

Introduction: A History of Gothic Studies in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

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Gothic and History

Gothic has always been pre-eminently concerned with history. From the medievalism of the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival to the post-Freudian concern with psychic histories and the return of the repressed, Gothic texts have always been driven by what Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith characterise as ‘the peculiar unwillingness of the past to go away’.¹ This historical sensibility is an inevitable corollary of modernity: as people began distinguishing a modern age from what went before it, they needed to address what the past meant and their relationship to it. Gothic arose in the eighteenth century as one means to explore the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of the modern subject’s separation from the past. Thus, as David Punter states of the first phase of Gothic writing (1760–1820), ‘Gothic seems to have *been* a mode of history, a way of perceiving an obscure past and interpreting it’.² What is commented on less frequently, however, is that the study of Gothic itself has a history, that a prestigious three-volume publication like this one is of its historical moment and would not have been possible even a quarter-century ago.

This Introduction seeks to map the history of Gothic scholarship in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as the academic discipline that we might now call Gothic Studies came into being. The critical-historical framework it thus constructs serves to contextualise the individual histories charted by individual chapters in this volume. It is not intended to be comprehensive: as will become rapidly apparent, it is not possible to list every single important

¹ Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith, ‘Introduction’, in Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith (eds), *Modern Gothic: A Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 1–5 (p. 4).

² David Punter, *The Literature of Terror Volume 1: The Gothic Tradition* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 52; italics in original.

contribution to Gothic scholarship and there is much that, of necessity, has been left out. Nevertheless, it draws lines of connection between works through four significant and overlapping stages: the first wave of Gothic criticism between the 1920s and the 1960s; the emergence of Gothic Studies as an academic discipline from the late 1970s to the early 2000s; the increasing understanding of Gothic as a ‘contemporary’ mode in the 1980s and beyond; and, finally, what can be seen as the institutionalisation of Gothic in the twenty-first century. In doing so, it argues that Gothic Studies in the twenty-first century is simultaneously at its most fertile and at an impasse, a complex deadlock that Gothic scholars of the future must resolve.

Gothic Criticism: The First Wave

Two crucial influences on the development of the modern Gothic occurred at the end of the nineteenth century: the invention of film, and the invention of psychoanalysis. These two enormous historical shifts can scarcely be underestimated in the history of the Gothic: the one opened up new ways of telling tales of terror in a mass market medium, while the other enabled a profound shift not only in the ways Gothic narrative could be written but also in the ways that Gothic could be approached by literary criticism.

As Dale Townshend observes in the introduction to Volume II of this series, by the end of the Victorian period, the Gothic novel’s critical stock was low. Indeed, the Gothic novel scarcely existed as a critical concept: E. J. Clery notes that the term ‘is mostly a twentieth-century coinage’ and although it was used twice in literary overviews published in 1899, it was only established with Edith Birkhead’s *The Tale of Terror* (1821), the first sustained critical work on Gothic fiction.³ A passion for book-collecting in the 1920s fuelled by the clearing of many country-house libraries following the First World War enabled the rediscovery of many obscure works from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and a corresponding renewal of readerly interest. As a result, a clutch of critical works addressing the Gothic began to emerge, including Eino Railo’s *The Haunted Castle* (1927), Michael Sadleir’s ‘The Northanger Novels’ (1927) and J. M. S. Tompkins’s *The Popular Novel in England 1770–1800* (1932). Mario Praz’s *The Romantic Agony* (1930, translated 1933) also placed Gothic authors including Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Gregory

³ E. J. Clery, ‘The Genesis of “Gothic” Fiction’, in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 21–40 (pp. 21–2).

Lewis, Mary Shelley and Charles Maturin within a wider literary tradition of dark eroticism.

Gothic, however, had never been a solely literary affair. Even leaving aside, for a moment, the term's long-standing associations with architecture, Gothic theatre thrived throughout the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Gothic was, moreover, fundamental to pre-cinematic technologies such as the phantasmagoria or magic lantern show; David J. Jones has mapped with precision how Étienne-Gaspard Robert's *Fantasmagorie* (1798) created an immersive Gothic experience using the latest projection technologies.⁴ Early film drew from the language of these pre-existent technologies and, as Simon Brown and Stacey Abbott demonstrate in the first chapter in this volume, was almost immediately perceived both as a Gothic medium in itself – a 'kingdom of shadows', in Maxim Gorky's words – and as a medium for Gothic storytelling.⁵ According to Christopher Frayling, 'only with the advent of cinema did "the Gothic" come into its own . . . "Gothic film" . . . propelled a long-marginalised and sometimes subversive form of literature from the past into the wider cultural bloodstream, and in the process turned it into myth.'⁶ Cinema was, in fact, only the first of a series of new media through which Gothic would flourish in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including radio, television and, ultimately, digital media. Chapters by Brown and Abbott, Mark Jancovich, Derek Johnston and Mark Olivier directly address the ways in which Gothic adapted to fit these new media, but an awareness of the increasingly trans-medial nature of Gothic informs the approach of many of the other contributors to this volume, too.

Psychoanalysis would have a more subtle but even more far-reaching effect on Gothic narrative. As Markman Ellis observes, 'the effect of psychoanalysis was to universalise the lessons of the Gothic novel, oddly increasing its cultural significance and prestige by explicating its relevance and importance'.⁷ Sigmund Freud's own contribution to what would eventually be established as Gothic criticism was his essay on "The 'Uncanny'",

⁴ See David J. Jones, *Gothic Machine: Textualities, Pre-cinematic Media and Film in Popular Visual Culture, 1670–1910* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp. 57–78.

⁵ Maxim Gorky, 'Last Night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows', reprinted in Colin Harding and Simon Popple (eds), *In the Kingdom of Shadows: A Companion to Early Cinema* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1996), pp. 5–6 (p. 5).

⁶ Christopher Frayling, 'Foreword' in James Bell (ed.), *Gothic: The Dark Heart of Film* (London: BFI, 2013), pp. 5–7 (p. 5).

⁷ Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 13.

published in 1919. In this work he analyses E. T. A. Hoffman's short story 'The Sandman' (1816) as an example of the *unheimlich* or unhomely, the creeping feeling that occurs to us when something happens to recall infantile complexes that have been repressed into the unconscious, enabling the recognition of the event or object that has provoked the return as simultaneously familiar and estranged. Of course, the concept of the return of the repressed has become a fundamental tenet of Gothic criticism and is almost impossible to sidestep. However, a broader Freudian approach inspired by *On the Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), in which the dream contains a latent content that can be decoded to reveal the workings of the unconscious, also lies behind much of twentieth-century Gothic criticism.

The Freudian notion of the return of the repressed merges in twentieth-century criticism with an older understanding of Gothic as anti-classical to create an idea of Gothic as a uniquely subversive, even revolutionary mode. This idea appears as early as Michael Sadleir's influential article on 'The Northanger Novels' (1927), in which he calls the Gothic romance 'an expression of a deep subversive impulse' comparable to the French Revolution and its authors 'prophets of iconoclasm', albeit ones whose 'once inflammatory art' would be received as escapism.⁸ However, it takes its more characteristic form in the Surrealist André Breton's assessment of what he calls the eighteenth-century '*romans noirs*' in his essay 'Limits not frontiers of surrealism', published in English in Herbert Read's *Surrealism* (1936). Breton, overtly influenced by Freud's understanding of the dream-work, constructs the Gothic as a radical genre that is in deliberate opposition to social realism and which reveals 'latent content, the means of fathoming the secret depths of history which disappear beneath a maze of events'.⁹ This would have a profound influence on Gothic criticism in the twentieth century.

Breton's stance was vigorously contested by Montague Summers in *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (1938); Summers's view of Gothic is almost fanatically conservative, and thus he suggests that the Surrealists have wilfully misinterpreted Sadleir's more nuanced position, having 'confused and deliberately commingled' revolution in literature with social

⁸ Michael Sadleir, 'The Northanger Novels', *The Edinburgh Review* 246:501 (1927): 91–106 (pp. 93, 94).

⁹ André Breton, 'English Romans Noirs and Surrealism', in Victor Sage (ed.), *The Gothick Novel* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 112–15 (p. 112). Translated by Sage from André Breton, 'Limites non frontières du Surréalisme', *Nouvelle Revue Française* 48:1 (1937).

revolution.¹⁰ In a final, almost comical move, he denounces the ‘intimacy’ between Surrealism and Communism.¹¹ Summers’s argument is in some respects a dead end in Gothic criticism, as its conservative politics is at odds with the tenor of most subsequent scholarship. Gothic for Summers is overwhelmingly nostalgic; he describes Romanticism, with which he aligns Gothic, as ‘reactionary in its revolt against the present since it yearns for the loveliness of the past as so picturesquely revealed to us in art and poem’.¹² In contrast, later twentieth-century scholars generally found Gothic to be progressive in its values and, as we shall see, often revolutionary in sentiment.

It is Breton’s approach that has thus proved to be the more influential on the subsequent history of Gothic criticism. In his undertaking to ‘fathom the secret depths of history’ lies the seeds of another persistent theme within Gothic criticism in the later twentieth and twenty-first century: that Gothic possesses a unique power to reflect or refract the time at which it is written. This approach is glossed further in Devendra P. Varma’s *The Gothic Flame* (1957), another key work in the development of Gothic criticism. Glossing Breton, Varma asserts, “The “fantastic” in literature is the surrealist expression of those historical and social factors which the ordinary chronicle of events in history does not consider significant. Such “fantasia” express the profoundest, repressed emotions of the individual and society.”¹³ Psychoanalysis and historical analysis are folded into one another here to suggest that Gothic is the dream-work of history, and by interpreting its symbols we can bring to the surface what history does not know about itself.

As it entered the 1960s, then, Gothic was critically constructed as a mode that was in tune with the times: a genre of social revolution, a ready-made counter-narrative, one in which the deepest fears and desires of Western culture were apparently made manifest in dream-like form. This is how it was characterised in Leslie Fiedler’s wildly influential *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), which argued that ‘the Gothic novel is fundamentally anti-bourgeois’ and ‘an anti-realistic protest, a rebellion of the imagination’, a provocation which Catherine Spooner’s chapter in this volume takes up.¹⁴ In this revolutionary guise, Gothic was adopted by the many social movements of the 1960s and afterwards, of which feminism was the most prominent.

¹⁰ Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (London: Fortune Press, 1938), p. 398.

¹¹ Summers, *The Gothic Quest*, p. 411. ¹² Summers, *The Gothic Quest*, p. 18.

¹³ Devendra P. Varma, *The Gothic Flame* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1957), p. 217. See also Punter, *The Literature of Terror Volume 1*, p. 15.

¹⁴ Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Criterion Books, 1960), pp. 107, 117.

The Birth of Gothic Studies

Gothic Studies as a formal discipline was fashioned in the late 1970s, and forged in the crucible of second-wave literary feminism. In *Literary Women* (1976), Ellen Moers devoted two long chapters to the Gothic novel, coining the phrase ‘female Gothic’ and infamously describing Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818, 1831) as a ‘birth myth’.¹⁵ Ironically enough, this proved to be the birth of Gothic Studies, as the fast-growing feminist movement seized on Moers’s partial rehabilitation of Gothic as a genre principally written and read by women and thus suffused with women’s concerns. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) may not explicitly have positioned itself as a work on Gothic fiction. Nevertheless, its discovery of a model of literary doubling in Charlotte Brontë’s pairing of heroine Jane Eyre with the mad Bertha Rochester, the archetypal madwoman in the attic, drew on Gothic tropes and proved a model of inspiration for generations of feminist critics to come. Notable works to take up the theme of female Gothic over the ensuing decade include Juliann E. Fleenor’s *The Female Gothic* (1983); Kate Ferguson Ellis’s *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (1989) and Eugenia C. Delamotte’s *The Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (1990). In the early 1990s, influential works from feminist film studies including Carol Clover’s *Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992) and Barbara Creed’s *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993) also made a significant impact on feminist approaches to Gothic. The focus on gender was soon followed by similar attention to other forms of identity politics, including race in Kari J. Winter’s *Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change* (1992) and sexuality in Paulina Palmer’s *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions* (1999), each inaugurating flourishing scholarly traditions in their own right. In this volume, Arthur Redding, Lucie Armitt and Ardel Haefele-Thomas directly address these traditions although their influence is felt throughout the book.

Identity politics were, of course, prevalent throughout the academy from the 1980s onwards, and Gothic is not exceptional in this respect. There is

¹⁵ Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: The Women’s Press, 1978), pp. 90–110, 98.

something about Gothic's particular nature, however, as what Robert Miles calls 'a coherent code for the representation of fragmented subjectivity', that renders it particularly conducive to being read in this way.¹⁶ This is, of course, also the quality that made it particularly amenable to psychoanalytic criticism earlier in the century. However, identity politics tended in many cases to move Gothic criticism on from psychoanalytic methodologies towards a broader range of theoretical approaches and, in several respects, a renewed attention to historical context.

It was a different kind of book, however, that set the seal on Gothic Studies as a formal discipline. David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* (1980) surveyed Gothic from its origins in sentimentalism, graveyard poetry and discourses of the sublime to 'modern perceptions of the barbaric' in the fiction of the 1970s.¹⁷ Punter's definition of Gothic was necessarily loose, but his achievement was to establish that Gothic was, indeed, a continuous and coherent literary tradition that ran from the mid eighteenth century to the present day, discarding the value judgements that had previously plagued its academic study and demonstrating that it repaid close literary analysis. Punter's book created a canon and conferred legitimacy on Gothic as an intellectual endeavour. As such, it permitted Gothic Studies to exist.

The other important move in the early 1980s that freed up the academic study of Gothic was its decoupling from the concept of genre. In *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (1982), Alastair Fowler argued that 'the character of genres is that they change', becoming more elastic and more easily combined with other genres or modes.¹⁸ Thus, over time, 'the gothic romance ... yielded a gothic mode that outlasted it'.¹⁹ This intervention had a dual effect. First, it meant that Gothic could be more flexibly and fluidly defined, and Gothic could be discovered in texts – and media – where it had hitherto been ignored. Critics continued to loosen Gothic from the straitjacketing notion of genre in a variety of ways: for Robert Miles in *Gothic Writing, 1750–1820: A Genealogy* (1993) it is a 'discursive site'; for Michael Gamer in *Romanticism and the Gothic* (2000) it is an

¹⁶ Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750–1820: A Genealogy*, 2nd edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 2.

¹⁷ David Punter, *The Literature of Terror Volume 2: The Modern Gothic* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 119.

¹⁸ Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 18.

¹⁹ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p. 109.

'aesthetic'.²⁰ The other effect of refiguring Gothic as a mode is that it loosened it from the more pejorative associations of 'genre fiction' and allowed it to creep into the teaching canon in universities and schools. Gothic was gradually attaining respectability.

The advantage and the problem with the shifting critical understanding of Gothic as a mode, discursive site or aesthetic is that it meant that almost anything could be defined as Gothic, and while this led to fruitful and sometimes thrilling new directions of study, it also brought with it a lack of critical purchase. While defining Gothic became a vexed – and frequently dull – question for critics in the 1990s and beyond, a vague and shifting sense of the function that Gothic performs resulted in a weakening field. Studies twinning Gothic with a variety of different adjectives proliferated in the twenty-first century (Fred Botting poked fun at this trend with his 2001 essay 'Candygothic', for example). At best, this produced exciting new combinations of Gothic and theory – Queer Gothic, Ecogothic – but this could also dwindle into the endless taxonomisation of subgenres and, at worst, deliver an ever-multiplying and, thus, ever-vanishing critical object.

As the twenty-first century commenced, voices of dissent began to be raised in Gothic criticism, with scholars calling out what they saw as its most egregious tendencies and each, in their own way, calling for the restoration of rigorous historical specificity to studies of the Gothic. The first target was the psychoanalytic-historical approach to the Gothic. This had been disputed as early as 1980, with the first edition of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, which argued that the psychoanalytic focus on uncovering the hidden depths of Gothic texts neglected precisely what was most interesting about them – their emphasis on surfaces. In an influential essay simply titled 'Gothic Criticism', first published in 2000, Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall denounced what they term the 'anxiety model' of much Gothic scholarship, or the idea that it is the work of the Gothic critic to 'reveal' the hidden anxieties of the age.²¹ They argue,

The assumption that cultural 'anxiety' is reflected or articulated in Gothic fiction is not only rather simplistic: it is tautological. Horror fiction is used to confirm the critic's own unproven point of departure, that this 'oppressive'

²⁰ Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750–1820*, p. 4 and *passim*; Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 4.

²¹ Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism', in David Punter (ed.), *A New Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2012), pp. 267–87 (p. 279).

culture was terrified by its ideological 'Others'; and thus if the Gothic features the Other in demonic form, these demonic forms must reflect society's fears about the Other . . . Since Gothic horror fiction has a *generic obligation* to evoke or produce fear, it is in principle the *least* reliable index of supposedly 'widespread' anxieties.²²

For Baldick and Mighall, the result of the pervasive and unquestioning adoption of this implicitly psychoanalytic approach to history is 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."' ²³ It also results in a weakening of the definition of Gothic itself, which is 'defined not according to observable features of theme and setting but according to the realms of psychological depth from which it is supposed to originate (dreams, fantasy) or the psychological responses it is believed to provoke (fear, horror, terror). Gothic Criticism is commonly unable and unwilling to distinguish its supposed object from the generality of fearful or horrible narratives'.²⁴

In a similar vein, Alexandra Warwick and Roger Luckhurst took respective aim at what Luckhurst named the 'spectral turn' in criticism, a preoccupation with textual hauntings inspired by the English translation of Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994).²⁵ In the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was a sudden vogue for using Derrida's highly localised and specific practice of discovering Shakespearean spectral traces within the writings of Karl Marx as a model for discovering textual hauntings within any given work. Both critics were perturbed by the way that this rendered all texts implicitly Gothic. This, they suggested, resulted in a loss of critical purchase on Gothic as an object of study. Identifying Julian Wolfreys's *Victorian Hauntings* (2002) as a particularly egregious example, Warwick writes that 'it is a critical step that renders Gothic absolutely ubiquitous and simultaneously nullifies it. It is no longer at the dark margin, but the normal state of textual affairs'.²⁶ Spreading his net more widely to take in works by Wolfreys, Jean-Michel Rabaté and Jodey Castricano, Luckhurst argues that 'because the spectral infiltrates the hermeneutic act itself, critical work can only replicate tropes from textual sources, punning spiritedly around the central terms of the Gothic to produce

²² Baldick and Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism', p. 280.

²³ Baldick and Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism', pp. 267–8.

²⁴ Baldick and Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism', p. 274.

²⁵ Roger Luckhurst, 'The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the Spectral Turn', *Textual Practice* 16.3 (2010): 527–46, *passim*.

²⁶ Alexandra Warwick, 'Feeling Gothicky?', *Gothic Studies* 9:1 (2007): 5–15 (p. 8).

a curious form of meta-Gothic that elides object and instrument', and producing 'what Derrida has elsewhere termed "doubling commentary"'.²⁷

For Warwick, this crisis of definition within Gothic Studies is matched by a comparable ubiquity of the Gothic in contemporary culture, something that she identifies as 'the effect of a kind of aftershock . . . of psychoanalysis'.²⁸ She suggests that the attitude to psychoanalysis has moved on, however, in the light of what she calls therapy culture. Whereas once the Gothic text registered the terrors of trauma and the impossibility of coming to terms with it, contemporary texts rather seek out trauma and cultivate it: 'contemporary culture *wants* to have trauma, it is induced, predicted and enacted, persistently rehearsed even when it is not actually present'.²⁹ What was distinctive about Warwick's article was not only her critique of contemporary critical approaches to Gothic but also her identification of a particular contemporary Gothic, one that merited study on its own terms. This was a late branch of Gothic scholarship to develop, but one that underwrites this volume.

Contemporary Gothic

Early Gothic criticism acknowledged the influence of the Gothic in the twentieth century only very tentatively. While most critics agreed, like Sadleir, that 'the spirit of melodrama and of terror . . . persisted unsubdued and persists to this day', there was very little attempt to address this in any sustained or coherent fashion.³⁰ For the majority of critics, the Gothic novel began with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) – with precedents in Spenser, Shakespeare, Jacobean drama and graveyard poetry – and ended with Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). What Varma calls 'residuary influences' in later works from James Hogg and William Harrison Ainsworth to Charles Dickens, the Brontës and Edgar Allan Poe were regarded as either a falling off from a golden age or a transmutation into a different form.³¹ Summers was the most vehement proponent of this view, acknowledging the similar properties of modern crime fiction, for example, but dismissing the majority of it as 'unhealthy and unwholesome rubbish'.³² As we have seen, he treated the idea that the Surrealists might be continuing the work of Gothic literature with unmitigated scorn.

²⁷ Luckhurst, 'The Contemporary London Gothic', pp. 535, 536.

²⁸ Warwick, 'Feeling Gothicky?', p. 10. ²⁹ Warwick, 'Feeling Gothicky?', p. 11.

³⁰ Sadleir, 'The Northanger Novels', p. 105. ³¹ Varma, *The Gothic Flame*, pp. 173–205.

³² Summers, *The Gothic Quest*, p. 13.

There were, nevertheless, hints that Gothic might have contemporary manifestations and a rich and exciting cultural existence well beyond the so-called 'first wave' of the period 1764–1820. Birkhead is an early champion of contemporary Gothic, documenting a continuous tradition of tales 'inspired by awe and fear' arising in antiquity and continuing to what were, in the early 1920s, 'living authors' such as H. G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle, E. F. Benson, Marie Corelli, Algernon Blackwood and Joseph Conrad.³³ Varma likewise insists that 'The Gothic novel remains a vital thing, a potential force in the literature of today', although this potentiality appears unrealised, as the most recent writers that he mentions in *The Gothic Flame* are repetitions of those in Birkhead, all of whom had met their demise by the time of his writing in the later 1950s.³⁴ An Appendix on the influence of Gothic on contemporary crime fiction and horror comics regards these as the 'disintegration or ruin of pure Gothic romance', although it somewhat snidely admits that the graphic sado-masochism found in such comics 'will probably invite the attention of some future Mario Praz'.³⁵ Fiedler, in arguing that the whole of the American literary tradition 'is almost essentially a gothic one', implied a contemporary Gothic almost by default, and inevitably found the culmination of the American Gothic tradition in the fiction of William Faulkner.³⁶

Critical hesitancy towards the Gothic as a contemporary phenomenon was to change with the rise of Gothic Studies as a formal discipline. Moers briefly addresses 'the persistence of the Gothic mode into our own time' in *Literary Women*, referencing Djuna Barnes, Carson McCullers and Sylvia Plath.³⁷ However, it was Punter's *The Literature of Terror*, again, that most cogently established a tradition of Gothic writing that ran more or less continuously from the later eighteenth century to the present day. Significantly, Punter includes film in his survey and thus opens up one of the key sources of Gothic potential in the twentieth century. Horror film, of course, had its own growing critical tradition that, until this point, had been regarded as separate to Gothic criticism, but which would increasingly discover shared ground from the 1980s onwards as both were influenced by the theoretical turn in the academy. Punter's key contribution to the identification of a distinctive contemporary Gothic, however, is to conclude his survey with a new selection of 'living authors', including Joyce Carol Oates, J. G. Ballard, Robert Coover and Angela Carter. The second and expanded edition of *The Literature*

³³ Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance*, Project Gutenberg <www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14154> (last accessed 30 December 2020).

³⁴ Varma, *The Gothic Flame*, p. 205. ³⁵ Varma, *The Gothic Flame*, pp. 237, 241.

³⁶ Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, p. 125. ³⁷ Moers, *Literary Women*, p. 107.

of *Terror* of 1996 updated this further to encompass Anne Rice, William Gibson, Iain Banks, Will Self and Bret Easton Ellis, among others. Partisan choices though these may be, they nonetheless gave permission to a new generation of scholars (of which I was one, discovering the original edition of Punter's book in 1992 in my first term at university) to address Gothic in its contemporary forms and manifestations.

The contemporaneity of the Gothic was finally fully established in 1991, when the novelists Patrick McGrath and Bradford Morrow published *The New Gothic*, an anthology of fiction by contemporary writers. Their brief Introduction provided a manifesto for the contemporary Gothic. Following the historical-Freudian trajectory of Gothic criticism after Breton, McGrath and Morrow's version of Gothic is reflective of 'a century whose history has been stained perhaps like no other by the blacker urges of human nature', a tradition that is indebted to Poe for dispensing with Gothic 'furniture' in favour of 'psychological disturbance': 'Now hell is decidedly on earth, located within the vaults and chambers of our own minds.'³⁸ Slight though this Introduction was, it vividly established the priorities and preoccupations of Gothic critics of the contemporary at this particular moment.

At the same time, an important cultural shift was taking place beyond the academy. Goth subculture began in the United Kingdom when groups of young people began wearing black clothes, affecting graveyard poses and producing and listening to bass-heavy, sepulchral music with doomy or macabre lyrics. Although there is much discussion of exactly where the term 'Goth' originated, 'gothic' was being used by music journalists to describe the new sound by 1979.³⁹ Although often regarded as the offspring of punk, Goth actually drew on a wide spectrum of musical influences, including glam rock (particularly David Bowie), metal and psychedelia. Its heyday was the 1980s, when bands such as Bauhaus, The Sisters of Mercy, Siouxsie and the Banshees and The Cure attained the upper reaches of the UK music charts. The subculture quickly spread internationally, particularly in North America and northern Europe, surprising its detractors by persisting well beyond its predicted shelf-life and, after receiving new impetus through the internet, surviving in good health up to the present day.

³⁸ Patrick McGrath and Bradford Morrow, 'Introduction', in Patrick McGrath and Bradford Morrow (eds), *The New Gothic* (London: Picador, 1993), pp. xi–xiv (pp. xix, xi, xi, xiv); italics in original.

³⁹ See Natasha Scharf, *The Art of Gothic: Music + Fashion + Alt Culture* (London: Omnibus Press, 2014), p. 8.

If Gothic Studies and Goth emerged at a similar historical moment, they seemed initially to be following different trajectories. In a 2002 article entitled 'Gothic Scholars Don't Wear Black', Sara Martin bemoaned the fact that 'Gothic Studies and the diverse youth subcultures identifying themselves as Gothic are hardly in touch with each other', noting that the methodologies of Gothic Studies, based as they were on psychoanalysis and 'a variety of post-modern critical discourses', did not lend themselves to the study of living participants.⁴⁰ Generationally, however, students who had grown up identifying as Goths were working their way through the academic system, and in the early 2000s a clutch of academic publications fully acknowledged Goth subcultural practices, fashion and music. Paul Hodkinson's *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture* (2002) was particularly striking for eschewing Gothic Studies altogether in favour of a participant observational approach influenced by the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies; this approach was also taken by Dunja Brill's *Goth Culture: Gender, Sexuality and Style* (2008). For Hodkinson, individual participants might mention horror film or fiction as influential on their appearance or lifestyle, but these were less important than shared participation in a scene and, crucially, the enjoyment of Goth music, in determining these participants' identity. Other publications, however, sought a *rapprochement* between Gothic Studies and Cultural Studies, such as Catherine Spooner's *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (2004), Carol Siegel's *Goth's Dark Empire* (2005), Lauren M. E. Goodlad and Michael Bibby's diverse edited collection *Goth: Undead Subculture* (2007) and Isabella Van Elferen's *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny* (2012).

As the 1990s wore on, so the assumption that the Gothic was a cultural phenomenon that informed contemporary literature and other forms of cultural production became increasingly commonplace. Subsequent to Punter's path-breaking work, it became *de rigeur* for critical surveys of the Gothic to bring their histories up to date and to cross media; early examples include Fred Botting's Routledge Critical Idiom guide, *Gothic* (1995), and Richard Davenport-Hines's popular history, *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin* (1998). Works that focused solely on Gothic in the twentieth century and beyond also began to emerge and included Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith's *Modern Gothic: A Reader* (1996); Christoph Grunenberg's *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late-Twentieth-Century Art* (1997), an exhibition catalogue that was perhaps the first book to

⁴⁰ Sara Martin, 'Gothic Scholars Don't Wear Black: Gothic Studies and Gothic Subcultures', *Gothic Studies* 4.1 (2002): 28–43 (pp. 28, 29).

acknowledge Goth subculture as part of the contemporary Gothic; a clutch of journal articles and book chapters by Fred Botting arguing for Gothic's exhaustion in the face of postmodernity; and Mark Edmundson's *Nightmare on Main Street* (1999), which argued that American popular culture exhibited patterns of sado-masochism and 'facile transcendence' and had thus itself become gothicised.⁴¹ By the time of the publication of my own *Contemporary Gothic* in 2006, the idea of a Gothic tradition stretching to the present day and across media still seemed under-explored, but no longer surprising.

In *Contemporary Gothic*, I sought to define what made Gothic produced in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries distinctive and discovered that, in fact, there was more in common between these texts and their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors than there were differences: 'the legacies of the past and its burdens on the present; the radically provisional or divided nature of the self; the construction of peoples or individuals as monstrous or "other"; the preoccupation with bodies that are modified, grotesque or diseased. Gothic has become so pervasive precisely because it is so apposite to the representation of contemporary concerns.'⁴² However, I also noted that postmodernity and globalisation had left their mark, as contemporary Gothic texts exist post-Freud, post-Gothic criticism, and therefore often reproduce what critics expect to find: 'Contemporary Gothic possesses a new self-consciousness about its own nature; it has reached new levels of mass production, distribution and audience awareness, enabled by global consumer culture; and it has crossed disciplinary boundaries to be absorbed into all forms of media.'⁴³

What I did not see, and would now add with the benefit of hindsight, is the way that globalisation has enabled the spread of Gothic beyond its traditional territories in Europe and North America and that, in turn, has influenced the production of Western Gothic texts. Although work had begun on a number of national Gothics by critics such as Andrew Hock Soon Ng, Ken Gelder and Justin D. Edwards, it was Glennis Byron's *Globalgothic* (2014), a volume bringing together the fruits of an AHRC-funded research network, that

⁴¹ See Fred Botting, 'Future Horror (the Redundancy of Gothic)', *Gothic Studies* 1:2 (1999): 139–55; Fred Botting, 'Candygothic', in Fred Botting (ed.), *The Gothic* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 133–52; Fred Botting, 'Aftergothic: Consumption, Machines, and Black Holes', in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 277–300. Mark Edmundson, *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism, and the Culture of Gothic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 77 and *passim*.

⁴² Catherine Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 8.

⁴³ Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic*, p. 23.

synthesised these approaches. Byron emphasised that twenty-first-century Gothic is characterised by 'multidirectional exchanges' between Western and non-Western cultures.⁴⁴ As a result, she argues,

Not only has Western gothic travelled but one of the effects of the increasing mobility and fluidity of people and products in the globalised world has been a growing awareness that the tropes and strategies Western critics have associated with the gothic, such as the ghost, the vampire and the zombie, have their counterparts in other cultures, however differently these may be inflected by specific histories and belief systems. Consequently, the flows have by no means been one-directional.⁴⁵

Byron's stance has been one of the most transformational in contemporary Gothic studies. Although this book does not have scope to do justice to the full geographical range of the Gothic in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it does provide three case studies of how Gothic manifests in a globalised world, focusing on the Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East (Tuğçe Bıçakçı Syed), Scandinavia (Yvonne Leffler) and East Asia (Daniel Martin). We also acknowledge that the shift from colonialism to postcolonialism is an important historical context for the production of Gothic texts in the twentieth century and beyond, and several of our chapters address this explicitly (Tabish Khair, Sarah Ilott, Johan Höglund), while it remains implicit in others. There are many very obvious gaps here, which we regretfully acknowledge; our editorial principles, however, have been governed by history rather than geography, and thus by the process of globalisation rather than by its myriad manifestations across multiple territories.

The Institutionalisation of Gothic

In May 2013, the then British Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, addressed an audience of teachers with the question, 'You come home to find your 17-year-old daughter engrossed in a book. Which would delight you more – if it were *Twilight* or *Middlemarch*?'⁴⁶ Pitting the *grande dame* of literary realism against the queen of teen Gothic romance, Gove replayed the age-old critical opposition between the realist novel and the Gothic in terms of

⁴⁴ Glennis Byron, 'Introduction', in Glennis Byron (ed.), *Globalgothic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2013), pp. 1–10 (p. 3).

⁴⁵ Byron, 'Introduction', p. 3.

⁴⁶ Michael Gove, 'What Does It Mean to Be an Educated Person?', delivered 9 May 2013, Brighton College <www.gov.uk/government/speeches/what-does-it-mean-to-be-an-educated-person> (last accessed 4 January 2021).

literary value. His argument backfired as educators came out in force in favour of teen girls' critical agency and the fact that the two choices were not mutually exclusive. In a sense, however, his argument was belated, in that while Stephenie Meyer's controversial 2005 novel may have been an easy target, Gothic had by this time become a staple of syllabi in schools and universities and was approaching a new respectability, not say orthodoxy, in which its pedagogical value was presumed.⁴⁷

By the mid-1990s, Gothic was firmly established as an object of serious study within Literature departments in anglophone countries and increasingly also in Europe. Where once an English Literature student may have expected to study one or two Gothic texts on broader courses on, say, Romanticism or Women's Writing, individual modules on Gothic became a frequent occurrence. The first Masters course dedicated to Gothic, the MLitt in the Gothic Imagination, was launched at the University of Stirling in 1996 by David Punter and Glennis Byron.

Meanwhile, a group of academics gathered at a conference at the University of East Anglia in 1991 were inspired to create the International Gothic Association (IGA) and its associated journal, *Gothic Studies* (1999–).⁴⁸ A second conference was held at the University of Stirling in Scotland in 1993, a third at St Mary's University, Twickenham (housed in Horace Walpole's Gothic mansion, Strawberry Hill), in 1997 and further conferences on a roughly biennial basis thereafter, with international venues spanning Mount St Vincent University, Halifax, Canada (1999); Simon Fraser University, Vancouver (2001, 2015); Liverpool Hope University (2003); Université de Montreal and Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada (2005); Université de Provence, Aix-en-Provence, France (2007); Lancaster University, UK (2009); Heidelberg University, Germany (2011); University of Surrey, UK (2013); Universidad de las Américas Puebla, Cholula, Mexico (2017); Manchester Metropolitan University (2018); Lewis University, Illinois (2019) and Trinity College Dublin (projected 2022). The IGA has deliberately sought to expand the international scope of Gothic academia from its bases in the UK and North America and to unite scholars working on Gothic in all its forms. Its conference at Manchester Metropolitan

⁴⁷ For more on the pedagogical value of Gothic, see Chloé Germaine Buckley, *Twenty-First-Century Children's Gothic: From the Wanderer to the Nomadic Subject* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 25–33.

⁴⁸ With thanks to David Punter for providing information on the early days of the International Gothic Association.

University in 2018 attracted well over 300 scholars from twenty-nine countries, an indication of the current health of the field.

As students who received their degrees from the 1990s onwards and had enjoyed Gothic as part of their studies entered the teaching profession, so Gothic increasingly became part of the school literature syllabus in the United Kingdom. In the early 1990s, I studied *Frankenstein* at A-level (the national qualification for students aged 16–18) but the remainder of the class gave up and elected to revert to *Hard Times* when our bemused teacher struggled to find supporting secondary criticism in the local university library. In 2020, Gothic is routinely taught in secondary schools in England from Key Stage 3 (age 11+) onwards and teaching resources proliferate on the web. AQA, the biggest exam board accounting for over half of all pupils in England, for several years included a module on ‘Elements of the Gothic’ as part of its A-level English literature syllabus; in 2021, the board requires GCSE (aged 14–16) students to study ‘The 19th-century novel’ and lists six out of seven set texts with a pronounced Gothic leaning – *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, *Great Expectations* and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (the seventh novel is *Pride and Prejudice*) – giving rise to the impression that the nineteenth-century novelistic tradition is primarily a Gothic one.⁴⁹ Compared to F. R. Leavis’s *The Great Tradition* (1948), with its celebration of ‘moral seriousness’ enshrined in the mostly realist work of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad – the stance that Gove implicitly drew on in his anti-*Twilight* speech – this marks a major canonical shift over the course of the twentieth century.

Several major cultural institutions, moreover, mounted high-profile events celebrating Gothic in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Even leaving aside exhibitions on medieval art and those held at small regional museums, the sudden prevalence of these events is striking. An early predecessor, *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late-Twentieth-Century Art* at Boston Institute for Contemporary Arts in 1997, identified Gothic aesthetics in the work of contemporary artists, and prefigured the notorious *Sensation* and *Apocalypse: Beauty and Horror in Contemporary Art* exhibitions at London’s Royal Academy in 1997 and 2000 respectively, events that did not use the word Gothic *per se* but which nonetheless traded on a macabre sensibility. These exhibitions were still heavily invested in the idea of Gothic as

⁴⁹ In England and Wales, GCSE English Literature is compulsory for pupils aged 14–16, and A-level English Literature is optional for pupils aged 16–18. See <www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-literature-8702/subject-content/shakespeare-and-the-19th-century-novel> (last accessed 22 December 2020).

oppositional at the same time as claiming it to be uniquely of the *zeitgeist*; the curator of the Boston ICA exhibition, Christoph Grunenberg, wrote in the attendant catalogue that ‘The desire to be entertained, challenged, shocked, and to indulge in the most intense and stimulating sensations that ensue in the encounter with the emotional extremes of delight and terror seldom seem more pronounced than today.’⁵⁰ Meanwhile, an essay by contemporary Gothic novelist Patrick McGrath in the same book asserted that since its origins, ‘the Gothic has disturbed and subverted all that is certain, singular, rational, balanced, established. Its *raison d’être* is transgression’.⁵¹

Twenty-first century Gothic exhibitions, however, set out to make grand statements about the significance of Gothic as a cultural tradition and often traded on the frisson between the popular and the canonical, the sensational and the scholarly. Many of these exhibitions took place at major British cultural institutions, funded by the government’s Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and implicitly framed Gothic as a distinctively British mode that spoke to the nation’s cultural identity. In 2006, Tate Britain showed *Gothic Nightmares: Fuseli, Blake and the Romantic Imagination*, an ingenious attempt to reframe its extensive William Blake collections in a new light and, the gallery claimed, ‘the first [exhibition] to explore the roots of this phenomenon in the visual arts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century’.⁵² The Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, curated the first ever exhibition on Gothic and fashion in *Gothic: Dark Glamour* (2008–9), combining *haute couture* with street style – a radical move within fashion studies, which had previously tended to confine its understanding of the term ‘Gothic’ to its use within subcultures. The British Film Institute held its largest ever festival, *Gothic: The Dark Heart of Film*, from 2013 to 2014, with miniature seasons in arts cinemas across the nation; this season explicitly celebrated the British *penchant* for the horrible, with Christopher Frayling commenting on the ‘national talent for horror’ in his Foreword to the accompanying compendium of essays.⁵³ Finally, in 2014–15,

⁵⁰ Christoph Grunenberg, ‘Unsolved Mysteries: Gothic Tales from *Frankenstein* to the Hair-Eating Doll’, in Christoph Grunenberg (ed.), *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 213–158 (p. 211). Pagination runs backwards in this volume.

⁵¹ Patrick McGrath, ‘Transgression and Decay’, in Grunenberg (ed.), *Gothic*, pp. 159–50 (pp. 158–7). Pagination runs backwards in this volume.

⁵² See ‘Gothic Nightmares: Fuseli, Blake and the Romantic Imagination’, Tate <www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/gothic-nightmares-fuseli-blake-and-romantic-imagination> (last accessed 21 December 2020).

⁵³ Frayling, ‘Foreword’, p. 5. The season featured 150 films in around 1000 screenings across the UK; see Xavier Aldana Reyes, *Gothic Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2020).

the British Library put on what was widely billed as the largest ever exhibition on Gothic and its hitherto most popular, *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination*. As Dale Townshend wrote in the Introduction to the accompanying volume,

this exhibition brings to the Gothic an important institutional recognition, celebrating a mode of cultural expression that, at least in its origins, was considered to be more a source of national embarrassment than pride . . . the idea that the Gothic imagination could ever merit the commemoration, celebration and display it is receiving in the year 2014 at the British Library was inconceivable 250 years ago.⁵⁴

What is striking about these exhibitions is not only their scale and popularity, with many declaring themselves to be the ‘first’, ‘largest’, ‘most popular’ and so on, but the way in which they assume that this populism can be combined with rigorous scholarly research with no trace of discomfort. *Terror and Wonder* was perhaps the most pronounced version of this. Although it contained such thrilling artefacts as Jack the Ripper’s ‘Dear Boss’ letter, a 1930s vampire-slaying kit and an Alexander McQueen catwalk ensemble, the exhibition was in many ways a love letter to the Gothic reader. In bringing together original copies of all the ‘Northanger Novels’ identified by Sadleir in 1927, one of the exhibition’s central display cases foregrounded generations of readers: Jane Austen, who originally collated the list of novels in *Northanger Abbey* (written 1798–9; published late 1817; dated 1818); her characters Isabella Thorpe and Catherine Morland who read them so avidly, standing in for other eighteenth-century readers as they do so; Sadleir, whose painstaking scholarship rediscovered the works in the 1920s; the curators who have lovingly reassembled them; and contemporary readers who re-encounter them via Austen, Sadleir and the exhibition curators today. There is no longer any need to defend the ‘trash with which the press now groans’, as Austen satirically put it, as it is taken for granted that the process of reading Gothic fiction itself, and the ‘terror and wonder’ that it affords, has intrinsic value.⁵⁵

It is thus that Gothic Studies finds itself at a critical impasse. On the one hand, Gothic is more popular in the twenty-first century than at any moment since its heyday in the 1790s. There is more to say about it than ever before,

⁵⁴ Dale Townshend, ‘Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination’, in Dale Townshend (ed.), *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* (London: The British Library, 2014), pp. 10–37 (pp. 33–4).

⁵⁵ Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, edited by John Davie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 21.

both in terms of the number of objects that are available to analyse and the plethora of theoretical approaches adopted from across the academy. In this sense, it is increasingly rich and vibrant as a discipline. On the other hand, its very popularity undermines the desire for subversion that informs so much twentieth-century Gothic scholarship. Gothic cannot be regarded as anti-bourgeois when the middle classes are queuing up to attend blockbuster exhibitions. As Warwick has observed, moreover, Gothic as a critical discourse has become so all-encompassing that it has started to lose definition. When I began my PhD in 1996 it was still just about possible for a particularly indefatigable scholar to read everything published on Gothic and very easy to read everything on contemporary Gothic; for my current PhD students, this would be an impossible task. As new combinations of Gothic with an endless proliferation of adjectives create a relentlessly expanding field, it becomes more difficult to grasp that field from any one position. The question that Gothic Studies must address in the twenty-first century, then, is whether it has a shared purpose and a unified set of debates, or whether it is satisfied to become increasingly fragmented and localised in its concerns.

The End of Gothic Histories?

Notoriously, Fred Botting ended the 1995 edition of *Gothic* by proclaiming that the postmodern self-referentiality of Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992) marked 'The End of Gothic'.⁵⁶ This was a position that he gracefully revised in the second edition of the book in 2014. It is the task of literary-historical critics to look for epistemological breaks and historical shifts. This book undertakes that task. Gothic in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries often acts as a kind of bellwether, alerting us to incipient trends as it rapidly responds to the zeitgeist. From the advent of new media to emergent aesthetic movements and political ideologies, Gothic absorbs the effluence of modernity into its distinctive aesthetic. It is only with the benefit of hindsight, however, that patterns emerge.

Gothic has become so all-encompassing a term in twenty-first century criticism that principles of inclusion and exclusion for a volume such as this one become a challenge. Put simply, there is just too much Gothic to cover in one volume, however capacious. We have, with one or two brief exceptions, confined ourselves to narrative-based media – literature, film and television – and readers who seek to discover Gothic within other art forms are directed

⁵⁶ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 177–80.

to David Punter's *The Edinburgh Companion to Gothic and the Arts* (2019). As already noted, this book does not attempt to provide comprehensive international coverage of Gothic either. A book that surveys the vast number of regional and national Gothics is still yet to be written.

The lengthy processes of academic publishing often struggle to keep up with the pace of historical events. We sought to end this book with a cluster of chapters by Marc Olivier, Sara L. Crosby and Simon Marsden addressing the eschatological tendency of twenty-first-century Gothic as it comes to terms with a post-digital world in which environmental catastrophe looms and the apocalyptic imagination finds new outlets. We did not expect to complete the book in the middle of a global pandemic, a context that inevitably adds an additional salience to these topics. The Gothic has provided a language for talking about contagion and disease in texts as temporally diverse as Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Masque of the Red Death' (1842), F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), Richard Matheson's *I am Legend* (1954) and Justin Cronin's *The Passage* (2010). Ardel Haefele-Thomas picks up this theme in their chapter on the AIDS epidemic and it is also acknowledged by Marsden in his chapter on the apocalyptic imagination.

It is a platitude to state that the advent of the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19 will create profound shifts in world economies, distribution networks, social relationships and lifestyles. If it seems likely that the Gothic will provide a language and a cultural imaginary with which to address the pandemic itself, the effect of these future shifts is still unknown. Gothic, it is widely acknowledged, is the product of modernity, intimately bound up with the way in which a culture progressing to an uncertain future regards its own past. But what happens *after* modernity? Critics nosing around for an epistemological break in years to come may well find one here.