes: tall, dark, taciturn, often aristocratic, impenetrable, eccentric, and reclusive with a secret past history, who inspires fear, pity, and sexual desire. A good example is Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) and the legions of morally complex vampires which are now to be found in contemporary vampire fiction.

Vijay Mishra, beginning with an analysis of Kant’s ideas on the Sublime, has most recently theorized a distinctive “Gothic Sublime.” Mishra argues that, in contrast to the Romantic poet, like Coleridge, who experiences the Sublime as a transcendental experience, the Gothic subject does not “self-transcend” (Mishra 1994: 40). For Mishra, the desire to return and capture the sense of the inexpressible (always allied to the invisible) is apparent in the Gothic novel, and anticipates a postmodern state where the means of representation (language) always falls short or overspills the boundary between signifier and signified.

Postmodern philosophers and cultural theorists, such as Fredric Jameson and Jean François Lyotard, have recently theorized that the sublime exists in contemporary culture in the sense of the individual’s sense of annihilation in the face of a seemingly endless series of global, unconnected random signifiers that increasingly lose any constant or stable meanings. In face of massive and sometimes conflicting systems of representation and knowledge, Lyotard, in The Postmodern Condition, shows how twentieth-century avant-garde artists and writers embraced sublimity to “present the fact that the unpresentable exists” (Lyotard 1984: 78).
Considering postmodern theory’s redefinition of the experience of the Sublime as central to the gap between representation and meaning, could contemporary Gothic texts be, in fact, anti-Sublime? Does their dependence upon endlessly reinventing the narrative conventions (to tell twenty-first-century vampire stories, for instance) undermine the experience of terror, if the reader is safely positioned, taking pleasure in knowing those conventions? Perhaps, as Maria Belville has most recently suggested, we need to look more closely at contemporary postmodern literature, or “Gothic-postmodernism” as she terms it (Belville 2009: 7) to see how and where the Sublime, particularly in the failure of language to accommodate our experience of terror, continues to thrill us.

SEE ALSO: Architecture, Gothic; Graveyard Poetry; Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann; Romanticism; Ruins; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Stoker, Bram; Terror; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING


Suburban Gothic

CATHRINE REDFORD

Suburban Gothic is a subgenre that exploits the anxiety that beneath the surface of idealized suburban communities – characterized as safe, spacious, family-focused, and removed from the corruption of the city – lie danger and dysfunctionality. The threat, whether it be a ghost, a demon, or a serial killer, is nearly always positioned as internal; the house next door (or even one’s own home and family), with its white picket fence and perfectly manicured lawns, is presented as being more menacing than the spooky old house on the hill or the stranger from out of town. Playing on fears about the “identikit” homes and families that the suburbs create, suburban Gothic suggests that there is something rotten hidden beneath the surface of these white, middle-class communities. Issues of identity and conformity
are addressed alongside anxieties about the destruction of the environment, as the suburbs expand and swallow up the countryside. The subgenre is most commonly associated with postwar North America, which saw mass suburban development as citizens bought into the ideas of prosperity and upward social mobility presented as part of the American dream.

Fears about suburban development can be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, with literary responses to the expanding suburbs of London incorporating Gothic tropes and motifs to portray a sense of unease and menace. In both *Dombey and Son* (1847–8) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–5), Charles Dickens explores the idea of industry and pollution invading the countryside as suburbs are built up (see *Dickens, Charles*). Wilkie Collins, too, examines the sinister aspects of the London suburbs in several of his novels, displaying distaste for both the new suburban class and the ominous landscape of half-finished houses on the outskirts of the city (see *Collins, Wilkie*).

Suburban Gothic as a specific subgenre flourished in the United States from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, and many films, television programs, and works of literature draw on the sinister undertones of the ideals of this era: the father working hard in a white-collar profession for his family; the contented mother looking after her home, children, and husband; and the spacious, modern house and friendly community that suburban living offers. One of the first examples of the American suburban Gothic, Shirley Jackson’s *The Road Through the Wall* (1948), does not contain any sort of supernatural threat but does explore the dark prejudices and class divisions of the suburban environment (see *Jackson, Shirley*). In the 1950s, Richard Matheson used the supposedly safe, peaceful suburbs as a setting for horror. In his novel *I Am Legend* (1954), the protagonist, Robert Neville, battles formerly human, vampire-like creatures from a distinctly suburban setting: he remains in the family home, drives a family car, and lives his life according to routine and conformity (see *Matheson, Richard*).

The idea that beneath the calm, contented façade of the housewife lurk feelings of entrapment and aggression is commonly used in suburban Gothic. In Ira Levin’s *The Stepford Wives* (1972), for example, a female newcomer to the suburbs sets out to discover the truth behind the community’s sinister, ultra-conformist housewives. More recently, the US television series *Mad Men* (2007–) has explored the psychological turmoil of a 1950s wife and mother through the character Betty Draper, who outwardly appears to live the perfect life but whose inner frustrations and pent-up anger suggest otherwise. *Desperate Housewives* (2004–12), another popular American television series, is set in an affluent suburban street whose female residents are involved in a range of dark circumstances including murder, infidelity, deceit, and addiction. Like Sam Mendes’ 1999 film *American Beauty*, which also draws on the frustrations and oppression of suburban living, *Desperate Housewives* is narrated by a dead character.

While a decaying castle or decrepit manor house have traditionally been the architectural settings for the Gothic, suburban Gothic often sets hauntings and other supernatural events in new houses and thus undermines the security that we feel in a modern development with its perceived lack of history. Jay Anson’s book *The Amityville Horror* (1977) is based on the supposedly true events that occurred when George and Kathy Lutz moved into a house that, thirteen months previously, had been the site of the notorious DeFeo massacre (see *Amityville Horror*, the). The Lutz family fled the house, which had been their dream home, just twenty-eight days later, claiming that they had experienced a range of terrifying paranormal phenomena. Anson claimed that the house had been built on an old Indian burial ground, suggesting that the house had inherited the psychic history of the land. This idea is also explored in Tobe Hooper’s 1982 film [insert reference here].
Poltergeist, in which the Freeling family move into a beautiful new home in an idyllic suburban neighborhood only to find that it is haunted by malevolent ghosts who go on to abduct the family's youngest daughter. It transpires that the house was built on a cemetery, and that this is the source of the paranormal activity. Sunnydale, the suburban setting of the television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997–2003), follows in this tradition; because of its geographical position over the “Hellmouth,” the town is teeming with vampires and other supernatural entities.

SEE ALSO: Amityville Horror, The; Dickens, Charles; Collins, Wilkie; Jackson, Shirley; Matheson, Richard.

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Supernatural, The

The literary supernatural may well be regarded as the starting point for Gothic literature. Not because all Gothic works feature supernatural elements, of course, for a great many do not, but because the Gothic as a modern genre began, in one important sense, with the vigorous introduction of the supernatural into literary discourse.

It is axiomatic that cultural periods and particular cultural forms acquire much of their shape in reaction to their immediate predecessors and/or immediate context, and this is certainly true of Gothic supernaturalism. The Gothic came into being as a distinct literary mode during the later neoclassical period, and much of its character may be understood as a response to the formal, urban (and urbane) rationalism of much neoclassical literature. Gothic (and Romantic) interest in the supernatural is a significant part of the late-eighteenth-century movement’s challenges to the norms and conventions of neoclassicism and its privileging of realism, decorous restraint, and didactic purpose.

Yet it is also the case that, while Gothic supernaturalism is very much the product of a particular historical moment, it spoke to its age by drawing heavily on a variety of prior forms and practices. There is of course, to begin with distant background, a human interest in the ghostly and the supernatural that precedes written history. Closer to strictly literary concerns, Gothic novelists and Romantic writers interested in the supernatural had before them the example of Shakespeare and Elizabethan revenge tragedies, with their ghosts and atmosphere of guilt and hidden crimes; burgeoning interest in rural folk culture, particularly British balladry and folklore, proved a rich source of supernatural fable and imagery; and the Graveyard School of the eighteenth century helped to legitimize the literary use of many of the supernaturalist images and tropes that would become hallmarks of Gothic
literature (see Graveyard Poetry). The period’s interest in travel literature supplied a ready fund of foreign locales in which superstition was believed to provide a rich emotional and psychological substrate for supernaturalist experience, and the popularity in England of German Sturm und Drang literature (with its valorization of intense emotion, defiant individualism, and social marginality) and the fantastic tales of Bürger, Hoffmann, Tieck, and others created an interest in the nonrational that whetted the appetite of the English reading public (see German Gothic; Sturm und Drang).

Gothic fiction is generally recognized as beginning with Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto, published on Christmas Eve in 1764, a work whose over-the-top supernaturalism may almost be considered a call to arms in a revolt against the restraints of neoclassical literary precepts, a sort of supernaturalist version of the fall of the Bastille almost twenty-five years later. Walpole may well have been ahead of his time, but his work marks a watershed moment in the literary use of the supernatural, giving it a legitimacy and presence it had not enjoyed since the Elizabethans (Walpole, fittingly, vigorously invokes Shakespeare in his novel’s introduction) and serving in a way as the culmination of the Graveyard School’s valorizing (primarily through its linking of the supernatural with Christian piety and morality) of the imagery of the nonrealistic (see Walpole, Horace).

Walpole’s most famous work endorsed this linking of the supernatural with the Christian (his novel’s climactic moment is the ascent of the finally complete ghost of Alphonso into heaven in company with St. Nicholas), for that explicit connection between the literary and the moral was the means by which literary supernaturalism had first established itself in eighteenth-century literary culture. Subsequent writers embraced that strategy; Clara Reeve’s The Old English Baron (1778) positioned itself as a response to Walpole, one in which the supernatural element was restrained and more explicitly moralized, yet even in this work the supernatural is unequivocally present and powerful (see Reeve, Clara).

Yet literary supernaturalism did not achieve its greatest initial popularity until some thirty years after Walpole, not coincidentally at approximately the same time as the Terror in France was reaching its most horrific pitch. Gothic fiction provided a perfect medium to address those concerns raised in England by the French Revolution; Gothicism’s frequent reliance on Continental settings, Roman Catholic institutions and practices, and beleaguered nobles in half-ruined and ostensibly haunted castles provided a literary form well able to articulate revolutionary anxieties while displacing them sufficiently (often through historical and geographic distancing) to render them palatable. Even Ann Radcliffe, the most popular novelist of the period, whose works, famously, eschew the supernatural, exploited it: there may be no genuine supernatural elements in any of her works (aside from the posthumously published Sir Glaston de Blondeville, 1826) but supernaturalist (and related “Gothic”) anxieties, in both her characters and her readers, provide much of the motive force of her novels (see Radcliffe, Ann).

The revolutionary tenor of the time, with its attendant anxiety of the unknown (future), may well account for much of the literary supernaturalism of the period, though to this must be added other Romantic-era concerns. Questions of identity and self, of political and cultural change, and uncertainty regarding the influence of Christianity in the Western world led many Romantic writers to ask searching questions about the nature of selfhood and the relation of the individual not only to society but also to the transcendent. As Western metaphysics began to postulate an increasingly remote divine, re-examinations of spirituality and transcendent possibility became a significant part of Romantic literary endeavor, and the supernaturalist literature of the time participated fully in this project. Indeed, some scholars have found a sense of the numinous or spiritual dread to be a definitive characteristic of Gothicism. The responses of various
writers to these metaphysical anxieties differed greatly. Radcliffe wrote works that found consolation in moral virtue, piety, and rationalist principles; such writers as Matthew Lewis, whose salacious and supernaturally packed novel The Monk (1796) was perhaps the most notorious Gothic fiction ever penned, were less confident of the orderly workings of a benevolent divine providence (see Lewis, Matthew). Regardless of their ideological or metaphysical persuasions, however, Gothic and Romantic writers found that supernaturalism provided a flexible, highly adaptable vocabulary of imagery that permitted incisive consideration of the political, spiritual, and psychological (particularly sexual) ramifications of the era’s ongoing reassessments of individual identity (see Romanticism).

Writers traditionally labeled “Romantic” rather than “Gothic” also relied on the literary supernatural: Coleridge drew heavily on a ballad tradition and other supernaturalist sources for Christabel (1798–1801), “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798), and “Kubla Khan” (1816), works now regarded as the high-water mark of Romantic supernaturalist poetry. Robert Southey borrowed from Continental literature while Sir Walter Scott mined the riches of Scottish history and legend; John Keats recounted a haunting from Boccaccio and young men in love with supernatural maidens and Lord Byron turned the Faust myth into a compelling poetic drama and helped to give birth to the literary vampire (see Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron). But these (and many other) borrowings from the past spoke very much to the present, for in the hands of the Romantics supernaturalism generally forsook the cloak of horror it had been given by Gothic fiction and became more concerned with investigating the possibility of transcendence.

So powerful was the lure of supernaturalist imagery that even William Wordsworth, whose preface to the Lyrical Ballads (1798) (which was originally published anonymously) explicitly condemns the excesses of Gothic fiction, found room in some of his mature poetry for supernaturalist or Gothic elements. Although Wordsworth, unlike Robert Burns, never celebrated superstition as a vital element of rural imaginative life, he did at times rely on superstitious belief and supernatural implication in order to explore the role and power of the imagination and of the human relationship to the suprarational: “Goody Blake and Harry Gill,” “Hart-Leap Well,” “The Thorn” (all 1798), and “The Danish Boy” (1800), among others, all rely on supernaturalism or superstition. “Peter Bell” (1819) is an important text in the tradition of supernaturalist satire, a genre that flourished in the waning years of the Gothic’s popularity.

Other Romantic-era writers found value in the literary supernatural as well, although literary supernaturalism’s high-profile association with the excesses of Gothic fiction made it suspect in the eyes of many, and writers in the mid-to-late nineteenth century found other sources for the psychological energy of their post-Gothic fictions. American writers interested in the same psychological territory – the mind under pressure – as their Gothic predecessors generally found other sources of terror; Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Brockden Brown, and Nathaniel Hawthorne found the human mind’s own tortured imaginings a more than suitable substitute for “external” supernaturalist elements such as the ghosts and demons of traditional Gothic fiction (see American Gothic).

Victorian writers retained a fondness for a more conventional supernatural, by and large, but brought it into keeping with the altered aesthetic and social climate of post-Romantic Britain. The Victorians “domesticated” their ghosts, setting their tales not in foreign locales but in the urban environments that were increasingly the concern of Victorian culture at large, using their ghosts not to pursue terror for terror’s sake but to affirm many of the same principles and values championed in their realistic fiction (see Victorian Gothic). Elizabeth Gaskell’s “The Old Nurse’s Story” (1852) (originally published anonymously) is a powerful Victorian meditation on class and morality,
and Charles Dickens’ (supernaturally ambiguous) *A Christmas Carol* (1843) struck a chord, still resonating today, because of its insistence on the compassion and essential humanity that, for Dickens and other Victorian moralists, was increasingly in jeopardy in a rapidly industrializing society (see Dickens, Charles).

The closing years of the Victorian period and the loss of confidence and dramatic dislocations attendant upon the calamity of World War I led to another step in the evolution of supernaturalist fiction. External sources of terror again became prevalent; the atavistic threat of Old World supernaturalist entities (Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and the antiquarian horrors of M. R. James) and indigenous malefic forces (the “Little People” of Arthur Machen and the Cthulhu horrors of H. P. Lovecraft) marked the demise of Victorian and Edwardian complacency and self-assurance (see fin-de-siècle Gothic).

While traditional forms of literary supernaturalism remain with us—ghosts, vampires, werewolves, zombies, and various other forms of occult energies maintain a robust presence in contemporary popular culture—they have also been supplemented by other forms of horror. Science fiction, beginning with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), provides a ready source of realist terrors, and the continuing appeal of slasher films and psychological thrillers confirms that perhaps the most daunting and ineradicable horrors are those that have their origin in the human mind (see film).

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Dickens, Charles; Film; Fin-de-Siècle Gothic; German Gothic; Graveyard Poetry; Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann; Reeve, Clara; Romanticism; *Sturm und Drang*; Victorian Gothic; Walpole, Horace.

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Taboo

JERROLD E. HOGLE

The word “taboo” came to Europe and America, as the Oxford English Dictionary tells us, via the 1777 Journal of Captain James Cook, where the Tongan word tabu from Polynesia is interpreted to mean some entity, act, or utterance “set apart for or consecrated to a select use” only by chieftains or priests, but also “in general signifying forbidden” to most members of any society (in Cook’s words) or even “the putting of a person or thing under prohibition” and “the fact and condition of being so placed” to the point where any being who has crossed into a taboo state becomes himself or herself taboo. Though the English importation of this word thus postdates the rise of the “Gothic Story” in Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764), as well as his initiation of Gothic drama in The Mysterious Mother (composed 1768), all of these meanings are operative throughout those inaugural texts as they openly combine the rising ideologies about probable character development in the Protestant middle-class novel with the fading, but still attractive, beliefs in supernatural pre-determination and intervention that pervaded the once-Catholic and aristocratic romances of the Middle Ages. The specters of three dead figures surface at Walpole’s Otranto because some characters are close to committing acts (in all three cases, sexual and perhaps incestuous alliances that could mean usurpations of proper inheritance) that are prohibited by an obscure Providence and allowed only to the true heir of the Castle’s murdered founder (see incest). When Manfred, the usurping Prince of Otranto, finally kills his own daughter (adding child murder to his family’s other violations) after mistaking her for the proscribed sex-object destined for the rightful heir, he then becomes a proscribed person, cast out from civil society into a monastery where he can be little more than the lasting embodiment of several taboos as a penitent belonging to no sanctioned order. The Countess of Narbonne in The Mysterious Mother becomes even more of the Forbidden incarnate when it is finally revealed that she committed true incest with her son decades ago and hence that this son and the woman he has wooed (really his daughter and sister) are consequently as outcast as the Countess herself – tragically more so than the predatory priests in this play, who themselves enact the taboo (from a Protestant perspective) of seeking more to expropriate the Narbonne property than minister to the soul of its owner. From its very beginning, then, Gothic fiction has always been about temptations toward and fears of pointedly forbidden states; about hauntings, supernatural or psychological or both, based on past secrets that are nearly always horrifying enactments of taboos, even if the word became anglicized.

The Encyclopedia of the Gothic, paperback edition. Edited by William Hughes, David Punter, and Andrew Smith. © 2016 John Wiley and Sons Ltd. Published 2016 by John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
enough to describe all that only later in the eighteenth century.

Consequently, all the descendents of the Walpoleian Gothic, whether in fiction or theater or film, are constructed to some extent around the enticement and threat of taboo conditions that are both primal horrors threatening to rise up from the past and inducements to social transgression that can lead to exile instead of liberty and fulfillment. Indeed, as the Gothic mode has developed across historical and ideological changes, it has been amazingly deft, with its displacement of present fears into seemingly antiquated repositories of them, at fictionalizing versions of taboos that are the most fearful threats to the desired social norms at the time of each tale: females gaining sexual and intellectual freedom (as in the “bad women” of Ann Radcliffe’s 1790s “romances” and the “New Woman” vampire in Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897)); takers of ascetic or aesthetic vows who are drawn to homosexuality as well as sex and incest in general (as in Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796) and Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891)); cross-racial attraction and miscegenation (from Charlotte Dacre’s Zofloya (1806) to Faulkner’s Absalom! Absalom! (1936)); the blending of human and animal bodies as well as the middle and the working classes, the colonizers and the colonized, and medieval and modern science (in, of course, Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) and its many adaptations); the pull of the troglodytic and unconscious id inside supposedly “evolved” humanity (in R. L. Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) and H. G. Wells’ The Island of Dr. Moreau (1896), as well as Dracula); and the actual roots of American exceptionalism being exposed as the slaughter or infection of Indians and the enslavement of Africans (in Charles Brockden Brown’s Edgar Huntly (1799) all the way to Toni Morrison’s Beloved (1987) and beyond). What turns out to be most taboo within the Gothic, in fact, is any mixture of states that are supposedly separate or opposite by civilized standards or “norms,” as in the “undead” (the partly alive and partly deceased), the amalgamation of different gender and/or racial characteristics, the straddling of class distinctions (as in the blend of genres in Walpole’s Castle), the crossing of boundaries between species and levels of being (the un- as well as the super-natural), and the inability to separate the technological from the organic (not only in Frankenstein but also in postmodern Gothic science fiction from the Terminator (1984–2009) to the Alien films (1979–2012)). Julia Kristeva calls such states locations of the “abject,” what we repress by throwing off and down (as in our visceral memory of being half inside and half outside the mother at birth) so as to seem to have a coherent human identity, and many scholars of the Gothic since her Powers of Horror (1982) have seen what is most taboo in the Gothic as very like what she sees as most abject in human self-construction. Few genres of fiction-making, then, have helped us flirt with by symbolizing, as well as distance by fictionalizing, as many kinds of Western taboos as the Gothic has for over 250 years.

SEE ALSO: Drama, Gothic; Incest; Psychoanalysis; Theory.

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Tales of Terror

STEPHEN CARVER

Although any horror story might be designated a “Tale of Terror,” this term usually refers to the short sharp shockers of Regency monthly magazines, in particular Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine. These tales thrived on sensational physical and emotional violence, often in contemporary settings. The characteristic style was one of grotesque and clinical reportage, the narrative constructed to convey exaggerated emotional intensity. The point of view was usually first-person, and the observational detail (like the voice of a disemboweled surgeon naming each organ as it plops out) placed the reader behind the horrified eyes of the protagonist. As Poe advised in his homage “The Signora Zenobia,” also known as “How to Write a Blackwood Article”: “Sensations are the great things after all. Should you ever be drowned or hung, be sure to make a note of your sensations—they will be worth to you ten guineas a sheet” (Poe 1840: 218) (see Poe, Edgar Allan).

The modern “magazine” had been around since Edward Cave’s Gentleman’s Magazine in 1731, but William Blackwood (1776–1834) redefined the format with the publication of outrageous, controversial, and innovative Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine in 1817 (see Mason 2006; Oliphant 1898). From its inception, “Ma Maga” (as Blackwood called it) demonstrated an enthusiasm for the mad and macabre on and off the page. Scott’s famous review of Frankenstein first appeared in Blackwood’s, and excerpts and critiques of major Gothic novels were common. De Quincy’s “On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts” also first appeared there. In 1821, vituperative exchanges with the London Magazine led to a fatal duel between the rival publication’s editor, John Scott, and the agent of Blackwood’s mainstay J. G. Lockhart, whom Blackwood’s subsequently described as “wet with the blood of the Cockneys” (Hymn to Christopher North 1821: 62).

A similar gallows style characterized Blackwood’s tales. John Wilson’s “Extracts from Gosschen’s Diary” (1818) is a nasty confession of obsession, murder, and necrophilia (anticipating Browning’s “Porphyria’s Lover”). In “A Night in the Catacombs” by Daniel Keyte Sandford (1818) a tourist recounts the terror of being lost in the vaults beneath Paris; while John Galt’s “The Buried Alive” (1821) describes just that, with a leitmotif later expanded by Poe. William Maginn’s “The Man in the Bell” (1821) is cited by Poe in “How To Write a Blackwood’s Article,” and is the narrative of a trapped campanologist driven mad by the sound of the bells. Alongside Maginn’s story, William Mudford’s claustrophobic tale of creative torture, “The Iron Shroud” (1830), is a forerunner of Poe’s “The Pit and the Pendulum.” “The Metempsychosis” by Robert McNish (1826) is a tale of one soul possessing the body of another, while Henry Thompson’s “Le Revenant” (1827) describes the protagonist’s last night in the condemned cell, and has echoes in both Dickens’ Sketches and Oliver Twist (see Sucksmith 1971). In a longer, later series, Samuel Warren used his Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician (1830–7) as a frame for tasteless tales of disease and insanity. Galt’s “The Buried Alive” sums up the common feature of these tales: as the narrator succumbs to narcolepsy and is presumed dead, “The world was then darkened, but I still could hear, and feel, and suffer” (Galt 1821: 262).

The sincerest form of flattery followed, with Henry Colburn’s New Monthly Magazine in particular running regular tales of terror, most notably The Vampyre by John Polidori (1819). As Leigh Hunt wrote in 1819:

A man who does not contribute his quota of grim stories now-a-days seems hardly to be free of the republic of letters. He is bound to wear a
death's head, as part of his insignia. If he does not frighten every body, he is no body. (Hunt 1890: 75)

Poe’s burlesque of the Blackwood’s style, “How to Write a Blackwood’s Article,” is an astute critique of the form as much as it is pastiche. The piece is a mock interview between William Blackwood and the hack writer “Psyche Zenobia” on the subject of writing “intensities.” “If you wish to write forcibly,” advises Blackwood, “pay minute attention to the sensations” (Poe 1840: 218). Miss Zenobia assures him that she will. Later, when her eyes pop out and roll away during decapitation by the minute hand of a cathedral clock, she precisely records her sensations. The story is called “A Predicament.” Poe’s understanding and application of this device was to have seismic consequences for the short story in English.

SEE ALSO: De Quincey, Thomas; Poe, Edgar Allan; Polidori, John.

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FURTHER READING


Teaching the Gothic

ANNA POWELL

Gothic is a hybrid of high art and popular culture (see popular culture), historical scholarship, and immediate sensation. Its academic study continues to grow in popularity with both students and teachers. Recruitment figures increase as ever more students encounter Gothic on specialist units or the broader based courses of contemporary English Studies. Classroom Gothic, responsive to student interests, has widened its own, still primarily literary, remit to include previously marginalized forms like the horror film, Gothic television, and the graphic novel (see comics and graphic novels; television).

A Gothic pedagogy has also begun to evolve. Guidebooks on the craft of teaching Gothic (Heller and Hoeveler 2003; Powell and Smith 2006) affirm the considerable self-reflexivity of its teachers. There are significant reasons why we want to teach Gothic and why the field should attract increasing numbers of enthusiastic converts. Teachers and students conspire together in our class laboratories to hybridize
texts with contexts and concepts. The imaginative reach of the classroom itself can sometimes open up to the sublime spaces where insight awaits. To prepare for such ascents, Gothic teaching and learning analyzes textual operations by the study of extracts, debates the relative merits of particular theoretical interpretations, and locates the mode within its past and present cultural contexts.

Creative and critical work expands the ideological and stylistic parameters of the field to produce, rather than “the” Gothic, a multiplicity of Gothics, including postcolonial, postmodern, and queer versions. Students discover that theoretical concepts encountered in congruent studies can also be used to generate new insights into ways of thinking about genre-specific materials. Poststructuralist Gothic, for example, offers a self-reflective perspective as the novels of Angela Carter and Iain Banks express the vitality of generic templates they parody, pastiche, and bend (see poststructuralism and the gothic). Psychogeography is being mobilized to add relevant insights into the haunted locales of urban Gothic (Mighall, 2007) and eco-criticism is also beginning to explore the “green” implications of Gothic.

Some Gothic units focus on film or television in their formal specificity. Other methodological approaches study the aesthetic and ideological processes at work in adaptation, most commonly from literary text into film. The longevity of Bram Stoker’s Dracula, for example, might be explored via some of its cinematic renditions in F. W. Murnau’s expressionist Nosferatu (1922), the erotic romance of the Hammer Horror Dracula (1957) (see hammer house) and the flamboyant CGI of Francis Ford Coppola’s Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1992).

As well as being marked by historical vicissitudes, Gothic embraces contemporary popular cultures. Students who enjoy novels and films that frighten and arouse them outside college are offered the chance to draw on these pleasures within their academic lives. Gothic Studies enables extreme subject-matter and stylistic excess to be opened up for exploration.

As well as the immediate appeal of sensational textual affect, the pedagogic possibilities of Gothic offer broader developmental scope for teachers and learners.

Our affective responses to ritualized narrative structures, suspense, and uncanny mise-en-scène can be expressed, articulated, and shared with others. Students can learn the relevance of theoretical concepts and terms to help them understand their own responses in greater depth (see theory). They can be offered tools with which to think about intriguing and complex issues and encouraged to make evaluative judgments pertaining both to texts and to their sociohistorical resonance. They can draw on secondary critical sources and can also develop the confidence to challenge received opinion via well-informed assertions of their own.

As well as historical locations and culturalist celebrations of this popular mode, the psychoanalytic and philosophical writings of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva have been applied to unravel the psychosexual elements of Gothic. Psychoanalytic theory has been fruitfully applied to Gothic fiction and film in tandem with ideological critique (Punter 1996; Schneider 2004) (see psychoanalysis). Freudian psychoanalysis and its reworkings by Lacan and Melanie Klein afford an insightful resource for theorizing psychosexuality via concepts of the uncanny, the body as haunted house, the “return of the repressed,” sadomasochism, ambivalence, and abjection (Creed 1993; Massé 1992).

More recently, Deleuze and Guattari have been deployed to extend the boundaries of Gothic studies via their philosophical insights into temporality and affect (Powell 2009). A Deleuzian approach to a film, a novel, or a painting sets out to ask not what it means, but what it does. Gothic has long been regarded as a genre of sensation and Deleuze proposes a logic, and a language, of sensation. This is a way of thinking not through concepts, as philosophy does, but through aesthetic affects. It can be used to identify what kinds of sensations are induced by Gothic texts and how they
might be regarded. Up to now, there has been little exploration of literary or cinematic affect. Deleuze’s work on temporality, which draws on Henri Bergson’s theories of duration, has special use value for our thinking of Gothic time through our sensational experience of its passage.

These exciting new developments have emerged from the checkered history of Gothic Studies. During the “dark ages” of the Leavisite “New Criticism,” Gothic was hardly visible per se on an English curriculum built on the Great Tradition (Hughes 2006). Prior to the 1980s, it made a fleeting appearance on the “typical” undergraduate degree syllabus as a necessary referent to the canonical works of Austen, Dickens, and the Brontës, for example, which deployed the mode as thematic and stylistic technique. Its neglected status in higher education was gradually undermined by a “Gothic renaissance,” both creative and critical, which has gained increasing momentum over the last thirty years.

Many of these pioneering critical approaches, initially used by scholars to identify generic parameters and open the mode up to ideological critique, have been widely applied, developed, and debated and are still very much alive in the classroom context. They function as a basis for current Gothic syllabuses as well as stimulating fresh generations of scholars to explore uncharted terrain with tools that they provided for our initial forays.

Peripheral to the academy, but familiar to many students, is the wide currency of Gothic for youth culture. The burgeoning of Goth music (see music) and fashion was historically generated in the early 1980s hybrid of punk and New Romantic (Bibby and Goodlad, 2007). This current led to an upsurge of nostalgic interest in its historical antecedents in literature, art, and architecture, and provided a new market for Gothic film and television. By the 1990s, Goth had produced a large number of “alternative” bands and its own authors such as Poppy Z. Brite in fiction and “ auteurs,” notably Tim Burton, in cinema (see BRITE, POPPY Z.; BURTON, TIM). Many students will attest to the continued appeal of Goth culture and stylistic motifs. The mutations of Goth and its absorption into mainstream culture via periodic fashion revivals, films like Twilight (2008), TV series like Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel, and controversial rock icons like Marilyn Manson are instrumental in forming the cultural tastes of Gothic students (see goth).

Among the intriguing new subgenres of Gothic to reflect a changing sociocultural and political climate are neo-Victorianism and Steampunk. Their styles and themes appear in literature, film, and graphic novel as well as music, fashion, and videogames (Krzywinska, 2002) and students may well have more cultural capital in these subgenres than their teachers. Steampunk fictions, comics, music, and fashion trace a rapidly growing hybrid of Gothic with cyberpunk sci-fi. Steampunk’s special characteristics include a self-reflective and sometimes nostalgic reworking of urban Victorian or Edwardian England, and/or fascination with steam power and elaborate clockwork machinery.

Steampunk blends late Victorian Gothic occultism (the Golden Dawn and Aleister Crowley) with the early science fiction of H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, and others. It was arguably popularized by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling’s The Difference Engine (1990), Neal Stephenson’s The Diamond Age: A Young Lady’s Primer (1995), and Paul di Filippo’s 1995 Steampunk trilogy, with its H. P. Lovecraft-style monsters. Alan Moore’s League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (1999) made the genre more widely known via the graphic novel and Steven Norrington’s film adaptation (2003). Other films with Steampunk appeal include Terry Gilliam’s Brazil (1985), Kenneth Branagh’s Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1994), Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s The City of Lost Children (1994), and Chris Weitz’s The Golden Compass (2007). Steampunk’s components are clearly visible in Guillermo Del Toro’s Hellboy (2004), which is typical in its hybridization of magic and science, philosophy and comics, humor and horror. Its science fiction elements include high tech weaponry and gadgets, a city
under threat by alien forces, and the apocalyptic theme. Gothic motifs predominate: demons and abject monsters, the fulfillment of an ancient curse, occult rituals, saints’ statues, crucifixes, relics, and the living dead. The subgenre is also strongly marked by the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft, whose impact is growing in contemporary Gothic across the board from doctoral theses to videogames (see Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips)).

As Gothic Studies gains momentum, Gothic literature and cinema attain increasing critical credibility. Nowadays, generic texts are validated as works of thematic and stylistic complexity as well as providing considerable insight into the social and historical contexts of their production, distribution, and consumption. Gothic has gradually gained academic weight to become a significant element in the English degree curriculum at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. It is currently undergoing rapid expansion in educational establishments as increasing numbers of staff and students opt to work with it as a distinct strand in the curriculum.

At postgraduate level internationally there is a steady increase in Gothic Master’s and PhD students. Figures from a UK survey indicate that postgraduate Gothic has doubled in size over the past decade (Smith 2006). Gothic topics are often historically located in the broader cultural movements of Romanticism, Victorianism, and the fin de siècle. Other popular approaches study Gothic in relation to women’s fiction, imperialism, ethnicity, and science. The international expansion of scholarly research in the field is attested to by journals such as Gothic Studies and the biennial conference of the International Gothic Association (see International Gothic Association, the).

From its former position marginal to the canon, Gothic has emerged as a fully fledged and popular topic in its own right, producing undergraduate units and postgraduate degree courses, scholarly associations, journals, and a plethora of internet resources. Rather than producing its own fixed canon, though, Gothic studies has not become a self-enclosed or fixed paradigm. A vibrant, flexible mode that transforms its shape in response to changing cultural and ideological climate, Gothic continues to offer its distinctive blend of ambivalent pleasure to a new generation of teachers and learners.

SEE ALSO: Brite, Poppy Z.; Burton, Tim; Comics and Graphic Novels; Goth; Hammer House; International Gothic Association, The; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Music; Popular Culture; Poststructuralism and the Gothic; Psychoanalysis; Television; Theory.

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Gothic has been intimately related to emerging technologies throughout its history. The envisaging of phantoms is bound up with technological effects, from the lights and shadows thrown onto the magic lantern screen, through the emergence of photography, cinema, and television, to the multiple platforms offered by contemporary digital technologies. From the outset, visual technologies were among the paraphernalia of modernity and enlightenment that the Gothic novel mobilized against the unenlightened and barbaric past. However, in technology’s capacity to become uncanny, whether conjuring phantoms or creating avatars of the human form, the Gothic novel’s investment in rationalism and progress is continually called into question. In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), for example, modern technologies such as typewriter, camera, and phonograph are tools with which to combat the vampire’s ancient menace but also, as Jennifer Wicke demonstrates, enable the mass reproduction of images or documents in a way that parallels the processes of vampirism itself (Wicke 1992).

Recent scholarship has increasingly identified the rise of magic lantern shows in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as an important context for the emergence of the Gothic novel. Athanasius Kircher’s pioneering experiments with the magic lantern in the 1640s almost exclusively showed images of the supernatural, leading Marina Warner to claim “an intrinsic, unexamined equivalence between the technology of illusion and supernatural phenomena” (Warner 2006: 139). David J. Jones records that as early as 1696, Edward Phillips’ *The New World of English Words* defined the “magic lantern” in terms that we now recognize as Gothic. For Jones, early visual technologies such as dioramas and phantasmagoria pre-empted and determined the development of Gothic as a recognizable genre: “the term ‘Gothic,’ as we know and inherit it, is the recurrent coalescence and subsequent collective operation of these media” (Jones 2011: 7). The most renowned of these magic lantern shows was Etienne-Gaspard Robertson’s “Phantasmagorie” (1799), which was staged in the cloisters of an abandoned Paris convent and capitalized on the atmosphere of a city scarcely recovered from the Terror. Entry through labyrinthine passageways, supplementary sideshows and scientific displays, atmospheric lighting, dramatic narration, eerie sound effects, and mysterious moving images projected onto screens or smoke coalesced into an immersive entertainment spectacle.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, progress in electrical science drew attention to the mysterious galvanic forces of electricity. Mary Shelley’s second edition of *Frankenstein* of 1831 introduced a preface that hinted at the use of electric galvanism in order to transmit “the slight spark of life” to its artificially constructed Creature (Shelley 1968: 263). As the nineteenth century wore on, electronic media such as the telegraph, telephone, and radio apparently conjured voices from the ether. As Jeffrey Sconce indicates, three recurring narratives surround electronic media in the nineteenth century and afterwards: fantasies of disembodiment, access to a separate
realm or “electronic elsewhere,” and “the anthropomorphizing of media technology” (Sconce 2000: 8–9). Each of these narratives produces technologies as uncanny.

The third of Sconce’s forms of haunted media incorporates the notion of the android or cyborg, the artificial human being. Ernst Jentsch identified the uncertainty as to whether a figure is human or an automaton as one of the principal features of the uncanny, identifying the life-like doll Olympia in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s tale “The Sandman” (1816) as a key example (Jentsch 1995). Freud was to repress this reading in his own essay on “The Uncanny” (1919), emphasizing instead the threat of castration provided by the Sandman figure itself, but artificial humans remain a persistent Gothic motif (see uncanny, the). As Fred Botting points out, automata were not considered uncanny prior to the industrial revolution, but with the subjection of the human being to rationalism, the notion of a machine that mimics and threatens to replace human abilities evokes the horror of “the doubleness that threatens human uniqueness” (Botting 2008b: 87). This is expressed particularly well in Fritz Lang’s film Metropolis (1927), in which the struggle between faceless workers and wealthy managers in a dystopian future city is brought to a head by an evil robot made in the image of the heroine Maria. In recent years the automaton has been partially reclaimed by cyborg theory, which in the vision of Donna Haraway’s influential “The Cyborg Manifesto” (1985), offers the potential for a new kind of being that deconstructs binaries between human and machine, as well as a politics that undermines essentialism and hierarchies.

The nineteenth-century invention of photography also had a significant impact on Gothic. In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The House of the Seven Gables (1851), it is set in opposition to older methods of portraiture; Holgrave the daguerreotypist represents the coming of a new age that seeks to sweep away the corruptions of the past embodied in the ancestral portrait of Colonel Pyncheon. Jonathan Harker’s Kodak in Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) embodies his tourist gaze, while in Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891), Sir Henry Wotton collects photographic cartes de visite of his protégé, signaling the emergence of a new celebrity culture. Photography could also be used as scientific evidence of the supernatural. The Victorian fad for spirit photography, which attempted to capture images of the spirits of the dead, took advantage of the saying that “the camera never lies,” professing realism while using tricks such as double exposure to create ghostly images on the photographic print. In Richard Marsh’s The Beetle (1897), the scientist Sydney Atherton recalls this documentary function when he attempts to photograph the titular monster on his brain, anticipating the future possibility of taking a “retinal print” (Marsh 1994: 107). More disturbingly, in Rudyard Kipling’s short story “At the End of the Passage” (1890), a doctor uses his Kodak to attempt to discover whether there is any truth in the superstition that the eye records the last image seen before death, but tears up the film before anyone else can see the result. The possibility that the camera might objectively record subjective phantasms is ultimately too horrific to countenance.

The development of cinema in the 1890s was linked with Gothic both through the terror occasioned by moving images – the Lumière brothers’ “The Arrival of a Train at a Station” (1895) purportedly occasioned panic as audiences thought a train was really heading toward them – and through the new opportunities for Gothic narrative. Many of the earliest films drew on Gothic imagery: George Méliès’ Le Manoir du Diable (1896) is considered the earliest horror film, and Méliès’ wider use of fantasy inaugurated cinema’s departure from realism. Strikingly, cinema is absent from Dracula, despite its embrace of other up-to-date technologies. However, Francis Ford Coppola’s film adaptation, Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1992), paid tribute to the novel’s location on the cusp of the cinematic age, by referencing precinematic technologies and inserting a scene where Dracula and Mina attend a screening of “The Arrival of a Train at a Station.” For
Ken Gelder, “It is as if the project of filming Stoker’s novel about Dracula also involves filming the beginnings of film itself” (Gelder 1994: 89) (see film).

Science fiction is often regarded as developing out of the Gothic novel in the nineteenth century, and the eponymous device from H. G. Wells’ The Time Machine (1895) can be regarded as Gothic technology through its ability to resituate the modern subject as anachronism, a remnant of the past stranded in a hostile future. It is in the late twentieth-century Gothic/noir/science fiction hybrid Cyberpunk, however, that Gothic technologies most fully emerge. Cyberpunk’s two most celebrated texts are Ridley Scott’s film Blade Runner (1982), a Frankenstein story in which a group of artificial human beings or “replicants” return to avenge themselves on their maker; and William Gibson’s novel Neuromancer (1984), in which “console cowboy” Case navigates a virtual environment that mimics a haunted house, the Straylight Mansion, in a mission to help two disembodied artificial intelligences to merge. Both texts comply with Gothic conventions but mediate them through technology, as Botting suggests:

“Though cyberpunk abounds with ghosts, demons and monsters, they all appear as technological effects: ghosts are virtual, haunting screens, neural circuits, the dead living on as data; demons are coding algorithms, AIs, cephalic corporate powers; monsters are quotidian and everywhere, the enhanced and mutated bodies of all those inhabiting the wrecked cityscapes and sublime datascapes of cyberpunk’s future present. (Botting 2008a: 185)

Gibson was also one of the major influences on Steampunk. The Difference Engine (1990), coauthored with Bruce Sterling, imagines an alternative nineteenth century in which Charles Babbage’s early computer (the “difference engine” of the title) has created a digitized culture driven by steam power. Although it possesses few of the generic markers of Gothic fiction (being a more straightforward hybrid of science fiction and the neo-Victorian novel), it proved influential on a subgenre in which science fictional technologies from the age of steam are imagined as real. Drawing on nineteenth-century narratives by H. G. Wells and Jules Verne, Steampunk frequently intersects with the Gothic, although it tends to nostalgically embrace the past rather than vicariously indulge its horrors. A subcultural style as well as a literary genre, Steampunk fetishizes retro technology, and adherents fashion a look replete with cogs, goggles, and brass gadgets, as well as “retrofitting” modern items such as laptops and iPods to make them look antique.

In the late twentieth century, a series of postmodern films commented self-reflexively on uncanny technology (see contemporary gothic). In Tobe Hooper’s Poltergeist (1982), ghosts communicate through a family television set, while in David Cronenberg’s Videodrome (1983), the boundaries between reality and television break down in hallucinogenic fashion. In Hideo Nakata’s Ring (1998) and its American remake The Ring (Gore Verbinski, 2002), a cursed videotape causes anyone who watches it to die within a week. The only way to escape the curse is to show the tape to someone else; technology is figured as virus or contagion. Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez’s The Blair Witch Project (1999) is “a found manuscript for the information age” (Spooner 2006: 40), a fake documentary purportedly edited together from footage shot by three missing film students and found close to the site of their disappearance. The innovative marketing campaign for the movie treated the story as genuine and posted supporting “evidence” on an accompanying website, relying on rumors being spread virally by users. Interestingly, the students’ isolation depended on the film’s setting in 1994, five years before its release, when mobile phones were not widely prevalent. As with the videotapes of Ring, technologies are quickly outdated and become Gothic anachronisms from a less enlightened past rather than harbingers of modernity.
The contemporary novel, too, has been an important medium for exploring the relationship between Gothic and technologies. Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995) is a groundbreaking work of hypertext, or the electronic novel. A rewriting of *Frankenstein* in which Mary Shelley constructs a female monster, it literally patches together a narrative through linked text and images of female body parts. The reader, following links, can take several directions through the narrative, constructing the story – and the monster – for themselves. Ostensibly more traditional in form, Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) was a novel about a film that was, paradoxically, unfilmable. Danielewski deliberately mimicked cinematography by playful use of typography, so that for instance a suspenseful sequence contains one word per page, creating a literally “page-turning” reading experience. *House of Leaves* also mimicked the form of hypertext, with the word “house” always appearing in blue, signifying a link elsewhere, “minotaur” in red, suggesting an inactive link, and “what I’m remembering now” in purple, suggesting a link already visited (Danielewski 2000: 518). In doing so, he gestured at the labyrinthine Gothic potential of the world wide web itself.

The uncanniness of digital media is still an emerging area of research, with one particularly significant area the widespread use of Gothic narrative in videogames. David Punter identifies several new forms of the uncanny associated with gaming and the world wide web, including the “uncanny of virtual locality” in which subjects can be in more than one place at once; the “uncanny awareness of multiplicity” or development of multiple virtual personae; and the “morphological uncanny” or ability to take on different shapes (Punter 2007: 133). Whether these are genuinely new, or simply versions of earlier forms of uncanny technologies, remains to be seen. It is certainly true that as new technologies emerge, however, they both provide new platforms for Gothic narrative, and are themselves routinely Gothi-cized (see Games).

SEE ALSO: Contemporary Gothic; Film; Games; Uncanny, The.

REFERENCES


FURTHER READING


Tegg, Thomas

FRANZ J. POTTER

Thomas Tegg (1776–1845) was born in Wimbledon in Surrey. Orphaned at five, he was sent to a boarding school and later apprenticed to Alexander Meggett, a bookseller in Dalkeith, Scotland. Abused by the bookseller, he ran away and briefly made a living selling chapbooks at Berwick. He eventually obtained employment at the Sheffield Register, a local newspaper. In 1796 he traveled to London, briefly working at William Lane’s Minerva Press in Leadenhall. He eventually secured a position at John and Arthur Arch’s bookshop, where he learned the book trade.

In 1800, Tegg received an inheritance of £200 and established himself as a bookseller, opening a shop in St. John’s Street, Clerkenwell. Overwhelmed by excessive debt, he took out a country auction license, determined to find success in the provinces. He returned to London in 1801, establishing a partnership with a fellow publisher, Castleman. Their shop, Eccentric Book Warehouse, was located at 122, St. John’s Street, West Smithfield, and there they not only sold books and held auctions but also published Gothic bluebooks (see bluebooks). Many of the most successful bluebooks and pamphlets were collected into serial volumes and published between 1802 and 1804 under the titillating title of The Marvellous Magazine and Compendium of Prodigies. Each volume contained six tales with lurid and provocative titles such as The Midnight Assassin: Or, Confession of the Monk Rinaldi; The Cavern of Horrors; or, Miseries of Miranda; The Secret Oath, or Blood-Stained Dagger; The Veiled Picture: Or, the Mysteries of Gorgono; and Father Innocent, Abbot of the Capuchins; or, the Crimes of Cloisters. In 1805, Tegg published a series of pamphlets in duodecimo with front pieces, containing abridgements of popular novels, circulating some four thousand copies of each pamphlet. In 1824, Tegg purchased the copyright of Hone’s Every-Day Book and Table Book and republished the whole in weekly parts for a very handsome profit.

By 1830, Tegg was not only commercially successful but also highly respected in the book trade. Notwithstanding his financial success, he continued nightly book auctions at 111, Cheapside and regularly bought up book remainders. He took up residence in the Mansion House, Cheapside, where he published the London Encyclopædia and secured the remainder and copyright of the Murray’s Family Library series in 1834, from which he bought 100,000 volumes at one shilling, reissuing them at more than double the price.

While Tegg’s reputation as a bookseller chiefly resides with his cheap reprints and abridgments of popular works, his impact on the Gothic trade cannot be undervalued. Like Ann Lemoine (see Lemoine, Ann), Tegg’s panache for marketing the Gothic bluebook eventually led to the shift from the triple-decker Gothic novel to short tales of terror in magazines. Tegg died on April 21, 1845.

SEE ALSO: Bluebooks; Lemoine, Ann.

FURTHER READING
As a genre which is suffused with familial dramas and disturbing domestic spaces, the Gothic is a genre which is ideally suited to television, though it was not acknowledged as a distinct category of television programming until relatively recently. While some have seen television as too “literal” or “bland” a medium to successfully present potentially affective Gothic fictions (King 1981; Waller 1987; Baddeley 2002), others have argued that it is precisely the quotidian nature of the medium which makes it a most suitable site for tales of young wives trapped in old houses, confused paternities and sinister relatives, and houses which are troubled by family secrets, hauntings, and other uncanny occurrences (Ledwon 1993; Wheatley 2006; Robson 2007). Given the Gothic’s notorious “slipperiness” as a generic category, and the multiplicity of interpretations of its meanings and identifying features, it is difficult to offer a singular definition of Gothic television. However, arguably Gothic television can be identified by the following: a mood of dread/terror; the presence of highly stereotyped characters and plots, often derived from Gothic fiction; representations of the supernatural (implied or fully visualized); the structures and images of the uncanny (repetitions, returns, déjà vu, premonitions, ghosts, doppelgangers, animated inanimate objects, and severed body parts); homes and families which are haunted by events/figures from the past; complex narrative organization (flashbacks, dreams, memory montages); dark/drab mise-en-scène; and subjective/impressionistic camerawork and sound recording (see Wheatley 2006 for an elaboration on this definition). In producing such a list, it is possible to see the Gothic as a separate generic category of television programming (albeit one which is produced by critical endeavor, rather than one which is frequently used by audiences and program makers to define the programs they watch or make), though thinking about the Gothic as a style or mode of television might encompass a wider set of programs. The above definition is also complicated further by television’s generic hybridity which means that it is possible to identify Gothic elements in a range of texts that do not necessarily fit the generic categorization above exactly, from sitcoms like The Addams Family (Filmways, 1964–6) and The Munsters (Kayro-Vue, 1964–6), to teen dramas such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Twentieth Century Fox Television, 1997–2003) or The Vampire Diaries (CW, from 2009), to reality TV like The Osbournes (MTV, 2002–5) and The Swan (Galan Entertainment, 2004–5).

Those writing about Gothic television have centralized the uncanny as the defining feature that distinguishes this programming from other generic categories (such as “made-for-television horror” or the broader category of “telefantasy”). This work has drawn on Freud’s 1919 essay on “The Uncanny” (1990) and his contention that the heimlich (or “homely”) and unheimlich (the uncanny or, literally translated, the unhomely) are inextricably linked together, rather than entirely separate categories (see uncanny, The). Therefore, Gothic television, with its emphasis on the uncanny, joins together the homely or familiar elements of the medium and its domestic spaces (those represented on screen and those in which television is viewed) with the unfamiliar, unsettling, and often supernatural elements of Gothic storytelling. Thus the uncanny can be found in:

the very structure of Gothic television [...] located in its repetitions and returns, in an aesthetic which combines traditionally realist, familiarizing programme making and non-naturalistic disorientating filming and editing, in Gothic television’s familiar characters and plotting [...] and even in the generic hybridity of the Gothic text. The uncanny is therefore located in the moments in Gothic television in which the familiar traditions and conventions of television are made strange. (Wheatley 2006: 7–8)
Leon Hunt has gone further in his analysis of the Gothic horror-comedy, *The League of Gentlemen* (BBC, 1999–2002), in arguing that the generic title “Uncanny TV” is in fact more appropriate than that of “Gothic television,” in that it encompasses a wider range of texts and is more flexible or “generically promiscuous” than the latter (Hunt 2008: 79).

To chart the emergence of studies of Gothic television, in the 1990s a number of critical surveys of the Gothic called for sustained attention to be paid to the manifestations of the genre on television (Botting 1996; Edmundson 1997; Grunenberg 1997; Davenport-Hines 1998). Some work on terror/horror on television had emerged in the previous decade, variously citing these genres as either innovative/ avant-garde experiments in creating viewer “affect” within a domestic setting (Prawer 1980), or ultimately failed attempts at scaring/disturbing viewers given the presence of the real horrors of war and disaster on television (King 1981) and television’s aesthetic impoverishment in comparison to cinema (Waller 1987). However, these studies did not connect the programs they were discussing with the idea of the Gothic, although in retrospect the 1960s and 1970s anthology dramas discussed by Prawer and King – such as Mystery and Imagination (ABC/Thames, 1966–70) and *Ghost for Christmas* (BBC, 1971–8) – have been understood as the foundational texts of Gothic television in the UK and US (Wheatley 2006). While these dramas, often adaptations of classic Gothic literature, might seem the obvious place to open up studies of the genre on television, in fact it was a couple of what might be termed “women’s genres” on television that were among the first to be explored and discussed as Gothic television: the talk show and the soap opera. For Elspeth Probyn (1993) *The Oprah Winfrey Show’s* (Harpo Productions, 1986–2011) juxtaposition of tales of rape and domestic abuse with the more mundane elements of daytime programming flow (particularly advertising) was interpreted as a manifestation of the uncanny, whereas Mark Edmundson (1977) read the same program as being suffused with characters and plots from Gothic literature, reading the Gothic on television as a melodramatic mode in which victims and villains are easily identifiable through the tropes of this genre.

Looking at similarly quotidian programming, Richard Davenport-Hines (1998) understands the North American soap operas *Melrose Place* (Darren Star Productions, 1992–9) and *Sunset Beach* (Aaron Spelling Productions, 1997–9), and even the long-running British soap opera *Coronation Street* (Granada, from 1960), as Gothic television, producing an argument similar to Edmundson’s about the presence of characters and narrative conventions from Gothic literature in these long-running serials, with their “confused paternities, improbable coincidences, melodrama, sudden death, cheap ideas, trivially stereotyped characters” (Davenport-Hines 1998: 143) and arguing that these soap operas offer “no homeliness or reconciliation, just serial disruption” (Davenport-Hines 1998: 10). More recently, analyses of Gothic television have explored more obviously Gothic manifestations of the soap opera, for example *Dark Shadows* (Dan Curtis Productions, 1966–71) with its complex, long-running narrative about a series of endangered heroines and reluctant vampires (Williamson 2005, 2007; Wheatley 2006) and *Passions* (NBC, 1999–2008), which again brought together the melodrama of the US daytime soap opera with the plot conventions and stock characters of the Gothic (Robson 2007). These more obviously Gothic soap operas can be understood as the natural progression for a genre defined by Davenport-Hines as steeped in the family melodrama of the Gothic by definition. Indeed, Vibiana Bowman’s (2006) essay on Lifetime TV’s made-for-TV movies inherits from this earlier work on soap opera an attempt to connect up an address to a female viewer, an emphasis on melodrama, and the presence of Gothic tropes and characters in programming made for women. While other individual programs have been discussed as having “Gothic elements,” most notably the unsettling drama of *Twin
Peaks (Lynch-Frost Productions, 1990–1) (see Ledwon 1993; Botting 1996; Wheatley 2006), it was not until Helen Wheatley’s 2006 monograph Gothic Television that any sustained attempt was made to account for the genre’s history and identity on television.

Wheatley’s book charts the development of various strands of Gothic drama in the UK and US, from the 1940s onwards, highlighting a series of key moments in the development of the genre. An argument is made for the importance of the anthology drama series in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, where two distinct traditions, the restrained, suggestive ghost story and the effects-laden supernatural horror tale, developed simultaneously, drawing on a wide range of Gothic literary, theatrical, cinematic, and radiophonic traditions. She looks, for example, at the series Hammer House of Horror (Cinema Arts International, 1980), connecting this and other “women in peril” series – to borrow Peter Hutchings’ (2009) term – to British Gothic cinema of the 1960s and 1970s and its emphasis on sensation and the grotesque, thus refuting Matt Hills’ suggestion that the Gothic is a label which is used as a “displacing category” for an engagement with horror on television (Hills 2005: 119) (see film). Wheatley’s study also highlights the adaptation of female Gothic literature in the UK, for example Rebecca (BBC1, 1979; Carlton, 1997), The Woman in White (BBC2, 1982; BBC1, 1997), The Wyvern Mystery (BBC1, 2000) as an important source of Gothic fiction on television, and one which allows its viewers to explore fears surrounding the family and domesticity. In relation to US television, Wheatley looks at both hybrid forms of Gothic fiction in the 1960s (the Gothic family sitcoms and soap operas mentioned above) and Gothic serial dramas of the 1990s – Twin Peaks, American Gothic (CBS, 1995–6), Millennium (10: 13, 1996–9), arguing that these popular series can all be understood as programs that allowed for the exploration of social issues and personal anxieties which are writ large within the domestic viewing context. While it is difficult to see programs made for such a mainstream medium as fully realizing the Gothic’s potential for subversion, it is certainly true that this programming has provided space and time for the contemplation of social issues and anxieties, particularly those that surround homes and families.

One of the large absences in Wheatley’s study is any exploration of children’s Gothic television, and subsequently a number of scholars (Butler 2008; Peirse 2010) have pointed to eerie children’s serials such as The Box of Delights (BBC, 1984), Moondial (BBC, 1988), and Century Falls (BBC, 1993) as being most correctly understood as Gothic television. In these dramas, children become immersed in supernatural worlds in which they must confront the past (and themselves); the tone of these dramas is perhaps surprisingly dark and sinister for children’s programming, and this programming emphasizes interiority and/or dream-like states within their narrative style. The Gothic drama as site of working through/worrying at issues and anxieties has also characterized approaches to teen television drama, particularly writing on Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Callander 2001; Moseley 2002; Freedman 2005; Wilcox 2005; Williamson 2005). As Williamson argues, “Commentators have noted that the series deploys Gothic fantasy as a metaphor for the problems associated with contemporary adolescence” (Williamson 2005: 78), while Moseley proposes that the series becomes a site in which the meanings of feminism and femininity are negotiated for the teenage viewer. It is clear that in recent years, following the success of Stephenie Meyer’s Twilight novels and their cinematic adaptations, the vampire in particular has become a central figure in the teen Gothic, or what Fred Botting disparagingly calls the “girly-girly Gothic” (Botting 2007: 207) of the Goth-romance, and that the tortured vampire (discussed by Williamson 2005 as the “sympathetic vampire” with a rich literary, filmic and televisual heritage) has become the central figure in teen and post-teen television in the last decade. Following Buffy, a number of television serials and series have figured vampires as figures in crisis, tortured individuals, or
members of a liminal group, who struggle to come to terms with their “new” identity or who clash with authority figures from within “vampire society” or the broader community around them. It is not difficult to see why and how the vampire – frequently held in perpetuity in the body of a teenager or young adult (having been transformed into their vampire state at this age) – has become both a figure of identification and desire for a mainly female teenage audience. In programs like *Buffy*, *Angel* (Twentieth Century Fox Television, 1999–2004), *Supernatural* (Warner Brothers Television, from 2005), *Being Human* (BBC3, from 2008), and the *Vampire Diaries*, the teen (and immediately postteen or young adult) moment is portrayed as a rich site of the uncanny in which the central figures struggle to understand newly emergent libidinal desires and the responsibilities that accompany them. Like the teenager, the vampire is figured here as both childlike (sometimes in looks, almost always in the immediacy of their emotions and in the urge to satisfy their needs/desires) and adult (in the sense that they are encumbered by a complicated past and attuned to the need to control their “hunger” – vampires on teen television often find alternative sources of feeding beyond the neck of a live human) (see vampire fiction).

Most importantly, however, the sympathetic vampire of teen television is figured as an emotional and passionate being with whom the female teen protagonist (and, by extension, the female teen viewer) can identify and who can also be figured as an ideal partner (set against a cast of emotionally stunted human suitors, typified by the “geeks” and “jocks” of the US high school). In the opening episode of the *Vampire Diaries*, for example, the titular diaries allow for dual internal monologues to be interpolated and intertwined throughout the narrative from both the position of the heroine, Elena (Nina Dobrey), a troubled teenager, recently orphaned, who is struggling to find her place in the small American town of Mystic Falls, and the central sympathetic vampire and potential love interest, Stefan (Paul Wesley), who is also wracked with sorrow at the loss of his loved ones and a former life. When Stefan first calls at Elena’s house, having established a generic moment of emotional intensity (looks laced with unspoken and unexpected desire and longing) in their first meeting within that most central site of melodrama within US teen film and television, the high-school corridor, the dual rush of intense identification and desire felt between the teenage girl and the sympathetic vampire is confirmed in Elena’s slightly breathless exclamation to her potential beau: “You keep a diary?” Later in the episode, as these two characters are held in sharp focus at a party against a blurred backdrop of American teenagers doing what they do in US teen television (drinking, dancing, kissing, and so on), the image of the vampire as an expression of the emotional experience of the teenage girl (as the outsider who desperately searches for emotional intensity and “connection” while struggling to understand her place in the world) is writ large across the screen. Here we see the foci of the teen melodrama and Gothic television coming together: both of these dramatic subgenres are concerned with anxieties about the self, the emotional and more literal inheritances of family, questions of identity (and identity confusion), and are driven by the representation of often marginalized subjectivities. It is therefore no surprise that *The Vampire Diaries* was created by Kevin Williamson, the creator of articulate teen series *Dawson’s Creek* (WB Network, 1998–2003) which spawned a run of copycat programming in which teenage protagonists struggled to define their sense of self, and were frequently tormented by rearranging and rearranging identities centered around class conflicts and sexual preferences; furthermore, it is no surprise that Williamson was drawn to the Gothic in continuing to explore these dramatic themes.

The “explosion” in teen–Gothic television must, however, be understood as forming a part of a much broader suffusion of the Gothic across US television and culture in recent years (see Robson 2007: 242) and a more general sense that we are living in “Gothic times.” It is true, for instance, that the images, narrative
tropes, and stock characters of the Gothic have been repeatedly evoked in recent “quality” serial drama being produced in the US: Six Feet Under (HBO, 2001–5), The Sopranos (HBO, 1999–2007), and Desperate Housewives (ABC, from 2004) are perhaps the most prominent examples of programs in which hauntings, uncanny occurrences, and an obsession with death have predominated: Six Feet Under’s Gothicism has been discussed by Heller (2005) and Merck (2005) in interesting ways. As has been argued by a number of scholars, reference to the Gothic has become a way of assigning quality or distinction to a television program: these shows’ explorations of Gothic tropes and imagery signify the program makers’ desire to distinguish their programs “as ‘different’, ‘quirky’ and ‘more intelligent’ in some way, [their] ruminations on death and family trauma (both staples of Gothic television) understood as [their] markers of ‘quality’” (Wheatley 2006: 203). James Lyons has argued of plastic surgery drama Nip/Tuck (FX, 2003–10) that series creator Ryan Murphy drew consciously on a Gothic literary tradition in order to legitimate his sensationalist narrative: “From the Weimar cinema onward, Gothic fiction has provided a potent source for infusing popular cultural forms with literary cachet, while retaining the possibility of exploiting opportunities for exploring dark desires, provoking strong emotions, and staging thrilling drama” (Lyons 2007: 5). Lyons goes on to describe in detail this show’s Gothic characteristics, from an emphasis in Season One on doubles and doubling to an exploration of Dr. Christian Troy (Julian McMahon) as a figure of Gothic monstrosity.

There are those, most prominently Fred Botting (2007), who believe that in its suffusion across US popular culture in particular, the Gothic loses some of its potency, its potential for subversion, and that by becoming subsumed into mainstream culture, the Gothic becomes commodified to the point that “horror cedes to familiarity. No longer exceptions, Gothic figures collude with the norms they once negatively defined” (Botting 2007: 199). Botting goes on: “Beyond transgression, all the paraphernalia of Gothic modernity change: the uncanny is not where it used to be, nor are ghosts, doubles, monsters and vampires [...] Domesticated, welcomed, assimilated, ‘normal monstrosity’ eclipses the possibility of difference and otherness” (Botting 2007: 200). In Gothic television, the vampires of True Blood (HBO, from 2008), a loose adaptation of Charlaine Harris’ “Sookie Stackhouse” novels created by Alan Ball (also creator of Six Feet Under), might be seen as the epitome of Botting’s disarmed Gothic vampires. Bill Compton (Steven Moyer), the central sympathetic vampire of the series, who survives on synthetic blood, dates the show’s heroine, Sookie (Anna Paquin), a human, and works hard to integrate himself into the small town community where he had lived as a human in the nineteenth century, is indicative of the vampire as “good citizen” or “good consumer” which Botting finds so disappointing. Although other vampires within the vampire community are more traditionally threatening, both in terms of their blood lust and their sexual desires – Bill’s boss Eric (Alexander Skarsgård) representing this alternative form of vampirism in Sookie’s life – the former vampire is figured as the epitome of the monster gone straight, of monstrosity disarmed, following the “Great Revelation” in which the vampires “came out” to the wider human world in True Blood.

Currently, Gothic television might be seen to have gone mainstream, rather than be assigned to very late night slots or sporadic/annual seasons, and in doing so, perhaps disarmed its potential to either terrify or to offer a satisfying subversion of societal norms and ideals. Indeed, dramas based around traditional Gothic narratives and characters are perhaps less terrifying manifestations of the Gothic on UK and US television than the recent cycle of “extreme makeover” shows, including Extreme Makeover (ABC, 2002–5), 10 Years Younger (Maverick, from 2004), The Swan (Galan Entertainment for Fox TV, 2004–5), and Dr 90210 (E! Entertainment, from 2004). These
programs, in which one or two participants are followed having complete surgical makeovers, feature a standard narrative in which the (usually female) participant is figured as the classic Gothic heroine, subjected to a series of bodily “tortures” at the hands of her surgeon and isolated from her friends and family for the duration of the narrative. Indeed, The Swan goes further in figuring the space of revelation at the end of the program (where the successful “swan” greets her new self in a “magic mirror,” which first shows an often unrecognizable reflection of her old self, her “grotesque double”) as a Gothic mansion, complete with sweeping staircase, heavy drapes, and high contrast lighting by mock-candelabra. In this programming, what terrifies us is not the “grotesque body” of the participant, as the narration frequently suggests, but the lengths to which a series of “experts” go to reconstruct these bodies, conjuring images of Mary Shelley’s Gothic nightmares of the constructed body. It is true then that the Gothic is everywhere in UK and US television programming, pervading factual as well as fictional forms, and defining as well as exploring some of our deepest fears and anxieties.

SEE ALSO: Angel (1999–2004); Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997–2003); Comic Gothic; Domestic Gothic; Doubles; Family; Female Gothic; Film; Gothic 1950 to the Present; King, Stephen; Melodrama; Popular Culture; Uncanny; The; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING

Terror
MAX FINCHER

The eighteenth-century philosopher Edmund Burke described the emotion of terror as “the ruling principle of the sublime” (1990: 54). Burke outlined the key aesthetic and conceptual features of the sublime in A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757). Burke’s enquiry examines the psychological experience of terror: “No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain” (1990: 53). Experiencing the vicarious thrill of terror in art, one also feels a degree of enjoyment, a “pleasing terror,” as the master of the ghost story, M. R. James describes.

A sense of uncertainty and apprehension are the two defining characteristics of terror. We read novels and stories, or watch films, with an increasing expectation that something untoward or harmful might happen. A state of terror is a heightened state of anxiety and fear, achieved through suspense and atmosphere. Other late-eighteenth-century writers developed Burke’s ideas, including the sociopolitical dimensions of terror following the postrevolutionary period of “the Terror” in France in the 1790s. In Gothic writing, terror is almost always experienced in relation to the supernatural, which represents those invisible forces which never die and which rise up to threaten the structures of society. Witnessing the supernatural provokes uncertainty about the capacity to reason. Consider these lines from the poem “Ode to Terror” (1792), by Stephen Hole:

Ah, whence proceeds this sudden gloom,
Dark as the mansions of the tomb,
That clothes the brow of night?
My faultering tongue amazement chains,
And ice seems creeping through my veins.
Alas, ideal terrors have disjoined
My powers of reason, and unhing’d my mind.

As well as indicating that astonishment and a sense of paralysis are the physiological effects of terror, Hole draws an association between terror and the life of the mind. In contrast to horror fiction, which is characterized by the physical, the visceral, and disgust, the lifeblood of fiction which is terrifying is the “ideal,” principally the imagination. Uncertainty, anxiety, suspicion, paranoia, obsession, and a powerless inability to distinguish between what may be real or imagined characterize terror in Gothic. Terror may or may not be all in our heads.

Ann Radcliffe’s fiction subtly develops the idea that terror is an aspect of a character’s internal psychological state. Her heroines
imagine “ideal terrors”; they cannot see or apprehend physical phenomena clearly. They are alienated and powerless. Deserted forests, oppressive mountains, mysterious noises, and ghostly appearances in infinitely vast castles, as in The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), arouse terror. Radcliffe’s topography of terror is also symbolic of her heroines’ psychological conflicts and desires, and she has left a legacy to generations of writers and filmmakers to comment on women’s social position.

Charles Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820), a labyrinthine, meandering narrative of the eponymous Melmoth who has made a pact with the Devil and is seeking a victim to release him, develops the psychological dimensions of terror further. Maturin shows the terrifying effects of delusion and obsession, especially as it is connected to religious belief and fanaticism. Perhaps for the first time in fiction, the reader is given a sense of the interior life of the disturbed mind in Maturin’s novel. Preoccupied with the terrifying bigotry and harm caused by religious fanaticism, the novel explores the paralyzing effects of delusion, paranoia, and religious mania in its interlocking tales, and pre-empts twentieth-century novels that deal with the terrifying power of religious fundamentalism and obsession.

The question of whether we can trust in the evidence of our senses, and whether we are seeing reality or an illusion, is ever-present in the literature of terror. Invariably, fictional representations of terror are concerned with the representation of distorted perceptions and beliefs. Like Maturin’s Melmoth, James Hogg’s The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) also suggests that extreme religious faith can be a source of terror. In the editor’s narrative, George Colwan is tormented and persecuted by his alleged brother, Robert, whose real origins are unknown. Robert is brought up by a strict Calvinist minister, who considers him to be one of the elect, destined for Heaven. However, there is the suggestion that Robert could possibly be demonic, possessing his brother. Hogg’s key to terrifying his readers is to leave them in a state of uncertainty as to the identity of Robert Wringhim, and whether he or George is responsible for the violent murders that occur. Hogg leads the way for later writers like Robert Louis Stevenson in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) and for later horror writers and filmmakers. Belief in demonic possession or fanatical religious convictions may or may not be forms of schizophrenia or megalomania.

Since the early nineteenth century, the inclusion of short stories within literary magazines ensured that the terror found in Gothic novels kept haunting the reading public. Almost every established nineteenth-century novelist wrote short tales of terror. However, two particular writers are commonly associated with the tale of terror in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century: Edgar Allan Poe and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. Poe’s short stories, personally expressive and powerfully intense, explore claustrophobia, obsession, and delusion. Several of Poe’s tales feature individuals who are on the borders of sanity. In “The Premature Burial,” Poe philosophizes that real terror is not experienced by reading the history of “the long and weird catalogue of human miseries,” but that “the ultimate woe is particular, not diffuse […] and that to be buried, while alive, is, beyond question, the most terrific of these extremes which has ever fallen to the lot of mere mortality” (Poe 1985: 432–3). Poe’s living burial motif becomes a prevalent metaphor in twentieth-century fiction that describes the psychological effects of living under social and political oppression. The living death symbolizes a state of powerless isolation, where characters are in thrall to larger social and political forces they have no control over or escape from.

Similar to Poe, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s supernatural stories feature helpless, powerless characters, who are possibly either delusional or victims of external malignant forces, sometimes sociopolitical ones. However, Le Fanu, a Dubliner, was particularly aware of the growing disenchantment with the Anglo-Irish aristocracy in mid-nineteenth century Ireland, and many of his stories suggest that terror is a
metaphor for wider sociopolitical conflicts and tensions (see Irish Gothic). Le Fanu’s collection of five short stories, In a Glass Darkly (1872), features a doctor-narrator, Dr. Martin Hesselius, whose letters and notes on his patients form the basis for the stories. What emerges in the late Victorian Gothic is how the effect of terror is, ironically, intensified by the drive to document and explain disturbing phenomena as the result of natural and scientific processes. The discourses of medicine, psychiatry, and criminology are present in many novels and tales that feature narrators who are doctors and detectives exploring geographically specific “cases” of terrified communities.

Critical analysis of the literature of terror began in earnest with David Punter’s groundbreaking literary-historical study, The Literature of Terror (1980), which provides a comprehensive historical analysis of how all the writers mentioned above achieve terror in their fiction (see criticism). Punter’s supplementary volumes (Punter 1996a, 1996b) consider several twentieth-century writers and film directors who have continued to terrify readers and audiences. Terror in the twentieth century is predominantly found in four genres: the political novel, the science fiction novel, cinema, and journalism. The individual trapped in a modern nightmarish, bureaucratic universe, suffering from paranoia and persecution, arguably begins with Franz Kafka’s novels, The Trial (1925) and The Castle (1926). George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty Four (1949), William Golding’s The Lord of the Flies (1954), and many novels in the dystopia and science fiction genres explore oppressive social and political structures that often exploit the emotion of terror. On celluloid, Robert Bloch’s Psycho (1960), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, sets the standard for how terror is achieved in film by the philosophy that less is more. Terror is created through what the audience does not see, and when they sense or know something untoward will happen to a character, and as in the novel, accumulates slowly. Music and lighting are particularly important in films that create or represent states of terror, typically individuals who are in some way isolated and powerless in the face of their oppressor(s), human, animal, or extraterrestrial. Examples are The Day of the Triffids (1960), The Birds (1962), Repulsion (1965), Rosemary’s Baby (1968), The Wicker Man (1973), Jaws (1977), Halloween (1978), and The Shining (1980).

Recent critical writing on terror looks at how terror continues in Gothic postmodernist fiction, for example by Salman Rushdie. Possible future directions for research into terror might consider further how the political meanings associated with “terror” have returned in the light of 9/11, “the war on terror,” and the continuing war in Afghanistan. One distinctive feature that characterizes Gothic fiction is that terror is almost always a displacement for wider, cultural anxieties. Rather than looking at treatments of terrorists in political fiction post-9/11, researchers might look to how and where ideas of alienation, hidden identities, fanaticism, and paranoia combine to create terror. Nevertheless, the political inflexion of terror should not be underestimated in readings of fiction. The interrelationship between the media, journalism, and politics, and the representation of terror in fiction might be investigated further. Some have described the last ten years as the “Age of Terror,” seeming to forget that terrorism is not new to some nations and cultures. Ireland, Palestine, Chile, Rwanda, Zimbabwe are just a few nations to have lived in terror for decades. 9/11, the “War on Terror” in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay, repeated suicide bombings, and the continuing war in Afghanistan have been ever-present in the Western consciousness in the digital age. Political and digital terrorism is, self-evidently, very much a reality of our times. The “truth” of history has, contrary to Poe’s view, replaced fiction as the locus for our experience of terror. Or has it? Increasingly, our understanding of the two realms is unstable, a prime principle of terror itself. Perhaps it is in the realm of an increasingly reactionary conservative media journalism that modern readers might look if they now wish to feel truly terrified.
SEE ALSO: Criticism; Hogg, James; Irish Gothic; James, Henry; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); Horror Fiction; Kafka, Franz; Maturin, Charles Robert; Poe, Edgar Allan; Radcliffe, Ann; Sublime, The; Supernatural, The; Victorian Gothic.

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FURTHER READING


Theory
DAVID PUNTER

The theory of the Gothic – how and why it emerged; what sociocultural forces it responded to; its strangely unnatural persistence; and the ways in which it has constantly been reshaped over the years and indeed the centuries – has been a source of great and expanding interest since the late 1970s. Before that time, critical attention to the Gothic was largely descriptive, and based on the work of scholars who might be better described as connoisseurs. Principal among these was the remarkable Montague Summers, who amassed and worked from a huge library of Gothic texts; his monumental book The Gothic Quest (1938) provides plot summaries and contexts for a huge number of works that might be loosely called Gothic fiction, many of which had been forgotten before his time and have, indeed, since been forgotten again. But, even behind these sometimes apparently naïve descriptions, there lies an agenda that might be termed theoretical, in a way: namely, an attempt to demonstrate that Gothic fiction is essentially a Catholic form, in love with the trappings of the church as much as with the legacies of a defunct aristocracy (see Roman Catholicism).

Summers saw Gothic fiction in its heyday (from the 1760s to the 1830s) as essentially coterminous with older forms of the Gothic: the image of the medieval cathedral appears to be never far away from his thoughts, and of course Gothic fiction is itself a form with roots deep in the past, from late antiquity through to the ballad and vernacular revival of the mid-eighteenth century. Devendra Varma’s The Gothic Flame, first published in 1957, continued Summers’ fascination with the sheer
proliferation of Gothic texts, and played a large part in reminding readers of the wealth and popularity of a form that, strange as it may seem to us now, had largely fallen from public consciousness. In both Summers and Varma, though, there is a tendency to regard Gothic fiction as a kind of aberration: an enjoyable one, no doubt, but standing distinctly aside from the conventional realist novel. If there is a basis to the Gothic, then it resides in a quasi-universal tendency toward a kind of mysticism; the Gothic is not within any mainstream, and is thus not responsive to the kinds of mundane concern that color other forms of writing.

In 1980, David Punter published *The Literature of Terror*, which is generally taken to be the first attempt to provide a clear explanation for the emergence of Gothic fiction in a specific historical context. The center of Punter's argument is that the Gothic is essentially a middle-class form, no less so than realism, but one in which fears and anxieties about historical progress are manifested, albeit in displaced form. Behind this argument lay a fundamentally Marxist – or, as it might now be called, cultural materialist – claim that even Gothic, until then widely seen as a curiously disembodied genre, could better be seen as a specific response to historical conditions: that the constant dealings with antiquity, with castles and monasteries, with castles and aristocrats, could best be explained as a backward-looking but still culturally relevant attempt to deal with a certain social precariousness, to address concerns about a rapidly evolving society. Thus, the apparent escapism of Gothic is shown to be something rather different: namely, an attempt, conscious or unconscious, to provide a “different” view of history that, even as it deals extensively in the supernatural and the demonic, uses these as codes in which to address aspects of social progress and reaction that run deep below the surface of everyday life.

Within this context, it naturally followed that this specific concern with the many and various – and often little understood by the writers themselves – forms of antiquity could usefully be read through a Freudian lens: namely, in terms of a “return of the repressed,” whereby the “dark imagination” of the Gothic sought to represent real fears through imagery founded on displacement. This in turn, it was suggested, served to explain, or to help to explain, the vast popularity of the Gothic, especially when taken alongside the huge expansion of the reading market that characterized the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Punter's work also went beyond this, in extending the canon of the Gothic well beyond its supposed temporal boundaries, moving from the “original” Gothic fictions of Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, and others, through the nineteenth-century “sensation novel,” to the late reflooding of the Gothic in fin-de-siècle works by Stevenson, Wells, Wilde, Stoker, and others, and beyond that into the twentieth century and up to the 1970s. This version of the “persistence” of Gothic is one that has tended to form the bedrock of much later Gothic theory, although many different kinds of explanation have been entertained.

But in fact Punter's book had been preceded by earlier work specifically on the “female Gothic” (see **female gothic**), in particular the chapter of that name in Ellen Moers' celebrated classic *Literary Women* (1977). Moers was the first critic to identify and move toward an explanation of the singular predominance of women writers of early Gothic fiction. She writes a little of Ann Radcliffe, but her first main focus of attention is Mary Shelley (see **shelley**, **mary wollstonecraft**: she mounts a pioneering study of *Frankenstein* (1818), paying attention for the first time to the issues of pregnancy, birth, and mothering that identify *Frankenstein* – despite its more apparently overt concerns with issues such as science, technology, and male transgression – as a specifically female text. Moers goes on to write eloquently of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Christina Rossetti's “Goblin Market” (1862), and a variety of more recent women authors, including Carson McCullers and Sylvia Plath, highlighting a specific take on the various meanings and implications of
monstrosity and returning again to Freud, setting as she does so a trend that reappears many times by referring to his essay on “The Uncanny” (1919).

Moers' work was followed and developed in 1983 by Juliann Fleenor’s collection of essays The Female Gothic, and the emphasis on the Gothic’s concern with issues of gender has persisted throughout the recent decades. The theme of the “persecuted maiden,” of course, is obvious from the very earliest days of Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe; but successive critics have seen Gothic’s dealings with gender as more complex than this. On the practical side, the popularity of Gothic provided work for many women writers; in terms of content, Gothic also served to provide the opportunity as time went on to portray not only shrinking violets but also strong, capable women: an example that perhaps summarizes many others is Marion Halcombe in Wilkie Collins’ 1860 novel The Woman in White.

The Gothic, perhaps, allows for a discourse about gender oppression – because it is frequently displaced in place and time – that would not be permitted within the mainstream; even the supernatural may be delivering messages about the relations between the sexes in coded form. Kate Ferguson Ellis’ The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology (1989) took these arguments to a new level, arguing that the Gothic castle itself is a coded version of the home, and that the relations we see between the evil baron, the persecuted girl, and the valorous but impotent lover are displaced versions of relations that were deeply troubling and deeply troubled as the realization that the social practices and assumptions that confined – indeed chained – women to the home were crumbling, with unpredictable effects on what had previously been assumed, mainly under religious influence, to be an unalterable arrangement of the sexes.

The early 1990s saw an extraordinary plethora of acute theoretical approaches to the Gothic. One of these is centered on the work of Jerrold E. Hogle. Hogle has made an enormous number of contributions to Gothic theory, but perhaps the most outstanding has been his insistence on bearing in mind that, right from the “beginning” – if, indeed, there ever was a beginning – Gothic has been a form of fakery. It has involved what Hogle has referred to as the “ghost of a counterfeit” (see counterfeit). The most obvious example is Walpole’s so-called “castle” at Strawberry Hill, and it is Walpole (alongside Shakespeare) that Hogle discusses in one of his most significant essays, “The Ghost of the Counterfeit in the Genesis of the Gothic.”

According to this argument, as it has been later developed, it is a mistake to look in Gothic for the kind of “authenticity” that we might expect of some other genres: instead, there is a mobility, and indeed a self-awareness, within Gothic that – as some later critical interventions have suggested – might be considered as rendering it a forerunner of postmodernism in its dealings with forgery, with false histories, and with, at least in some cases, a certain playfulness that resists being drawn into the fold of seriousness. This is not at all to say that Gothic does not address serious concerns, but rather that it calls constant attention to the gap, indeed the abyss, between the sign and its apparent cultural roots, reminding us all that there is always the possibility that what we ourselves present to the world is not a matter of ultimate verifiability but a question of masks, veils, and disguises (see masks, veils, and disguises). Thus, it may be that, in presenting us with questions about the counterfeit, the Gothic is asking the most serious of all questions: questions about truth, trust, recognition.

This essay by Hogle was published in 1994; so was Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction, by Stephen Bruhm. What this book does is to “bring on stage,” as it were, the relationships between the Gothic and the tortured body. Issues to do with Gothic and the body will be returned to a little later; but the essential point here is that Bruhm establishes the hitherto avoided connections between Gothic, spectacle, and the sheer...
physicality of pain. Far from being a genre merely involved in the multiple evasions typical of the discourse of the supernatural, Bruhm argues, Gothic is far more physically and socially transgressive, allowing us to witness suffering bodies. Basing his argument partly on Foucault, Bruhm, dealing with both verbal and visual materials, invites us to imagine the Gothic as a spectacle of transgression wherein we as readers or viewers are sucked into a scenario where we also experience the terror of the tortured.

Bruhm has since followed up this theme of transgression, which has become a fertile one in Gothic theory, by focusing on transgressions of gender role. In a series of essays, he has demonstrated the relation between the Gothic and a “queer aesthetic” (see Queer Gothic): this has partly to do with the queer authorial presence in a number of Gothic texts, but also partly to do with a further reticulation of Gothic’s concerns with gender – the curious sexuality of Matilda in Lewis’ The Monk (1796) is perhaps the most obvious example, but for Bruhm as for a number of later critics the Gothic proves to be a radically unstable field in which socially forbidden desires can find an outlet and can disturb the gendered norms of societies from the eighteenth century to the present day.

A third critical text published in 1994 is Ken Gelder’s Reading the Vampire; this and the 1997 book by Nina Auerbach, Our Vampires, Ourselves, are two of the most powerful contributions to recent consideration of the vampire (see Vampire Fiction). The “history” of the vampire has been fundamentally imbricated with the history of the Gothic since its inception; but, of all manifestations of the Gothic, it can be argued that it is the figure of the vampire that has remained, and shows all the signs of continuing to be, the most potent. Why is this? How is it that a figure of the supernatural that should, by all accounts, have been long dead has continued to exert such a primal force over literature, film, and television well into, as it has now proved, the twenty-first century?

From Gelder’s and Auerbach’s work, we can suggest some answers – or, if not answers, approaches. The vampire has to do with blood, of course; and concerns of blood, in all its real and symbolic manifestations, continue to grip the imagination – especially, perhaps, in times when the infection of blood has a number of particular resonances (see Blood). The vampire has also to do with dreams of immortality; with the strange possibilities of physical and sexual connection beyond the confines of intercourse; with the notion of the outlaw; and with a certain kind of aesthetic grandeur that, in fantasy, floats free of the constraints of the world.

None of this, perhaps, quite accounts for the allure of the vampire; and this may be because that allure is constantly changing, modernizing, even while it refers us back to a version of antiquity. Above all, we may say that the theory of the vampire depends upon the notion of being free from constraint, being “exempted” from a world wherein we would otherwise be in chains. In one sense, this is an infantile scenario, one that stems from what Freud called “childhood omnipotence”; but, on the other, with the prospect of a certain freedom from the body coming closer all the time in terms of scientific advance, then it may be that the vampire, as well as being the siren voice of the past, may also be able to carry the charge of being the haunting, haunted voice of the future.

When thinking of the Gothic and theory, it is worth bearing in mind that 1994 also saw the English translation of the second of the two key works of the psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, The Shell and the Kernel (their first work to be translated, in 1986, had been The Wolf Man’s Magic Word). What is interesting about these books, from the Gothic point of view, is their extensive deployment of terms with which Gothic scholars will already have been long familiar: nightmare, phantom, crypt – indeed, The Wolf Man’s Magic Word has as a subtitle A Cryptonymy. One of Abraham and Torok’s central arguments is that there lies below the Freudian...
unconscious a further, cryptic or encrypted level of the psyche of which we are doubly unaware since it manifests itself only in the form of a gap, a space: the reason it does this is that it has been implanted in us by past generations; it is the site of family secrets, apparently uninhabited yet haunted by all we have not been told.

It is possible to read Freud’s own case histories as Gothic stories; but far more so to read Abraham and Torok, with their insistence on the absence/presence of the “transgenerational phantom,” as either a critique of, or inflected by, Gothic fiction from Walpole onwards. Judith Halberstam, in Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters (1995), pursues this line in fascinating ways: she sees psychoanalysis itself as within the Gothic tradition (in the sense that it offers an account of life that is radically different from, submerged within, conventional practices and expectations) and addresses, in particular, what one might call the “monstrosity of monsters” (see monstrosity) – in other words, she addresses the ways in which the monster is a specific construct of its own place and time while simultaneously being irreducible to the most obvious components from which it appears to be formed.

Halberstam’s work has been followed up by Kelly Hurley in The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the “Fin de Siècle” (1996), which, taking a more specific period in history, argues that the Gothic denotes a series of threats to the stability of what we consider to be “human.” In order to explain this approach, Hurley coins the term the “abhuman” to refer to what happens to human bodies and psyches under duress; but, at least equally importantly – and foretelling a great deal of more recent work on the Gothic – she connects this kind of process with nineteenth-century discourses of medicine, criminology, and biology. On this linked spectrum, the Gothic of the fin de siècle does not appear as aberrant, but rather as part of a set of developments – some aspirational, some threatening – in how to think (of) the human.

This emphasis on the body, its possibilities and its enclosures, its materialization and its dematerialization, its openness and its concealment, brings us on necessarily to the further question raised by the latest manifestation of the persistence of the Gothic, namely contemporary Goth culture (see goth). There have been many attempts to think through the cultural and aesthetic issues raised by this persistence – or perhaps revisitation would be a better word – but the most interesting to date is that of Catherine Spooner in Fashioning Gothic Bodies (2004). Here Spooner moves back to Victorian Britain in order to think through how fashion, the dressing of the human body, has responded to other cultural phenomena; how clothing is related to revelation and concealment; how the whole issue of how the body presents itself, or is presented, is related to the question of the secret, that which is meant to be kept concealed, that which is on display. On this basis, she is able to put forward an engaging and convincing argument as to the cultural significance of contemporary Goth style.

It would be fair to say that these developments have been, as it were, on the materialistic side of Gothic theory. Julian Wolfreyes, for example, in his 2002 book Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature, while maintaining a historical thread through his work, is more concerned with the “supernatural” – not, that is, as an attested fact but rather as a way of looking at the spectral effects of literature. In this, he relies heavily on Derrida (who also wrote the foreword to Abraham and Torok’s Wolf Man book). Ghosts, Wolfreyes claims, have an intrinsic connection with texts, and even with the very notion of textuality – what is a text but a haunted site, haunted by the ghost of the author, haunted by the phantoms of readers and readers-to-come? As we ourselves read, are we not ghosts looking in, disembodied, on the text?

It is possible, of course, that the Victorian scenarios Wolfreyes chooses are specifically open to a “phantomatic” reading; but it is equally possible that this kind of argument can
be extended across time and place, for if the ghost, the specter, the phantom – as relayed by Gothic fiction but always recurring in new and different guises – are the unaccommodated residues of the psychic or social past, then all culture is laid open to a version of a Gothic reading. This indeed has led to some of the most interesting developments in Gothic theory since the start of the new millennium.

At this point, it will be obvious that the ideas about the Gothic considered thus far, while of general application, have nevertheless arisen largely within the context of the British Gothic tradition. There has been, ever since the work of Leslie Fiedler, a linked but slightly separate set of developments in connection with North American writing, regarding which there is insufficient space to consider here (see American Gothic); nevertheless, what has become apparent in recent years is that the notion of the Gothic may be of relevance to a wide swath of national, regional, and local literatures. An excellent example of this is Justin Edwards’ Gothic Passages: Racial Ambiguity and the American Gothic (2003), which explores the connections in nineteenth-century American literature between Gothic imagery and narrative and the various tropes deployed in order to portray, consciously or unconsciously, racial difference (see race). The issue of racial difference, its flaunting and suppression, occurs perhaps even more obviously in connection with various postcolonial literatures, and here groundbreaking work has been done by, among others, Tabish Khair in The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness (2009) (see postcolonial Gothic).

To what extent, then, is “Gothic” a term specific to a particular type or genre of literature with clear boundaries; to what extent is it a mobile label that can help us to identify and understand the various concerns literature has with otherwise suppressed or inexpressible material? This is one of the questions that contemporary Gothic theory is constantly exploring; to take up one example from above, what is the meaning of the fact that the symbolism of the vampire has spread so remarkably during recent years? One of the factors that needs to be borne in mind is the identification of the “uncanny” (see uncanny, the).

Oddly, after Freud’s essay, there was no monograph devoted to the uncanny until the publication in 2003 of the eponymous book by Nicholas Royle. This monumental work – which is part argument, part literary enactment – reminds us, above all, of the sheer multifariousness of the uncanny, of the propensity of ghosts to pop up in the unlikeliest of places. In one sense – for example in its dealings with the death drive and telepathy – it builds on Freud; in another it seeks to establish as a principle that literature itself is uncanny – in its “origins,” in its effects, in its dealings with the disembodied. This has, of course, profound implications for the Gothic, as the genre that deals above all in the supernatural, in the specter and the phantom, in the transgression of the lines between life and death, in all the uncanny doublings that make Freud’s original essay so resonant and that are developed here by Royle in far greater detail.

The supernatural, we may paradoxically say, is not an aberration; on the contrary, it is always with us, in the forms of haunting by the past; the return of ghosts that were thought to have been laid to rest; and odd quirks of consciousness that appear to suggest that the rational fabric within the shelter of which we seek to live may not be as well constructed as we would like to think. In a sense, this returns us full circle to the “original Gothic,” if we see it (as most critics now do) as a reaction against the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, as the necessary dark correlate to a lucid, neatly boundaried view of the world.

In 2007, a book was published by Dale Townshend titled The Orders of Gothic: Foucault, Lacan, and the Subject of Gothic Writing 1764–1820. It is a densely argued book, and I cannot do it justice here: but what is perhaps most significant is the extraordinary light it sheds on the complexities of Gothic’s dealings with issues central to modern cultural and psychoanalytic theory. At the heart of this lies the issue of repression; but Townshend is more concerned
with related concepts, including the problem of incest and the doubtful field of paternity – both of which, of course, are central to the concerns of Gothic fiction from Walpole on.

What Townshend’s study reveals is that “theory of the Gothic” does not have to bifurcate into, on the one hand, purely historical study and, on the other, an attempt to demonstrate “universal” aspects. On the contrary: the historicity of the Gothic, its lack of verifiable origins, its endless recapitulations, its ellipses and uncertainties, its reveling in the difficulty of establishing a legitimate text – all of these features are relevant, too, to contemporary theories of the vicissitudes of the subject. In this sense, then, it can be contended that Gothic is an ur-form; it is not that somehow it “predicted” theoretical concerns to come, but rather that it proves to be a vessel, a capacious vessel into which all kinds of content can be poured – as, emblematically, the myth of the vampire can be, and is, remade for so many different generations, locales, cultures.

I have mentioned Goth culture above: the refashioning of “Goth” within a contemporary subculture. But there is a further aspect to the “modernity” of Gothic, which has been addressed by Fred Botting in a series of books including Limits of Horror: Technology, Bodies, Gothic (2008). It has been noted before that Dracula (1897), as well as relating to an abyssal past, also contains an extraordinary amount of up-to-date technology – telegraphy, typewriting, and so forth; Botting’s wider argument is that there is in fact an intimate general relationship between the Gothic and technology – or, to put it more broadly, between technology and the ghost (see Technologies). If we think, for example, of the early history of cinema, we discover two interesting features: the first is that many of the very earliest films were made around a small corpus of Gothic novels (Frankenstein, Dracula, Jekyll and Hyde); the second is that early audiences for film often felt themselves to be in the presence of a supernatural process – the successor, of course, of the magic lantern show, the deliberate “smoke-and-mirror” effects of Victorian magicians.

One of Botting’s favourite terms is “cyber-gothic”: a set of new Gothic phenomena, ranging from computer games through to the prosthetic body, by means of which the apparently “human” is challenged with the potential emergence of a “new order” that may appear at first monstrous or may, indeed, actually be so. We live in a world where, increasingly, scientific advance may appear paradoxical: the more we know (about outer space, to take one example), the less we find we know. When we try to reduce the world to the natural, what we find (or produce) is an explosion of the supernatural, of monstrous hypotheses, of ways in which the simple notion of the “human” is relegated to the past, remaining merely to foreshadow or haunt an inhuman, or perhaps abhuman, present: one that has itself been foreshadowed in the monsters and demons of the Gothic.

Where, then, is the Gothic? At the moment, it would appear that the answer is “all over the place.” Perhaps the most interesting theoretical work on the Gothic in the last couple of years has been done by Glennis Byron and the team she has assembled at the University of Stirling to develop the notion of “global Gothic.” This has yet to emerge in published form; but the essential concern is with the spread of “Gothic” motifs across a huge variety of cultures, from Brazil to the Philippines, from Russia to South Africa. So far, perhaps, so obvious: but the issue is a complex one, because it involves the constant contact, now prevalent more than ever before because of the globalized spread of cultural interchange, between Western textualities and “indigenous” folktales and related material.

There are a number of ways of looking at this. One might say that the West, through its dominance and control of the means of production, largely passes on its “product” to other parts of the world; or one might say that Gothic imagery is being constantly remade – in China, in Japan, in Spain – and coming into new kinds of fusion with all manner of “different” histories. In either event, though, it seems proper to speak of “haunting,” of the ways in which apparently stable cultures conjure, receive, and
transmute specters of the Other; and thus again Gothic becomes, according to these ideas, a kind of paradigm for the phantomatic, and particularly for the increasingly disembodied forms in which, under conditions of globalization, ideas and images appear from unverifiable sources, seeming to have something of the supernatural while both manifesting and concealing relations of power – as, it seems safe to assume, Gothic has always done.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Blood; Counterfeit; Female Gothic; Goth; Masks, Veils, and Disguises; Monstrosity; Postcolonial Gothic; Queer Gothic; Race; Roman Catholicism; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Technologies; Uncanny, The; Vampire Fiction.

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FURTHER READING

Thompson, Alice

MONICA GERMANÀ

Published in 1990, Killing Time foreshadows the recurrent themes of the subsequent works of Alice Thompson: set in the London underground, her debut novella explores the liminal space between desire and obsession, interrogating simultaneously – and
Killing Time has been followed by the publication of five novels to date: Justine (1996) (joint winner of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction), Pandora’s Box (1998), Pharos (2002), The Falconer (2008), and The Existential Detective (2010). The five novels share an intense engagement with conventional Gothic topoi; revenants of both the psychological and supernatural kind possess the uncanny settings of her main novels, which, in turn, are haunted by a complex web of intertextual references, exposing the self-reflexivity of her Gothic writing (see intertext; uncanny, the). Though the novels present a cohesive set of shared themes articulated by a distinctive voice, Thompson’s fiction is in fact difficult to categorize. The American modernism of Henry James’ fiction, which Thompson investigated in her doctoral thesis at Oxford University; the magical realism of Angela Carter; and the psychological Gothic of Edgar Allan Poe and Daphne Du Maurier contribute overtly to the complex symbolism of her plots (see carter, angela; du maurier, daphne; james, henry; poe, edgar allan).

The Scottish Gothic, too, plays a significant role in the development of Thompson’s work, particularly in her latest two novels, Pharos and The Falconer, both set in Scotland (see scottish gothic). Born and currently living in Edinburgh, Thompson spent her childhood in various parts of Britain, including Shetland, where she was writer in residence. Along with the evocative power of the Scottish landscape, it is the eminently psychological quality of the Scottish doppelganger that surfaces throughout her work, particularly visible in the references to James Hogg’s The Private Confessions and Memoirs of a Justified Sinner (1824) and Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) in Justine (Thompson 1996: 13). The story revolves around the obsessive bonds between an unnamed narrator, Justine, and her (alleged) twin, Juliette. Influenced by Carter’s controversial study The Sadeian Woman (1979), Thompson’s doppelganger explores the representation of feminine clichés in relation to patriarchal discourse (see doubles). Simultaneously “angel” and “whore,” Thompson’s Justine/Juliette resists identification with binary categorizations of gender, embodying instead the undistinguished (female) other. Justine’s own book is also significantly blank (Thompson 1996: 63), like the uncut pages of the first edition of Justine, which “required to be slit open in an act suggestive of Sadeian or Gothic violence” (Anderson 2000: 122), opening up Thompson’s text to a metafictional reading of the character’s disruption of narrative/authorial control.

The story of plastic surgeon Noah Close and his “creature,” Pandora – Thompson’s second novel, Pandora’s Box – bears similarities with several stories of monstrous (re)production, such as Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) and its postmodernist rewriting, Alasdair Gray’s Poor Things (1992). The novel, as the title suggests, recalls the creation of Pandora and, implicitly, the mythical birth/creation of two more female archetypes, Venus and Eve. The male gaze’s control over notions of female beauty and the construction of feminine subjectivity is articulated through a complex parody of the detective novel, which self-consciously deconstructs essentialist notions of gender and the foundations of monolithic, rational knowledge: “Pandora’s Box [...] argues for a recognition of the different facets that collectively comprise vision” (Sellers 2001: 106).

The tidal landscape of the Scottish islands is recognizable in the sublime setting of Pharos: A Ghost Story. The fictional setting of the story, the Scottish isle of Jacob’s Rock, is a haunted land. While the text interrogates the authenticity of ghostly apparitions, all characters in the
story – Cameron, the Lighthouse-Keeper; Simon, his assistant; Lucia, the woman rescued from the sea; Charlotte, Cameron’s sister; and Grace, a mulatto girl – present spectral qualities. Semantic barriers between seen and unseen, the “real” world and the realm of shadows, collapse from the beginning, as sign-posted by the epigraph, taken from Thomas Browne’s *The Garden of Cyrus* (1658). The light/darkness conflict is the principal source of the novel’s symbolic subtext: revolving around Lucia, Latin for “light,” the plot unfolds the dark secret concerning the island’s corrupt history, unveiling the disturbing tale of slave trade, abuse, and death haunting Jacob’s Rock and the Lighthouse. Against Cameron’s gnosticism and the stronghold of patriarchal power the Lighthouse represents, Lucia’s elusiveness epitomizes the ethereal specter of the untold truth.

*The Falconer* unravels as a mystery novel, set in the haunted Highlands castle of Glen Almain, where Iris, the novel’s protagonist, returns under false pretences to solve the mystery of her sister’s death. The sister’s name, Daphne, is a tribute to Daphne Du Maurier, while the numerous intertextual references – the “sister’s evocative handwriting” (Thompson 2008: 19), the “shrine” room of the deceased woman, and her glamorous wardrobe (Thompson 2008: 19, 100) – along with the sensuous atmosphere of the interwar setting are strongly reminiscent of *Rebecca* (1938). As with *Pharos, The Falconer* combines a deep psychological exploration of feminine subjectivity with a wider mystery plot: in this case a story of espionage foreshadowing the outburst of World War II.

With its intricate visual symbolism, Thompson’s fiction marries Gothic traditional motifs with postmodernism’s concern with simulacra (see *Contemporary Gothic*). From the Gothic Thompson derives a fascination with the uncanny, understood in the Freudian sense, to incorporate the coexistence of the unfamiliar within the familiar: ultimately the most haunting of her novels’ specters is the ghost of the real.

SEE ALSO: Carter, Angela; Contemporary Gothic; Doubles; Du Maurier, Daphne; Hogg, James; Intertext; James, Henry; Poe, Edgar Allan; Scottish Gothic; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Uncanny, The.

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FURTHER READING


**Twilight**

DIANE MASON

A global teenage Gothic publishing phenomenon was born in 2005 with the issue of *Twilight*, the first in a saga of four books by American author Stephenie Meyer (1973–). Meyer was born in Hartford, Connecticut, to Stephen and Candy Morgan, and raised in
Phoenix, Arizona, with brothers Seth, Jacob, and Paul and sisters Emily and Heidi. She was educated at Chaparral High School in Scottsdale, Arizona, and Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, where she gained a BA in English in 1997. Meyer met her husband, Christian (whom she nicknames “Pancho”), during her childhood in Arizona and the couple married in 1994 when they were both twenty-one. The couple have three sons: Eli, Gabe, and Seth. Meyer is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and is a self-confessed “straightlaced Mormon who doesn’t drink alcohol or smoke” (Mills 2008).

Prior to Twilight, Meyer had never written so much as a short story and, before the birth of her first child, she even “considered going to law school because she felt she had no chance of becoming a writer” (Mills 2008). Meyer claims that the plot of Twilight came to her in a dream in June 2003 (Whitworth 2008). In Meyer’s dream, her protagonists, Isabella (or Bella) Swann, an “ordinary” girl, and Edward Cullen, a “sparkly and beautiful” vampire, were standing in a meadow having a conversation (Whitworth 2008). Edward was torn between his attraction to Bella and a near uncontrollable urge to drink her blood, which “sings for [him]” in a way no other mortal’s has ever done (Meyer 2007: 490). Meyer was intrigued by the characters and the premise of the incident and, keen to know what happened next, began to write. By August 2003, Meyer had completed the first draft of Twilight. The manuscript was rejected by nine literary agencies and ignored by a further five, but she eventually received a positive response from Jodi Reamer of Writers House. In November 2003, Meyer signed a $750 000 three-book deal with Little, Brown and Company.

In Twilight (2005), Bella, the new girl at Forks High School, falls passionately in love with the “devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful” Edward Cullen (Meyer 2006: 17), ostensibly an adopted son of the local doctor, Carlisle Cullen, but actually a vampire over a century old. The Cullens, a group of vampires posing as a family to integrate with the mortal population, are “vegetarians” (Meyer 2006: 164): they eschew human blood and hunt only animals. They are, however, regarded with suspicion by the Quileutes, who live on the nearby reservation at La Push. The tribe was once decimated by predatory vampires, known as “the cold ones” (Meyer 2006: 107). Bella learns about the animosity from the “very pretty” fifteen-year-old Quileute Jacob, the son of her father’s friend, Billy Black (Meyer 2006: 103). According to tribal legend, Black’s ancestors were “werewolves” – within the context of the Twilight saga, the sworn enemies of Cullen and his kind (Meyer 2006: 107). Jacob is not only romantically attracted to Bella (who regards him as her best friend) but also becomes a werewolf in New Moon (2006), adding further tension to the love triangle that underpins the series. Eclipse followed in 2007 and the saga concluded with Breaking Dawn in 2008. Although Bella is the saga’s main narrator, part of Breaking Dawn is narrated from Jacob’s point of view. Meyer had planned to release a further book, Midnight Sun, a focalizing of the events in Twilight from Edward’s perspective, but the project was shelved after early draft copies were circulated unofficially on the internet. An extract from the manuscript can now be read on Stephenie Meyer’s official website (www.stepheniemeyer.com). Meyer, whose writing style has been described as “galloping melodrama, with minimal flourish” (Mills 2008), published an Eclipse spin-off novella, The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner, which charts the dark side of becoming a “newborn” vampire, to tie in with the cinema release of Eclipse in 2010 (Meyer 2008: 303).

The initial, remarkable, success of Twilight was prompted largely through teenagers spreading the word to their friends on social networking websites. The books have since attracted an army of loyal and passionate fans known as “Twihards.” This fan base includes many adults, particularly mothers who, keen to keep abreast of their children’s interests,
began to read the books themselves. These adult aficionados even have a dedicated online community, www.twilightmoms.com. Hailed by Time magazine as “the publishing phenomenon of the new century,” the four books in Meyer’s saga “have sold 85 million copies worldwide and have been translated into 37 languages including Vietnamese, Chinese and Croatian” (Relax News 2009). The popularity of the books has been enhanced by their adaptation and development as a successful cinema franchise by the film company Summit Entertainment.

The movie version of Twilight, directed by Catherine Hardwicke with a screenplay by Melissa Rosenberg (who went on to adapt all four books in the saga for the screen), was released in November 2008. The main protagonists were played by British actor Robert Pattinson (Edward Cullen) and American actors Kristen Stewart (Bella Swann) and Taylor Lautner (Jacob Black). The film proved to be an emphatic box-office success with total worldwide receipts of $392 616 625 (Box Office Mojo n.d.). The second film in the saga, New Moon, directed by Chris Weitz, appeared in November 2009. In preproduction, Weitz considered replacing Taylor Lautner with a bulkier actor in the role of Jacob Black to more accurately reflect the significant physical changes the character undergoes in the book. Instead, Lautner undertook a program of weight training and “gained 30 lbs” in order to retain the part (Huver 2009). The movie eclipsed its predecessor in box-office takings, becoming Summit Entertainment’s highest-grossing film to date. The third and fourth films, Eclipse (directed by David Slade) and Breaking Dawn, Part 1 (directed by Bill Condon), continued the success of their forerunners, roughly equaling the takings of New Moon.

It was decided to film the longest book of the saga, Breaking Dawn, in two parts, the first of which was released in November 2011. Stephenie Meyer is acting as coproducer for both films, with Bill Condon as director. The more adult content of the book, including the consummation of Bella and Edward’s marriage and a graphic birthing scene, made the book the most challenging to film. Screenwriter Melissa Rosenberg has commented on her adaptation: “It has to be what the book is, which means more skin” (Will 2010). In spite of the subject matter, the first installment was released in the United Kingdom with a 12 rating (in line with the rest of the franchise). The film concludes with Bella’s transformation into a vampire after the bloody birth of her daughter, Renesmee. Breaking Dawn, Part 2, which follows the Cullens’ battle to protect Bella’s child from the Volturi (the equivalent of vampire royalty), is scheduled to open in November 2012.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Film; Vampire Fiction; Werewolves.

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FURTHER READING


Uncanny, The
ANNELEEN MASSCHELEIN

The uncanny is a mild form of anxiety and alienation that arises when something familiar suddenly appears strange. Originating in psychoanalytic discourse, the uncanny was developed as a critical and theoretical concept within genre studies and poststructuralist theory in various disciplines of the humanities. At the end of the twentieth century it became a concept that draws attention to the real yet immaterial presence of what is repressed and forgotten by mainstream culture and scientific discourse.

Freud, who is generally acknowledged to be the first to develop the concept of the uncanny in his 1919 essay “The Uncanny,” states that the German word unheimlich is ambivalent. It contains the negation of heimlich in the sense of “homely, familiar” and at the same time almost coincides qua meaning with the second meaning of heimlich, “hidden, secretive, furtive.” Starting from this etymology and from a number of examples taken from daily life, psychoanalytic experience, and literature (among them Freud’s well-known analysis of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s short story “The Sandman”), Freud derives the psychoanalytic explanation of the uncanny (see Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus)). The familiar becomes strange due to the return of repressed infantile complexes such as castration anxiety, or to the confirmation of surmounted primitive beliefs, as in superstition.

Within the Freudian corpus, “The Uncanny” is hard to classify (see psychoanalysis). Nowadays, it is regarded as one of the most important instances of “applied psychoanalysis”; that is, the application of psychoanalytic insights to literature and daily life. According to Freud, the uncanny is an aesthetic concept or an affect. Within the domain of art and culture, it is also an effect. Freud questions why fiction allows us to enjoy experiences, such as the uncanny and terror, that are not pleasurable in real life (see terror). Moreover, literature and art offer possibilities to evoke the uncanny, or to tone it down. The first mention of the uncanny is found in Freud’s work on phylogensis (i.e., the origin and development of culture and society) in Totem and Taboo (1914). “The Uncanny” also announces major changes in Freud’s metapsychology (the theory of psychoanalysis). It introduces the dualism of Eros, the death drives, the superego, and the second conception of anxiety. Finally, the uncanny is also observed in psychopathology, most notably in obsessive-compulsive neurosis.

The eclectic and slightly chaotic essay was for a long time neglected in psychoanalytic theory and resurfaced in the wake of (post) structuralism’s predilection for forgotten and obscure texts in the 1960s and 1970s (Lacan’s reading of the text in his 1962–3 seminar on anxiety was only published in 2004). As
a critical concept, the uncanny is used in the analysis of all forms of anxiety-provoking or unsettling art: the Gothic, the fantastic, the grotesque, horror, surrealism, and so on. The discovery and conceptualization of the uncanny occurred through several different pathways simultaneously.

First, the uncanny became a crucial concept in the study of genre fiction in the second half of the twentieth century. Freud's examples – such as Hoffmann's “The Sandman,” the double, the evil eye, telepathy, inanimate objects that appear to be alive, and so on – can be read as a stock of literary and artistic motifs in the genres associated with the fantastic and the grotesque. Early theories of the fantastic took recourse to psychoanalysis to explain the primitive roots of the supernatural in animism and magic. However, it was Todorov’s influential structuralist study of the fantastic that really established the Freudian uncanny within the study of the genre. Following the English translation of Todorov’s genre category l’étrange as “uncanny,” the Todorovian fantastic-uncanny and the Freudian uncanny merged in the later literature on the fantastic, all the more so because of the analogy between the central notion of “hesitation” in Todorov’s definition of the fantastic and “ambivalence” and “intellectual uncertainty” in Freud’s essay on the uncanny. Moreover, Todorov’s controversial claim that the discourse of psychoanalysis was partly responsible for the disappearance of the historical genre of the fantastic led to heated debates. Several authors suggest that the fantastic must be seen as a transhistorical mode rather than a historical genre. Psychoanalysis acquires a prominent position to explain not only the function and appeal of the fantastic but also its revolutionary potential. Jackson (1981) attributes the subversive nature of the fantastic to the atavistic use of language as a form of magic with transformative powers, with reference to Freud’s uncanny. In the 1990s, the uncanny became a central category for the analysis of fantastic fiction and related genres such as the Gothic, cyberpunk, and horror in literature, film, and the visual arts.

Second, the uncanny is conceptualized as the “secular” or “negative sublime.” Prawer (1965) was one of the first authors to propose a broad theory of the uncanny in literature. He argued that the uncanny is the contemporary form of the confrontation with the ineffable in art in the disenchanted nineteenth and twentieth century, after the waning of the traditional religious vocabulary and symbolism for such experiences. Bloom (1982) claims that “The Uncanny” is the only major twentieth-century contribution to the theory of the sublime, because the repression of the sublime in Freud’s essay highlights the importance of repression for the sublime (Bloom 1982: 101). Thus, the uncanny and the demonic repetition compulsion are one form of the anxiety of influence, also called “kenosis,” which determines the unconscious agonistic relation between strong poets and their predecessors (Bloom 1997). The association with the sublime leads to the historicization of the uncanny. The uncanny – associated with irrational and primitive fears – arises as a repressed remainder of the Enlightenment that continues to haunt modern Western society. Castle (1995) describes the fascination with the uncanny in eighteenth-century popular culture as an expression of the failure of the Enlightenment’s repression of irrationalism, and Wolfreys (2002) examines the uncanny and the Gothic in the nineteenth century. Others situate the concept in the twentieth century. Foster (1993) draws attention to the darker sides of surrealism. Anthony Vidler (1992) characterizes the “unhomely” architecture of the late twentieth century as a deconstruction of the imperialist, colonial, and bourgeois façades of romanticist and modernist architecture. Theoretically, he inscribes the uncanny in the critical tradition of alienation from Marx through Shklovski, Lukacs, Brecht, and Benjamin to deconstruction.

Third, the conceptualization of the uncanny is firmly rooted in poststructuralist “theory,” in the wake of numerous deconstructive readings
of Freud's essay (e.g., Cixous 1976; Hertz 1985; Kofman 1991; Wright 1998; Weber 2000). The essay is analyzed in order to expose the phallicentric and logocentric biases, especially in Freud’s reading of “The Sandman.” Cixous (1976) concludes her influential close reading by relating the uncanny to a conception of literature in terms of transgression. As a side effect or echo, the uncanny is dynamic and ungraspable and cannot be put down or categorized. This fleeting quality – which it shares with the figure of the ghost and the animated doll, Olympia, in Hoffmann’s story – constitutes the mysterious attraction of literature. As the predecessor of Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1921), “The Uncanny” is elevated to a central position in post-Freudian aesthetics. Literature and art are no longer considered in terms of wish fulfillment and sublimation but in relation to repetition and death. The repetition compulsion and the mechanism of the double as an ambivalent protection against death that turns into an uncanny harbinger of death can be linked to Derridian “dissemination” (the endless process of deferral of meaning) on the one hand and to primary narcissism on the other (see doubles). Narcissism underlies the ambivalent relation between author, character, and reader: fiction offers a protection against death but at the same time, like the double, it reveals the profound relation between death and culture (Kofman 1988).

In the 1990s the uncanny became a typical “travelling concept.” The marginal psychoanalytic concept, elaborated by literary theory and criticism and by deconstruction, has been applied to virtually all domains of late-twentieth and early-twenty-first-century art and culture (e.g., architecture, art, film, media, and popular culture). The concept appears in analyses of digital culture, early sound film, Marxism, postcolonialism, religious studies, sociology, terrorism, among others. Although the uncanny is canonized in the Freudian sense of the word, other strong conceptualizations have been grafted onto it: the existential mode of “unhomeliness” or “not-being-at-home” in the world (Heidegger 1996); Marxist “alienation”; the Derridian notion of “hauntology,” or the study of phenomena between being and not being, such as haunting, specters, and ghosts (Derrida 1994) (see spectrality); and Kristeva’s “abjection,” or the confusion of boundaries between object and subject that inspires disgust and originates in the earliest, pre-Oedipal stages of development (Kristeva 1982).

In Vidler (1992), Derrida (1994), and Kristeva (1994), the uncanny is endowed with a political potential that has been criticized as well. Jay (1998), for instance, signals the dangers inherent in the fashionable status of the uncanny. The metaphoric openness of the word, its lack of a fixed core, which Jay associates with deconstruction, may lead to facile relativism and even to cynicism with regard to “real” problems such as homelessness and exile, and ultimately to the word’s recuperation by the very capitalist culture industry it supposedly criticizes (Jay 1998: 157–64). The openness of the concept of the uncanny, which also testifies to a hollowness at its core, makes the uncanny very hard to grasp indeed (Masschelein 2011). Yet, this quality is what, at the end of the twentieth century, makes it so topical. For, the uncanny, with its roots in the ghostlike, in the spectral, and in the spectacular, performs what it signifies. As an affect and effect, it is ungraspable, endless, and estranging. The frustration it produces is a mixture of fear and delight, not just in the fantastic and Gothic literature in which it originates but also in the meanderings of the theory that has produced the uncanny.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, several tendencies can be distinguished. The uncanny has become a creative concept that works on the borders of disciplinary practices. In the wake of “hauntology” and “spectrology,” the uncanny has appeared in several calls for disciplinary renewal, both in terms of subject matter and style of writing. In the first monograph devoted to the subject, Royle (2003) supplements Freud’s etymological enquiries with the Scottish roots of “canny/uncanny” in order to emphasize the semantic
kernels of knowledge and humor. In different fragments examining themes and motifs in Freud’s essay, Royle puts his deconstructive uncanny pedagogy into practice by blending criticism, theory, absurd humor, literature, and anecdote. Likewise, Trigg’s (2012) phenomenology of the uncanny takes personal anecdotes and photographs as his starting point to examine the uncanniness of spatial memory. The application of the uncanny to virtually any topic makes it hard to maintain the boundaries between scholarly disciplines and between theory and artistic practice. Within contemporary art, the uncanny has become a particularly productive notion (Grenville 2002; Kelley 2004; Williams 2007). Kelley’s show “The Uncanny” is constituted around the return of the taboo subject of the colored human sculpture in contemporary art, and the fetishist and compulsive character of his collections (“harems”).

An unexpected twist comes from the field of robotics and artificial intelligence. The uncanny entered this field via roboticist Masa-hiro Mori’s hypothesis of “the uncanny valley” (1970). Mori conjectures that robot design should take into account that robots with a human-like appearance (i.e., androids or humanoids) will be more easily accepted and liked by humans, up to a certain point. When the likeness becomes too great, however, the robot will be experienced as uncanny – or, to put it in Mori’s terms, it will fall into the uncanny valley of the graph that charts the relationship between familiarity and likeability. Mori’s hypothesis can be amply supported with evidence from literature and culture going back to antiquity (Kelley 2004: 17–18), but in contemporary robot design there is debate about its validity. Experimental research by neurobiologists and cognitive psychologists aims to overcome the uncanny valley that holds back the development of humanoids and photorealistic graphic animation (in games and movies such as Final Fantasy (1987), The Polar Express (2004), and Avatar (2009)). The results of this seem to be mixed. Whereas some groups (e.g., the Princeton Neuroscience Institute; see Princeton University (2009)) seem to have found evidence to corroborate the phenomenon or have set out to explain it (Miselhorn 2009), others, such as Christoph Bartneck and his collaborators, are critical and intent on qualifying and overcoming the uncanny valley (Bartneck et al. 2009). Although the experimental research on the uncanny is of fairly recent provenance and is developing according to its own paradigms, there is some contact between this tradition and the concept of the uncanny as it has been developed in the humanities (Geller 2008; Liu 2011; Turkle 2011). Paradoxically, but also fittingly, the somewhat vague, poststructuralist concept, with its roots in the fantastic, Gothic, and science fiction, is now experimentally tested in order to accomplish the uncanny scenario of Hoffmann’s “Sandman,” the construction of a life-like animated robot that can function in our society.

SEE ALSO: Doubles; Grotesque, The; Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); Occultism; Psychoanalysis; Science and the Gothic; Spectrality; Sublime, The; Supernatural, The; Terror.

REFERENCES


"Urban Gothic" categorizes texts in which the topography and social infrastructure of the metropolis shape the Gothic affect of the narrative. The industrial or postindustrial city often becomes a dark, claustrophobic, and labyrinthine space, haunted by doubles, secrets, and traces of the past, refracting personal, social, or political concerns onto the urban terrain. In the nineteenth century, the Gothic mode originating with eighteenth-century writers such as Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe diversified; as urban populations
increased with industrialization, Gothic tropes found new loci in city environments. Urban streets, buildings, and institutions replaced castles, mountains, and abbeys as sites of terror and the uncanny, which were brought home from distant times or exotic lands to these modern, domestic locations.

In the United States, Charles Brockden Brown’s *Arthur Mervyn* (1799), set in Philadelphia, marks the beginnings of an American urban Gothic tradition. George Lippard’s novels of New York and Philadelphia include *The Quaker City* (1844), depicting urban corruption through the city’s criminal element and corrupt justice system (see American Gothic). In mid-nineteenth-century Britain, Charles Dickens and G. W. M. Reynolds created Gothic-inspired worlds of mystery, secrecy, and crime, invoking the new cityscape of industrialized London as well as the class hierarchies and social structures accompanying the growth of British capitalism. In Reynolds’ best-selling sensational weekly *The Mysteries of London* (1844–6), the capital is experienced as a maze of urban horrors and vices across the strata of society.

The Gothic revival of the 1880s and 1890s saw the strongest initial proliferation of urban Gothic (see Victorian Gothic). James Thomson’s long poem “City of Dreadful Night” (1874) sets an almost apocalyptic tone through London’s bewilderment and overwhelming darkness and size. Late-Victorian Gothic emphasizes the alienation engendered by the metropolis; the city’s expanding population leads to a paradox of anonymity within the crowd. It also plays on the living conditions of the industrialized city – the unlit streets, factories, overcrowded dwellings, and proliferation of vice and crime – to produce spooky or sinister atmospheres and subversive social commentary. Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) invokes the size and anonymity of London as a space where crime flourishes and in which the prosperous city is doubled by its shady underside. Hyde’s ability, through Jekyll’s form, to escape his crimes on London’s streets reflects the geographical and class divisions within Victorian London as well as implicating the inherent duality of human nature.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the empire’s capital was felt to be under threat, from rising powers in other nations and a perceived decline in the nation’s health owing to modern living conditions, while the decadent tendencies of the wealthy were seen as exacerbated by modern art and literature as well as by the social and criminal opportunities enabled by city dwelling (see Degeneration). Marks of degeneration are detected in the monstrous Others of Victorian urban Gothic: the depravity corrupting Dorian’s portrait in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and the repulsive dwarfishness of Hyde. Monsters emerge from the shadows of the city, symbolizing anxieties around moral and physical degeneration, invasion, and imperial decline circulating at the fin de siècle (see Monstrosity).

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) brings the terror of its eponymous vampire home to the empire’s capital in a reversal of British colonialism (Arata 1996). The city and its modern contexts – the “New Woman,” new technologies, and capabilities of travel and communication – both allow the Count’s invasion to take place and help Mina, Van Helsing, and the others to defeat him as they drive him out of the city and back to his Eastern European homeland. In Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1894), London becomes a hunting ground for the demonic Helen Vaughan, disguised as a woman who seduces the city’s young gentlemen, representing the corruption inherent in the urban environment and the degenerate potential of modern life.

In urban Gothic, the city becomes a key locus for the uncanny. Over a city’s history, the layers of its building and rebuilding produce a sense of buried past that shapes characters’ experience of the city and re-emerges as repressed secrets, desires, or histories marginalized by a culture formed by capitalist
dynamics. If industrialization led to an expanding urban Gothic terrain, it also produced new anxieties in which class hierarchies came under threat from the changing social order. In some Gothic literature, itself generally a middle-class cultural product, threats to the cultural positions of authors and readers are displaced to the margins and return to haunt the city. In Paris, paupers’ graveyards were cleared to create space for new buildings such as the Opera House of Gaston Leroux’s *The Phantom of the Opera* (1910), leaving the modern city haunted by the vanished bones of an “othered” lower class (Hogle 2002).

Such ghostly returns also show how texts are inflected for their particular time as well as location. In London, the urban Gothic of the World War II period, by Anna Kavan and others, reveals fractures in dominant national myths of unity and resilience. The trauma of the Blitz is played out across a Gothic London, darkened by blackout, damaged by bombing, with many individuals’ lives closely controlled by government regulation and intervention (Wasson 2010). The iconicity of London in urban Gothic persists into contemporary texts, in which the influence of late-Victorian Gothic can be seen, for example, in Alan Moore’s *From Hell* (1999), which speculates on the mysteries surrounding the 1888 Jack the Ripper murders. Contemporary authors Peter Ackroyd, Neil Gaiman, and Iain Sinclair also draw consciously on London’s Gothic heritage to rework Gothic tropes of haunting and earlier trauma into their fiction, refracting onto the city’s topography “that curious mixture of tyranny and farce that constitutes London governance” (Luckhurst 2002: 536).

Urban Gothic feeds into other, related genres. Dystopian fictions draw on Gothic elements; for example, in the futuristic cities of early-twentieth-century literature and film – cities often depicted as mechanized with a closely controlled populace. In the capitalist dystopia of Fritz Lang’s film *Metropolis* (1927), urban space becomes monstrous and devouring; dehumanized workers move like automata or zombies in the mechanized city. The vast cities of the twentieth century offer a natural home to the noir tradition (Crow 2009), and American graphic novels and their film adaptations reimagine American cities through a Gothic filter, as in Frank Miller’s *Sin City* (1991–2) (see COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS). Urban Gothic’s shadowy visualizations of the modern or postmodern city also overlap the decaying metropolises of science fiction and cyberpunk; for example, in the fiction of William Gibson and the tech noir of Gothic films such as Tim Burton’s *Batman* (1989) (see FILM).

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Comics and Graphic Novels; Degeneration; European Gothic; Film; Monstrosity; Victorian Gothic.

REFERENCES


Vampire Fiction

ANNA CHROMIK

Vampire fiction is a subgenre of the Gothic, although contemporary vampire literature mixes Gothic elements with other genres, such as horror, sci-fi, fantasy, and even romance novel. The vampire myth, derived from Slavic folklore, made its remarkable literary appearance in the late eighteenth century. The gloomy and mysterious atmospheres of the Gothic novel shaped vampiric imagery in its two crucial aspects: the construction of the vampire as the Gothic villain and the construction of the setting of the classic vampire novel.

Prior to becoming one of the key figures of Gothic fiction, the vampire as a literary motif can be found in German poetry of the Sturm und Drang period (see Sturm und Drang); for example, in Gottfried August Bürger’s spectral ballad “Lenore” (1773) (see Bürger, Gottfried) and Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s “Bride of Corinth” (1797), sometimes labeled the first “proper” vampire story. The first vampire in English literature appeared in Robert Southey’s Oriental epic poem “Thalaba the Destroyer” (1797), including an episode in which the main character’s dead bride turns into a vampire. The Romantic Oriental context also provided a background for a mention of vampires in Lord Byron’s “The Giaour” (1813) (see Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron). An important milestone in the genre was Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Christabel, which features a lamia character named Geraldine who bewitches and preys on the young and innocent Christabel.

The story often considered a progenitor of what later developed into romantic vampire fiction is The Vampyre (1819). Written by Byron’s personal physician, Dr. John Polidori (see Polidori, John), it was apparently based on Byron’s unfinished short story told to Polidori and others during the famous night at the Villa Diodati. The pale and “Byronic” Lord Ruthven – the story’s vampire – who kills young maidens and leaves fang marks on their necks, became a model for the romantic vampire figure in European literature.

At around the same time, a German author named Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (see Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus)), greatly inspired by the Gothic novel, wrote a short story entitled “Vampirismus” (1820) featuring a beautiful and doomed female vampire, Aurelia, who spends her nights in cemeteries feeding on corpses. In England, Elizabeth Caroline Grey published her Faustian penny dreadful (see Penny Dreadfuls) The Skeleton Count, or The Vampire Mistress (1828), considered to be the first vampire novel written by a female author. Simultaneously, French Romantic writers started to explore the vampiric motif. In 1836, Théophile Gautier published his “La Morte Amoureuse,” which revolves around a character named...
Clarimonde – a beautiful courtesan who feeds on the blood of a young priest. Vampiric imagery can also be traced in Comte de Lau-tréamont’s *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869), which later became a major inspiration for the surrealists (Dali, Breton, Duchamp, Ernst). The most famous French vampire text of the period is *Loki* (1869) by Prosper Mérimée. The novella is set in Lithuania, reflecting the Romantic fascination with Eastern Europe, and tells of Count Szémioth, whose bestial vampiric nature of half man, half bear is revealed on his wedding night when he murders his young wife. Other significant French contributions to the genre include Alexandre Dumas’ novella *One Thousand and One Ghosts* (1849) and Guy de Maupassant’s short story “Le Horla” (1887). The former is a macabre collection of supernatural tales featuring at least two remarkably vampiric characters, and the latter tells of the haunting presence of an invisible vampire-like creature who drives the nameless protagonist to madness and, eventually, suicide.

Vampiric fascinations are also visible in the nineteenth-century literature of Eastern Europe. The first modern Russian short story – “Upyr” (The Vampire), by Alexey Tolstoy (1841) – is set in Moscow and concerns Russian characters, but the construction of the plot by no means resembles the traditional Russian fable but rather a conventional English-style Gothic novel. The case is slightly different with the Ukrainian-born Nikolai Gogol, whose short story “Viy” (1835) is a supposed Ukrainian fairy tale and, in spite of the use of typically Gothic literary devices, contains elements characteristic of Eastern European folklore, such as tragicomic and grotesque motifs (see *grotesque*, the).

The work that marked the transition between the Romantic vampire tale and modern vampire literature was the English penny dreadful *Varney the Vampire, or the Feast of Blood* (1847). Unlike the previous, more somber works of the genre, it was targeted at the mass-market audience. Written and published hurriedly in weekly sections, it was work of disputable authorship (usually attributed to James Malcolm Rymer but alternatively to Thomas Peckett Prest) and a product of the assembly line. It was sold on the streets and paved the way for the vampire as an icon of popular and mass culture. Distinguished by its epic length (868 pages divided into 220 chapters) and inconsistent style, as well as its tangled and often incoherent plot, it nevertheless had a huge impact on the later masterpieces of the genre, especially Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) (see *stoker, bram*). Varney also possesses many attributes recognizable to the modern reader, such as fangs to pierce his victims’ necks, the ability to hypnotize people, and superhuman strength. He also hides his identity and can easily pass as a human, concealing his beastly nature under the façade of an eccentric aristocrat.

Another of the most significant and seminal vampire novellas of the nineteenth century was Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (see *le fanu, joseph sheridan*). Published in 1872 in his collection of short stories *In a Glass Darkly*, this brilliant Gothic tale pervaded with dreamy and sensual atmosphere is also renowned for its lesbian motif. The theme of female friendship and intimacy is imbued with the horror of various “vague and strange sensations” and, at the same time, an aura of subtle sensuality, when the vampire and her victim merge into an osmotic union of female flows, dreams, and maternal memories. The plot, with obvious references to Coleridge’s *Christabel*, features a female vampire who tricks her way into a young heroine’s household and drains her not only of her blood but also of her identity and, eventually, sanity.

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is undoubtedly the most recognizable and influential piece of vampire fiction ever written. While it was inspired by the previous stories (especially *The Vampyre*, “Le Horla,” *Varney*, and “Carmilla”), *Dracula* was the book that established the vampire as a figure of Western popular culture. It introduced many themes and motifs that have become archetypal for the genre, such as the Transylvanian setting, the figure of the
vampire fiction

The vampire became an iconic figure of the twentieth-century popular imagination, especially with the invention of cinema (see film). In literature, the vampiric theme perfectly fitted the decadent moods of the fin de siècle and the early twentieth century, which offered the dark and opiated settings of occult experiences, hypnosis sessions, secret satanic societies, spiritualists, and mediums. An interesting manifestation of this trend is Wampir (1911) by Władysław Reymont, a Polish novelist and Nobel laureate. The novel, set in London, features a vampiric femme fatale character and describes all kinds of occult fashions of the era: mesmeric séances, orgiastic rituals, theosophy circles, and mysterious cults originating in India.

Vampires became subjects of numerous short stories reflecting the era’s concerns, such as the growing interest in psychoanalysis (see psychoanalysis), the development of technology (see technologies), and changing sexual conventions and gender roles. The most notable examples include E. F. Benson’s “The Room in the Tower” (1912) and M. R. James’ “An Episode in Cathedral History” (1919), both of which explore the phenomena of recurring nightmares and predictive dreams (see Benson, E. F. (Edward Frederic); James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); dreams). Other much-anthologized classics include Carl Jacobi’s “Revelations in Black” (1933), which focuses on the vampire’s failure to show up on a photographic plate, and Fritz Leiber’s “The Girl with the Hungry Eyes” (1949), about a pin-up girl who turns out to be a psychic vampire.

At the same time, the vampire theme exceeded the boundaries of the Gothic genre and encroached on new ones, such as sci-fi and fantasy – exemplified by Gustave Le Rouge’s Le Prisonnier de la Planète Mars (The Prisoner of Planet Mars) (1908) and La Guerre des Vampires (The War of the Vampires) (1909), which deal with a cosmic vampire civilization from Mars, and, much later, by Richard Matheson’s I Am Legend (1954), which presents an apocalyptic image of the Earth affected by plague that is turning the survivors into vampires.

Another important work of the genre is Stephen King’s horror novel Salem’s Lot (1975), which transfers the pattern of Stoker’s Dracula into the setting of a small American town (see King, Stephen). Full of violent and gruesome scenes, the book revolves around a writer who, realizing that his hometown has been affected by some kind of evil plague, organizes a hunt to find and destroy the vampire Barlow.

The latter part of the twentieth century saw the rise of vampire sagas, and it was with Anne Rice’s Interview with the Vampire (1976) that the genre was once again revolutionized (see Rice, Anne). Rice’s best-selling series, known as the Vampire Chronicles, which consists of ten novels, revolves around the character of Lestat, a French nobleman vampirized in the eighteenth century who later moves to colonial New Orleans. What Rice did was to romanticize the vampire, whom she presented as a poetic tragic hero rather than a typical villain, thus shifting the reader’s empathy from the vampire slayer to the vampire him/herself. Her vampires, who are also narrators of the books, are sensitive and sensual, often experiencing moral dilemmas and intense emotions, and are therefore easy to identify with.

Another significant work in the genre is the New York-based The Hunger (1981) by Whitley

The new century has brought another surge of interest in the genre, and vampires have once again reached the top of the best-seller lists. This has mainly been thanks to the *Twilight* saga (2005–8) by American novelist Stephenie Meyer (see TWILIGHT). This series, including four novels that could be categorized as young adult fantasy romance, tells of a romantic relationship between a human teenager and a vampire. The novels revolve around some universal themes, such as the Romeo-and-Juliet-type love story, the “Beauty and the Beast” motif, a vampiric-Byronic hero controlling his desire to drink blood, and a “damsel in distress” archetype.

The *Twilight* series is often compared to *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* series (now better known as the *True Blood* series), which began in 2001. Written by another American author, Charlaine Harris, the books present an alternative version of contemporary reality in which vampires exist alongside humans (and other supernatural beings, such as shape-shifters, witches, and werewolves). This circumstance is announced to the world after the invention of synthetic blood, which allows the vampires to survive without needing to feed on human blood.

Other noteworthy publications of the time include, among others, Darren Shan’s vampire saga for young adults and the *Vampire Kisses* series by Ellen Schreiber. Interesting updates of Bram Stoker’s classic are offered by Elizabeth Kostova in *The Historian* (2005), which combines postmodern historical novel, Gothic thriller, and detective fiction, and by Dacre Stoker (a great-grandnephew of Bram) in his 2009 sequel to Dracula entitled *Dracula The Un-Dead*.

SEE ALSO: Benson, E. F. (Edward Frederic); Brite, Poppy Z.; Bürger, Gottfried; Byron, George Gordon, Sixth Baron; Dreams; Film; Grotesque, The; Hoffmann, E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus); James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); King, Stephen; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Penny Dreadfuls; Polidori, John; Psychoanalysis; Rice, Anne; Stoker, Bram; Sturm und Drang; Technologies; Twilight.

FURTHER READING


Victorian Gothic

DAVID PUNTER

What is Victorian Gothic? In a purely technical sense, the term could be taken to cover any Gothic text written within Queen Victoria’s reign (1837–1901), but usually the writings of the last two decades of the nineteenth century are seen to be under the heading of the fin de siècle, so I will here focus on works written within the middle decades of the century (see fin-de-siècle gothic). The “original Gothic,” it has often been said, came to an end with the major publications of the 1810s and 1820s, principally Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) (see Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft) and C. R. Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) (see Maturin, Charles Robert); but in fact many of the major themes, tropes, and emphases of Gothic continued right through the nineteenth century, influencing some of the major works of the age. At the same time, the conventions of the Victorian period exerted their own influence on the Gothic, so that it is indeed possible to identify a “Victorian Gothic” that has major continuities with what preceded it and yet encodes its own cultural and social preoccupations. Largely gone, as the age goes on, are the medieval and aristocratic emphases of the turn of the century; in their place, to an extent, are scenarios that are very much of the “present time,” and yet issues to do with imprisonment, claustrophobia, and madness continue to haunt these very different settings and locales. Over all this, it has been said, looms the shadow of Victoria herself, a queen who, on the death of her consort, appears to have managed to plunge the whole nation into varieties of prolonged mourning, the shadows of which are felt everywhere in the literature and culture of the period. What follows will address four key aspects of the Victorian Gothic: the historical novel, the political Gothic, the “sensation novel” (see sensation fiction), and the ghost story. There will then follow something about the three major Victorian novelists who were most impressively influenced by the Gothic: Charles Dickens (see Dickens, Charles) and Charlotte and Emily Brontë.

Arguably, the historical novel in English begins with Walter Scott, whose long series of writings on themes both Scottish and English became one of the most prolonged successes in the language – and not only in the language, because Scott enjoyed tremendous prominence in mainland Europe, where his novels were adapted, copied, and translated in a seemingly never-ending stream. In the 1830s and 1840s his ideas, and indeed his methods of writing, were picked up on, imitated, and developed by a number of English novelists, of whom three are particularly worthy of note: Edward Bulwer Lytton (see Bulwer Lytton, Edward), G. P. R. James, and William Harrison Ainsworth (see Ainsworth, William Harrison).

Bulwer Lytton, an enormously popular novelist of his time, wrote some works that are obviously Gothic. For example, there is A Strange Story (1862), which takes up the idea of unnaturally prolonged life, following on from the numerous tales centered on the figure...
of the Wandering Jew; and, in “The Haunted and the Haunters” (1859), Lytton wrote a full-blown tale of the apparently supernatural, at the same time employing contemporary pseudo-scientific explanations to excuse himself. Apparitions are conjured up in “The Haunted and the Haunters” to great effect; but what is perhaps more important about Bulwer Lytton’s work in general is that it continually looks back to a tradition in order to point up a continuing dissatisfaction with the muddle and pettiness of the everyday. In Bulwer Lytton, himself a writer with more or less justifiable pretensions to aristocracy, we can see the connections between the self-aggrandizement of characters in Ann Radcliffe (see Radcliffe, Ann) and Maturin and the later world-dismissing aphorisms of Oscar Wilde. Bulwer Lytton’s Gothic is profoundly antibourgeois; but it is, we might say, uncertain of its alternatives – is it possible actually to return to a world of the past, or does that merely now figure as an insubstantial haunting of the present?

James, again an enormously popular writer whose work has all but disappeared, was a novelist but also a historian, although his writing of history was always partisan: he was a high Tory, and, like Bulwer Lytton and arguably many earlier Gothic writers, he saw his present age as a diminution from the greatness of the past. There are few ghosts in James; what there is, though, is a harking back to what one might think of as an ideal of chivalry, in, for example, Corse de Leon, or, The Brigand (1841), which sets out a strong case for this ideal to be only available outside the law. James thus occupies a curious position, but one that is perhaps explicable in Gothic terms: on the one hand he is a supporter of the political status quo, while on the other his heroes, while they try to strive for right and justice, end up, Robin Hood-style, fighting the state from the outside.

Yet there is also in James a considerable taste for violence: his heroes and villains may appear at one level to be seeking to fight by medievalized rules of justice but there is also an awareness that these so-called rules of justice do not stand up to much historical scrutiny. Instead, what the contemporary world – and thus the contemporary writer – is constantly faced with are examples of injustice. In customary Gothic fashion, James does not write about these instances in terms of their actual occurrence – this we must leave to the more radical writers – but they still feature in, for example, his constant Maturin-esque railing against tyranny. James’ politics, we might say, were confused: but at the same time we have to acknowledge that he was taking up the panoply of the Gothic – the knights, the castles, on occasion the shining armor – and using the repertoire for political ends.

James was rivaled during the 1830s and 1840s for popularity by Ainsworth, who displays far fewer “historical” credentials and a greater taste for Gothic paraphernalia. His early work – for example, the play Ghiotto, or, The Fatal Revenge (1821) and stories such as “The Pirate” (1822), “Adventure in the South Seas” (1822), and “The Fortress of Saguntum” (1823) – is very clearly Gothic in a mode that was already fast becoming old-fashioned. But it is novels such as Rookwood (1834) and Jack Sheppard (1839) that cemented Ainsworth’s reputation as a writer who was capable of horrifying in his depictions of the excesses of tyranny, petty or otherwise, and in his apparent encouragement of sympathy for those who set out to subvert the forces of law and order. There is no doubt that Ainsworth, like Bulwer Lytton and James, deliberately set out to challenge a certain view of the “establishment”; and so in these three writers we can see different but related ways in which uses – and perhaps abuses – of the Gothic serve to provide a dark underside to the hegemony of mid-nineteenth-century thought and culture.

Ainsworth’s special skill, though, is to introduce us to a kind of Gothic that is actually situated in “real” places – contemporary cities, contemporary prisons – but to turn them into spaces that closely resemble the castles, convents, and jails of earlier Gothic. This has sometimes been referred to as “Newgate Gothic”; at all events, it performed a double task: at once reinvigorating the kinds of fear of
the apparently supernatural that the earlier Gothic had encouraged and at the same time providing a critique of a “modern” world in which man’s inhumanity to man could be practiced on a scale at least as grand, and as nauseating, as anything more ancient worlds had to offer. If Victorian norms attempted to promote culture and civilization on a large scale — through empire, through industrial and technological development, and through protestations about the improvement of the general human lot — then Gothic, through its intensely ambivalent relationship with notions of progress and improvement, the past and the future, produced in this particular phase of the historical novel a valuable set of correctives to these bland assumptions of continuous forward social movement.

However, it was left to a writer of avowedly radical credentials rather than the complicated conservatisms of Bulwer Lytton, James, and Ainsworth to push these strands of Gothic further. G. W. M. Reynolds, newspaper founder, Chartist, and advocate of freedom (see Reynolds, G. W. M. (George William Macarthur)) wrote a number of novels including Faust (1845–6), Wagner, the Wehr-wolf (1846–7), and The Necromancer (1852); he also wrote, and became most famous for, two immensely long works: The Mysteries of London (1844–8) and The Mysteries of the Courts of London (1848–56). These latter two appeared in serialized form and, taken together, are almost as long as the complete works of Dickens.

Reynolds was a man with a mission; he was also a man who understood a certain side of the public appetite, namely its taste for blood and gore. What he also understood was that his “readership” (many of whom could not in fact read, but used to have the latest episode of his grisly and gruesome tales read aloud to them in breaks on market day) were much afflicted by class inequality. One of his most famous lines runs “The gorgeous robe and elegant dress of every high-born lady [...] is stained by the life-blood and infected by the pollution of the poor seamstresses who made them all” (Reynolds 1850: 228).

This was strong stuff indeed for the mid-nineteenth century; but the endless pages of Reynolds’ novels, and of his newspapers, constitute an unending — and, one might say, entirely admirable — diatribe against inequality and prejudice. For our purposes, however, what is important to remember is how much this owed to the Gothic tradition. Reynolds’ explicitness about torture and tyranny takes up directly from the most exorbitant pages of Maturin; but, unlike Maturin, Reynolds situated these excesses in the here and now, in the everyday experience of the poor and the wretched of London, in their experience of ill treatment by the privileged. The old Gothic aristocrats are here in spirit, certainly; but for the first time we see, on the one hand, their continuity with the captains of industry of nineteenth-century Britain and their inhuman practices, and, on the other, how the machinations of the upper classes are actually felt and experienced by those lower down — indeed, at the bottom of — the social ladder.

But, in terms of the Gothic, it is not the historical novelists who have survived, nor is it the overtly political strand in the mid-nineteenth-century Gothic; what has survived into the twentieth and indeed the twenty-first century is mainly that subgenre that was known then, as it still is now, as the “sensation novel.” It is a curious designation: on the one hand, it may remind us of the notion of the “sensational,” with all the apparatus that has gone with that term in later years; on the other, it may take us back to notions of sensibility and sentimentality, those staples of various kinds of fiction in the eighteenth century. At all events, the sensation novel is now inextricably entangled with the works of one particular writer, Wilkie Collins (see Collins, Wilkie). Collins was a prolific author, but most would agree that his three great novels are The Woman in White (1860), Armadale (1866), and The Moonstone (1868). In all three, Collins’ combination of melodramatic technique (see melodrama) and superb manipulation of suspense earned him the status of a new version of Radcliffe. They also earned him a similar reception:
on the one hand massive sales, and on the other the irritation of critics.

*The Woman in White* is perhaps Collins’ best-known, and indeed his most achieved novel. It combines many traditional Gothic themes. We have incarceration; we have the virtual imprisonment of a persecuted maiden; and we have a villain, in the shape of the extraordinary Count Fosco, who appears capable of almost supernatural machinations while also displaying a degree of arrogance that is almost beyond belief, and yet remains in some senses curiously open to audience admiration. One of the great advantages for Fosco as a villain is that, as his name suggests, he is not British; he thus comes from, and develops, a stock of “foreign” villains that ran right through “original” Gothic fiction. Another is that he is possessed of a curious androgyny; if it could be said that Gothic has always troubled gender boundaries, then the characterization of Fosco took this uncertainty of perception and gender assignation to a new extreme. And he has his counterpart, in the shape of Marion Halcombe, a “heroine” who is curiously masculine: if the Gothic issues of gender identity were later to undergo a new renaissance in the closing years of the nineteenth century, then Collins provides us with some fascinating avatars, alongside riveting stories and a readerly quality that had so far eluded some of the more stodgy dealers in late Gothic.

But Collins was, of course, not the only practitioner of the sensation novel: among others who dealt in surprise, suspense, and the apparently (but always explained) supernatural was Ellen Wood, whose *East Lynne* (1861) has sometimes been referred to as the mother of sensation novels. Here we have a complicated plot full of misarranged and ill-fated loves and marriages, strange villagers, and dubious inheritances. All of these were, or became, staples of the sensation novel. This makes one think about what the word “sensation” means in this context, and it covers a number of things. First and foremost is the presence of social mores and manners that exceed Victorian norms; and so again we see the legacy of the Gothic standing as an antidote to social convention. But also in Wood, as in Collins, we see a complexity of gender roles: the Gothic is no longer merely about persecuted maidens; it is also about women who can see that they are prone to persecution and can at least contemplate steps to avoid this fate.

Third, sensation stands for suspense – for the sensations of the audience, that is, as they are played upon by the author. This relates, obviously, to the suspense inherent in the serial novel; but it goes beyond that in suggesting that such suspense is not only a formal feature of a serialized work but also an aspect of life, especially in situations where there are unequal – sometimes savagely unequal – distributions of power.

Looking at savagery and power had, arguably, always been one of Gothic’s strengths; so we find it too in the work of Mary Elizabeth Braddon (see *braddon, mary elizabeth*), whose most famous book is *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862). Here we have perhaps the most obvious example of what lurks behind the imagery of Victorian womanhood: the fabled “angel in the house,” in the shape of Lucy Graham, both bigamous and murderous. Thus we may glimpse another meaning of the term “sensation” that has not only to do with social conventions but also to do with the law. After all, the very title “belie”s itself, exposes itself to a finding of guilt, in speaking of a “secret,” when of course the text itself – any text – is at least in part about exposing that secret, whatever it may be.

Secrets and the Gothic: a web that we can trace right back to Horace Walpole (see *walpole, horace*). But the supernatural as such (if indeed there is any such thing) has thus far been largely absent from these novels and stories (see *supernatural, the*). Not so from the final strand of Victorian Gothic that we will consider here – the ghost story – although this of course raises again one of the crucial questions about Gothic fiction. In theory, any text can conjure a ghost – and many do, at least as much now as in previous times. Does the fact (if it is a fact) that the ghost is “explained” – or
explained away – on the final page mean that the readership has not “experienced” a ghost – or, perhaps, a manifestation of the ghostly, the phantomatic? Or does that trace of the ghost within the Gothic remain even after the sometimes perfunctory explanation has faded away (like, of course, a ghost)?

The great exemplar of the Victorian ghost story is Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (see Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan). He deserves to be best known for his novel Uncle Silas (1864), which has been regarded as the first Gothic masterpiece since Melmoth the Wanderer, but he was also known for his shorter stories. Five of these, “Green Tea,” “The Familiar,” “Mr Justice Harbottle,” “The Room in the Dragon Volant,” and “Carmilla,” were collected into In a Glass Darkly in 1872, a volume that also saw the birthplace of the linking figure of Dr. Hesselius, a “psychic doctor” who prefigures later ghost- or monster-hunters, which culminated in nineteenth-century terms in Van Helsing in Dracula. The stories are notable chiefly for their insight into the nature of the psyche: Le Fanu’s typical plot is one in which the protagonist, whether deliberately or otherwise, opens his mind in such a way as to become subject to a haunting by a figure that is unmistakably part of his own self. These figures are truly imaginative, from the malignant monkey in “Green Tea” to the vision of vengeance seen in “Mr Justice Harbottle.” But perhaps the most interesting of the stories, especially when seen from a later perspective, is “Carmilla,” which concerns a female vampire and brings out very strongly the already present sexual content in vampire legendry (see vampire fiction). The story is written with a style and fluency that carries the reader along, within an ostensibly realist context, into a world of horror and seduction that marks a great advance on earlier versions of the vampire and at the same time challenges many of the Victorian age’s most deeply cherished concerns – for the sanctity of the family, for example, and for the purity and asexuality of women.

Uncle Silas is the story, told by herself, of Maud Ruthyn, who, on the death of her father, finds that she is intended to go and live with Silas, her uncle. She is surprised by this because Silas has always been regarded within the family as taboo, having committed some dreadful act of disreputability in his youth. Maud’s stay under his roof is not a pleasant one: she is terrified by Silas himself, an ill and gloomy religious fanatic, and harassed by his brutal son Dudley, and she is also victimized by a horrific governess, Madame de la Rougierre. The house also contains within itself the riddle of an unsolved murder, which may or may not have been committed by, or at the instigation of, Uncle Silas. Events are actually few and far between: the power of the book comes from the consistent brooding offstage presence of Silas, and from the fineness with which Le Fanu etches in the details of Maud’s feelings as she oscillates, in true Radcliffean fashion, between security, doubt, and terror. It appears only at the very end that there has been an entirely practical plot afoot, which goes badly wrong; but explanations count for very little, and during the course of the book there is very little that we would not believe of the deathly Silas and his minions. The possible, indeed probable, ghosts are finally laid to rest; but during our reading they are very much present. As well as being a master of suspense, Le Fanu is also an experimenter with belief: as with all ghost stories, the question is how much we can be induced to believe, even if this is sometimes – if not always – against our better judgment.

It is a measure of the prevalence of ghost stories during the Victorian period that they were written even by some of those writers we associate most strongly with the realist tradition. A case in point is Elizabeth Gaskell, best known for her “social problem novels,” such as Mary Barton (1848). “The Old Nurse’s Story” (1852), for example, combines an emphasis on domestic detail with a restrained but omnipresent treatment of the supernatural. In “The Poor Clare” (1856) and “Lois the Witch” (1859), we again encounter supernatural features; but what is important is that these scenarios are quite clearly the other side of a world in which
the actuality of society’s bad treatment of women is more obvious. Here the ghost story functions as it often, but not always, does: it exposes those evils and prejudices by which society is haunted, and reveals the thinness of the veneer of civilization under which we live.

The same could be said about the supernatural stories of Margaret Oliphant. Here again we have a writer principally known for her realist novels, seven of which are known collectively as the *Chronicles of Carlingford*. But Oliphant also wrote a series of supernatural tales focused on bereavement, and on attempts at reunion between the dead and the living; it would be tempting to say that these tales reflect in some way the Victorian emphasis on the necessity of mourning, or – perhaps better – the compulsion to mourn, a compulsion that may take us beyond the confines of the world as we usually see it and expose us to darker forces. But we would also need to inspect whether this communication across the fatal boundary is ever actually possible. In the (rather late for our purposes) “The Library Window” (1896), for example, there is a writing ghost whose manuscript is never read (except, of course, insofar as we are ourselves now reading the consequent story); while, in the novella *The Beleaguered City* (1880), the ghosts, despairing of ever communicating with the citizens of Semur, put up a large sign that is summarily dismissed; the inhabitants are eventually compelled by an unseen force to leave their homes and go outside the gates of the city while the dead return to take back their old homes as a judgment upon the living.

This is perhaps a judgment on those who ignore the power of the ancestors – or, equally, on those who, like Victoria, dwell upon them too much and force others into their mould; it is perhaps of interest to note how close the name “Semur” is to “lemur,” one of the Latin names for a ghost. Certainly these stories by Le Fanu, Gaskell, and Oliphant seem to cluster around notions of the forbidden, but although the supernatural is often pictured as malignant there are frequently reasons for this, and the dead as often as not seem as unhappy to be called back into a semblance of life as the living are to experience their reappearance. We are coming, of course, to what we might call the years of spiritualism (see *spiritualism*): there is an atmosphere of the séance, the summoning of the unwilling dead, and the uncertainty that their calling may provoke that clings to some of these tales and has provided the setting for many another supernatural story since.

But it is perhaps in the work of three great literary figures that the Victorian Gothic reaches its apogee, although it would be inapt to refer to any of them as simply Gothic writers. Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), for example, is full of the supernatural and of Gothic reminders. We can list so many instances. There is the continuing theme of imprisonment: Wuthering Heights is not itself a Gothic castle, but it shares many of the key features. There is the wider setting, on the wild, windswept moors, where nothing is ever clearly perceptible and so many things may be tricks of a malfunctioning vision. There is the uncertainty and unreliability of the narration: Lockwood may seem at first to have a measure of stability, but this is quickly undermined during his residence on the scene of terror, and we are uncertain from beginning to end whether Nelly Dean’s tale is motivated mainly by good sense or by a constant succumbing to superstition. There is the presence of Heathcliff himself: hero or villain, or a Gothic admixture of both, he is in any case a creature without provenance, of no known or admitted origin, whose presence in the novel, and in the lives of the characters, continually threatens to unseat the rule of reason.

And there is, of course, the constant doubling, of places but more importantly of characters, which offers its own well-attested difficulties of interpretation; and there is the underlying story, of a passion or set of passions that cannot be laid to rest and that continually threaten to erupt into and trouble whatever world of calm and rational order may from time to time be offered. Any reasonable succession of the generations is continually haunted and challenged by “the love which never dies.”
Wuthering Heights is, undoubtedly, a haunted text; arguably this is precisely why it has remained itself a text that haunts us, that is continually remade, perhaps indeed in a series of attempts to lay to rest ghosts that have been conjured only too vividly.

Something similar could be said of Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre (1847). Here the Gothic element centers on the figure of Bertha, the “madwoman in the attic” whose ambiguous presence could be said to have sparked off a whole wave of feminist criticism. Is Bertha mad? If so, who has driven her thus? Or is she more principally the “excluded other,” excluded by patriarchal rejection, by racial differentiation, by foreign origin? In the figure of Bertha, a whole series of issues are enwrapped: her confinement points up the ghastly injustice at the heart of an apparently rational, ordered society; it marks our need, recounted before in so many Gothic novels, to keep the primitive and potentially violent sequestered in a far place, in a room where the only attendant is a jailer, where the only voice to be heard is a scream.

And, in dealing with these immensely difficult materials, Jane Eyre underlines what may always have been true of the Gothic: namely, that the possibility of representing social injustice is always inseparable from the attempt to represent the mental effects of that injustice. It would be fair to say that Victorian Gothic brings this awareness to a new peak, or, at any rate, to a new explicitness: where Radcliffe portrays her persecuted maidens as (usually) inevitably suffering until they are rescued by a knight in shining armor (or not), the kinds of criticism implicitly leveled by the Brontës go beyond this stock patriarchal scenario and show us far more vividly how the female psyche is shaped under conditions of duress. Whether they also show us ways out of this impasse is a critical crux; in other words, we might ask, does Jane’s securing of Rochester’s hand, even at the expense of his eyes, constitute a way forward for women, or does it again reduce them to the role of helpmeet and guide? Do women attain to real agency within the Victorian Gothic, or are they again seduced, by perhaps more complicated and subtle means, into the conventional roles of angel or maniac (see female gothic)?

These matters of social organization are dealt with, we might say, far more directly by Dickens, and part of the supreme strength of Dickens can be found in the way in which he continually hovers between the realist and the fantastical, between the domestically, naturalistically detailed and the melodramatic, the Gothic. There are examples too numerous to mention, but one might think emblematically of Oliver Twist (1838) and The Old Curiosity Shop (1841). In the case of Oliver Twist, here we have a novel of crime, murder, and all manner of melodramatic contrivances; a hideously violent book in which we are drawn repeatedly face to face with excess and brutality. Dickens moves well beyond what the boundaries of the permissible had previously been assumed to be; in the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes, for example, we are confronted by a crime of which, we might suppose, even the most blood-soaked baronial villain of the earlier Gothic might have proved incapable. There are extraordinary passages in Oliver Twist where Dickens describes the criminal mind in terms that are more than worthy of the exaggeration of any former depiction; we also have here, of course, the contrasted portrayal of innocence, though here Oliver himself takes the place of the persecuted maiden; indeed, one of Dickens’ great strengths is that he sees persecution in a different light – although he is well aware of the problems of women in Victorian society, he is even more aware of the impossible plight of children, and especially of working-class children.

The case of The Old Curiosity Shop is perhaps, though, even more obvious: Little Nell is both female and a child, and her fictional death was mourned by tens of thousands of readers, some of whom, it would appear, were ready themselves to offer criminal violence to Dickens were he not to change the plot. She is from beginning to end surrounded by scenes of Gothic horror and melodrama that
deeply invite the reader in; we are exposed to all the terrors of the Gothic, but not in the mountain ranges of the Alps or in the isolated castles of central Italy – rather in the stews and hideouts of a London that is portrayed as below the radar, as sequestered away from the law, as operating according to its own outlaw rules and thus as a place where nobody can find true safety. Nell’s deathbed scene is emblematic of this; there is a Gothic re-capture of the utter dissonance between life as it is supposed (under the rules of what passes for culture and civilization) to be lived and the actual strictures that control life when the organs and institutions of power are all ranged against the isolated, disempowered individual.

That Dickens was commenting on his own age, on the vast and increasing disparities of wealth and power that were flowing from industrialization and urbanization, there can be no doubt; as there can be no doubt that, in other ways as well, Victorian Gothic served to expose, in however shadowy or uncanny a form, these inequalities and to demonstrate how the apparent progressivism of the present would forever be haunted by those who were left behind. Those left behind might be those disenfranchised by the progress of technology or they might be the already dead; either way, the veneer of advancement is constantly challenged during the Victorian age by Gothic memories, Gothic images, ghostly hauntings.

SEE ALSO: Ainsworth, William Harrison; Braddon, Mary Elizabeth; Bulwer Lytton, Edward; Collins, Wilkie; Dickens, Charles; Female Gothic; Fin-de-Siècle Gothic; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Maturin, Charles Robert; Melodrama; Radcliffe, Ann; Reynolds, G. W. M. (George William MacArthur); Sensation Fiction; Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft; Spiritualism; Supernatural, The; Vampire Fiction; Walpole, Horace.

REFERENCE

FURTHER READING

Village Gothic

WILLIAM HUGHES

The early Gothic was characterized by a geographical inclination toward the foreign and an architectural fascination with immense or castellated architecture (see architecture, gothic; sublime, the). If the village appeared at all as a feature within such works, its function was characteristically as little more than a rustic backdrop, an aspect perhaps of the picturesque or superficially beautiful strategically placed in order to better emphasize the grandeur of a presiding baronial edifice. If not this, its presence may perhaps have been justified for comedic effect, the rural settlement traditionally being populated by superstitious peasants, locked in too literal an appreciation of a folkloric past, or else spectacularly distinguished by their idiocy as well as their credulity.

It is in the nineteenth century, though, that the village comes into its own as a discrete Gothic environment. At this time, arguably, the exoticism of empire in British culture in particular appears to have generated a type of intense introspection that deflected the national gaze at least sporadically upon the unknown (and possibly uncanny) within domestic culture. Thus, in the evocative literature of national concern, the discourse of social exploration comes into existence progressively from the mid-century, fearfully directing the bourgeois gaze toward the spectacular, Godless, and morally depraved inner cities that Henry
Mayhew, Charles Booth, Andrew Mearns, and William Booth were drawn to (Keating 1981). If the city were the stuff of such things, and the imagery deployed in urban social exploration a close relative of that associated with writers such as Charles Dickens and Blanchard Jerrold, the village ought rightly to have presented its diametrical opposite. The ambience of the small and rural settlement is, conventionally, pastoral and innocent, community-centered, and inclined to idealize a world in which each occupant is known to his or her fellows, where the interiors of houses are as free to neighbors as the public street, and through which the enduring, uncontaminated, and essential qualities of the race, the nation, and the faith are maintained.

The opposite, of course, must be true in Gothic fictions – and, indeed, in many other generic forms which make use of the village as a setting from the nineteenth century to the present. Where the elegiac qualities of Oliver Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village” (1770) celebrate departed glories, the surviving village community as depicted in Gothic fiction would appear to have little to proclaim it as an institution suited to the historical past, let alone the present implicitly occupied by the reader. The village is, in such fictions, a provincial and insular place. As well as ignorance, there is characteristically petty oppression and a climate of scrutiny that asserts the power of orthodoxy and represses those indigenous individuals who resist it as well as the outsiders who attempt to import their alien morals, practices, or beliefs into the village community. The village, moreover, is a place of secrecy. If its collective gaze is directed toward its inhabitants, then its power is equally expended in imposing a cordon sanitaire between its own culture and that of the outside world. If anything, the intruder from outside will meet with an excluding wall of silence at worst, or at best with a partial accommodation which is, nonetheless, never a cordial incorporation into community. In a village, anything can seemingly happen to the incredulous and incautious traveler or would-be resident. In a village, such people may witness things unprecedented, and find themselves unable to communicate their presence to an outside world from which they have, because of that fatal contact, become excluded.

Though isolated rural or semirural communities such as Chapelizod, Drumgunniol, and Golden Friars feature in J. Sheridan Le Fanu’s ghost stories, it is usually as the backdrop to uncanny or inexplicable events often witnessed by outsiders. A broadly similar use of isolated settlements (made all the more marginal, in some cases, by a coastal location) is made by M. R. James, for example in his stories “Oh, Whistle and I’ll Come to You, My Lad” (1904) and “A Warning to the Curious” (1925, both in James 1987). These, really, are generic pieces, and if not formulaic, do not necessarily emphasize the threat potentially posed by the living village rather than the supernatural energies it apparently plays host to.

A more striking deployment of the village as a threatening entity in its own right, though, characterizes fictions written in the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras particularly. Notable among these is the small French town – little more than a modern village – depicted in Algernon Blackwood’s “Ancient Sorceries” (1908), one of the stories in his John Silence (Blackwood 1962). Here, a residual witchcraft, associated with shape-shifting, has survived from the medieval past, and the ancestral connection between a traveler and the region almost encloses him within the community’s pagan grasp. “Cwm Garon” (1948), a later story by the unjustly neglected British writer L. T. C. Rolt (in Rolt 1996), has similar implications, though here an intruder into a residual pagan community in rural Wales does not survive his encounter with the avowedly mortal as well as the ostensibly demonic. One might note in the latter example a prescient intimation of a nascent plot which was to receive full and spectacular fruition in the British film The Wicker Man (1973), and which still arguably informs later works such as the novel Pig Island (2006) by Mo Hayder. Another excellent example is Dorothy K. Haynes’ “Fully Integrated” (1949),...
a story in her collection *Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch* (1996) in which holiday visitors to the village of St. Rowan’s disappear sporadically year by year, paradoxically becoming part of the community only through their *literal* incorporation within the body of its people as the main ingredient in an annual cannibal feast.

Similar communities, distinguished by inbreeding and ancient religious practices, also occur within the American Gothic tradition. The community of Missing Mile, which appears more than once in the fiction of Poppy Z. Brite, is one example of physical isolation, and its vulnerability to vampire occupation links it to the better known ‘Salem’s Lot in Stephen King’s novel of the same name. The tendency in American Gothic, though, is more toward the small town than the village, and this may well have been concretized by H. P. Lovecraft’s interest in the decaying ports of the East Coast in his short fiction. In communities such as Lovecraft’s Innsmouth, the past and the present exist simultaneously, in cultural practice as well as in degenerate blood stock. In such places, the American dream slumbers its way slowly into torpor, and any awakening proposes an entry into nightmare rather than the reassurance of urban normality.

The victims of village Gothic characteristically disappear, their traces carefully covered up, and so the cycle of intervention followed by death may continue, preserving a way of life that resists the changeable nature of urban existence. This concentration upon the outsider who innocently strays into alien territory rather than upon the indigenous villager would suggest that village Gothic might also be termed tourist Gothic, with all the baggage of modernity, colonialism, and patronizing disdain that the practice of tourism may inadvertently drag within it. Village Gothic is, in many respects, as much a quiet resistance to all-embracing metropolitan modernity as it is an assertion that the uncanny may dwell, unseen and potent, in pastoral shades.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Architecture, Gothic; Blackwood, Algernon; Film; Ghost stories; James, M. R. (Montague Rhodes); King, Stephen; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Sublime, The; Urban Gothic.

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FURTHER READING


Voodoo

JIMMY PACKHAM

“Voodoo” refers either to Haitian Vodun (alternatively spelled Vodou) or Louisiana Voodoo (also called New Orleans Voodoo). In both instances it is a syncretic religion informed principally by Christianity and West African *vodun*. The preference now shown by scholars and practitioners of the religion to use the spelling “Vodun” or “Vodou” is a consequence of the inaccurate popular conception of “Voodoo,” in part perpetuated by Gothic fiction.

The westward migration of African *vodun* originates in the slave trade, when *vodun*-practicing communities were among those sent to New World plantations, where, despite efforts to suppress its practice, it mixed with the white population’s Catholicism. Vodun was able to prosper without external interference following the establishment of the Black Republic of Haiti in 1804 after a slave revolution,
During which a priest named Boukman led what is perhaps the most historically significant Vodun ceremony at Bois Caïman. With the prohibition of the importation of slaves into Louisiana in 1808, Louisiana Voodoo became a similarly independent community. Consequently, and despite their shared origins, Haitian and Louisianan beliefs developed separately. There is no written doctrine, no true hierarchy, and as Vodun practices differ from region to region across Haiti, no overview can incontestably define Vodun, though its three most common cults are those of the spirits, the dead, and twins.

Practitioners of Haitian Vodun believe in a single godhead, Bondye (from the French Bon Dieu). Bondye, however, is too remote to communicate with, and thus it is the lwa (spirits or mysteries) to whom worship is directed. The pantheon of lwa includes a number of spirits common to all forms of Vodun, such as Baron Samedi, a lwa of death, and Legba, the gatekeeper between spiritual and material worlds. Additionally, each family has its own personal lwa and some dead may become minor lwa. The lwa are categorized into nanchons (nations, but implying family groups), of which the most extensive are the rada and petro. The rada are generally considered gentle and looked to as guides of morality, whereas the petro are associated with power and are among the lwa to be feared; the petro are invoked when practicing magic.

Ceremonial worship to effect possession by the lwa informs perhaps the most famous aspect of Vodun. Led by a priest (hungan) or priestess (mumba), each lwa is called down by three songs and dances. When possessed, individuals enter a trance-like state, having lost one aspect of their soul, the gros-bon-ange (big-good-angel), to accommodate the lwa, at which point the lwa may speak prophecies, give advice or reprimands, or attempt acts of curing. In this state the body of the individual solely represents the lwa, which conveys its personality through movement and utterance. When the lwa leaves a body, the possessed individual supposedly has no memory of the event. The first lwa with which an individual is possessed subsequently becomes their guardian lwa (maît tête), who must be removed from the body after death.

The cult of the dead in Vodun is concerned largely with ensuring that each aspect of their two-part soul is appeased and released from the body. The ti-bon-ange (little-good-angel) is that part of the soul that undergoes judgment before God, while the gros-bon-ange is more firmly tied to the material world and must be appeased via funeral rites and mourning. Failure to do so may result in the dead returning to haunt the dreams of the living, which may also occur if the maît tête remains in the body.

The cult of twins (marassa) stems from a belief in their supernatural powers, including the ability to predict rain, aid the sick, and increase a harvest. A family that includes marassa, even in remote ancestry, worships them with an annual ceremony, the mangé marassa, with an additional ceremony if the marassa are living or recently deceased. Marassa are considered rather capricious, and it is important to indulge their fancies for fear of provoking their displeasure, which can bring bad luck upon an entire family. Even more powerful than the marassa is the child born after twins (dosi if male, or dosa if female), who has precedence over the marassa during ceremonies.

While conjuring does exist in Vodun, it is often considered a black magic, used for personal gain. One who makes use of this magic is known as a bokor. It is a bokor who may conjure a zombi (see zombies), an individual held in a hypnotized state, whose will is directed by the bokor. White magic is used primarily as a means of undoing the ill-effects of black magic: it can be employed to reverse spells and dispel tormenting lwa. Small charms are considered a simple means of safeguarding against such threats.

Though Louisianan Voodoo is similar to Vodun, venerating both the lwa and the dead, there remain substantial differences between the two religions. Its central deity is Li Grande Zombi, also known as Damballah Wedo, a snake deity that is present, but not given
exceptional reverence, in Vodun. Hungan and mambo are less common than are Voodoo queens, who officiate over ceremonies, and of whom the most significant is Marie Laveau (once an oracle revered for her magical expertise, whose spirit is now a lwa). Magic generally is more common than it is in its Haitian counterpart. From Louisiana Voodoo culture primarily comes the voodoo doll and other magical talismans, usually held in a flannel pouch known as a gris-gris bag.

An 1884 publication by Spencer St. John, entitled Hayti or the Black Republic, is usually cited by anthropologists as the origin of numerous, rather Gothic, misconceptions about Vodun; the author claims, for instance, that cannibal feasts and infant sacrifices are part of a Vodun ceremony. Hoodoo, an African-American folk magic strongly connected to Christianity, has also provided elements for the Gothic which have been wrongly attributed to Voodoo, including the idea, found extensively in Blues music, of selling one's soul to the Devil at a crossroads.

In countless instances, the sensationalist version of Vodun found in Gothic fiction is restricted to its representations through evil cults, voodoo dolls, and black-magic curses. This is readily seen in the pulp fiction of such writers as Henry S. Whitehead and Robert E. Howard. The zombie subgenre of the Gothic, and especially of horror cinema, also owes a great deal to Vodun – though the flesh-eating undead have little in common with the zombi of Haitian folklore. But, even in those tales that venture to depict Vodun in Haitian locales, it remains undeniably misrepresented. This includes: White Zombie (1933, dir. Victor Halperin), starring Bela Lugosi (see Lugosi, Bela) as a plantation owner practicing black magic; I Walked with a Zombie (1943, dir. Jacques Tourneur), in which the matriarch of a plantation-owning family has her daughter-in-law turned into a zombie; and The Serpent and the Rainbow (1988, dir. Wes Craven), based on a 1985 study by anthropologist Wade Davis, who sought to establish a natural means of inducing zombie-like states. An exception to such sensationalizing may be seen in the more somber depiction of Vodun in Jean Rhys' novel, Wide Sargasso Sea (1966).

As with much colonial fear, it is the mysterious nature of Vodoo as it appears to the outsider that is a source of Gothic terror, and consequently the Voodoo of Gothic fiction is unlikely to resemble Vodun/Voodoo proper.

See also: Folklore; Lugosi, Bela; Zombies.

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Further Reading
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L. ANDREW COOPER

Horace Walpole (1717–97) wrote the novel The Castle of Otranto (1764), which named and arguably began the modern tradition of Gothic fiction. His macabre playfulness set a tone for the Gothic that remains prevalent, and his interest in taboo subjects shaped the Gothic as a form dedicated to exploring and defying the limits of human identity and behavior.

Walpole was born September 24, 1717 to a life of fame that he initially owed to his father Sir Robert Walpole, Prime Minister and one of the most influential men in eighteenth-century British government. Horace Walpole spent his early years in London. His time at Eton nurtured a taste in Gothic architecture as well as prominent (and possibly erotic) friendships with his cousin Henry Seymour Conway, the ninth Earl (later Duke) of Lincoln Henry Fiennes-Clinton, and the poet Thomas Gray. At Eton and King’s College, Cambridge, Walpole developed a lifelong habit of letter-writing, producing what amounts to a chronicle of his age that, beside his Gothic works, forms his greatest contribution to literary history. Among the letters’ many gems is the coinage of the word “serendipity,” found in a letter from Walpole to Sir Horace Mann in 1754 (Walpole 1937–83: 20, 407–11).

From these letters and other accounts, biographer Timothy Mowl draws conclusions about Walpole’s erotic life that are potentially important because of sustained scholarly interest in Gothic literature’s relationships with sexuality, particularly homosexuality. Mowl concludes, despite speculation to the contrary, that Walpole’s relations with his cousin Conway never crossed from the erotic to the overtly sexual, but Mowl nevertheless grants enormous importance to Walpole’s same-sex emotional attachments, particularly the attachment to Lincoln. Indeed, Walpole’s putatively homosexual longings provide a primary means of understanding Walpole as “the great outsider,” as the subtitle of Mowl’s biography (1996) calls him. If Walpole, who died unmarried, led a life as a self-conscious sexual outsider, then his experience of sexuality strengthens readings of Otranto and other works as invested in critiquing the sexual and social norms of his day.

Setting aside questions about Walpole’s sexual tastes, no serious Walpole scholar would dispute that Walpole’s aesthetic tastes ran to the extreme. His most (in)famous aesthetic accomplishment outside the literary arena is the home he established for himself in Twickenham, which he dubbed Strawberry Hill. Walpole purchased the estate in 1747, after becoming Member of Parliament for Callington in 1741 and receiving a large inheritance upon his father’s death in 1744. Strawberry Hill became a mock castle, replete with elaborate
walpole, horace

stairways, battlements, towers, and archways that make it a testament to the eighteenth-century Gothic revival in architecture. In addition to providing inspiration for The Castle of Otranto's titular site of medieval mischief, Strawberry Hill became the site of his own printing press, which published limited editions such as Two Odes by Mr. [Thomas] Gray (1757) and Walpole's own Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors (1758), Anecdotes of Painting in England (1762–71), The Mysterious Mother (1768), and Hieroglyphic Tales (1785). Though the press provided some amusement, Walpole preferred trusting his more important works, such as Otranto and Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third (1768) to more established London publishers.

While Strawberry Hill (and a nightmare that it inspired in June, 1764) might be the greatest influence on Otranto's composition, Walpole's experiences on London's Cock Lane in 1762, which he recounted in a letter to George Montagu (Walpole 1937–83: 10, 282), also deserve mention. Walpole went to a small house on Cock Lane reputed to be haunted by a ghost who communicated with visitors through scratching sounds. E. J. Clery contrasts Walpole's visit to the house with the visit of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who sought an encounter with the "'real supernatural'" to help ground his own faith in the unseen. Walpole, on the other hand, sought the "spectacular supernatural," a source of entertainment for skeptics (Clery 1995: 24–32). Treating the supernatural as an amusement rather than as a matter for serious contemplation is crucial for approaching Otranto as Walpole did. In a letter to Madame du Deffand (Walpole 1937–83: 3, 261), Walpole rejoices in having duped the world into taking his joke of a novel far too seriously.

The trick Walpole played on the world when he published Otranto's first edition December 24, 1764 had multiple levels. The most obvious trickery appears on the original title page, which claims that the text is a translation of a medieval tale in an Italian manuscript recently rediscovered in the library of a Catholic family. In the guise of the work's translator, Walpole apologizes for the narrative's supernatural elements, which might have once helped a priest to reinforce people's superstitions. Thus this preface positions the work as an antiquarian bauble, deeply flawed but excusable because of its historically distant origin. Taking the work as such, critics approved the publication, but they reversed their approval upon publication of the second edition, which appended the subtitle "A Gothic Story" and confessed Walpole's authorship. Scandalized, critics condemned Walpole's novel for the very reasons that had prompted the imaginary translator in the first edition to apologize: a literary production from an age of enlightenment was supposed to eschew the supernatural, and failing to do so might reinspire what the reigning powers regarded as superstitious beliefs, particularly beliefs of the Catholic variety, from which the England of Sir Robert Walpole had constantly defended itself.

Since strains of the supernatural appear in modern tales of earlier dates, how much credit Walpole deserves for beginning the Gothic tradition is debatable, but his “Gothic Story” subtitle certainly popularized the tradition's best-known name, and his preface to the second edition functions as a Gothic manifesto, explaining that Otranto combines the imagination and improbability of ancient romances with the verisimilitude of modern novels. Viewed from the era's reigning critical perspective, this combination was pernicious; literature's purpose was to provide practical and moral instruction that verisimilitude could facilitate by making literary characters into believable role models, but if a Gothic story combines the supernatural ideas of unenlightened ages with contemporary realism, then it threatens to provide models of the worst kind. Otranto's story line about a ghost seeking to crush usurpers (literally) and restore the rightful heir to his noble line could teach people to believe and behave as if such fantasies could be reality.

Walpole's trickery, as well as the danger that his literary experiment poses, does not end at the second edition's revelation of his author-
ship. Subtle clues suggest that the serious literary experiment described in the second preface could also be a ruse: *Otranto* might lack seriousness altogether. Questioning the text’s sincerity is particularly important when interpreting its politics. A sublime story – about supernatural intervention to preserve dynastic purity – might be conservative, reinforcing the divine placement of the nobility, so the novel might be the message of an author loyal to his king and eager to establish English Gothic as a legitimate source of national aesthetic pride. An absurd story, on the other hand – about a giant ghost assembling his oversized spectral body parts – might be subversive, suggesting that the very idea of dynastic purity having divine supernatural countenance is a giant joke, so the novel might be the message of an author known for continuing the most extreme of his father’s Whig principles. Walpole’s enthusiasm for King George II could support the conservative interpretation, and his habit of sleeping with copies of the Magna Carta on one side of his bed and of the writ for King Charles I’s execution on the other could support the subversive interpretation. The ambiguity of *Otranto*’s politics forecasts the ambiguity found in the works of his many literary heirs.

In fact, Walpole’s heirs took his Gothic formula in directions sometimes seen as diametrically opposed. Widely considered to be the second Gothic novel, Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (or *The Champion of Virtue, 1778*) claims to refine the formula by minimizing the supernatural and expanding verisimilar (that is, laudable) morality (see *Reeve, Clara*). The result sets the stage for a disagreement best represented by the acclaimed work of Ann Radcliffe and the decried work of Matthew Lewis. Radcliffe extends Reeve’s refinement of the Gothic, eliminating the supernatural altogether and putting in its place the “supernatural explained,” events of apparently supernatural origin that actually have reasonable explanations (see *Radcliffe, Ann*). On the other hand, Lewis reverses Reeve’s move and dilates upon Walpole’s supernatural and sexual excesses, creating in *The Monk* (1796) one of the wildest and most scandalous novels of eighteenth-century Gothic (see *Lewis, Matthew*). A set of binaries, all problematic but conceptually useful, emerges from this bifurcated tradition: as Walpole contrasts with Reeve, and as Lewis contrasts with Radcliffe, “horror” Gothic (interested in the supernaturally explicit) contrasts with “terror” Gothic (interested in life-like suspense), and “male” Gothic (interested in issues such as dynastic politics) contrasts with “female” Gothic (interested in issues such as domestic oppression) (see *Female, Gothic*).

Walpole’s other Gothic work, *The Mysterious Mother*, troubles these binaries at the outset, as in it Walpole tweaks his own formula, using settings and characters recognizably related to *Otranto* but omitting oversized supernatural presences. *Otranto* approaches incest by having the novel’s antihero, Manfred, scheme to marry his would-be daughter-in-law. *The Mysterious Mother* goes much further, having the protagonist discover not only that he once unknowingly slept with his mother, begetting a daughter, but also that his daughter/sister is now his wife. Estimating the play’s influence is difficult because it had a very small circulation in its day, but some critics have reasonably concluded that *The Mysterious Mother*, along with *Otranto*, affected romantic-era treatments of incest in works such as Lord Byron’s *Manfred* (1817), whose title is likely a nod to Walpole (see *incest*).

The remainder of Walpole’s fruitful literary life offers little to the Gothic tradition other than the *Hieroglyphic Tales*, which has fabulous elements that make it a cousin to the Gothic, especially William Beckford’s Orientalist Gothic novel *Vathek* (1786). Walpole continued to write letters and works such as *History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* (1780) and *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole* (1784), about Strawberry Hill. He was made the Fourth Earl of Orford in 1791, and he died on March 2, 1797.

SEE ALSO: Female Gothic; Incest; Lewis, Matthew; Queer Gothic; Radcliffe, Ann; Reeve, Clara.
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Wells, H. G. (Herbert George)

PATRICK PARRINDER

Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) is known as one of the two great pioneers of modern science fiction and as a lifelong campaigner for a peaceful, rational world order based on scientific principles (see *science and the gothic*). He was trained as a scientist and taught biology for a few years before ill health forced him to seek a living from fiction and journalism. His first book was a biology textbook, and much of his later writing, including his best-selling *Outline of History* (1920), has a broadly educational purpose. As his *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934) makes clear, it was not as a contributor to the tradition of Gothic fantasy that he most wished to be remembered. Nevertheless, he owes his lasting influence as a novelist to the fact that, as a reviewer of the serial version of *The Time Machine* (1895) put it, he was a visionary with “an imagination as gruesome as that of Poe” (Parrinder 1972: 33).

Wells’ fellow pioneer in science fiction, the French novelist Jules Verne (1828–1905), famously dismissed his younger rival’s work as not being genuinely scientific. Verne’s best-known stories are travel adventures involving new but scarcely revolutionary modes of transport and communication; the contrast between Verne and Wells is often seen as one between “engineer’s fiction” and a more speculative, post-Darwinian exploration of scientific cosmology. It should also be remarked that Verne’s novels lack the powerful Gothic elements characteristic of Wells’ fiction. *The Time Machine* takes us forward to a future in which humanity has divided into two distinct species, the beautiful but weak-minded Eloi and the ghoulish,
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predatory Morlocks. *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) introduces a sinister plastic surgeon experimenting (without anaesthetics) on wild animals in order to reshape them into human beings. The protagonist of *The Invisible Man* (1897) is another scientific outlaw, who inflicts a reign of terror on the benighted villagers of rural Sussex (see village gothic).

In *The War of the Worlds* (1898), England is overrun by repulsive, heavily armored invaders from Mars whose preferred source of sustenance is human blood. These tales have been freely adapted for cinema, stage, and radio, and have become part of the folklore of the modern age. Wells’ highly original repertoire of themes in his “scientific romances” — time travel, future social evolution, biological engineering, space flight, alien invasion, and technological warfare — remains the subject matter of most science fiction more than a century after he himself professedly left the genre behind.

There are no aliens in Jules Verne, and the extraterrestrial beings of earlier fantasy literature are, if not exactly human, invariably humanoid. Wells, therefore, invented the flesh-creeping “bug-eyed monster,” the science-fictional version of the mythical dragon. His Martians are zoological aliens, reminding us that the Earth was once dominated by marine creatures and reptiles rather than mammals. They are legless, but go into battle mounted on enormous fighting machines — armored steel tripods acting as prosthetic limbs. The Martians are terrifying but, as Wells points out, not at all unlike modern imperialists in their genocidal instincts and uncontrolled aggression.

*The War of the Worlds* is in this respect a fable of “reverse colonialism” underlining the tendency of stronger human societies to subjugate the weaker and less well defended. An unexpected consequence is that, when the Martian invasion falters, our sympathy is partly transferred to the plight of the invaders. The novel is a double catastrophe in which both the aliens and their human victims are shown defeated and helpless (see imperial gothic).

Apart from Edgar Allan Poe, Wells’ early masters were Nathaniel Hawthorne (whom he openly imitated in an unfinished story written during his student years, “The Chronic Argonauts,” 1888), Jonathan Swift, and Mary Shelley. Like *Frankenstein* (1818), many of Wells’ tales portray a lone inventor, such as the Time Traveller or Griffin, the “invisible man” who lives with and eventually dies as a result of a world-shattering discovery. There was a ready market for short novels and short stories in the 1890s, and together with his science fiction Wells was adept at writing ghost stories and horror tales in the manner of his times. His 1897 collection *The Plattner Story and Others*, for example, begins with the tale of a chemistry teacher who disappears after setting light to an unknown substance in the classroom. Gottfried Plattner reappears nine days later with the left and right sides of his body transposed, a reversal that could not have happened within the confines of three-dimensional space. The next story, “The Argonauts of the Air,” is a Verne-like tale of the disastrous first flight of a primitive flying machine. Then comes “The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham,” an accomplished Gothic fantasy in which a young man is tricked into exchanging bodies with an elderly, decrepit philosopher.

“The Plattner Story,” the first of the three tales described above, includes the protagonist’s own lurid account of entering a ghostworld and joining the invisible throng of “Watchers of the Living,” who cluster around as a murder is committed next door to the school in which Plattner was teaching. But the story is introduced by a skeptical external narrator whose carefully documented report is supposedly a digest of evidence he has submitted to the “Society for the Investigation of Abnormal Phenomena.” This judicious and noncommittal approach, parodying the style of a scientific paper, is typical of Wells’ narrative manner. Even “The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham” has a deadpan opening ostensibly playing down, rather than ratcheting up, the horrors to come.

Wells’ Gothic derives significantly from two of the formative experiences that set him apart from his literary contemporaries. The son of
a professional gardener and small shopkeeper and of a former lady's maid who went back into service, he studied biology on a barely adequate government scholarship and then, weakened by malnutrition, suffered kidney failure and lung hemorrhages as a result of being fouled in a football game. He was diagnosed (wrongly, it turned out) with tuberculosis and was warned that he had only a few years to live. Unsurprisingly, his imagination came to dwell on the visceral aspects of human biology and how to transcend them. His “Man of the Year Million” (1893), a forerunner of the Martians of The War of the Worlds, has a vastly distended brain and hands but almost no internal organs, having outgrown the need for a stomach and digestive tracts.

As a biology teacher, Wells’ preparation of candidates for university entrance involved training in the practice of dissection, and his Text-Book of Biology (1893) examines the physiology of the rabbit, the frog, and the dog-fish. In a presentation copy for his future second wife, then one of his students, he sketched as a frontispiece a rabbit dissecting a man. The narrators of his science fiction tend to stumble upon horrifying scenes involving something nasty on the operating table or dissecting slab. For example, the Time Traveller thinks of the Morlocks as etiolated and ghostlike until he enters an underground cave and finds a joint of meat exuding a “faint halitus of freshly shed blood” (2005b: 54). There is a rather similar scene in chapter seventeen of The First Men in the Moon (1901), “The Fight in the Cave of the Moon Butchers.” Prendick, the narrator of The Island of Doctor Moreau, hears screams from Dr. Moreau’s laboratory and briefly catches sight of the vivisected puma, “something bound painfully upon a framework, scarred, red, and bandaged” (2005b: 50). It was, presumably, in response to scenes such as this that the critics who had welcomed The Time Machine lined up to denounce its immediate successor.

The reviewer of The Island of Doctor Moreau in the Athenaeum wrote that “the disgusting descriptions arouse loathing [for] absolutely no adequate artistic reason” (Parrinder 1972: 51). The Speaker opined that “Mr Wells [...] has talent, and he employs it for a purpose which is absolutely degrading” (Parrinder 1972: 50). The Saturday Review, perhaps remembering Victor Frankenstein’s searches in graveyards and charnel houses, accused Wells of seeking out “revolting details with the zeal of a sanitary inspector probing a crowded graveyard” (Parrinder 1972: 44). Wells’ response to these structures is unknown, but two years later he published The War of the Worlds, in which the narrator makes a show of distancing himself from the vampirish horror of the Martians’ feeding practices:

They were heads – merely heads. Entrails they had none. They did not eat, much less digest. Instead they took the fresh, living blood of other creatures, and injected it into their own veins. I have myself seen this being done, as I shall mention in its place. But, squeamish as I may seem, I cannot bring myself to describe what I could not endure even to continue watching. Let it suffice to say, blood obtained from a still living animal, in most cases from a human being, was run directly by means of a little pipette into a recipient canal... The bare idea of this is no doubt horribly repulsive to us, but at the same time I think that we should remember how repulsive our carnivorous habits would seem to an intelligent rabbit. (2005c: 125)

The “intelligent rabbit” is, of course, precisely the creature that Wells had sketched in the presentation copy of his biology textbook.

Wells’ aesthetic of fantasy, spelled out in a 1933 preface to his collected Scientific Romances, has influenced many subsequent science-fiction writers. Here he distinguishes his work sharply from Verne’s, which deals with “actual possibilities of invention and discovery.” Each of his stories has a “fantastic element,” but

The thing that makes such imaginations interesting is their translation into commonplace terms and a rigid exclusion of other marvels from the story [...]. Touches of prosaic detail are imperative and a rigorous adherence to the hypothesis.
Any extra fantasy outside the cardinal assumption immediately gives a touch of irresponsible silliness to the invention. (1980: 241–2)

Wells’ practice may not always conform to his theory, but the latter, with its Aristotelian emphasis on probability and necessity, involves a clear contrast between logical and “irresponsible” narrative development.

No sooner had he established his reputation as a scientific romancer than Wells turned to other forms of writing, notably realistic fiction and comic fantasy. His later romances increasingly resembled some of Jules Verne’s in being vehicles for technological extrapolation and political allegory. “The Land Ironclads” (1904) is noted for its anticipation of the tank, The War in the Air (1908) for its depiction of aerial bombing, and The World Set Free (1914) for unleashing nuclear weapons on an unsuspecting world. In The Food of the Gods (1904), two scientists develop a food additive that enables their children to grow to gigantic proportions. The food soon escapes from their secret laboratory, but the resulting giant wasps and rats are exploited for comic rather than horrifying effects (see comic gothic). Most disappointingly, as the giant children grow to adulthood they become figures in a political satire aimed at small-minded humans. Some of Wells’ later short stories have a Gothic element, notably “The Country of the Blind” (1904) and “The Empire of the Ants” (1905), in which, reversing our normal expectations, a sighted man finds himself powerless in a community of the blind, and intelligent ants set out to exterminate Homo sapiens. But it was not until nearly the end of his long literary career that Wells briefly returned to the theme of the ghost-world that he had touched upon in “The Plattner Story” and The Time Machine.

At the heart of The Croquet Player (1936) is the story of Cainsmarsh, a remote rural district in which the inhabitants find themselves in a permanent state of irrational fear. The fear, apparently of something underground, may have been stirred up by archaeological diggings that revealed a history of human settlement stretching back to the Stone Age. This tale, perhaps the most graphic of Wells’ various responses to the rise of European Fascism, is ultimately a dialogue novel in which Cainsmarsh becomes a symbol of the precariousness of all human achievement: “Any archaeologist will tell you [that] modern man has no better skull, no better brain [...] Civilization, progress, all that, we are discovering, was a delusion” (1998: 40). Nevertheless, The Croquet Player reflects the haunting that underlies all of Wells’ writings, from The Time Machine to his disconcerting last book, Mind at the End of Its Tether (1945) – his fear that science and rationality represent a promise that will never be fulfilled. What Wells called the “human adventure” must surely sooner or later be doomed to disaster, yet as social beings we have little choice but to commit ourselves to the human project and do what we can to advance it. The narrator of The Time Machine faces up to the inevitable destruction of our world and – putting his Gothic forebodings behind him – concludes that “If that is so, it remains for us to live as though it were not so” (2005b: 91).

SEE ALSO: Comic Gothic; Imperial Gothic; Science and the Gothic; Village Gothic.

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FURTHER READING

Welsh Gothic

JANE AARON

According to the testimony of earlier literary historians of the Gothic genre, no such thing as Welsh Gothic exists; previous encyclopedias of the genre include no reference to Wales, apart from the *Handbook to Gothic Literature* which lists “Welsh Gothic” only to state that Wales has in fact contributed virtually nothing to the wealth of world literature in the Gothic genre. With the sole exception of the Caerleon-born “master of the macabre” Arthur Machen, no writers, the *Handbook* insists, have concerned themselves with the task of reworking in literature the extensive Welsh “store of weird and darkly inventive folklore” or of developing a Welsh perspective on the uncanny (Eirian 1998: 324). Yet in fact a trawl of Welsh and Wales-related literature dating from the birth of the genre to the present day will, with relative ease, disclose a substantial body of material which Gothicizes aspects of Welsh history, scenery and folklore, and develops a specifically Welsh version of the uncanny (see uncanny, the).

The rise of the Gothic genre in the second half of the eighteenth century coincided with a revival of popular interest in Celticity, fueled by the antiquarian societies of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Popular translations into English of specimens from the medieval Welsh bards, along with new speculations on the nature of druidic rituals, brought Wales’ haunted past to the attention of contemporary readers. The druids’ alleged capacity to raise spirits and their practice of appeasing the gods through human sacrifice added an element of supernatural terror to novels like William Godwin’s *Imogen* (1784; see godwin, william), set in prehistoric Clwyd, and William Earle’s (1801) *The Welshman*, set in the thirteenth century during the period of the Plantagenet conquest of Wales but featuring anachronistic druids. In the 1790s, when the wars with France brought temporarily to a close the fashion for taking a continental Grand Tour, Wales became popular with travelers looking for experiences of the sublime, the picturesque, and the horrid closer to home. The mountains of Wales, along with its ruined castles and abbeys, provided appropriate locations for a number of Gothic fictions, penned for the most part by visitors to Wales. Matthew “Monk” Lewis’ play *The Castle Sceptre* (1797) (see lewis, matthew) set in Conway Castle and featuring a villainous Welsh nobleman, his female captive, and the ghost of her murdered mother, his previous victim, encouraged the vogue for novels representing Wales as wild, barbarous, and far removed from modern civilization, a land in which the unfortunate female victims of the Gothic genre could convincingly be entombed and forgotten (see A. Davies 1998 for a bibliographical list of such fictions).

For Welsh-born authors of the period, however, the locations in which innocents are terrorized and lose control of their lives are more often than not English. Though the Welsh mansion home of the heroine of Anna Maria Bennett’s *Ellen, Countess of Castle Howel* (1794) is described as Gothic from an architectural point of view, its inhabitants experience it as a site of civility, culture, and good order. But once Ellen is removed by her husband to Regency London – “the tifel’s [i.e., devil’s] drawing room,” according to her Welsh maid (Bennett 1794: 1, 277) – the lure of such fashionable pursuits as gambling soon brings about her apparent ruin. The “tifel’s drawing room”
also nearly ruins Charles Marmaduke, the young hero of Robert Evans’ novel *The Stranger* (1798), who on his first visit to London is tricked into visiting a brothel, at a time when his every move is being watched and followed by a “Stranger,” “his inseparable companion” (Evans 1798: 70–1), employed to spy on his behavior by Madame Llewellyn, the formidable head of his family. It is only while Marmaduke is in England, however, that surveillance is required; he can apparently be trusted in Wales, but under testing and potentially corrupting English conditions he must be watched. The presence of this mysterious shadow perpetually at the hero’s heels gives to Robert Evans’ novel the same haunted quality as William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (1794). It also introduces a new perspective on the uncanny – of the self as haunted by its own ethnicity, figured as a close-clinging incubus always on the watch lest it should be betrayed, a theme which was to emerge more strongly in twentieth-century Welsh literature.

For the most part the focus in nineteenth-century Welsh Gothic is on the reworking of Welsh folklore and superstition. Welsh witches feature throughout the century from William Frederick Williams’ *The Witcheries of Craig Isaf* (1805) with its morally polarized twin heroines – the bad sister joins a witches’ coven and undergoes a supernatural transsexual change before committing suicide – to Allen Raine’s *A Welsh Witch* (1901), in which a reputed witch deconstructs the superstition by heroically manifesting her virtues. Cursed families, doomed from generation to generation, and supernatural portents of death, such as ghost funerals, or the apparition of *cwn Annwn* (the hounds of the Celtic underworld) or the *cyhyr-rafeth* (a banshee wailing cry), feature in such texts as Joseph Downes’ *The Mountain Decameron* (1836), a series of ten dark tales which also has the distinction of being the first literary work to fictionalize the Welsh sin-eater. The sin-eater was a community’s scapegoat, impoverished enough to be willing for the sake of a pittance to take upon himself the sins of the dead through participating in a ritual in which he ate bread and drank beer over the corpse, and supposedly imbibed its sins in so doing. The sin-eater makes subsequent appearances in a number of nineteenth and twentieth-century Welsh texts (see, for example, Raine 1905; Gwyn Jones 1962; Ellis 1977), always surrounded by an atmosphere of supernatural dread, before migrating to America and reappearing in recent fictions, films, and comic books, with his antecedents for the most part forgotten.

The best-known contributor to Welsh Gothic also gleaned much of his materials from the darker aspects of Welsh folklore and prehistory; Arthur Machen’s fictions frequently pit Saxon rationality and scientific investigation against the primitive dark forces of the pre-Roman “little people” still potent in his tales of his natal Welsh border country. His work has been read as “powerfully expressive of the fears of a ‘border’ identity, who wants to be ‘English’ (the superior race) but fears he is contaminated by (undesirable) Welshness” (Bohata 2000: 126), yet it is not always clear where his sympathies lie. The “superior” scientific approach generally proves to be destructive or ineffective in his tales, while in *The Hill of Dreams* (1905) (see *Machen, Arthur*) Lucian, the adolescent protagonist, yearns to identify wholly with the Celtic little people, to such an extent that he experiences himself as a changeling when forced to seek his bread in London. He belongs to another race, which is labeled degenerate by his English schoolteachers and is certainly Gothicized in the text but not repudiated.

More contemporary aspects of Welsh life were Gothicized in the work of another early twentieth-century Welsh-born writer, Caradoc Evans. In his 1915 novel *My People* (Evans 1987) he drew on traditions of Protestant Gothic to vilify the dark deacons of the Welsh Nonconformist chapels; the Calvinist elect proclaim themselves the messengers of a sadistic and avaricious God and feed on the superstitious worship of their impoverished congregations, bullying them into submission with the threat of hell-fire. On its first
Welsh Gothic publication, *My People* was greeted with horror in Wales, where an attempt was made to ban it. But its example encouraged the publication of more antichapel fictions, many of them fueled by a psychoanalytically informed persuasion of the harmfully repressive effects of the Calvinist creed (see Davies 2007; Evans 1936). During the bleak interwar years of strikes, lockouts and economic depression in the industrial areas of Wales, the enemy for many writers, however, was not so much the Welsh chapels as the profoundly Gothic living and working conditions into which whole towns were thrust, particularly in the coal-mining areas. Gwyn Thomas in *The Dark Philosophers* and Glyn Jones in his surreal short stories drew on Gothic metaphors and devices to convey the realities of their natal communities’ subterranean worlds (see Jones 1999; Thomas 2006).

A culture tends to Gothicize that which it most fears; many of the fears encoded in Welsh Gothic writing are specific to the history of Welsh people, none more so than the dominant fear expressed in many twentieth-century and contemporary Welsh Gothic fictions, particularly Welsh-language ones, that the Welsh language and its culture are endangered and in a state of terminal decay. In these texts characters are represented as haunted by figures from the past who condemn them for their inadequacy in defending their heritage. Menhirs and dolmens still dotted about the Welsh landscapes are imbued with supernatural forces which wreak a frightful revenge on those who disregard them or tamper with them (see Ellis 1970; Thomas 2010). The princes and warriors of preconquest Wales rise from the dead to castigate the modern Welsh, sunk in materialism, for their heedlessness and neglect of language and culture (see Meuryn 1946; Tomos 1982). In the zombie novels of Griffith Jones the undead walk to demonstrate the continuing survival of the old Welsh world, but are speedily suppressed by centralized state powers (see Jones 1966, 1972). Some English-language texts also Gothicize the dread that the Welsh language and its culture is dying and that those who cling to them and to their memories of the past are being sucked into the black hole of the dying star, their lives slowly emptied of meaning until they too become the living dead (see Jones 1985; Hughes 2006). It is in its development of this type of postcolonial theme (see postcolonial gothic) that Welsh Gothic writing may be said to have evolved its own perspective on the uncanny.

SEE ALSO: Folklore; Godwin, William; Irish Gothic; Lewis, Matthew; Machen, Arthur; Postcolonial Gothic; Protestantism; Romanticism; Scottish Gothic; Uncanny, The; Witchcraft; Zombies.

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Werewolves

MAX FINCHER

Since making an appearance in The Satyricon (61 CE) by the Roman author Petronius, the werewolf has stalked its way across almost two thousand years of literature, including fairy and folktale, legend, poetry, and drama. From the sixteenth century onwards, a belief in lycanthropy, where a person believes him or herself to be a wolf and behaves as such, has been prevalent in folktale. In fairy tales such as Charles Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood,” the wolf is symbolic of evil, embodying deception. In Christian theology, the wolf is most closely associated with the idea of the Devil.

The earliest novelistic treatment of the werewolf is The Severed Arm; or, The Wehr-Wolf of Limousin (1820), a popular Gothic bluebook (see bluebooks). The motif of the severed arm also appears in Hugues, the Wehr-Wolf: A Kentish Legend of the Middle Ages (1838) by Sutherland Menzies, generally considered to be the first English werewolf story. In these early narratives, as in later film treatments, the werewolf signifies anxieties to do with social class and sexuality. The werewolf as a symbol of the marginalized outsider whose class/race/sexual difference threatens an established social order is emphasized in many stories. Werewolves often exist on the fringes of local communities in remote locales such as forests, jungles, and mountains. The werewolf’s devouring and consumption of their victims articulate a fear of human cannibalism, and in some representations there is an emphasis on the class differences between the wolf and his/her victims, suggesting a critique of a consumerist, capitalist society.

In folklore, werewolves transform themselves from human to beast by the light of the full moon, and they can only be killed by a silver bullet. The narrator of Menzies’ story suggests that the lines between human and animal, civilized and savage, are often interchangeable. This theme of reversibility, that the real victim is the wolf who deserves the reader’s sympathy, is common to later interpretations, particularly in contemporary films such as Romasanta; the Werewolf Hunt (Paco Plaza, 2004), which was inspired by the legend of Manuel Romasanta, a Spanish peasant who killed over fifteen women in 1851 and was diagnosed as a lycanthrope. The first novel to develop the folkloric myths of the werewolf was G. W. M. Reynolds’ Wagner, the Wehr-wolf,
Werewolves

a penny dreadful serialized in Reynolds’ Miscellany in 1846 and 1847. Set in early-sixteenth-century Germany and Italy, Fernand Wagner is an aged hermit living in the Black Forest. He exchanges his soul with John Faust for eternal youth, on the condition that he becomes a wolf one day a month.

Many nineteenth-century writers employed the short story genre to revive the folkloric tradition of the werewolf, as in Sir Gilbert Campbell’s “The White Wolf of Kostophchin” (1889). In Frederick Marryat’s “The White Wolf of the Hartz Mountains” (1839), Krantz is punished for the murder of his adulterous wife by marrying a she-wolf in disguise who then eats his children. Werewolves devour their victims, frequently their loved ones and children. This type of cannibalism may function as a metaphor for social fears and anxieties about child cruelty, poverty, and starvation in the Victorian age. Rudyard Kipling’s “The Mark of the Beast” (1891) reflects a cultural anxiety about race and ethnicity, particularly the fear of an indigenous native paganism debasing a “superior,” civilized imperial order. In Count Eric Stenbock’s surreal, atmospheric story “The Other Side” (1893), Gabriel is a sensitive, intuitive child who is receptive to the supernatural power of a wolf-woman, Lilith, who lives in a forest and who turns him into a wolf when he meets her. But, like Angela Carter in her werewolf stories, Stenbock treats the wolf as a morally ambiguous and complex figure who appeals to our sympathy. Lilith is hunter and hunted, bloodthirsty and loving, compassionate and vicious. Robert Louis Stevenson’s atmospheric story “Ollala” (1885) subtly explores the idea that lycanthropy represents both familial and social degeneration into madness, and an irrational, feral mentality.

In twentieth-century and post-millennium culture, the werewolf finds his natural lair in Gothic cinema (see Film; Monster Movies). Universal Studios’ The Wolf Man (George Waggner, 1941), with Lon Chaney, inspired a series of sequels, imitations, and spoofs in Hollywood. In Britain, the Hammer horror film The Curse of the Werewolf (Terence Fisher, 1961), starring Oliver Reed, set a standard for makeup and transformation sequences that CGI (computer-generated imagery) transformation sequences have superseded to fantastic effect. Among the dozens of contemporary horror films that exploit the visceral power of the werewolf, An American Werewolf in London (John Landis, 1981) and the popular The Howling (1981–) series, based on Gary Bredner’s novels, are notable examples. Ginger Snaps (2000), a clever reinterpretation by the Canadian film director John Fawcett, explores the problems of teenage female sexuality. In Ginger Snaps and Ginger Snaps 2: Unleashed (Brett Sullivan, 2004), Bridgette, a socially isolated teenage girl living in Montreal, is a werewolf whose dead sister, Ginger, incites her to kill her male admirers when Bridget’s sexual desire takes over. Wild Country (Craig Strachan, 2005), an independent Scottish horror film, uses a Highland folktale of a cannibalistic black beast to explore teenage pregnancy. The Wolfman (Joe Johnston, 2010), a remake of Universal’s 1941 film starring Anthony Hopkins, returns audiences to the fairy-tale origins with a histrionic Gothic extravaganza of werewolves embodying “a dog-eat-dog” world.

See also: Bluebooks; Carter, Angela; Film; Hammer House; Monster Movies; Race; Reynolds, G. W. M. (George William MacArthur); Sex; Stevenson, Robert Louis.

Further reading


The skill of Edith Wharton (1862–1937) at adapting Gothic tropes in order to produce subtle insights into and critiques of American culture and society is evident throughout her writing career (see American Gothic). In her earlier work, Gothic images abound as a way of showing how women are imprisoned by social constraints; in the House of Mirth (1905), for example, Lawrence Selden perceives Lily Bart as “so evidently the victim of the civilization which had produced her, that the links of her brace seemed like manacles chaining her to her fate” and, later, Lily finds her aunt’s house “as dreary as a prison” (1985: 7, 109). Rooms and houses frequently appear claustrophobic to Wharton’s heroines, who find them tomb-like and labyrinthine.

In her novellas Ethan Frome (1911) and Summer (1917), Wharton uses extremes of climate and remote settings to help to create heightened atmospheres redolent with sexual tension. In these two works, characters are confined in buildings and trapped in small, inward-looking communities where people play out dull lives. As in her short stories, much is left implicit: “I had the sense that the deeper meaning of the story was in the gaps” (1991: 9), the narrator of Ethan Frome tells us in the first few pages. In both novellas, sexual attraction is inflected by a quasi-incestuous desire (see Incest) that adds another dimension of the unsettling and the uncanny to an already threatening and claustrophobic atmosphere. Wharton’s interest in incestuous desire reappears in later works, such as The Mother’s Recompense (1925) and Twilight Sleep (1927), in which, respectively, an older woman’s former lover becomes her son-in-law and a middle-aged man becomes his stepson’s wife’s lover. Incest, a feature of many Gothic narratives, was to be the main focus of Beatrice Palmato, a novel in which Wharton planned to explore the erotic and destructive nature of father–daughter incest. Only an outline of the book and a fragment (which vividly describes oral sex between the two characters) were completed, and neither were published during her lifetime.

From the 1920s onward, Wharton deliberately and self-consciously played with the boundaries between naturalism and the Gothic, much of her later work predating itself on earlier Gothic texts. The Mother’s Recompense, for example, obliquely references Horace Walpole’s The Mysterious Mother (1768); Twilight Sleep draws on Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764) (see Walpole, Horace); and both Hudson River Bracketed (1929) and The Gods Arrive (1932) refer frequently to Goethe’s Faust. In these later novels, women’s lack of agency and their consequent tenuous sense of identity are reflected in images of ghosts and ghostliness. As Kate Clephane, of The Mother’s Recompense, reflects: “It made her feel like a ghost to be so invisible and inaudible” (1986: 278). Trapped in an unhappy marriage, Annabel Tintagel of The Buccaneers (1938) thinks of her former happy self as Nan St. George as “a plaintive ghost” (241).

However, it is perhaps in her short stories, in which she uses humor, irony, and pathos as well as fear and anxiety to unsettle the reader, that Wharton excels in her use of the Gothic. In her essay on short stories in The Writing of Fiction (1925), she notes that “all the best tales of Scott, Hawthorne, and Poe belong to that peculiar category of the eerie which lies outside of the classic tradition” (1977b: 28). A collection of Gothic tales, entitled Ghosts and published posthumously in 1937, was dedicated to Walter de la Mare. In the preface, Wharton describes her own stories as “ghostly strap-hangers” to de la Mare’s work and cites Robert Louis Stevenson, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, and
Henry James as important precursors (see James, Henry; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Stevenson, Robert Louis). However, her use of humor and parody enabled her to move beyond these influences and to engage self-reflexively with the tradition of the ghost story, so that the idea of the supernatural — rather than the supernatural itself — is used not only to question the values at the heart of American culture and society but also to draw attention to the politics of representation and narration (see supernatural, the). “Bewitched” is a tale about a married and respectable New England farmer who is (his pious wife claims) supernaturally possessed by a neighbor’s vampiric dead daughter; in fact, he is having an affair with her all-too-living sister (see New England Gothic). Read seriously, this is a rather purple tale in which the legacy of New England Puritanism tragically traps modern American consciousness between the poles of cold hypocrisy and anguished hysteria. However, read as a parodic reworking of Gothic texts — Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter (1850) and “Ethan Brand” (1852), for example — it appears a far more sophisticated work that engages ironically with American cultural narratives of female sexuality.

Focusing again on the nature of female sexuality in “Miss Mary Pask,” set in Brittany, Wharton appropriates elements of Wuthering Heights (1847), including the unreliable narrator, in order to explore the erotic desire of the older woman and the subsequent hysterical reaction of the inadequate young male relative through whom the story is focalized. It is no coincidence that Mary Pask, having survived a cataleptic trance, plays at being a vampire, a state that allows her to articulate needs that “the living woman had always had to keep dumb and hidden” (1977a: 159). Many of Wharton’s Gothic tales use parody in this way in order to challenge the grand récit of gender difference, transforming the stuff of Gothic nightmare into fictions that offer a wry critique of conventional attitudes to desire. In the last story she wrote before she died, “All Souls,” Wharton uses another unreliable narrator, whose gender is not revealed and through whom she resituates the uncanny in the modern American home. Again, the focus is an older woman, whose belief that she has seen a “fetch” gives shape to the desires of a group of people who are otherwise refused sexual expression. As in the memorable tale “The Eyes,” the story is about what cannot, in fact, be told or seen in such a society. Wharton, however, openly invites her readers to meet her “halfway among the primeval shadows” and fill in “the gaps in my narrative with sensations and divinations akin to my own” (1977a: 8).

As Allan Lloyd Smith has noted, Melville frequently used the Gothic mode “to articulate his more coded understanding of the darker underside of the new nation’s optimistic surfaces” (2007: 268) (see melville, herman). Wharton continued this American tradition in her writing but she also drew on a rich European legacy to create a transatlantic Gothic that astutely explores the hidden pasts and transgressive desires of supposedly respectable individuals. Although she would not have called herself a feminist, Wharton’s use of Gothic tropes to represent women’s lack of agency in Europe and America, even after female suffrage and advances in the law and education, has attracted feminist critics to her work since the 1980s (see female gothic).

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Female Gothic; Incest; James, Henry; Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan; Melville, Herman; New England Gothic; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Supernatural, The; Walpole, Horace.

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The wartime slogan “keep calm and carry on” suggests both the certainties of a socially cohesive body (the British nation under fire in World War II) and the expectation of unquestioning compliance with the (recognizably right, undoubtedly shared) values of public good. The once extremely popular horror of Dennis Wheatley (1897–1977) easily identifies those of the Left and the Right Hand ways (the left is the bad one – sold to the Powers of Darkness), ensuring that, after episodes of occult activity, adventure, and chivalry, order is restored. His introductions warn against Satanism and its repercussions while he insists on disbelief in the satanic. Wheatley’s horror, with its investment in and certainty about the defensive power of crucifixes, Britishness, manly action, and health both represented and embedded itself in the British psyche of a particular period. His was a solid, upper-middle-class life, and his values of conservatism sit oddly in the context of the advances in popular fiction, particularly Gothic horror, to which he made a significant contribution.

Dennis Wheatley left the family Mayfair wine business, joined the Merchant Navy, served in World War I in Ypres and Flanders, and was gassed at Passchendaele. In World War II he was recruited directly into a role involving information and security in Churchill’s underground fortress, constructing false strategies and stories to mislead the Nazis. He continued with the family wine business, and wrote a mystery crime novel and several series of adventure novels. It is for his eight black magic novels – *The Devil Rides Out* (1934), *Strange Conflict* (1941), *The Haunting of Toby Jugg* (1948), *To the Devil a Daughter* (1953), *The Ka of Gifford Hillary* (1956), *The Satanist* (1960), *They Used Dark Forces* (1964), *Gateway to Hell* (1970) – and his short stories and edited collections of horror tales that readers of the Gothic seek him out, although he also wrote science fiction and crime fiction, in which he spliced Sherlock Holmes-type sleuthing with seemingly real life, documented files and books on wine (among others). Between 1974 and 1977, Wheatley edited a series of forty-five paperback reprints, “The Dennis Wheatley Library of the Occult,” for Sphere, including occult-themed novels by Bram Stoker and Aleister Crowley and works on magic, occultism, and divination.

Wheatley seems an unlikely writer of Gothic horror and the fantastic, but he is a product of his age and origins: Britain, imperialism, and the period between, during, and after the wars (see IMPERIAL GOTHIC). His particular probing of security with terror that can be controlled – through logic, persistence, moral right, and a
good strong man (the Duke de Richlieu) with a good strong friend (the barn-door-sized Rex) and an equally strong car (his powerful Hispano) – identifies Wheatley's as the version of horror with which readers could cope while the real horrors of death in battle, concentration camps, and air raids went on all around them and the Cold War set in with its terrors of invasive spies and foreign Others (Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels emerged at the same time). Although it is difficult to find his work now except in public libraries, in the 1960s and 1970s each of his eight black magic books averaged sales of 80,000 a year.

Interestingly, Wheatley’s horror avoids the metaphors and ironies on which the Gothic flourishes, building instead on works such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), which expose the shaky foundation of British respectability, the moral ambiguities of split selves, and the threat of invasion of the dangerously foreign, the racially debased, or the criminal underclass (see fin-de-siècle gothic). Wheatley added in a dose of misogyny and distaste at physical disability, which he portrayed as degeneracy (see disability). There is a great deal of vicarious pleasure for the morally righteous reader in watching bestockinged semi-clad women about to be sacrificed but then rescued by dashing, young, upper-class men (with whom the reader can identify), who use speed, power, and reason against the dark forces. When respectable men sell their daughters’ souls to the devil (*To the Devil a Daughter*), it bespeaks a crisis of immorality and lack of parental care in the vein of Beauty’s father offering her to the Beast. We are never in any doubt that the father is in the wrong; the girl, Christina, is unable to temper her own immoral behavior (drinking, staying out at night, seeking the company of young men, and so on) because of her bartered soul. Tanith, who lures Simon in *The Devil Rides Out*, is driven to a kind of (dangerous and disturbing) jouissance, but only because she is under some wicked, dastardly curse (and so not her more conformist, innocent self). The satanic figure of the Goat of Mendes on its throne is unmistakably, disgustingly evil, as are the half-naked, urine-drinking followers who dance around it and summon its appearance in a perfectly ordinary British field in the home counties at night. Wheatley does expose those who maintain a socially acceptable front but at night worship the devil, so the social criticism is present; however, there is no irony, no ultimate questioning of the values of a society that is capable of producing fathers who barter daughters’ souls, or that rewards burghers and bankers who worship the powers of darkness. Good resides in the upper-middle classes and the aristocracy, who have powerful, noble names (Rex, the Duke), and young girls only misbehave sexually when in the power of the devil. There is no subtle critique of a divided society, no questioning of how different times define good and evil, no exposure of the duplicity or hypocrisy upon which this very British national identity is based. Devilish figures and monsters are inevitably foreign. Other. David Punter writes of authors dealing with Britishness, manliness, and the upholding of right as often being part of the more realist edge of the Gothic, and it is here that we can place Wheatley and his closing down of the satanic with good, commonsense, chivalrous behavior: in his work we find he can “smooth out the moments of terror and vision which comprise experience and render them into a unitary whole” (Punter 1980: 407).

There is a complacent comfort in this clarity of distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, and such comforts caught the popular imagination in the war and postwar years, when homeland security was necessary and leadership by men of power the way forward. Wheatley’s cultural conservatism opens up the fantastic, then closes it down again.

Those who stay inside the safe circle in *The Devil Rides Out* will not be lured or forced into the clutches of the devil, however much he howls and shakes the substance of their hastily constructed magic circle in the inn. Dennis Wheatley’s brand of horror is as clean cut as
the differences between good and evil and as palpably, visibly clear. Wheatley’s horror is part of a project that was founded much earlier, in the novels of imperial adventure writers such as Rider Haggard. The enemy needed to be palpably foreign and Other, and to be conquered by clearly defined good. While we have monstrous goat creatures in the country villages of the seemingly law-abiding shires and a devil who can ride out at will and into the safe spaces of English coaching houses, pubs, and middle-class family lounges, we are rarely left in any doubt about the ability of the powers of law, order, good, and masculine bravery to restore daylight and right – in fact, to keep calm and carry on. No irony, no question.

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**FURTHER READING**


**Wilde, Oscar**

MAX FINCHER

An urbane philosopher, poet, and playwright, Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) is now remembered principally for his plays of the fin de siècle, deceptively superficial, yet full of social satire and paradoxes. Notorious for his trial for “the love that dare not speak its name” and his subsequent imprisonment in Reading jail, Oscar Wilde also helped to shape the modern Gothic in its capacity to express transgression.

Wilde flirts initially with the Gothic in two early short stories, *Lord Arthur Saville’s Crime* and *The Canterville Ghost*, both of which hinge upon twisting Gothic conventions for comic and moralistic purposes. A “cheiromantist” predicts that Lord Arthur Saville will murder somebody, and he goes on a quest in a gloomy fog-filled London to fulfill the prophecy. Ironically, it is the ghost of Canterville Chase who is haunted by his new tenants, the Otis family from America, who proceed to terrorize the ghost into performing all that they expect from a specter inhabiting an English country house. Yet it is with his only full-length novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) that Wilde really can claim our attention as an important contributor to the Gothic. Along with his contemporaries Robert Louis Stevenson and Bram Stoker, Wilde helps to break the mold of “the bottomless pile of Gothic stories” in the late nineteenth century (Stokes 1996: 60).

One of the ways that Wilde achieves this is to refashion many of the traditional conventions of earlier Gothic fiction, reconfiguring them in an urbanized setting that expresses modern preoccupations that are relevant even today. For instance, employing the theme of the Faustian pact and the magical portrait, with Dorian remaining eternally youthful while his portrait in the attic ages, Wilde does
not, as Charles Maturin and others did earlier, use the Faustian motif as a moral fable for the punishment of acquiring worldly riches. Instead, the novel problematizes a correlative reading of beauty and virtue, and ugliness and moral bankruptcy, suggesting instead that real evil is an “absence of conscience” (Womack 2000: 176). In the modern era’s narcissistic obsession with surface, image, and beauty, Wilde reverses the idea that the monster is physically repulsive, a badly put together collection of body parts, but rather “a decadent Gothic subject whose beauty is the wellspring of horror” (Dryden 2003: 114).

In common with other Gothic narratives, the secret of Dorian’s youthful beauty and the destructive lengths he employs to contain it (including blackmail and murder) creates a fragmented subjectivity whose grasp of reality disintegrates. Critics have traced lines of affiliation between Dorian and the monomaniacs of Edgar Allan Poe and Robert Louis Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1888). Like Stevenson’s novel, Wilde’s portrait of a divided subject concealing a secret in a domestic setting has been interpreted as an example of the doppelganger, or the literary double (see doubles). The portrait of Dorian, covered over in the attic, is at once both a mirror, reflecting back Dorian’s “real” self, and his alter-ego. In the act of exchange, Dorian’s own life becomes art; he becomes all image, while the portrait bears the marks of his increasing degeneration (see degeneration). Several doublings of narrative situation and character relations in the novel reinforce the increasing difficulty of neatly distinguishing between “good” and “evil.” There is no stable narrative viewpoint we can depend upon, only echoes and reflections. Wilde uses the doubling motif to go “beyond good and evil” as the contemporary German philosopher Nietzsche would express it, to illustrate “the shallowness of an aestheticism that fails to recognize the need for a human conscience” (Dryden 2003: 116).

Wilde was a central figure in aestheticism, an artistic movement in the 1890s that advocated above all the idea of “art for art’s sake.” The Svengali-like older friend to Dorian, Lord Henry Wotton, argues that all real moral value is only to be found in art and beauty (a key tenet of aestheticism) and advocates that Dorian worship the Hellenic ideals of beauty (which readers would have read as a byword for homosexuality) (see queer gothic). Contemporary with Wilde’s novel, Freudian psychoanalytical theory also suggested that the Narcissus myth, literally falling in love with one’s own reflection, or in this case canvas, could be interpreted as evidence of homosexual instincts (see psychoanalysis).

And yet the novel presents us with a conflicted, almost agonized, view about the role of art in relation to ethics. The murders of Dorian’s painter and friend, Basil Hallward, and Sibyl Vane, his actress lover, become events that “are judged solely by their aesthetic qualities” (McGinn 1997: 127). The preface of the novel lays down a series of neutral paradoxical laws about the role of art and the artist. However, the proclamation that “there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book” is in fact contradicted by The Picture of Dorian Gray: we are warned of the dangers of valuing beauty too highly.

SEE ALSO: Degeneration; Doubles; Maturin, Charles; Poe, Edgar Allan; Psychoanalysis; Queer Gothic; Stevenson, Robert Louis; Stoker, Bram.

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Wilkinson, Sarah
FRANZ J. POTTER

Like many of her contemporaries, the Gothic novelist, chapbook-writer, and hack Sarah Wilkinson (1779–1831) “lived by the pen.” Today Wilkinson is nearly forgotten, a minor author whose disreputable bluebooks (see bluebooks) and chapbooks are the centerpiece of nineteenth-century literary rubbish. However, her vast output of varied fiction – some twenty-nine volumes and above a hundred small publications – illustrates the demanding conditions that authors, who produced fiction as part of a profitable industry, endured.

Wilkinson was born on December 14, 1779. Little is known about her early life apart from that she was selected by Mrs. Frances Fielding as one of the young persons who read to Lady Charlotte Finch, governess of the children of King George III, when she was deprived of sight. Wilkinson was undoubtedly a well-educated woman, probably having attended one of the many day schools for girls that operated in London during the late eighteenth century. The publication of three text books for schools strongly suggests that she was a governess or educator after leaving school.

Wilkinson’s literary career began in 1803 with several short tales that appeared in Ann Lemoine’s Tell-Tale, a Magazine, which specialized in short stories that were simultaneously sold as chapbooks (see Lemoine, Ann). Between 1803 and 1806 she published at least sixteen chapbooks with Lemoine; most but not all appeared in the Tell-Tale magazine. Wilkinson’s literary relationship with Lemoine was not exclusive: she simultaneously published at least nine bluebooks with five other publishers.

Wilkinson’s ability to construct straightforward, simple tales free from complicated sub-plotting proved her greatest strength. Her short tales carefully blended the tantalizing terror (see terror) found in Ann Radcliffe’s work with the rapidity of horrifying shocks of Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796) (see Radcliffe, Ann; Lewis, Matthew). Her characters were not only dignified but sensitive – prone to appreciating the aesthetics of nature, quick to dismiss any suggestions of the supernatural; nevertheless, they were predictably located in a violent landscape populated with specters.

Wilkinson did not confine herself entirely to chapbooks. In 1806 she published her first novel, The Thatched Cottage; or, Sorrows of Eugenia, A Novel by subscription. While Wilkinson’s chapbooks were Gothic in style and content, her novels were often sentimental and didactic with only slight Gothic overtones. In The Thatched Cottage, Wilkinson clearly tried to realign herself with domestic fiction.

The financial success of The Thatched Cottage enabled Wilkinson to open a small circulating library in Westminster, London. The following year she gave birth to a daughter, Amelia Scadgell, although it is unclear whether or not she married Mr. Scadgell. It was about this time that the name on many of her publications began to appear as Sarah Scadgell Wilkinson.

Achieving relative success with her library, Wilkinson continued writing novels: The Fugitive Countess; or, the Convent of St. Ursula, A Romance in 1807; City Nobility; or Summer at
Margate in 1808; *The Child of Mystery, a Novel* in 1809; and *The Convent of the Grey Penitents; or, The Apostate Nun, A Romance* in 1810. In all of her novels the central figure is a rejected wife, tyrannized and victimized by her cruel and capricious husband. The novels center on secret, arranged, or forced marriages that return to threaten the present; they are essentially novels of retribution and reconciliation. Despite deploiring forced and arranged marriages, Wilkinson fundamentally supports the traditional importance of duty within those marriages. Throughout her novels, she clearly discriminates between a wife’s duty and her affection. For Wilkinson such marriages inevitably remain loveless.

The modest success of her novels was, however, offset by the failure of her library some time after 1811. To survive, Wilkinson was compelled to take lodgers into her home and turned to writing for periodical publications such as the *New Gleaner*, occasionally publishing Gothic chapbooks such as *Priory of St. Clair; or, Spectre of the Murdered Nun* and *Albert of Werdenorff; or the Midnight Embrace* (1812). After 1812, however, she began to exclusively focus on writing children’s books.

In 1819 Wilkinson opened a day school in London, an endeavor that ultimately failed. That same year she returned to the Gothic, publishing the novel *The Bandit of Florence* (retitled *New Tales* by the publisher M. Iley). That same year she was engaged to be the mistress of a free school but her health forced her resignation just nine months later; cancer had developed under her right arm.

Wilkinson returned to Westminster in 1820, but deprived of an income she again turned to the pen, publishing at least seven chapbooks and four Valentine Readers, and serving several publishers frequently with periodical publications. She also published her last novel, *The Spectre of Lannmere Abbey; or, The Mystery of the Blue and Silver Bag, A Romance* (1820).

Unfortunately, like her other novels, *The Spectre of Lannmere Abbey* was sold to the publisher for copyright. Frequently desperate, Wilkinson gained short-term stability from copyright sales but they deprived her of a constant income. With the money from the novel, she opened a parlor where she sold small books and pictures for children. The following year, she was hired to conduct a part of Dean & Munday’s magazine *Lady’s Monthly Museum*. Her small parlor, though, failed, and she soon lost both her business and her home. For the next decade she had no permanent home and was forced to occupy boarding houses.

As Wilkinson’s ill health continued, from the want of proper necessities more than illness, she persisted in writing chapbooks, short pieces for periodicals, and children’s books. Once more, she attempted to find work outside the book trade, taking embroidery lessons in the hope that this would eventually enable her to procure a more substantial subsistence. Sometime after April 1830, destitute and ailing, Sarah Wilkinson became a resident of St. Margaret’s Workhouse, Westminster, where she died on March 19, 1831.

SEE ALSO: Bluebooks; Lemoine, Ann; Lewis, Matthew; Radcliffe, Ann; Terror.

FURTHER READING

Williams, Tennessee

JOHN S. BAK

In addition to being one of America’s more important playwrights of the twentieth century, Tennessee Williams (1911–83) was also a significant voice in the nation’s experiment with the Gothic. Domestic violence, murder, rape, castration, and even cannibalism fill the pages of Williams’ stories and plays, each tinged with the same racial clashes and religious fanaticism
present in much of the work of America's Southern Renaissance writers (see Southern gothic).

Williams is comfortably situated in this Southern branch of American Gothic, alongside Poe, Faulkner, O'Connor, McCullers, and Rice (see American gothic). Williams openly admits as much in his introduction to McCullers' Gothic novel, *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1950): "There is something in the region, something in the blood and culture, of the Southern state that has somehow made them the center of this Gothic school of writers" (Williams 2009: 49). Like these writers, Williams was lured by the South's ineluctable confrontation with race relations and religious zealotry and their role in assessing the "underlying dreadfulness in modern experience" (Williams 2009: 49). From his first major play, *Battle of Angels* (1940), to one of his last, *A House Not Meant to Stand: A Gothic Comedy* (1981–2) – which he described as a "Southern Gothic spook sonata" (Williams 2008: 3) – Williams remained loyal to his Southern Gothic roots.

Long before he considered himself a Gothic writer, let alone a Southern Gothic writer, Williams dabbed in the exotic and the uncanny (see uncanny, the). His first published story, "The Vengeance of Nitocris" (1928), which appeared in *Weird Tales* when he was only nineteen, seemingly set the young writer down a path of literary terror. The story is about an Egyptian princess who avenges her brother's murder by inviting all who participated in the Pharaoh's death to a banquet in a newly constructed temple dedicated to him. The story reaches its sensationalized climax when the princess, Nitocris, opens a sluice gate and floods the temple, the "black water" hurling its "victims, now face to face with their harrowing doom, into a hysteria of terror" (Williams 1985a: 11). A later Williams story, "Desire and the Black Masseur," would confirm the writer's Gothic tendencies. In it, the white protagonist, Anthony Burns, named after the last black slave caught under the Fugitive Slave Law (Bak 2005: 131), stumbles upon a black masseur whose sadistic nature fuels Burns' masochistic and homoerotic desires to such an extent that their encounters become more and more violent, climaxing in the masseur's beating Burns to death and eating his body to hide the evidence. The eating of Burns' body carries religious overtones of the Eucharist in the story (Bak 2005; Clum 1997; Saddik 1998; Savran 2003), for while the men seal their brutal contract, a Protestant revival is heard outside the window, whose preacher is delivering an animated sermon on suffering as contrition, which both men interpret as Burns' need to die for humanity's sins. Upon Burns' death, the masseur muses: "Yes, it is perfect, [...] it is now completed," an echo of Christ's "Consumatum est" (Clum 1997: 137).

Cannibalism becomes the central trope and dramatic climax of Williams' (1958) *Suddenly Last Summer* (Evans 1992). Set in an exotic greenhouse in New Orleans' Garden District, the play recounts the final moments of Sebastian Venable, an unprolific poet who uses his cousin Catherine to lure starving Spanish boys, who become Sebastian's trade in exchange for food. When Sebastian refuses to pay them for their services, they chase, corner, and kill him, then eat parts of his body. Catherine is recounting this story to Dr. Cukrowicz and to Violet Venable, Sebastian's obsessive mother, who erstwhile served as her son's lure until her age failed to draw the young boys. At stake is Catherine's mental health, as Violet is trying to convince the young doctor of her niece's need for a lobotomy, a new surgical procedure which will advance the doctor's career, silence Catherine, and insure Violet's self-denials about her son's pedophilia and violent death. As is typical of Williams' Gothic story lines, religious fanaticism and homoerotic desires intertwine, with Sebastian assuming Christ-like overtones in offering up his body as a way for another's salvation (Clum 1997; Konkle 1998).

Though often criticized for his glorification of violence in the sanitized America of the 1940s and 1950s, Williams defended his art by insisting upon its allegorical nature. The actual eating of the flesh found in "Desire and the
Black Masseur” and in Suddenly Last Summer, Williams claimed, were indicative of another form of consumption in America – unchecked capitalism – where a nation and its people manipulated its religious ideologies to nourish a socioeconomic policy that prescribes the devouring of one’s competitors. Cannibalism becomes not only a religious trope, but an economic one as well (Bruhm 1991), one responsible for generating the social flotsam and jetsam that traffic Williams’ pages and stages.

This anti-American ideology dates back to a one-act play Williams wrote in August 1937 entitled “American Gothic,” based loosely on Williams’ interpretation of Grant Wood’s eponymous painting. Williams’ version of the painting’s “story,” which parallels a longer play he was writing at the time (Fugitive Kind), is that a religiously devout mother, Nonnie, willingly turns her son Amadee over to federal agents, who are hunting the young man and his moll for having recently robbed a bank. Nonnie defends her “hard and fast” commitment to her “Christian duty” because Amadee (“Loved by God”) has “turned a hair’s breadth for the devil himself!” (Williams 1937: 13, 14). In Fugitive Kind, Terry, a bank robber on the run, sees that “Christian duty” in a different light:

Because you believe in God then – yes, in spite of the fact that you’re on the wrong side and you know that God’s gotta be on the right. You thank him just the same because you’re alive and you can’t help thinking that he’s responsible for it somehow. (Williams 2001: 138)

This admixture of violence, religious piety, and capitalistic greed are leitmotifs in all of Williams’ Gothic-styled stories and plays.

In Williams’ inverted Gothic world, it is not the homosexual, the pedophile, the prostitute, or the bank robber who stains the nation’s moral fiber, but rather the racially prejudiced and the religiously obsessed, two figures whose ignorance, intolerance, and false piety mislead them into considering themselves superior to others. It was a Gothic formula we see repeatedly in Williams’ signature plays, including A Streetcar Named Desire, Camino Real, Baby Doll, Sweet Bird of Youth, and Night of the Iguana, to name only a few.

SEE ALSO: American Gothic; Southern Gothic; Uncanny, The.

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WITCHCRAFT

NICK FREEMAN

Gothic texts tend to make a somewhat blunt distinction between witchcraft, which they typically associate with women and the worship of either Satan or non-Christian deities or nature spirits, and “black magic” in which the (usually male) magician uses a variety of ritual practices to bend the world to his will (or request Satan’s help in so doing). Perhaps surprisingly, although witchcraft features heavily in early modern writing (not least because it was then considered a very real part of everyday life), folktales, children’s literature, and various genres of fantasy (notably the parodic works of Terry Pratchett, featuring witches such as Granny Weatherwax and her friend, Nanny Ogg), it has generally been a less significant presence in Gothic than magic. Witchcraft has formed the basis of drama (Macbeth is the most famous example), historical novels, and stories (such as Nathaniel Hawthorne’s 1835 “Young Goodman Brown” and Harrison Ainsworth’s 1848 The Lancashire Witches), and has also been deployed as a supernatural element in otherwise non-Gothic works such as Thomas Hardy’s The Return of the Native (1878), but in many respects, witchcraft has loomed larger in Gothic film and television than in literature.

During the nineteenth century, many of the typical ingredients of Gothic writing, from ghosts to vampires, from unjust incarceration to the self-haunted/traumatized protagonist, migrated from historical settings to contemporary ones. Witchcraft was a late developer in this respect, but as a revival of interest in occult and esoteric thinking gathered pace in the wake of books such as Jules Michelet’s La sorcière (1862), the rise of celebrity occultists such as Helena Blavatsky and Aleister Crowley, and the popular success of anthropologists such as Margaret Murray, whose The Witch-Cult in Western Europe (1921) argued that witchcraft was actually a pre-Christian fertility religion that had survived into the modern age, so Gothic writers (and later, film makers) began to realize the potential of setting witchcraft narratives in modern urban environments. Some of the resulting texts were Gothic comedies: Thorne Smith and Norman Matson’s The Passionate Witch (1941), filmed as I Married a Witch (1941) established the formula for later works such as John Van Druten’s play, Bell, Book and Candle (1956, filmed 1958) and the television series Bewitched (1964–72), in which a rationalist, prosaic man marries a beautiful woman with magical powers. Other writers, however, notably Fritz Leiber in Conjure Wife (1943, film versions 1944, 1962, 1980) and Shirley Jackson in We Have Always Lived in the Castle (1962), were more ambitious. Leiber’s novel is a campus fiction in which a psychology professor slowly discovers how the university’s “faculty wives” form a cult dedicated to advancing their husbands’ interests, and established another plotline typical of the genre – a battle between a solitary representative of the forces...
of good/rationality/progress/modernity and a group representing evil/irrationality/superstition. This is not always crudely gendered – the protagonist of Peter Curtis' (pen-name of Norah Lofts) *The Devil's Own* (1960, filmed 1966 as *The Witches* with a screenplay by Nigel Kneale), is a female schoolteacher. However, the struggle between the forces of progress and reaction is very familiar in Gothic witchcraft narratives, whether they are political allegories, such as Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953), or simply attempting to provide the expected quota of shocks and shudders. Shirley Jackson, however, who often proclaimed herself a witch, reworked Leiber's narrative structures by writing from the witches' point of view; her troubled teenage protagonist, Merricat, surrounds herself with protective devices and rituals, though it remains unclear whether her magical powers are genuine. Jackson made liberal use of fairy tale tropes and characters in this novel, playfully endorsing or subverting them as needs demanded.

During the 1960s, witchcraft became a significant aspect of countercultural life in Britain and the US, and, as Ronald Hutton (1999) has shown, began to reconstitute itself as a more formalized religious practice in the wake of books such as Gerald Gardner's *Witchcraft Today* (1954). Wicca, as it became known, received salacious press coverage (not least because of its practitioners' espousal of ritual nudity), and this in turn led to work in which sexual permissiveness became a keynote of pulp paperbacks such as June Johns' biography of the occultist Alex Sanders, *King of the Witches* (1969). A later variant, which showed Gothic's generic restlessness to good effect, used loosely historical settings to showcase sex and violence, a technique familiar from films such as *Witchfinder General* (1968), *Cry of the Banshee* (1970), and *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971). A good example is James Darke's (pen-name of Laurence James) eight-book sequence, *The Witches*, published as a "Sphere Adult Series of Devilry and Lust" between 1983 and 1986, and characterized by its lurid covers depicting women in various states of distress and seminudity. Set in a laxly researched seventeenth century, individual volumes were titled *The Torture* and *The Trial* (both 1983); the latter's cover promised "the second chilling volume of torture and terror."

By the 1980s, witchcraft in Gothic fiction was portrayed in several ways. Writers like Darke exploited images of witch-finding for prurient purposes. By contrast, Roald Dahl in his dark children's fable, *The Witches* (1983, filmed 1990), revisited and modernized fairy-tale notions of the "wicked witch." Other writers recruited the witch in the service of ecology, feminism, spiritual renewal, and personal development. The witch's role as a teacher, healer, and counselor, particularly of young women and girls, had long been a staple of children's books, and this "good" witch frequently reappears in Gothic film, whether she is the kindly and wise neighbor in "The Witch's Bottle" (1975), an episode of the children's television series *Shadows* scripted by the Wiccan, Stewart Farrar; the proprietor of the occult bookshop in the film *The Craft* (1996), who vainly warns teenage witches against practicing evil; or belongs to the warring witch factions who periodically enliven the US television series *Charmed* (1998–2006).

By far the most successful exponent of the "reclaimed" witch (and wizard) has been J. K. Rowling, whose *Harry Potter* novels (1997–2007, filmed 2001–11) cross-fertilize Gothic with the mid-twentieth-century school story and the "witchcraft academies" found in Ursula Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968) and Jill Murphy's *The Worst Witch* (1974). Rowling's sensitivity to prevailing trends, and her mix-and-match approach to generic conventions means she has much in common with Gothic writers, even though she resists identification as one.

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Wordsworth, William

ROBERT MILES

William Wordsworth (1770–1850) is not customarily thought of as a Gothic writer. Indeed, the most common association between Wordsworth and the Gothic is his hostility toward it. In the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), he famously complained that “the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse” (Wordsworth 1974: I 129). The gentlemanly agreement between himself and Coleridge, that in their jointly written book of poems *Lyrical Ballads* the latter would enjoy a license to indulge in poems of the supernatural while Wordsworth restricted himself to “subjects” chosen “from everyday life” (Coleridge 1983: II 7), underscores Wordsworth’s reputation as a writer sternly opposed to the hair-raising fripperies of popular modes of writing – to the “degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation” (Wordsworth 1974: I 129) – a hostility seemingly underlined by his aggressive marginalization of Coleridge’s supernatural efforts in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth’s antipathy to the Gothic was further cemented in the critical imagination through two concurrent developments in the Victorian period: the canonization of Wordsworth as the principal architect of English Romanticism, understood as a recent apogee of high literature, and the demonization of Gothic as trash (see Romanti

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blank-verse paens to uplifting nature was already well fixed in the popular imagination (Gill 1998: 23). Wordsworth was also careful to cover his tracks. Famous, he was now in a position to bring out his unpublished works. They were also the work of his radical youth, whereas his period of fame coincided with his “apostasy” and drift into high “Toryism” (Roe 1988: 1–14).

As a Girondin, which is to say as an ardent, if moderate, supporter of the French Revolution, Wordsworth was especially drawn to that branch of the Gothic style that had its source in the “Revolution controversy” (Duggett 2007: 196–201). In revising his earlier work, Wordsworth minimized his “Girondin” past.

Prior to the French Revolution, “Gothic” had a positive valence for radical and aristocratic Whigs alike. Generally it was treated as a synonym for Englishness, for the Saxon or Gothic traditions that made England what it was, from its ineradicable attachment to liberty to its parliamentary tradition, constitutional monarchy, and poetic genius. In this sense, “Gothic” was part of a binary, where the other half was Catholic, backward, enslaved Europe; Horace Walpole brings all these things together in his second preface to *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), in which he presents Shakespeare as the English, original, rule-breaking model for his experiments in the Gothic style, in stark opposition to Voltaire and dogmatic, despotic, French neoclassicism (see Walpole, Horace).

All this changed in 1790, when Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* politicized the Gothic taste by linking it to chivalry, aristocracy, and Marie Antoinette’s loneliness. For radicals, the Gothic mode was now an explicit form of antifeudalism rather than anti-Catholicism. The changed ideological scene is evident in William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (1794), which takes Burkean chivalry as the key, systematic element that was keeping things, repressively, “as they are” (see Godwin, William).

The shift is evident in the differences between Wordsworth’s early Gothic efforts and those produced later in the decade. “The Vale of Esthwaite” is a five-hundred-line fragment dating from the late 1780s, and was a principal part of what Wordsworth termed his “juvenalia”:

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At noon I hied to gloomy glades,
Religious woods and midnight shades,
Where brooding Superstition frown’d
A cold and awful horror round,
While with black arm and bending head
She wove a stole of sable thread.
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(Wordsworth 1940: ll. 25–30)

The poem repeatedly recurs to superstition as a vehicle for introducing spectral terrors of all kinds, so much so that superstition and phantasmagoric sublimity more or less fuse. At the same time, Wordsworth recurs to a topography of ruined “Gothic mansions” (l. 47), the “dismal gloom / Of haunted Castle’s pannel’d room” (ll. 240–1). But the poem contains very little “social Gothic”; nor does the “Fragment of a ‘Gothic’ Tale.” In the “Fragment” a nameless youth conducts a blind old sailor across a “loose plank” that traverses a chasm with a deafening torrent far below, until they find respite from the storm in a ruined castle, haunted, it seems, by banditti, or else menacing specters in their guise. The blind sailor is naturally unaware of their presence, and so remains preoccupied with thanking his youthful savior, offering him what “recompense” he can (Wordsworth 1940: ll. 123). The dramatic irony is that the youth has been corrupted by this promise of wealth, however meager, so that he labors with the “curse / Of evil thoughts […] monstrous and perverse” (ll. 135–7) and that, but for the spectral glimpses of the witnessing banditti, he would have toppled the blind old veteran to his death. The youth believes the apparitions are real, their spectral appearance explained by the flickering lightning, but the fragment ends on an ambiguous note, as sounds of “uncouth horror” (l. 208) arrest the youth’s foul purpose, as his “joints with terror quake” (l. 217).

While not fully radicalized, the early poems contain hints of the Jacobin Gothic to come. In “Esthwaite,” superstition is qualified by her “druid sons” who roll their “glaring eyes” on the narrator, looking for a “sacrifice,” while in
the “Fragment” the Gothic castle is likened to a predatory bird: “It seemed, thus perched, a dim-discovered form! / Like some grim eagle on a native rock” (ll. 21–2). In Adventures on Salisbury Plain, Stonehenge is presented as some kind of spectral castle further qualified by its seeming connection with the Druidic Wicker, its sacrificial victims immured within, buried alive. The narrative brings out the Jacobinical meaning of these representations. The poem tells the story of a discharged sailor who in an evil moment murdered a stranger, through need, and who now wanders a spectral landscape, overcome with “guilt and sorrow” (as Wordsworth later titled the poem). He takes refuge in a “spital,” an abandoned hospital, now a “dead house” on the plain, where, fortuitously, he meets a sailor’s widow, in similar dire need. Telling her story of woe, she reaches his humanity, softening him, an act of release ironically counterpoised with the widow’s fear that the dead house contains the ghost of a recently murdered man, interred within the ground on which they rest, whose escape she dreads. While the narrative ends with the surrender and hanging of the protagonist, Wordsworth makes it clear his characters are the all-too-human victims of the government’s institutionalized violence; that they are as much the walking dead of the feudal (“Gothic”) system as were the sacrificial victims of the Druidic Wicker.

Aimed at Pitt’s warmongering, Adventures on Salisbury Plain is the most Jacobinical of Wordsworth’s Gothic works. While The Borders is more reflective and less partisan on the relationship between violence and revolutionary times, it is equally astute, and adept, in manipulating Gothic conventions. Wordsworth repeatedly turns to the figure of live burial in his Gothic works – for Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick, the master trope of the genre (1986: 12–13) – and in doing so Wordsworth’s treatment progresses from the Burkean sublimity of superstition’s enclosed spaces, where terror prompts the phantasmagorical imagination, a moment of isolation, at once dangerous and fecund, to a politically inflected representation where live burial echoes the Jacobinical charge that Bastilles, literal and mental, are “cemeteries of the living” (Miles 2002: 49). In The Brothers, Wordsworth reverses the trope so that the central moment of deracinating terror is one of extreme exposure and privation, a condition memorably rendered through the figure of the sea captain marooned by his mutinous crew on a rock in the ocean, as bare and polished as a shield. This originating act of violence appears to unhinge the antagonist of the play, Rivers, a forced participant in the captain’s slow lynching. Iago-like, Rivers later seduces the hero, the noble Mortimer, into duplicating his crime by abandoning the father of Mortimer’s fiancée on an open heath, knowing that, old and blind, he is sure to perish. The play’s mise-en-scène thus repeats that of the Gothic “Fragment,” albeit with a greatly complicated motive: not simple greed, but a mixture of hubris, self-hate, and jealousy, stirred by Rivers’ false reports of Mortimer’s fiancée’s infidelity with the leprous feudal lord, Clifford. Wordsworth embeds his psychological investigation into the roots of monstrous violence in the telling use of what Robert Mighall calls “Gothic geography”; that is, the use of place as a means of mapping history. Caught between a tribal society to the north, with its ancient customs, and an emerging, modern state to the south, with its rule of law, the border country figures as the transition phase between feudalism and modernity, which was the Jacobinical take on the revolutionary present. The play is implicitly Jacobinical, in that it advocates a full transition to modernity, with its rule of law and clear principle as the best defense against the ruinous consequences of monstrous egos and untrammeled intellects such as Rivers’. While this might apply, most obviously, to a Robespierre, the analysis is of a piece with the radical view that such monsters arise during tumultuous times, and that, as a Burkean return to chivalry (and caste) is out of the question, constitutional reform is the urgent answer.

Despite his later protests, Wordsworth did not altogether abandon the Gothic after the late 1790s. As Clifford Siskin argues, during his
“great decade” Wordsworth constantly returned to starting points found in his juvenilia (Siskin 1979: 166). Among his many experiments, the one that proved the most productive over the course of his career was his choice to embed the defamiliarization associated with the spectral imagination in the apprehension of nature itself (see UNCArY, THE), thus completing the logic of what M. H. Abrams influ-entially termed “natural supernaturalism” (Siskin 1979: 161). But, while Wordsworth’s “spots of time” are Gothically tinged, with their hints of a deeply disturbing apprehension of mysterious presence, his deployment of Jacobinical Gothic virtually disappears.

Critical interest in Wordsworth’s Gothic decade (roughly, 1788–98) has recently increased. While critics have downplayed Wordsworth’s dismissal of this work as “juve-nilia,” they acknowledge, and indeed focus upon, the process whereby Wordsworth’s Gothic experiments were superseded by his later style. Instead of simply trying to recover Wordsworth’s “lost” Gothicism, they have worked to reveal the complex dynamic whereby the Gothic was both foundational for, and yet antipathetic to, Wordsworth’s “great decade.” Much of this dynamic concerns Wordsworth’s fraught relationship with the literary market, with his efforts to establish a literary identity in opposition to popular literature in favor of a more strenuous kind of poetry. Besides Siskin, see the work of Gamer (2000), Trott (2000), and Miles (2008).

SEE ALSO: Bürger, Gottfried; Godwin, William; Lewis, Matthew; Romanticism; Uncanny, The; Walpole, Horace.

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FURTHER READING


Zombies

FRED BOTTING

“Zombies are the real lower-class citizens of the monster world” (Beard 1993: 30) – George Romero definitively establishes the zombie’s place in the hierarchy of monstrosities thrown up by fiction and film. Unlike Frankenstein’s monster, there is nothing sympathetic about a zombie’s condition – nothing more ugly, rotten, and inhuman in its desperation to feed. Unlike vampires, zombies have no aesthetic, rebellious, or sexual appeal; their bloodlust is without charm, tradition, or history. Romero’s series of films, starting in the 1960s, made a decisive mark on the popular cultural development of the zombie and, as films, distinguish zombies less as creatures of written fictions (though that is where they first appear) than as things activated visually and cinematically in a subgenre of the horror movie (see film). Shambling across screens since the 1930s, zombies are more suited to being objects of vision rather than subjects of speech or writing: without will, self-consciousness, agency, or, indeed, any higher human functions at all, these barely animated corpses seem determined only to feed en masse on others’ blood and brains. Language – or self-reflection – is, it is generally and generically agreed, beyond their capacities.

Zombies come from a realm of horror distinct from Gothic forms and fictions, associated less with Enlightenment constructions of feudalism or superstition and with literary and architectural forms, and only in part associated with late-nineteenth-century notions of primitivism or regression. Their emergence in Western fictions emanated from non-Western practices and beliefs encountered by colonialism, but also from the mechanisms and media of modern technological progress (thus, the subgenre has associations with science fiction). The word “zombie” comes from African folklore – from “zombi,” a West-African word for “ghost” (Simpson 1940; Davis 1985); another associated word, “jumbie,” is used in the Caribbean and means “spirit” (Warner 2005: 357) – and the zombie was brought to colonialist audiences in lurid tales of slave religion and ritual (the voodoo of Haiti often being blurred with the Obi rituals of other Caribbean islands) whereby potions or magic are said to render victims so physically inert that they appear dead, or are so potent as to remove all will or self-control. Wage slavery, however, is also part of the zombie’s roots: popularized by modernity’s cinematic and industrial apparatuses, the slow, regimented, subhuman shapes of workers in early film (notably Fritz Lang’s Metropolis, 1927) make an explicit link between the automation of industrial production and the zombification of working life (Tulloch 1997; Gunning 2000). The first zombie movie – White Zombie (Victor Halperin, 1932), set in occupied Haiti – takes the link between capital,
factory production, and work further in its expressionist scenes of lumbering zombies loading bundles of cane into the mill’s dark mechanism. As the owner notes, they are the perfect workers – cheap, compliant, tireless, and expendable. In contrast to the aristocratic, decadent aesthetic individualism of vampires, zombies present an image of the soulless, subjugated mass of homogenized and bureaucratized society.

Literally lower class, as workers or slaves, zombies also occupy the significantly inferior aesthetic realm of the B-movie. The genre repeats the shocks and formulas of popular cinema with the aim of producing intense affects rather than developing narrative or character in any meaningful manner. Zombie horror (its gore, surprise, and violence) replicates the same effects on its spectators as the submissive, almost mechanical, less-than-human workers depicted on early cinematic screens, repetitively numbing against and stimulating intense experience in a way that Walter Benjamin (1973) describes as the shocks of modern urban, industrial life. With low-budget zombie horror films, the tendency to play with taboos relating to the body and the consumption of flesh overrides any higher pleasures. Films such as *Evil Dead* (Sam Raimi, 1981) have become notorious as “video nasties,” a type of body horror pushing tastelessness – and censorship – to its limits.

Romero’s films, though gory enough, set out apocalyptic scenarios that maintain a critical and reflexive perspective aware of generic origins and patterns as well as social contexts and histories. His series of zombie films acknowledge their own social and political contexts: in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), questions of traditional American family and social structures are set against the pressures of mass culture and media and the new challenges posed by the Cold War on the one hand and civil rights and anti-Vietnam protests on the other; *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), famously set in a shopping mall, foregrounds the numbing effects of consumer culture, the Western world literally eating itself; *Day of the Dead* (1985), set in a military-scientific bunker under siege from zombie masses, suggests the social and global militarization of the Reaganite New Right. Two of Romero’s recent films exhibit the influences of September 11, 2001 and the second Iraq war: *Land of the Dead* (2005) is dominated by a huge tower and a social hierarchy of survivors based on wealth and exploitation, and *Diary of the Dead* (2008), with its focus on global migration and new media forms, addresses changes in global power linked to corporate and technological control and innovation. The films establish the most familiar features of the popular zombie movie: a small group of survivors is faced with a devastated world populated by a mass of corpses that are neither living nor dead, condemned to plod in search of other bodies, guts, blood, and brains on which to feed and able, by biting, to contaminate others with blood or saliva. Apocalyptic in their outlook, the films locate the causes of zombie infection in radiation from space; germ warfare, pollution, and medical experimentation; or viral mutation. One character in *Dawn of the Dead* observes that zombies represent the dead walking the Earth on the Day of Judgment, when there is no room left in hell.

Though Romero’s films focus on contemporary issues (such as consumer culture, mass media and politics, and scientific and social control), thus attuning them to their respective presents, the very distinctive focus on questions of race (his first film has a black hero) acknowledges contemporary black and class struggles in US society and the racial and colonial history of the popularization of zombies. This history includes slavery, with the Vodun religion practiced in Haiti brought to the Caribbean in the eighteenth century in ships filled with chained West Africans forced to work on plantations. Significantly, however, Haiti’s trajectory was different from that of other Caribbean countries: its slaves rose up against their French masters in 1791 and, in 1804, won independence to create the first black republic (see *slavery and the gothic*). Moving to production based on
small-holdings and retaining only limited international links, Haiti remained in semi-isolation for over a hundred years. The late nineteenth century produced stories that use voodoo themes in a lurid and Orientalist manner, but it was in the early twentieth century that stronger interest was rekindled. W. B. Seabrook’s The Magic Island (1929) tells of an American’s search for the secrets of voodoo in the mountains and villages of rural Haiti: his colorful narrative of life, ritual, and countryside also tells of an encounter with a zombie. The popularity of Seabrook’s enthusiastic identifications plays to colonial mythology and a lurid Romanticism, leading directly to the production of White Zombie. It appears near the end of a troubled period in US–Caribbean relations: from 1915 to 1934 Haiti was occupied by America, the latter instituting new modes of government and economic production after the fall of President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam. During this period, also, black US writers became interested in the island, with Zora Neale Hurston writing an account of life and religion in Haiti and documenting an encounter with a zombie. Thus, not only was a small republic subjected to imperial domination and faced with a media machine that rendered its customs and religion in terms of Western preconceptions (thereby legitimating colonial intervention) but that republic, for black intellectuals in the United States, also offered a different idea of a democratic political formation in which black people could enjoy self-determination.

The zombie’s complex history exceeds a strictly Gothic tradition. Nonetheless, sensationalized as a figure living beyond the grave, a product of occult (non-Western) religious practices, and as an emergence of primitive forces and powers, the walking corpse has found itself deployed according to Gothic modes. In White Zombie, the sets, expressionist style of cinematography (lighting, shadows, and angles), and Bela Lugosi in the role of Legendre, the voodoo master, offer an overtly Gothic mood (see Lugosi, Bela). Made just after Dracula (1931), the film uses some of its sets, a gloomy cliff-top medieval castle with high-arched pillars and a windowed hall being the most incongruous. If its historical reference does not fit with the Haitian setting (it is not an eighteenth-century French colonial fortress, for instance), it nonetheless serves to overlay US imperialism with European Gothic associations of tyranny, barbarism, and superstition: the blackness of evil is ancient and, linked to the blackness of Lugosi’s makeup, places white US femininity under a double threat, in the same way as that of a heroine from an eighteenth-century romance. This romantic-Gothic theme engaging sexuality reinforces conventions of Europeanized otherness: Vodun powder is employed first by the mill owner and then by the voodoo master to take possession of the body of a white American woman, making her a kind of love automaton. Using Vodun ritual and powder rather than satanic incantation, the heroine’s body is possessed through the removal of her will, and she is removed from the protection of her husband-to-be via a faked death. Touching on a long-standing romantic theme of amorous intoxication, the film adds a colonial twist that alludes to Jane Eyre (1847) and Wide Sargasso Sea (1966); and, in I Walked with a Zombie (Jacques Tourneur, 1943), the connection is made more explicit, with love and loss directly entwining in romance and colonial and ritualistic Vodun possession.

Other texts and fictions assimilate zombies into a Gothic canon. In an early passage in Interview with a Vampire (1976), Anne Rice offers an account of two North American vampires undertaking a European tour in search of their origins: in the rural provinces of Transylvania they come across tales of walking corpses wishing to feed on human flesh. Like the culture in which they are buried, these figures are backward, presented as less-well-developed forms of vampire:

Two huge eyes bulged from naked sockets and two small, hideous holes made up the nose; only a putrid, leathery flesh enclosed his skull, and the rank, rotting rages that covered his frame were
thick with earth and slime and blood. I was battling a mindless, animated corpse. (Rice 1976: 206–7)

Very much a distant cousin of their well-heeled Western European and North American vampires, this “creature of the Old World” evokes no affinity or sympathy; it is abject, vile, putrescent, and as far away from supernatural glamour as possible. Rice’s history draws on early accounts of Eastern European vampires (such as Dom Augustin Calmet’s Treatise on Vampires and Revenants, 1746) in which superstition is seen to stem from the discovery of bloated or undecayed corpses. Other links to figures from the Gothic tradition are suggested visually and through associations with science rather than superstition: Boris Karloff’s monster – inelegantly assembled from various dead body parts, square and scar-headed, bolt-necked, physically massive, and animated through an array of electrical gadgetry – is very much a creature of modern manufacture. His is a singular figure of industrial alienation, whereas the worker-zombie comes in a mass. In H. P. Lovecraft’s “Reanimator” stories (1922), Frankensteinian science also gives life to corpses in a series of dark experiments whose horrors are only alluded to until, at the end, the pale and ardently callous scientist is claimed by the vengeful victims who return from beyond the threshold of life.

Though offering no graphic detail, the horror of W. W. Jacobs’ tale “The Monkey’s Paw” (1902) climaxes in an encounter with a walking corpse. A version of the “beware of what you wish for tale,” the eponymous object, brought back from the colonies, bestows, like a fairy godmother, three wishes. When one of those wishes is used after a young son is accidentally killed, the final nocturnal knocking on his parents’ front door is considered too horrible to relate. More often, the horrors of the zombie are highly visible. Popular horror tales and stories deploy zombies to various effects: to chill, parody, or offer cultural commentary; as accounts of scientific transgression of the boundaries of natural life and death in medical experimentation; as explorations of divisions of body, will, and soul; as speculations on the social breakdown attendant on some kind of apocalypse; as critiques of the dull habits and thoughtless routines of everyday life and daily work; and as explorations of concerns about the disturbing or desensitizing effects of new media. Joe Hill’s “Twittering from the Circus of the Dead” (2010) effectively uses the new form of online writing to perform and publicize a family’s fatal encounter with zombies. In longer tales, devastated cities, countries, and worlds overrun by zombies provide the setting for relating the adventures of a small band of survivors (Wellington 2007a, 2007b). Less formulaic, less obviously horrific, and more thoughtful fictional treatments of the zombie theme – few and far between – have been undertaken. Joyce Carol Oates’ short novel Zombie (1996) engages with themes of sexual deviance and serial killing: the aim of its first-person narrator is to create his own same-sex love zombie by kidnapping and lobotomizing an attractive victim. Working as a caretaker in a boarding house for short-term students, he has a secret cellar prepared for the operation and subsequent imprisonment of his to-be-zombified sex slave. Most of the novel narrates his plans and recalls failed attempts to succeed in his aim, its style of stilted, simplistic prose implying that the emotional numbness and educational underdevelopment of the protagonist makes him as much a zombie as the object of his desire. In positioning readers close to the “zombie” protagonist, and in linking serial killing to same-sex desire and familial rejection, the narrative – with its allusions to the killing house of Robert Bloch’s American Gothic (1974) – encourages complex and problematic identifications and otherings. Cultural boundaries remain unclear in “Less than Zombie” (1989), Douglas E. Winter’s sharp parody of the coldly alienated cool language and characters of Bret Easton Ellis’ Less Than Zero (1985). Los Angeles’ rich, pampered, but emotionally shallow adolescents are placed in a world very close to that of Ellis’ novel, their easy and empty excesses of drugs, sex, alcohol,
and parties only slightly accentuated to include zombies and killing. Again, the language of the fiction – stilted, slang-filled, and without compassion or comprehension of greater human issues – presents the vacuously consumerist lifestyle of wealthy and spoilt youngsters as a thin crust veiling an aimless, vapid, empty, and zombie-like existence. In contrast, Seth Grahame-Smith’s *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) offers less subtle incursions of exemplary figures of trash and rotten culture into higher forms of literature.

**Zombies are the new vampires.** In the last decade, not only have mass, made-up “zombie walks” become popular in major Western cities but zombies have begun to return to screens and fictions in significant numbers – a response both to the fin-de-siècle overexposure of the sexy, decadent, individualistic, powerful vampire (a model of the flexible patterns of post-1980s consumerist and corporate individualism) and to greater concerns about a posthumanist world in which understandings of the boundaries of life and death are being transformed by technological and biopolitical modes of economic practice and social discourse. Scientific innovations in communications and biotechnologies have given rise in videogames to monstrous figures from the ever-popular undead, whether swarming en masse over game screens (legitimate objects, like the massed ranks of space invaders, of thoughtlessly reactive virtual execution) or portrayed as new and highly mobile mutants created by genetic experimentation and failed processes of social control. Resident Evil, which numbers zombies among its range of scientifically enhanced and recoded bodies and is set in an apocalyptic near future of viral outbreaks and mass contamination, thrived as a videogame and later moved to the big screen (Paul W. S. Anderson, 2002) to alter the conventions of zombie motion. As in *28 Days Later* (Danny Boyle, 2002), zombies move swiftly, their speed calibrated to the contemporary need for ever more rapid technologies of communication, gaming, and film editing (Pegg 2008). In Stephen King’s novel *Cell* (2006), a global zombie virus is spread very quickly by mobile phone use; in the film *Pontypool* (Bruce McDonald, 2008), set in a small-town Canadian radio station, language is the cause of the viral contagion. In *28 Days Later* and its sequel, *28 Weeks Later* (Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, 2007), the “infected” are transformed by the appropriately named “rage” virus, which originates, it is suggested, in global violence spread on media screens or in animal testing laboratories: violent, fast, angry, the film’s bloodthirsty monsters are more contemporary in their furious response to overcrowded urban, screen, social, and technological environments – populations that are to be (unsuccessfully) managed and controlled by military force and medical intervention. Their mobility – the Canary Wharf setting is an occupied immigration-repopulation center – is very much a sign of globalization’s uncontrollable flows of finance, warfare, commodities, and bodies. “Zombies” – following on from the tradition of the urban mass of industrially organized society – now signal the move to posthuman and postindustrial patterns: rewritten and recoded by technical means, redundant in an economy dominated by services and computers, working bodies are cast on the scrapheap, useless, unemployable, outdated in an age of high performance and fast profits in which life is tied to money as just another line on an electronic ledger or a league table.

**Zombies mark out the excesses of global consumer culture.** Max Brooks’ *World War Z* (2006) documents the events and aftermath of a worldwide zombie plague. The novel takes the form of individual accounts from across the world collected as a supplement to an official UN-style report on the disaster. Among the novel’s concerns are a planet shaken by migrations of populations; the changing – and fragile – networks of global economic, military, and political power; and the communal and spiritual disempowerment brought about by a dependence on useless consumerist luxuries and technical gadgets. There is a degree of relish in the accounts of global destruction, a survivalist pleasure in the
Zombies continue to be monsters that warrant destruction. Unbearably repellent, irredeemably disgusting, resolutely destructive, zombies embody the most abject features of the humanity that both serves as their raw material and disavows them: it remains impossible to domesticate them, let alone to find positive qualities to identify. Or does it? A recent fiction has converted the zombie from the ultimate in abjection to a sacred and noble monster, celebrated for its refusal of mortal limits and of capitalist acquisitiveness. In Jasper Bark’s Way of the Barefoot Zombie (2009), the group that sanctifies zombies is made up of disaffected super-rich kids calling themselves the “Zombie Liberation Front.” The novel, written in the wake of the credit crunch, uses the figure of the zombie to critique the excesses of capitalism. Its title refers to an exclusive Caribbean island training program for the super-rich that teaches the adoption of the single-minded inhuman drives (including consuming living human flesh) of the zombie as a means to increase individual success, wealth, and power: zombies, it seems, connote two extremes of capitalism, its lumpen, useless excess and its callous, all-consuming voraciousness. Yet, while capitalism used to be monstrous or vampiric in its scale and inhuman operations, it is now a walking corpse, “zombie capitalism” destructively continuing a wasteful consumption of humanity and the environment yet unable to keep up with or control its own excesses: “twenty-first century capitalism as a whole is a zombie system, seemingly dead when it comes to achieving human goals and responding to human feelings, but capable of sudden spurts of activity that cause chaos all around” (Harman 2009: 12).

SEE ALSO: Film; Lugosi, Bela; Slavery and the Gothic.

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