Introduction

This book is mainly aimed at readers who are either new to studying the Gothic or who have some basic understanding of the form and want to know more. How to critically read the Gothic is the principal issue addressed in this volume, which examines a range of Gothic texts and non-textual Gothic forms from the eighteenth century to the present day. The approach here is avowedly cultural and historical in emphasis as this helps us to observe the connections between texts and authors, and to appreciate how a Gothic tradition developed.[1]

In a book of this kind there will inevitably be omissions, and the texts sampled here are representative rather than definitive. The Guide to Further Reading at the end of the book in the Student Resources section lists information on secondary material concerning specific periods, forms (such as film, for example), theoretical approaches, and author-based studies. The Glossary provides a synoptic explanation of some of the key terms, and a sample essay is discussed in a section on advice on essay writing. The book's structure is broadly chronological and each chapter concludes with a specific reading of a Gothic text from the period discussed in that chapter. However, before looking in detail at such texts it is important to consider the historical contexts from which they emerged and the kinds of critical approaches which are available to us.

GOTHIC HISTORIES

The word 'Gothic' means different things in different contexts. The Goths were a Germanic tribe who settled in much of Europe from the third to the fifth centuries AD. In architecture the term refers to a revival (more accurately a cultural reconstruction) of a medieval aesthetic that was in vogue in Britain from the early eighteenth to the late nineteenth century. Such reconstructions of a somewhat fantasised version of the past (combined with a sense of 'barbaric' Germanic tribes) provide a context for the emergence of Gothic as a literary mode.

This cultivation of a Gothic style was given new impetus in the mid-eighteenth century with the emergence of Enlightenment beliefs that extolled the virtues of rationality. Such ideas were challenged in Britain by the Romantics at the end of the eighteenth century, who argued that the complexity of human experience could not be explained by an inhuman rationalism. For them the inner worlds of the emotions and the imagination far outweighed the claims of, for example, natural philosophy. The Gothic is at one level closely related to these Romantic considerations, and poets such as Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Byron at various times used the Gothic to explore, at different levels of explicitness, the role that the apparently irrational could play in critiquing quasi-rationalistic accounts of experience. This view was given intellectual support by philosophies which explored the limits of thought and feeling. Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), which will be discussed in depth later in this chapter, suggested that the sublime (a key Romantic concept) was associated with feelings of Terror (rather than with a benign pantheism which characterised some other models of sublimity). Transgressive, frightening feelings (in Burke, relating to largely imagined imminent violent death) are the most powerful that people are subject to and therefore the most sublime. Immanuel Kant's more rigorously philosophical account of the sublime in *The Critique of Judgement* (1790) observed a distinction between phenomena (a world of objects) and noumena (a world of ideas), in an exploration of the relationship between the mind and the external world. For Kant the sublime indicated the limits of subjective

experience, and this emphasis on introspection privileges thought and understanding above certain Enlightenment ideas about the presence of an independent or 'objective' reality that can be rationally comprehended. However, although the Gothic often shares in such anti-Enlightenment ideas (because it focuses on thoughts and feelings), it is important to acknowledge that the early Gothic appears to be highly formulaic, reliant on particular settings, such as castles, monasteries, and ruins, and with characters, such as aristocrats, monks, and nuns who, superficially, appear to be interchangeable from novel to novel. Nevertheless, these stories are not as stereotyped as they may seem, and it is necessary to look beyond such narrative props in order to consider the anti-Enlightenment impulses and related themes and issues which are central to the form.

A second key aspect in any analysis of a Gothic text concerns its representation of 'evil'. The demonisation of particular types of behaviour makes visible the covert political views of a text. This is perhaps not surprising, given that the 1790s were a period in which the fears of, or enthusiasm for, revolutionary ideas, exemplified by their practical implementation by the French Revolution, profoundly influenced the British Gothic. The relationship between the Terror in France (the term used to apply to the mass executions, which included many of the first generation of revolutionary leaders) and literary versions of Terror can, for example, reveal the moral outlooks and political sympathies of specific writers. Nevertheless, it is necessary to approach such apparent clarity with circumspection. David Punter in his seminal study of the Gothic *The Literature of Terror* (1980, revised 1996) rightly notes that one of the key terms in the Gothic is that of ambivalence, because the Gothic so often appears to delight in transgression.[2] This is a key issue which this book explores in depth.

The Gothic is also a form which is generated in different genres as well as national and social contexts. The American Gothic tradition, for example, reveals particular concerns about race which are closely tied to issues of slavery and how it shaped a black identity politics which emerged in the post–Civil War period. America, unlike Britain, had a revolution (1775–6, although fighting with Britain continued until 1781) and was thus free of the images of threatened political turmoil that colour a strand of late eighteenth-century

British Gothic writing. In Germany the emergence of the *Schauerroman*, or 'shudder novel', in the late eighteenth century has its roots in a German Romantic tradition which included Schiller and Goethe. The shudder novel was a form which influenced the Gothic from other nations, and this illustrates how nationally specific manifestations of the Gothic played a role in shaping the aesthetic considerations of the Gothic in other countries. The Gothic also encompasses different forms, including drama, poetry, the novel, the novella, and the short story, and in the twentieth century it was taken up by radio, film, and television. In the late twentieth century to the present day it has also shaped certain subcultural experiences built around the Goth scene, which encompasses music and stylised dress codes, as well as influencing video games and the images on specialist Internet websites. The Gothic, in other words, mutates across historical, national, and generic boundaries as it reworks images drawn from different ages and places. The roots of the British Gothic can be found in the mid-eighteenth-century 'Graveyard Poetry' of Collins, Young, Blair, and Gray, a quite different point of origin from that of the German *Schauerroman*. In addition Gothic theatre's heyday in Britain coincides with the popularity of the Gothic novel, approximately 1780s to the 1820s, whereas in France Gothic drama was staged at the infamous Grand Guignol theatre in Paris from 1897 until its closure in 1962.

Different nations therefore generate different types of Gothic that develop and feed into other Gothic forms which proliferate in one place but seemingly die out in another. Space precludes the opportunity to explore this in depth, but the relationship between the British and American traditions will be focused on in this study; information concerning other national and cultural developments is given in the Guide to Further Reading.

Despite the national, formal, and generic mutations of the Gothic, it is possible to identify certain persistent features which constitute a distinctive aesthetic. Representations of ruins, castles, monasteries, and forms of monstrosity, and images of insanity, transgression, the supernatural, and excess, all typically characterise the form. In order to appreciate how we might read these Gothic motifs, it is helpful to acknowledge how criticism on the form has developed.

READING THE GOTHIC

The first major academic study of the Gothic was Dorothy Scarborough's *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917), which was followed by Edith Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror* (1921) and Eino Railo's The *Haunted Castle* (1927). These early critical readings attempted to locate the Gothic within certain literary cultures, or to explain them in terms of an author's oeuvre. Important studies in the 1930s include J. M. S. Tompkins's *The Popular Novel in England, 1770–1800* (1932), which explored in detail Gothic themes and how they contributed to a suspense tradition. Mario Praz in *The Romantic Agony* (1933) examined the Gothic in relation to Romanticism, and Montague Summers's *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (1938) provided a broad, if somewhat eccentric, history of the form.[3] They also, in their various ways, attempted to culturally locate the Gothic as a literary mode. In 1928 Summers had also written *The Vampire*, which is an early study of vampires in literature and folklore. A later important study was Devendra P. Varma's *The Gothic Flame* (1957).[4] However, the modern era of theoretically informed criticism was inaugurated by David Punter's *The Literature of Terror*, published in 1980, which provided the first rigorous analysis of the Gothic tradition and suggested ways in which Gothic texts could be read through a combination of Marxist and psychoanalytical perspectives. The following year Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (1981) was published, in which she examined the Gothic through Freud's concept of the uncanny (a concept which will be discussed at the end of this chapter). Since then there have been many groundbreaking contributions from scholars working in Britain, mainland Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia, indeed often in those very countries where the Gothic took root. Such studies have helped to shape approaches to the Gothic, and in order to acknowledge this I will briefly outline a range of possible critical approaches (see Guide to Further Reading): the psychoanalytical, historicist, feminist, and colonial and postcolonial perspectives. Psychoanalytical approaches indebted to Sigmund Freud tend to read Gothic narratives as if they could be interpreted as dreams. Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) examined how a

dream worked through two levels of content: the latent and the manifest. The manifest content of a dream refers to the story of the dream. Dreams, like some Gothic narratives, possess a peculiar surrealism and a rich symbolism. Such tales appear to be 'fantastical', and require the work of the analyst, or literary critic, to decode them so that they give up their latent content which is what the dream (or story) is really about. For Freud, this was only possible if we knew something of the dreamer and his or her life experiences. The author is treated like the patient, so that the tale corroborates the presence of anxieties that are specific to their life, as well as confirming the presence of more generalisable neuroses such as those generated by the Oedipus complex. Marie Bonaparte's study of Edgar Allan Poe (1933), discussed in Chapter 2, is a classic of this kind of analysis. However, it is also possible to psychoanalyse the text by examining how the symbolism articulates anxieties that are inherent to a culture, as well as to consider the kinds of effects that reading such narratives might have on a readership.

Freud's essay 'The Uncanny' is an important critical text and will be explored in depth in a concluding section to this chapter. In the essay Freud attempts to account for feelings of unease, and relates them to anxieties about the return of the dead in which the dead are reanimated and the living become corpse-like. In his interpretation of E.T.A. Hoffmann's Gothic tale 'The Sand Man' (1816) he constructs a model of the double which is relevant to a reading of many Gothic texts. For Freud, the double suggests that the self is haunted by repressed feelings which threaten to disrupt commonplace notions of everyday reality. Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) moved away from the Freudian idea of doubling to argue that a culture needs to represent as abject any experiences which compromise the 'norm'.[5] Such a view has obvious applications to the Gothic conception of 'evil' and suggests that it is a necessary concept that ensures the well-being of the 'norm'. Psychoanalytical readings can also be used in conjunction with more historicist approaches to the Gothic as it enables us to decode the form's symbolism and discuss the critically retrieved narratives (or latent content) in historical terms. However, it is important to note that whilst early readings of the Gothic from the 1980s frequently relied on predominately psychoanalytical

approaches, such a perspective has, in recent years, been criticised by more robustly historicist critics.

Reading the Gothic historically enables us to see how writers respond to earlier Gothic texts; it also enables us to relate such texts to the historical contexts within which they were produced. Such an approach does not, as mentioned, necessarily preclude using a psychoanalytical perspective to help decode certain scenes or characters, which can then be related to the wider historical picture. Such an approach is implicit in much of the analysis of the texts discussed throughout this book. A historically sensitive approach helps to illustrate the points of cultural contact between Gothic narratives and the events (the French Revolution, for example) to which they respond. However, the danger in this is that such texts can merely be seen as doing history by other means and it is important that due acknowledgement is made of the literary histories which they also drew upon and which played a role in shaping a Gothic aesthetic. One can say, for example, that Ann Radcliffe's novels make covert reference to conservative British fears concerning the spread of seditious ideas during a time of revolution, but it is also important to see how she reworks ideas and concepts which are familiar from Romanticism, as well as reworking scenes and characters which possess a clear Shakespearian imprint. In addition, how we understand history is not an objective process as it is inevitably influenced by selectivity and because the past is always mediated for us through accounts (even contemporary 'eye witness' accounts) of historical events. History also means different things to different critics – how a Marxist, a cultural materialist, a new historicist, or a feminist interprets history is dependent upon the significance accorded to specific events. For some critics a historical approach provides a rebuttal to the apparent ahistorical tendencies of a strict psychoanalytical reading. Robert Mighall, for example, has argued that psychoanalytical criticism can find itself co-opted to support stereotypes about repression. To argue that *Dracula* (1897) uses vampirism as a coded reference to sex implies, in this argument, little more than a cliché about the Victorians and sexual repression.[6] Michel Foucault has argued that we can map histories of sexuality which are not complicit with such a repressive hypothesis, a hypothesis which merely indicates just how far Freudian

ideas have become critically internalised within our analytical procedures and cultural practices.[7] However, this is really another way of saying that reading Gothic texts should not become an oversimplified process of ahistorical symbol spotting. The advantage of a historicist approach is that it enables us to examine Gothic transgressions within the context of the prevailing norms which generated notions of the transgressive in the first place. In Kristeva's terms, what a society chooses to abject or jettison tells us a lot about how that society sees itself, and this process can also be read archaeologically to make sense of the historically and culturally specific manifestations of 'terror' that are central to the Gothic.

One of the most important contributions made to scholarship on the Gothic has been made by feminist critics. Ellen Moers in 1976 coined the term 'Female Gothic' in order to distinguish between male- and female-authored texts from the early part of the Gothic tradition.[8] This has generated a considerable amount of scholarship which either develops or challenges many of the issues raised by Moers (especially relating to whether the Female Gothic simply refers to writing by women or whether it constitutes a literary form which has also influenced certain male-authored Gothic texts).[9] This type of criticism helps to decode Gothic symbolism in order to reveal the covert presence of patriarchal plots, and to examine the relationship between aesthetics and gender. It is also important to note that a particular strand of the Gothic, like that of Shirley Jackson, Angela Carter, and Toni Morrison (all of whom are discussed in Chapter 4), is quite self-conscious in its use of Gothic imagery. In the case of Carter, her rewriting of folk tales in *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) represents an explicit attempt to make visible the concealed gender narratives inherent to the tales collected (and often rewritten) in the late seventeenth century. This type of self-conscious critical rewriting also makes visible one of the most significant issues about the Gothic: that it should not be read as a form which passively replicates contemporary cultural debates about politics, philosophy, or gender, but rather reworks, develops, and challenges them. The engagement may often be ambivalent, but the Gothic is a mode which searches for new ways of representing complex ideas or debates, and it is therefore not coincidental that the form has so often appealed to women writers. Such an

approach to gender has also stimulated discussion about the presence of a 'Male Gothic' tradition which arguably has its roots in Matthew Lewis's violent and semi-pornographic novel *The Monk* (1796), which is examined in Chapter 1 in relation to Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797). Feminist approaches to the Gothic often utilise elements from feminist inflected critical theory, such as that of Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous. However, it is a mode of criticism which cannot be easily pigeon-holed by association with other critical theories. Feminist readings examine historical evidence, but that does not mean that they simply accept the claims made by Marxists or cultural materialists about historical and cultural evidence. Indeed, for historical and political reasons feminist critics are often, quite rightly, cautious about the claims made by Marx and Freud as their deliberations frequently overlook the contribution that women make to the economy (Marx) or can help to confirm troubling gender stereotypes (Freud). This study will highlight the presence of gendered narratives in order to illustrate how this approach provides a perspective on the Gothic which illuminates how these issues are generated in historically contextualised terms.

That certain types of critical theory can be used in a way that is mutually supportive is indicated by how critics have examined the Gothic in terms of race, colonialism, and postcolonialism. Stephen D. Arata, for example, has (in an article discussed in depth in Chapter 3) examined how vampirism in *Dracula* can be read not only in gendered terms but as a symbolic representation of colonisers parasitically feeding off the colonised.[10] In addition a novel such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) is a gender-aware reconstruction of a range of anxieties (psychological, historical, and economic) which reflect on the history of slavery in North America. To that end it invites an analysis that is grounded in feminist, psychoanalytical, and historical enquiry. This historicist approach would not just reflect on the nineteenth-century setting of the novel but would explicitly address how and why such issues about history are important in understanding black identity politics in the late twentieth century. Also relevant here are writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Charles W. Chesnutt, George Washington Cable, and Kate Chopin, for they illustrate how issues about race and slavery were developed

within an American Gothic idiom in the mid- to late nineteenth century, which covertly influenced many of the issues in *Beloved*.

Discussions of colonialism and postcolonialism acknowledge that these terms are open to contestation. India, for example, a former British colonially administered country, could rightly be considered as a postcolonial nation. However, given that much of its industrial economy is dependent upon North America and Europe for its sustainability, it could be argued that it is subject to a new kind of economic colonialism. Other complications are technical ones relating to, for example, Commonwealth countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, which are economically independent of Britain but which have dominion status. How nationality (itself a highly contested term) is represented in the Gothic helps to explain why there are periodic anxieties about the meaning of national identity, especially but not uniquely at the *fin de siècle* in Britain.

The Gothic can represent a confluence of many issues reflecting on gender, race, history, class, nation, and the self, and a number of critical strategies are available for understanding how these issues relate to one another. This book places Gothic texts within their historical contexts and indicates how they address some, or occasionally all, of these issues. However, there are, historically speaking, two major intellectual contributions made to an understanding of the Gothic – Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry* (1757) and Freud's 'The Uncanny' (1919) – which need to be outlined as they will underpin much of the discussion of the Gothic in this study and represent two theoretical accounts of anxiety which have played an important role in shaping Gothic criticism on Romantic and post-Romantic Gothic.

BURKE

Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* takes its place in a history of treatises on the sublime. The sublime had acquired conceptual significance in Britain during the seventeenth century after the publication of Boileau's 1674 French translation of *Peri Hypsous* ('On the Sublime'), written around the first century AD and attributed

to Longinus, which examines how rhetoric can be used as a form of persuasion. The abuse of rhetoric found in propagandist political speeches might move the soul but also trick the mind, and so indicates the potentially deceptive nature of sublimity which would dog later accounts of it (especially debates about its natural or cultural provenance).[11] Burke's influential account of the sublime distinguished between sublimity and beauty. The sublime was associated with grand feelings stimulated by obscurity and highly dramatic encounters with the world in which a sense of awe was paradoxically inspired by a feeling of incomprehension. Beauty was of a different order, and was linked to notions of decorum and feelings for society. This distinction is also gendered, with the sublime implicitly associated with a strong masculine presence, and beauty with a decorous feminine presence. Central to Burke's treatise is the claim that death, or more precisely the fear of death, provides the clearest example of sublimity. He states that:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.[12]

This view provided the Gothic of the late eighteenth century with an influential representation of states of terror. Burke's treatise is notable for its attempt at cataloguing the possible causes of sublimity. He discusses a series of concepts which articulate these feelings of anxiety, including Obscurity, Power, Privation, Vastness, and Infinity. All imply experiences in which the subject is diminished, and behind it all lies, for Burke, the presence of an omnipotent creator who, given these implied links to fear, anxiety, and a terror of death, seems to be an Old Testament God of punishment and damnation. Burke claims that within our conceptions of 'the Deity' (p. 62) we invest God with such an awesome power that 'we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him' (p. 63).

Burke's account of the sublime is important because his is the first major treatise to claim that the sublime is associated with

absence. Instead of the sublime leading us to a contemplation of our place in a world of natural majesty (the natural sublime), which implies the presence of a benign divine creator, he claims that the sublime is a negative experience because it reinforces feelings of transience (our passing) and insignificance (our smallness).

For Burke these feelings appear as intimations of danger, and this suggests that fears and anxieties are subtly generated via subjective associations and expectations. His formulation of God, for example, explicitly depends upon a particular conception of the divine. As we shall see, Ann Radcliffe frequently exploits the potential solipsism which is implicit in Burke's idea of the sublime, and in her hands this is used to suggest that terror can easily be falsely manufactured. In *The Italian* (1797), for example, Vivaldi, the ostensible hero, is given an object lesson in how his over-stimulated imagination makes him prone to conceiving imaginary terrors which make him susceptible to manipulation by the villain Schedoni. Radcliffe also provides a corrective to Burke by replacing his terrifying God with a more paternalistic divine presence who, through providential design, helps the virtuous. Gothic writers do not, therefore, simply copy from Burke, but they do respond to his formulation of Terror, seeing in it a language for representing fear, and a debate about the role that the imagination plays in generating emotionally heightened states.

Burke's version of the sublime therefore makes a contribution to an understanding of accounts of subjectivity. What it means to feel is his principal concern, and the hesitations and oddly sche-matic structure of his *Philosophical Enquiry* are the consequence of accounting for emotions within the discursive limitations of a philosophical examination. At its heart is the idea that the subject is not defined by noble or lofty feelings, but by anxious feelings relating to self-preservation. This version of the subject seems at one level to be manifestly Gothic, whilst its suggestion that the self is defined by moments of trauma anticipates Freud's conception of the subject as shaped by childhood anxieties. Or as the Freudian analyst Adam Phillips puts it in his introduction to the *Philosophical Enquiry*, Burke discovers 'the impossibility of rational classifica-tion' and that 'nearly two hundred years later Freud would describe something comparable between Thanatos, the Death Instinct, and

Eros' (p. xxiii). Freud gives specific voice to these Burkean anxieties about death in his essay 'The Uncanny', which is regarded as a critically important attempt at understanding the psychological complexities which characterise the post-Romantic Gothic.

FREUD

The problem with classification that Phillips noted in Burke is echoed in Freud's attempt to define the uncanny. For Freud the uncanny, or *unheimlich*, exists in opposition to the *heimlich*, or 'homely'. The *unheimlich* 'is undoubtedly related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror', whereas *heimlich* refers to domesticity and security.[13] However, these terms are prone to slipping into each other, so that '*heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a subspecies of *heimlich*' (p. 347, italics in original). Freud's hesitancy ('is in some way or other') is indicative of his inability to produce a rigorous, putatively scientific, analysis of feelings of uncanniness. The reason why the two terms slip into each other is due to the Oedipus complex which Freud explores in his reading of Hoffmann's 'The Sand Man'. In his interpretation of the German tale he identifies the references to eyes and threats to sight as representing Oedipal anxieties about castration (in which 'eyes' take on a symbolic form). His reading of the tale reworks an idea which earlier in the essay he regarded as central to the uncanny when he claimed that 'the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (p. 340). The home, or the *heimlich*, is for Freud the place where Oedipal desires and anxieties are generated, so that the home is not, because of the sexualised family tensions which inhere in the Oedipus complex, such a safe place after all. Indeed the home considered in this way is the place which generates repression and becomes uncanny because it involves incestuous sexual feelings that evoke fear, dread, and horror.

Freud's view of uncanniness is allied to Burke's notion of terror because it represents an attempt to account for fear. Burke suggested

that such fears were a response to dangers in the external world, but his account of subjectivity implies that these anxieties inform us about the inner emotional world of the subject rather than about the specific objective conditions which give rise to fear. The problem in Burke is how to find a language which can represent the emotions, and for this reason he asserts the importance of external stimuli even though his principal focus is on why the subject feels in the way that they do. For Freud, such feelings of uncanniness may represent repressed Oedipal anxieties which are revealed in disturbing ways. As with Burke, the issue is how to find a language or a set of images which captures this feeling of fear. Freud, however, suggests a further modification of his theory of Oedipal subject formation by linking the uncanny to images of the double.

For Freud, the subject, when a child, goes through a stage of primary narcissism which they grow out of once they develop a conscience that enables them to regulate their moral conduct. However, the very presence of this conscience suggests a capacity for self-criticism which paradoxically reflects, because it is a self-regarding process, 'the old surmounted narcissism of earliest times' (p. 357). This adult self-reflection is thus a continuation of childish primary narcissism but with an added morbid twist. In primary narcissism the child experiences the double 'as a preservation against extinction' (p. 356). The child, in other words, has no conception of death. In the adult experience of doubling, implied by the presence of a conscience which enforces moral censorship, the relationship to the double is changed – 'From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death' (p. 357) – as we become aware of the morally constricting and finite adult world. The uncanny is thus closely associated with images of death, and Freud states that 'Many people experience the feeling in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts' (p. 364). Such images also represent an image of repetition, 'the return of the dead', which is a fundamental characteristic of the uncanny. The urge to repeat, or to relive a past experience, suggests a desire to confront as yet unresolved, because repressed, Oedipal dramas. This can manifest itself as an adult anxiety about death (concerns about the future), or as a neurotic anxiety about the past.

Avril Horner has noted that 'Freud's essay and terminology have been adopted by critics of the Gothic who thereby read texts as codified forms of instinctual drives and mechanisms of repression'.[14] Freud's essay has proved to be very productive for psychoanalytically orientated critics, but the uncanny can also be used to historicise such anxieties. This is exemplified in Chapter 3 in a reading of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) in which the uncanny helps to draw out an underlying dynamic concerning economics (and so aids in placing the tale in the context of the economic depression of the 1840s). Freud's essay is important because it enables us to explore motifs of doubling in the Gothic which we can find in texts as diverse as *Frankenstein*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Dracula*. It also enables us to see how the Gothic creates an uncanny mood in which characters become doubled with places (which, as we shall see, is a key element in the ghost story). Freud intriguingly also suggests in 'The Uncanny' that uncanny tales should be read not solely for their hidden psychological meaning but also for how their literary qualities generate new forms of uncanniness. He notes of such literature that 'it is a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides, something that cannot be found in real life' (p. 372). The very unreality of the Gothic text becomes, paradoxically, the special place for the uncanny.

In Chapter 2 Marie Bonaparte's classic Freudian reading of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' will be discussed and contrasted with some historicist approaches which explore Poe's representation of race. However, it is important to re-emphasise that the uncanny, whilst a psychoanalytical concept, can also be used to bring to light historically contextualised anxieties.

The chapters follow a chronological approach to the Gothic and discuss a range of different literary and non-text-based forms (including radio and film). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this book should be seen as stimulating discussion about the Gothic; it is not intended to be the last word on the topic. The principal ambition of this study is to show how the Gothic can be read for its contexts, and to do that we have to begin with the eighteenth century.

NOTES

1. It is also important to appreciate that the academic study of the Gothic, as with any mode, is conditioned by the formation of literary canons. What constitutes a course of study on the Gothic is not a static affair because it is conditioned by changes in critical theory and by other issues such as the availability of new editions of long out-of-print texts. In other words, we need to be aware that a Gothic canon (and this book inevitably builds it own version of that) should not be seen as carved in stone but rather subject to critical scrutiny and revision. The reasons for these changes are an implicit theme in this study.

2. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 2 vols (London: Longman, [1980] 1996): see pp. 1–19.

3. See Punter, *Literature of Terror*, vol. 1, pp. 14–15.

4. Dorothy Scarborough, *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (New York: Putnam, 1917); Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (London: Constable, 1921); Eino Railo, *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 1927); J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770–1800* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska, [1932] 1961); Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933); Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (London: Fortune, 1938); Montague Summers, *The Vampire* (London: Senate, [1928] 1995); Devendra P. Varma, *The Gothic Flame: Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England: Its Origins, Efflorescences, Disintegration, and Residuary Influences* (London: A. Barker, 1957).

5. See Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

6. Robert Mighall, 'Sex, History and the Vampire', in *Bram Stoker: History, Psychoanalysis, and the Gothic*, ed. W. Hughes and A. Smith (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 62–77.

7. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1976] 1984).

8. See Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: Women's Press, [1976] 1978).

9. See also special issue of *Gothic Studies*, 6: 1 (May 2004) on 'The Female Gothic', ed. Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace, and special issue of *Women's Writing: The Elizabethan to Victorian Period*, 1: 2 (1994) on 'Female Gothic writing', ed. Robert Miles. See also Alison Milbank, *Daughters of the House: Modes of Gothic in Victorian Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992); E. J. Clery, *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*, Writers and Their Work series (Tavistock: Northcote, 2000), and Suzanne Becker, *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

10. Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', *Victorian Studies*, 33 (1990), 621–45. Reprinted in *Dracula: A Casebook*, ed. Glennis Byron (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 119–44, p. 129.

11. Cassius Longinus, *On Sublimity*, trans. D. A. Russell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965).

12. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1757] 1998), p. 36 (italics in the original). All subsequent references in the text are to this edition.

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