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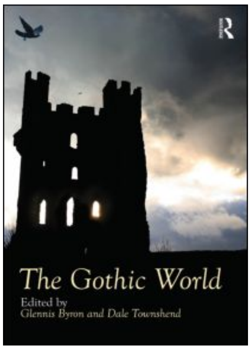

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

GOTHIC AND THE QUESTION OF THEORY, 1900–PRESENT

Scott Brewster

Given the current proliferation of Gothic cultures, and the corresponding diversification of Gothic criticism and theory, do we inhabit an age peculiarly susceptible to its attractions? Or is there something inherent to Gothic that has generated, even demanded, new forms of critique as it has mutated since it emerged in the later eighteenth century? Gothic has fostered an array of theoretical approaches in the last century, and yet the possibility of providing a single definition – generic, thematic, conceptual – of the term becomes ever more remote. Nonetheless, after nearly 250 years, we return compulsively to the task: as Lucie Armitt comments, "we cannot leave the Gothic alone, because it deals in what will not leave us alone. It is everywhere and yet nowhere" (Armitt 2011: 12). As this essay was being completed, two examples of Gothic's ubiquity, and pervasive capacity to interpretation, caught the attention. The first was the UK release of Tim Burton's *Frankenweenie* (2012), timed to coincide with Halloween and school half-term breaks. The film, which centers on the death and resurrection of a beloved pet, brings the story back to life 30 years after Disney had fired Burton for making a short version of the film deemed "too scary" for children. The black-and-white animation faithfully acknowledges Gothic's cinematic history, and in an interview on the BBC News website Burton recalls his early identification with Frankenstein's creature and Dracula on screen. This has an echo in *Frankenweenie*; as the BBC feature stresses, the film deals not only with loss and bereavement but "also touches on issues of making friends and finding your way in life" (Griffiths 2012). Gothic horror, then, can be didactic and confidence-building, a manual to individuation. The perceived homely qualities of the feature were underscored by *The Sunday Times* on 14 October 2012 which had a *Funday Times* pullout devoted to the film, with features including "Brain-teasing puzzles," "fun science to do at home," and the chance to win "10 fabulous, fun-packed, *Frankenweenie* goodie bags." The second example was BBC Radio 4's month-long focus on the Gothic Imagination, including new versions of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, with an aim of "reclaiming original gothic creations from the clichés they have become." This refreshing endeavor did not appear to extend to the synopsis of Rebecca Lenkiewicz's *Dracula*, however. It was billed as "a supernatural fable reflecting a harrowing fear of female sexuality, and the treatment meted out to the insane pervert who unleashes it for pleasure." The listener was promised an "all-action adventure story, with ghosts, ghouls, lunatics and seriously gripping chase scenes', and that this two-hour adaptation would take its audience "on a thrilling ride through the dark psyche of Victorian England" (BBC Radio 4 2012). The novel reappraisal that is promised gives way to a series of old and long-familiar stereotypes of the Gothic: a theatrical supernaturalism, repressed female desire, perversity at once unleashed and punished, the guilty delights of exploring the murky depths of the past. This neatly illustrates Fred Botting's remark that "If Gothic works tend to repeat a number of stock formulas, so does its criticism" (Botting 2001: 5).

These recent reanimations of modern Gothic typify not only its enduring appeal, but its self-consciousness and generic flexibility too: it is celebratory as much as it is transgressive, consumer-oriented and conformist as much as it is counter-cultural, a hybrid of "high" and "low" culture. Such attempts to refashion old tales to meet the needs of the present bear out Judith Halberstam's claim that Gothic is a "consumptive genre which feeds parasitically upon other literary texts" (Halberstam 1995: 36). Arguably, too, Gothic preys upon audience desire and critical expectation. Whether or not Burton's film or the radio plays lived up to their advance billing, there was a well-rehearsed expectation of what these versions of Gothic would deliver. Once the threatening invader of domestic stability, Gothic would seem to have become a familiar feature of modern life. It lives on through its re-readings, its ongoing capacity to generate interpretations within and beyond the academy. Mark Edmundson has noted how pervasively aspects of Gothic have seeped into critical theory: "Much, though surely not all, of what is called theory draws on Gothic idioms" (Edmundson 1997: 40). There is, perhaps, no Gothic without theory, and it is possible to argue that something "Gothic" has happened to theory as it has attempted to define, classify and conceptualize Gothic literature and culture across the last century.

Gothic has been theoretically aware from the outset: as Jerrold E. Hogle and Andrew Smith have observed, the contemporary proximity of Gothic and theory recalls the latter part of the eighteenth century, when Gothic was coming to prominence and "theory and the Gothic were so closely intertwined that they constantly fed into each other" (Hogle and Smith 2009: 2). The "origin" text of the Gothic tradition, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, typifies this self-consciousness. Walpole's Preface to the first edition of the novel in 1764 stresses the anachronistic nature of this found manuscript, which has been divorced from its original Neapolitan setting in two senses. Firstly, it was uncovered in the library of an "ancient catholic family in the north of England." Secondly, while it was printed in 1529 and written in "pure Italian" around the same time – a period when letters flourished in Italy and served to "dispel the empire of superstition" – the tale depicts a barbaric world "in the darkest ages of Christianity," and seems designed to confirm "the populace in their ancient errors and superstitions" (Walpole 1968: 39). The tale is not modernizing, and instead enables the recrudescence of a dark past: its moral is that "the sins of the fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation" (Walpole 1968: 41). Yet, as Walpole's Preface to the second edition in 1765 reveals, this sense of repetition might equally describe the novel's counterfeit textual history. It is the eighteenth-century English present that visits these sins back on history. This Preface discloses the "real" genesis of the novel as an attempt to "blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" (Walpole 1968: 43). Modern romance is claimed to adhere strictly to "common life," and to copy nature, rather than indulge in the imagination and improbability of previous romance tradition, and the novel tries to reconcile both these tendencies. Walpole had the opportunity to establish new rules, but is more pleased to imitate, "however faintly," the example of Shakespeare (Walpole 1968: 48). Gothic thus begins as a repetition, a fabricated original, an invented history that masquerades as a return. Yet it also begins with conceptual questions about aesthetic form and taste, about verisimilitude and fantasy, and about how we read and write the past.

The focus of early twentieth-century studies of Gothic, such as Dorothy Scarborough's *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917), Edith Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror* (1921) and Eino Railo's *The Haunted Castle* (1927), was mainly historical and thematic. These scholars sought to situate Gothic within a wider literary tradition and concentrated on the work of individual authors, practicing a literary history "whose concern was as much bibliographical and classificatory as it was hermeneutic" (Ellis 2000: 12). These pioneering works are psychoanalytically oriented to some degree: for example, Railo comments that early Gothic typically evokes the "sexual excitement of a neurasthenic subject" (Railo 1927: 281). Nonetheless, until the 1930s, scholarly opinion tended to conclude that Gothic was a minor offshoot of the novel tradition, and at best the preserve of antiquarian interest. This dismissive attitude is exemplified by the review of Railo's book in the *TLS* on July 21, 1927, which observed that Gothic novels were no longer read, "except by students of origins and curios" (cited in Varma 1987: 1). J.M.S. Tompkins's *The Popular Novel in England, 1770–1800* (1932) signals a shift in the status accorded to the Gothic, situating the English Gothic within the context of a wider European romance genre, particularly in relation to the "sickly German tragedies" that Wordsworth derided in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in 1802. Tompkins carefully identifies the generic settings and themes of Gothic, primarily by concentrating on Radcliffe's fiction, and begins to exorcize what Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall term the "curse" of Wordsworth's dismissive response (Baldick and Mighall 2012:267). Tompkins is equivocal about the merits of Gothic, and its pretensions to invoke fear: she brusquely notes how Gothic novelists use artistic license to rid the tales of dirt and vermin, and concludes that "physical horror was not the emotion that the first Gothic romance-writers tried to raise" (Tompkins 1932: 272). She also makes clear that English Gothic is Protestant, and that it treats Catholicism as exotic but superstitious and irrational (Tompkins 1932: 274). Gothic in the 1790s can be read as

> a natural reaction from a long period of sobriety in literature combined with revolutionary excitement and the growth of the reading habit in the lower middle classes to intensify the appeal of the terrible and increase the opportunities of gratifying it.
>
> (Tompkins 1932: 221)

Although she grants Gothic seriousness of intent, Tompkins views Gothic as relatively chaste, sanitized and conservative, attuned to and serving its audience. This sense of Gothic's commodification in a literary marketplace stands in marked contrast to subsequent accounts that stress its subversive or transformative power.

Montague Summers is the first critic to make claims for the value and significance of Gothic, portraying it as a form that transcends its historical conditions and generic constraints. In *The Gothic Quest* (1938) – a book that David Punter later pronounces "all but useless as an introduction to the Gothic" (Punter 1996: 15) – Summers argues that the Gothic acquired its popularity because it allowed an escape or refuge from "the troubles and carking cares of everyday life" (Summers 1964: 12–13). Yet Gothic was not merely a sedative: it was an "aristocrat of literature" and emanated from "a genuine spiritual impulse" (Summers 1964: 397, 399). Summers associates this lofty ambition with reactionary principles: "the great Gothic novelists abhorred and denounced political revolution," and their fiction nostalgically rekindled the certainties of medieval faith. Despite considerable textual evidence to the contrary – early Gothic novels exhibit hostility toward tyrannical dynastic power and immorality located in southern, Catholic Europe – Summers contends that Gothic does not exhibit "any militant protestantism" (Summers 1964: 195). Summers's tendentious account seeks to confirm the conservative character of Gothic, partly in response to the Surrealist André Breton's claim in his 1936 "Limites non-frontières du Surréalisme" that the first Gothic novelists were revolutionary and anti-aristocratic, drawing on dream and fantasy to uncover the limits of Enlightenment reason. Devendra Varma's *The Gothic Flame* (1957) positions itself rather curiously between these extremes of imaginative flight and premodern spirituality. Herbert Read (whose anthology *Surrealism* featured Breton's essay) provides a foreword in which he claims that Varma has "rescued a dream literature from oblivion" (Varma 1987: viii), while Tompkins introduces the book, highlighting how it "sees the Gothic romance-writers as contributing to the recovery of the vision of a spiritual world behind material appearances" (Varma 1987: xii). Like its predecessors, Varma's study identifies the staple features and literary antecedents of Gothic romance, yet it consistently evokes another realm, something that lies beyond the surface of the texts. Gothic "appeals to the night-side of the soul," granting "a sense of infinity to our finite existence" and evoking in us "the same feelings that the Gothic cathedrals evoked in medieval man" (Varma 1987: 212). This mystical spirit expressed by religious artists and saints is reflected in Gothic fiction: "In an ecstasy of communion the Gothic spirit makes humble obeisance before the great Unknown: fear becomes acceptance, and senseless existence fraught with a dark, unfathomable, sacred purpose" (Varma 1987: 15). Varma's Gothic serves a higher, visionary purpose, rather than seeking to satisfy more earthy appetites; its novelists "strike a union between our spiritual curiosities and venial terrors, and mediate between the world without us and the world within us" (Varma 1987: 212). Varma assumes the hauteur of Summers in emphasizing that this high-minded Gothic must be distinguished from "lower" variants of the genre that appealed to "the perverted taste for excitement among degenerate readers" (Varma 1987: 189).

These studies, although differing in their approaches and conclusions, foreground a recurrent set of questions about the Gothic: the attractions and dangers of its popularity, its conservative or revolutionary tendencies, the concern with psychological interiority and an ability to generate meanings that transcend its immediate historical context. Collectively, they accord Gothic a distinctive place and significance in literary history, and bestow it with critical respectability. In the last five decades, critics have grown increasingly confident in asserting the scope, quality and visionary ambition of Gothic. As Gothic has taken on new forms, so criticism has diversified: the theoretical perspectives deployed to examine Gothic range from psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism and gender studies, through to new historicism, deconstruction, queer theory, post-colonialism, film theory and cultural studies. Hogle and Smith reflect that the Gothic "revival" of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has been due in part to its generic fluidity and dynamism, but also to "the advances in theorizing about literature and culture" that have transformed Gothic into a mainstream critical concern (Hogle and Smith 2009: 1). Gothic can be seen as an instigator of theoretical discourse rather than the passive object of critical enquiry, and the "explosion in multiple approaches to the Gothic" in the last three decades has led to "new theorisings of Gothic *and* a re-Gothicising of theory" (Hogle and Smith 2009: 4). If it is associated with excess, then it is the excess of meanings identified by Judith Halberstam, who observes that in Gothic novels, "multiple interpretations are embedded in the text and part of the experience of horror comes from the realization that meaning itself runs riot" (Halberstam 1995: 2).

It is in this move to the interior, the privileging of transgression, and the general surrender to the lure of meaning that lies "beyond" the text that has, in the view of some, fatally weakened theories of the Gothic. Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall contend that "Gothic criticism has abandoned any credible historical grasp upon its object, which it has tended to reinvent in the image of its own projected intellectual goals of psychological 'depth' and political 'subversion'" (Baldick and Mighall 2012: 267–68). In their bracing account, Baldick and Mighall highlight the ways in which contemporary theory has turned Gothic into a playground for its own desires or political aspirations. In the manner of the Gothic interloper or uninvited guest, theory intrudes, appropriating Gothic for its own ends. Yet, as we have already seen, Gothic begins by purloining the past and inventing its origins, so is it a form whose very nature invites reappropriation? To read Gothic in terms of surface or depth, to view it as safe or threatening, to treat it as entirely a product of its own time or as capable of speaking afresh to new audiences: these are the stakes of Gothic theory.

In the later twentieth century, the tendency has been to celebrate Gothic as a scandalous and transgressive psychosexual arena of forbidden desires and excess that threatens bourgeois order. David Punter's landmark *The Literature of Terror*, originally published in 1980, proposes that the abiding feature of Gothic is fear: to explore Gothic is to explore the ways in which "terror breaks through the surfaces of literature" (Punter 1996: 18). Terror here denotes that sense of awe and elevated feeling associated by Edmund Burke with the sublime, and not just incapacitating horror. A substantial number of critics embrace this terror and imbue it with revolutionary potential. Kenneth W. Graham asserts that "the Gothic experience grows out of prohibition" (Graham 1989: viii), and "The transgression of order and reason is central to the essential subversiveness of the Gothic experience" (Graham 1989: 260). Such a view recalls early debates about Gothic, both in terms of its generic status (such as its relation to the romance tradition) and its challenge (or otherwise) to moral standards (Hogle and Smith 2009: 3). Critics deplored "the corrupting effects of depraved, sensational and feminised fiction" (Botting 1999: 23) and the immature, base appetites it stimulated. However, Gothic's perceived deviancy appeared to feed its popularity. The imposition of standards or norms grew steadily more difficult as the Gothic skirted the boundaries between popular entertainment and serious-minded art across the nineteenth century, transmuting into a myriad of cultural forms such as sensation fiction, popular theater and shilling shockers. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this proliferation has grown exponentially, with Gothic surfacing in film, television, advertising, fashion, computer gaming and children's toys. Like the initial reactions to Gothic, later theoretical responses have also revolved around questions of sexuality, gender and the popular, and how a putatively transgressive cultural form can enjoy and sustain mainstream acceptance. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's qualification that Gothic is "an aesthetic of *pleasurable* fear" (Sedgwick 1986: vi; emphasis added), may propose one answer: Gothic constitutes a site of managed affect, offering indulgence and gratification rather than genuinely unsettling or discomforting its audience. One year after the publication of Punter's study, Rosemary Jackson had trenchantly argued that Gothic fiction "tended to buttress a dominant, bourgeois ideology, by vicarious wish fulfilment through fantasies of incest, rape, murder, parricide, social disorder" (Jackson 1981: 175). As Fred Botting reflects, transgression and prohibition in Gothic are interdependent: "While Gothic fictions are presented as shamelessly indulging illicit desires and excessive passions, they simultaneously serve the interests of a system of power, reinvigorating its surveillance, bolstering its discipline, reinforcing its vigilant attention to limits" (Botting 1999: 27). For Baldick and Mighall, the privileging of Gothic's revolutionary force is modern critical wish fulfilment; Gothic texts are at best "tamely humanitarian" (Baldick and Mighall 2012: 285).

Robert Miles detects a "nexus" of psychoanalytic, feminist and materialist perspectives in Gothic theory, modes of enquiry that examine questions of power and subjectivity. They demonstrate "broad agreement that the Gothic represents the subject in a state of deracination, of the self finding itself dispossessed in its own house in a condition of rupture, disjunction, fragmentation" (Miles 2002: 3). Psychoanalytic approaches focus on the interior landscape traversed by Gothic, encouraged by the prevalence of vaults, dungeons, subterranean chambers and passages, buried or concealed family secrets and uncanny phenomena. William Patrick Day argues that Gothic "investigates the dynamics of that inner life, those phenomena we call states of mind and modes of consciousness"; the recurrence of dream and nightmare obliges the reader to read symbolically, and to enter a Gothic "underworld" (Day 1985: 180–81). For Coral Ann Howells, Gothic "represents the darker side of awareness, the side to which sensibility and imagination belong, together with those less categorizable areas of guilt, fear and madness," projecting "a peculiarly fraught fantasy world of neurosis and morbidity" (Howells 1995: 5). Gothic texts are not merely symptomatic expressions of unconscious desires and anxieties, but, like the analytic session, they perform a therapeutic function by staging and managing this "fraught" inner world: Gothic novelists "create a fictional world which embodied their fears and fantasies and offered a retreat from insoluble problems, while at the same time it rendered their fears ultimately harmless by containing and distancing them in a fantasy" (Howells 1995: 7). Thus, rather than releasing forbidden or transgressive appetites, Gothic contains them within generic and moral conventions.

Yet to what extent is psychoanalysis the "master" discourse and Gothic the case study, particularly if they can be regarded as "coeval" narratives that "both begin to take shape around the end of the eighteenth century" (Miles 1995: 108)? Day describes the Gothic and psychoanalysis as "cousins" with a common purpose: "The Gothic arises out of the immediate needs of the reading public to . . . articulate and define the turbulence of their psychic existence. We may see Freud as the intellectual counterpart of this process" (Day 1985: 179). Anne Williams argues that Gothic and psychoanalysis share a "common cultural matrix," and "Instead of using Freud to read Gothic, we should use Gothic to read Freud" (Williams 1995: 243). As she observes, Freud's theory of the mind conceives of the self as a haunted house, and he uses architectural metaphors to describe the structure of the psyche (Williams 1995: 244). Thus Gothic may be seen to prefigure Freud, furnishing him with a ready-made topography of murky depths and exorbitant tendencies: psychoanalysis becomes "an effect of 150 years of monster-making" (Botting 2001: 5). Even the uncanny, that ubiquitous, hardy perennial of Gothic criticism over the last few decades, can be historicized as an effect of modernity, "invented" in the eighteenth century as a critique of the Enlightenment production of knowledge, rather than a survival of human prehistory (Castle 1987: 5). Terry Castle has argued that Ann Radcliffe's ghosts are "symptomatic projections of modern psychic life," an "effect of the images pervading the culture, subject and history of modernity" (Castle 1987: 237). In this light, Freud's fascination with mental apparitions and the demonic is also a product of Romantic sensibility. It seems clear that psychoanalytic theory is fundamentally indebted to Gothic motifs and narrative strategies, but to treat their relationship as a struggle for priority or hermeneutic supremacy is to reproduce the Oedipal family drama. Since psychoanalysis and Gothic share common points of reference and origin, it may be more profitable to think of their relationship as transferential, each implicated in the story that the other tells.

Feminist readings of the Gothic can be read as following a similar pattern. In *The Literature of Terror*, David Punter commented that it was no accident that many of the most important Gothic writers are women and, perhaps unsurprisingly, feminist theory had made one of the "most energetic" contributions to Gothic criticism. It can even be claimed that feminist literary criticism "rescued Gothic studies" (Fitzgerald 2004: 9). Ellen Moers's concept of the female Gothic, "the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (Moers 1985: 90), has been highly influential for feminist criticism, but it also illustrates how theory becomes gothicized. A volume such as Juliann Fleenor's *The Female Gothic* (1987) understands the female Gothic as an expression of women's dis-ease in a patriarchal culture: this condition of identity, consciously or unconsciously, controls the constitutive features of the form, and leads to recurrent images of enclosure and imprisonment that symbolize the repressive society in which the female writer lives. Moers's female Gothic has been critiqued, however, for accepting a biologically based dichotomy (Howard 1994: 57) and presuming an "essentialist link between the biological sex of the writer and the 'gender' of the text" (Fitzgerald 2004: 11). Alongside this hesitation about its gender essentialism, Diane Long Hoeveler has argued that female Gothic as a category inaugurates "victim" feminism, with its heroines masquerading their innocent helplessness in the face of patriarchal oppression while utilizing that "weakness" to triumph over such coercion (Hoeveler 1998). As such, feminist theory "participates in the very fantasies" that Gothic produces (Hoeveler 1998: 3). Historicizing accounts have also reassessed the narrative propounded by female Gothic. E.J. Clery has shown how Gothic women writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are preoccupied with questions of imaginative autonomy, audiences, and the economics of authorship, rather than the exposure of the oppressive constraints of patriarchal family structures (Clery 2000).

Such contextualization challenges assumptions about the female readership and authorship of Gothic in a brief period when the feminization of ideas about language, literature and creativity increased the visibility and acceptance of women writers (Howard 1994: 67–97). Thus we might regard the female Gothic as a product of its own historical moment, a contribution to the second phase of Anglo-American feminist literary criticism that sought to recover a lost tradition of women's literature (Fitzgerald 2004: 8–9). Yet does this necessarily limit its critical purchase? It is possible to discern historical parallels between early Gothic women writers and critics of the female Gothic: they are complementary endeavors which actively question not just the restrictions of patriarchy and normative family structures, but also the nature of female authorship and visibility in culture. Equally, it is impossible in both moments to homogenize women in terms of ideology, social status and writing practices: just as there are multiple, and often conflicting, feminisms in the present day, so there were points of agreement and fundamental difference between a "Jacobin" feminist like Mary Wollstonecraft and a social conservative such as Hannah More, particularly in the 1790s. It may be worth retaining the female Gothic as a term partly as a corrective to the gender blindness of earlier critical accounts (Smith and Wallace 2004: 6), but as a practice it also discloses a deeper socioeconomic history. Feminist literary criticism highlights the centrality of property to Gothic – a fascination of post-Enlightenment culture in general – and implicitly acknowledges its own involvement in this "property plot." In her identification with pioneering women writers, Moers not only charted a path for a subsequent generation of feminist critics, but she also carried on the struggles of female novelists over the textual space of the Gothic, as Lauren Fitzgerald has suggested (Fitzgerald 2004: 13). Although this could lead to a questionable tale of Gothic "heroines" and male "villains" in fiction and criticism, this theoretical tradition recognizes that Gothic is not a passive object of study: Moers and others do not just examine the female Gothic, they become part of its ongoing history.

Materialist approaches of course center on the "property plot," recognizing that Gothic is "a bourgeois genre" (Baldick and Mighall 2012: 285), and that "Monstrosity (and the fear it gives rise to) is historically conditioned rather than a psychological universal" (Halberstam 1995: 6). As Baldick and Mighall contend, "others" represent new market opportunities rather than fearsome difference for the true bourgeois, and Gothic criticism projects the fantasy of a terrified bourgeoisie out of "vengeful frustration" (Baldick and Mighall 2012: 284). As with psychoanalysis and feminism, however, Marxist perspectives are not immune to Gothic effects: not least *The Communist Manifesto*. Its opening lines announce that "a spectre is haunting Europe," a specter capable of transforming the present, not a remnant of the outmoded past. Modern bourgeois society resembles the "sorcerer" who is "no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells." By unleashing these forces, the bourgeoisie becomes its own "gravedigger" and its rule is overthrown: one of the benefits of the proletariat's victory will be the disappearance of the bourgeois family unit as site of exploitation (Marx and Engels

1992: 2, 8, 16, 22–23). Nonetheless, even though it is doomed, Marx and Engels present the bourgeoisie as an iconoclastic and revolutionary force. The Manifesto charts the vertiginous ability of capitalism to ceaselessly destroy and reinvent itself, constantly on the cusp between novelty and obsolescence, and variously tolerating, policing or terminating its others. Thus this foundational Marxist vision draws on an extensive Gothic repertoire: tyranny, supernaturalism, transgression, uncanny returns and unpredictable appetites.

Franco Moretti's treatment of Gothic's most enduring monsters captures the instability and conflicted nature of capitalism: Frankenstein's monster and Dracula sum up "The fear of bourgeois civilization" (Moretti 1983: 83). They represent the extremes – "the disfigured wretch and the ruthless proprietor" – of capitalist society, and Gothic "is born precisely *out of the terror of a split society*, and out of the desire to heal it" (Moretti 1983: 83, emphasis in text). In *Frankenstein* (1818), the creature is the proletariat: an artificial and collectivized creature, a monstrous assemblage of disparate parts that is "not found in nature, but built" (*ibid.*: 86). Moretti sees the deforming of the creature as analogous to the deforming effects of alienated labor in capitalist society, a representation "of how things really were" in the early decades of the industrial revolution (Moretti 1983: 87). Victor Frankenstein is his own gravedigger: he has created a monster that cannot be controlled. Dracula, by contrast, is a monopoly capitalist, one who brooks no competition. He is the (undead) embodiment of capitalism, sucking the blood of the living, impelled like capitalism "towards a continuous growth, an unlimited expansion of his domain: accumulation is inherent in his nature" (Moretti 1983: 91). The Count represents unashamed capital, a capital that can expand endlessly without restraint. Yet, since monopolistic concentration is less pronounced in turn-of-the-century Britain than in other advanced societies, he must be portrayed as a foreign threat (Moretti 1983: 93). The vampire-hunters must demonstrate that money must be harnessed to good, moral ends, rather than functioning as an end in itself. This is

> the great ideological lie of Victorian capitalism, a capitalism which is ashamed of itself and which hides factories and stations beneath cumbrous Gothic superstructures; which prolongs and extols aristocratic models of life; which exalts the holiness of the family as the latter begins secretly to break up.
>
> (Moretti 1983: 94)

In fighting Dracula, the vampire-hunters want to arrest history; as such, *they* are "'the relics of the dark ages,' not the Count" (Moretti 1983: 94).

As this survey suggests, psychoanalysis, feminism and Marxism share an assumption that, in Gothic texts, bourgeois society is beset by fears and conflicts that cannot be fully resolved, or can be uttered only symptomatically. Baldick and Mighall term this the "anxiety model," which rests on "the doubtful assumption" that Gothic represents "supposedly widespread and deeply felt 'fears' which troubled the middle classes at the time" (Baldick and Mighall 2012: 279). Kelly Hurley's view that Gothic interprets and refigures "unmanageable realities for its audience" (Hurley 1996: 5), particularly at the *fin-de-siècle* period, exemplifies this tendency. As Baldick and Mighall point out, however, if Gothic fiction has a generic obligation to frighten, it may be an unlikely index of general cultural anxiety (Baldick and Mighall 2012:

280). The belief of Gothic criticism in "the infinite modes of bourgeois anxiety" makes Count Dracula, *par excellence*, a figure that can be fashioned retrospectively to serve numerous critical perspectives: "The vampire itself has become a cipher, merely the vehicle for the desires and agendas of modern critical discourse, and the pretext for the latest Gothic melodrama to be enacted" (Baldick and Mighall 2012: 281). They suggest, provocatively, that in Gothic literature Victorians are more anxious about the arrival of an enlightened future (as represented by emancipated contemporary criticism) than they are about the recrudescence of a primitive past. Dracula and his kindred have certainly become an inexhaustible source of fascination for Gothic theory across the last century, but as we shall see, the vampire has not been read exclusively as a subversive figure. Ken Gelder has traced how the vampire functions as metaphor in differing historical contexts, geopolitical settings and cultural forms through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) exemplifies the multiple ways in which the vampire can be read in a specific historical moment: the film was released in the midst of ethnic conflicts in the Balkans – the warlord Dracula's "original" territory – but also invited readings in terms of the AIDS epidemic. Moreover, as Gelder observes, Coppola also locates the Count in the spectral realm of early film technology, acknowledging that the vampire has been constantly reanimated by cinema (Gelder 1994: 87). The vampire is an enabling resource as much as it is a recurrent anxiety.

The continued currency of the vampire suggests that it finds modernity hospitable, but this sense of belonging is precisely at issue in Stoker's novel, which simultaneously welcomes the future and longs to retreat onto old and long-familiar ground. In its composition, *Dracula* is self-consciously modern, its assembled narratives compiled via diary entries, newspaper cuttings, shorthand, letters, official records and new writing technologies (the typewriter, telegrams, shorthand, the phonograph). The text speaks with the multivalent voice of a modernity that arrays itself against the vampire's threat, yet it cannot seem to choose, finally, between science and the occult (Hurley 1996: 20). Science and the bureaucratic state combine to kill the vampire, but Dracula – whether as outlandish anachronism, unapologetic vestige of "ancient supernaturalism" (Ellis 2000: 195), return of the repressed or figure of ambiguous sexuality – can readily navigate modernity. As Markman Ellis suggests, knowledge of tradition and superstition serve the vampire-hunters well and, arguably, "the supernatural discourses of folklore win out" (Ellis 2000: 193, 198). This oscillation between tradition and novelty extends to Lucy and Mina: neither of these New Women can be contained within a discourse of "romance" and sexual convention, even if the novel vigorously attempts to impose a marital norm. They represent two sides of the same coin: "perverse" sexual independence, and the confident professionalism that is indispensable in an advanced capitalist society. In summary, the vampire is not solely the champion of modern Enlightenment, nor the menacing resurgence of a dark past. Gothic criticism does not necessarily impose "progressive" values on this late-nineteenth-century text: the potential for liberation, albeit muted or resisted, is already there. Baldick and Mighall claim that Dracula's attraction for Gothic criticism "resides less in what he is – a vampire – than in what he is not – 'Victorian' " (Baldick and Mighall 2012: 281). Yet he *is* Victorian, in that he is a vindication of modernity but also a recognition of its costs and contradictory legacies.

As if to signal that the clutches of atavism have finally been thrown off, Dracula crumbles to dust at the end of the novel, but he has enjoyed a rich afterlife in literature and popular culture across the last century. Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* (1976–2003) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon 1997–2003) have been followed by a raft of vampire films in the new century, including the *Blade* (1998–2004) and *Underworld* (2003–12) series, *Van Helsing* (Sommers 2004), and the final (perhaps) cinematic installment of the *Twilight* franchise was released in late 2012. In view of this vigorous bloodline, is the vampire, like the Gothic more widely, the lingering half-presence that shadows technological innovation and the proliferating forms of modern culture, or the irrepressible *product* of that modernity? As Catherine Spooner remarks, Gothic has spread like "a malevolent virus" across disciplinary boundaries and to all parts of contemporary culture, establishing itself as "mainstream entertainment" (Spooner 2006: 8, 25). While critics still invest it with subversive potential, this marginal genre is big business: "Above all, Gothic sells" (Spooner 2006: 23). This marketability ensures its continued appeal to critical theory, which in turns gathers energy from Gothic: it can be relied upon "to fulfil whatever cultural or critical need arises at any given time" (Spooner 2006: 155). Early in the new millennium, Fred Botting surmised that Gothic has become so familiar that it seems "incapable of shocking anew," revealing not the dark underside of modernity but the emptiness at the heart of consumer culture (Botting 2001: 134). Yet, while contemporary Gothic can be critiqued, like postmodernism, as being concerned only with surfaces and commodification, it can also be seen to remain preoccupied with material concerns "such as poverty, race and sexual discrimination" (Armitt 2011: 152). In its blend of innovation, inauthenticity and recapitulation, the present assumes the countenance of Walpole's pseudo-Gothic castle Strawberry Hill. Yet, as Walpole's foundation myth epitomizes, Gothic does not embrace the future unreflectively. In Gothic texts, products and lifestyles, reminders of other places and times return constantly, always viewed through the lens of our current concerns. Theoretical approaches must remain similarly capable of ceaseless reinvention, telling old tales differently, at once indulging and resisting the invitation of Gothic.

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