

INTRODUCTION



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The Gothic World. In this, the second decade of the twenty-first century, the title-phrase of this collection might well bring to mind the nightmarish visions of global apocalypse and tentative, painful recovery so graphically figured in Max Brooks's 2006 novel, *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*. Through knowing recourse to a narrative trope that reaches as far back as the eighteenth century, Brooks's narrator, a researcher for the United Nations' Postwar Commission Report, offers up in *World War Z* a version of Gothic fiction's "lost manuscript" or "censored chapter," an unwieldy textual dossier comprised of the many transcriptions of personal testimonies of the Zombie War that he, ever since the War's end, has labored meticulously to compile, but which, through the utilitarian demands of his superiors, would otherwise have fallen into oblivion. "It was all too intimate," the chairperson of the Postwar Commission Report coldly informs him, attempting thus to explain and rationalize to the narrator the Commission's decision to excise and delete from the final edition of his report almost half of his recorded materials (Brooks 2006:1); "Too many opinions, too many feelings," she cavalierly continues, "That's not what this report is about. We need clear facts and figures, unclouded by the human factor" (Brooks 2006: 1). Coming, as it does, at the end of an arduous process of interviewing and transcription, the news is understandably crushing for the narrator. But his determination to conserve, through the writing and publication of his research, precisely this "human factor" (Brooks 2006: 2) as it is given such powerful expression in each of the book's oral testimonies seems particularly pertinent, especially when we realize that it is primarily the condition of being a living and breathing human being that the previous ten years of onslaught by hordes of the walking dead have placed seriously under threat. As the Chilean merchant shipmaster, Ernesto Olgun, interviewed only narrowly in the disaster's wake, poignantly observes,

The living dead had taken more from us than land and loved ones. They'd robbed us of our confidence as the planet's dominant life-form. We were a shaken, broken species, driven to the edge of extinction and grateful only for a tomorrow with perhaps a little less suffering than today. Was this the legacy one

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would leave to our children, a level of anxiety and self-doubt not seen since our simian ancestors cowered in the tallest trees? What kind of world would they rebuild? Would they rebuild at all? Could they continue to progress, knowing that they had been powerless to reclaim their future? And what if that future saw another rise of the living dead?

(Brooks 2006: 267)

Here, the recidivist fears of the return to a degenerative, ape-like state that we are accustomed to seeing in Gothic fictions of the Victorian *fin de siècle* merge with a decidedly postmodern anxiety concerning the imminence of a monstrous, post-human future. Indeed, concerns around the future of the human race are articulated throughout Brooks's novel, as the forces of science, medicine, chemical warfare, military prowess and democratic government, all commonly accepted markers of progress and human achievement, prove spectacularly ineffectual against the ever-swelling tides of the Undead. Roaming the furthest reaches of the globe, and destructive of towns, cities, natural resources, nations and individuals alike, zombies bear the horrific potential to annihilate all forms of life on earth, and we, the human beings who populate it, are utterly powerless to prevent it.

Of course, zombies, those lumbering, fleshy, heavy-set relatives of their more elegant and nimble vampiric ancestors, constitute the Gothic cipher par excellence in this, our post-millennial world of late-industrial capitalism and “zombie economics” (Quiggin 2010). Contemporary popular culture (films, novels, graphic novels, computer games) is practically teeming with these figures, albeit, as the example of several zombie memoirs indicates, not always in ways that are distinctly horrifying, terrifying or, indeed, “Gothic.” However, the “Gothic” qualities to Brooks's vision in *World War Z* might be said to reside in the particular form of corporeality to which his monsters give such awful form. During one of the earliest outbreaks of the plague of the living dead in Meteora, Greece, for example, the retirement-seeking inmate of a monastery, Stanley Macdonald, describes his encounter with a zombie in the language of immediacy and gross physicality, two of the definitive qualities of the “horror” sub-genre of Gothic writing since, at least, the publication of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* in 1796:

A hand was sticking out of the limestone. It was still moving. I reacted from the gut, leaned forward, grabbed the hand, felt that grip. Like steel, almost crushed my fingers. I pulled back, tried to get away. It wouldn't let me go. I pulled harder, dug my feet in. First the arm came free, then the head, the torn face, wide eyes and gray lips, then the other hand, grabbing my arm and squeezing, then came the shoulders. I fell back, the thing's top half coming with me. The waist down was still jammed under the rocks, still connected to the upper torso by a line of entrails. It was still moving, still clawing me, trying to pull my arm into its mouth. I reached for my weapon.

(Brooks 2006: 20)

Similarly, when Fernando Oliveira, the emaciated, drug-addicted surgeon practicing in the depths of the Amazon Rain Forest, unwittingly transplants into his patient, Herr Muller, a donor-heart that has been infected with the zombie virus, he enters

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the patient's room to witness before him a scene of horrific, gross corporeality as the newly zombified Herr Muller devours Doctor Silva:

I noticed blood seeping out from under the door. I entered and found it covering the floor. Silva was lying in the far corner, Muller crouching over him with his fat, pale, hairy back to me. I can't remember how I got his attention, whether I called his name, uttered a swear, or did anything at all but just stand there. Muller turned to me, bits of bloody meat falling from his open mouth. I saw that his steel sutures had been partially pried open and a thick, black, gelatinous fluid oozed through the incision. He got shakily to his feet, lumbering slowly toward me.

(Brooks 2006: 25)

Brooks's narrative is studded with gruesome episodes throughout. If the term "Gothic," in the words of Alfred E. Longueil, is taken in its current literary-critical sense as "a mere synonym for that grotesque, ghastly, and violently superhuman in fiction" that originated in the second half of the eighteenth century (Longueil 1923: 453), then Brooks's novel, in its preoccupations with hordes of reanimated, flesh-devouring corpses that ooze dark liquid and bear the foul stench of putrefaction, is "Gothic" in the extreme, the fact that the term itself never features in the course of the narrative notwithstanding. The global dimensions of Brooks's vision are encapsulated in the novel's title: *World War Z*, otherwise known as "The Crisis," "The Dark Years," "The Walking Plague," "Z War One" or simply as "The Zombie War," is one that starts in China, but then rapidly spreads to Tibet, Greece, Brazil, Barbados, South Africa, Israel, Palestine, the USA, England, Antarctica, India, Russia, Greenland, Ireland, Canada, Bohemia, South Korea, Japan, Cuba, Australia, Chile, Finland and beyond. North and South, East and West, nations developed and undeveloped are all enlisted in its horrors, as these ghouls pursue their indiscriminate hunger for human flesh, traversing all national borders and geographic boundaries as they do so. War in the novel remains total, universal and continuous, and the threat of obliteration all-encompassing, pervasive and extreme.

GOTHIC SWARMS

The dynamic that informs the global reach and spread of zombieism in *World War Z* is one of viral infection, and like a part-vampire, part-*proto-zombie* narrative such as Richard Matheson's *I am Legend* (1954), the narrative makes constant recourse to notions of infestation, outbreak, plague, epidemic and blight in order to account for, and make sense of, the zombie's ubiquitous, universal presence: conceptualized as "a global catastrophe in the making" (Brooks 2006: 63), human resources worldwide are mobilized against "a mysterious uber-plague that reanimate[s] the dead" (Brooks 2006: 63). And yet, metaphors of infection and disease in the novel are rapidly taken over by a more prevalent image-system, one that is consistently deployed in order to mark the extent of the zombies' global presence: swarming, the action of "assembling in a swarm or dense crowd" (*OED*), and often relating specifically to the gathering and departure from the hive of a swarm of bees, wasps, hornets or similar winged insects. One Ahmed Farahnakian, for instance, observes

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of zombie-infested Greenland that “So many areas were already infected, great swarms slouching towards our cities. Our border guards were overwhelmed, entire outposts buried under waves of ghouls” (Brooks 2006: 90). Later, speaking from Northern Ireland, Philip Adler recalls being stranded without food and water, “just waiting to be rescued with the dead swarming outside, and I don’t know how many infected inside” (Brooks 2006: 112). Similarly, at the Udaipur Lake Palace in Rajasthan, India, project manager Sardar Khan observes that “the only thing behind those people was a raging swarm of God knows how many million zombies” (Brooks 2006: 132). For Mister Sinclair, Director of the US Government’s newly formed Department of Strategic Resources (DeStRes), the swarming of the zombies is akin more to the movement of carnivorous ants than bees: “Did you ever hear of Don Hill? Ever see the movie Roy Elliot did on him? It was when the infestation hit the San Joaquin Valley, the dead swarming over his fences, attacking his cattle, tearing them apart like African driver ants” (Brooks 2006: 142–43). Roy Eliot, in Malibu, California, speaks proudly of the “rapid fire” of the guns that he has had at his disposal: “exactly what you needed,” he observes, “in swarm attacks” such as those with which he has been confronted (Brooks 2006: 165). And so the examples in Brooks’s novel proliferate, the metaphors gathering, collecting and accreting in a way that enacts the swarming movements of the zombies themselves: “My ankle was throbbing, my lungs were aching,” Colonel Christina Eliopolis relates, “and the swarm was now gaining on me fast” (Brooks 2006: 183). And as Admiral Xu Zhicai points out, swarming need not necessarily imply a line of flight, for, in testifying to the sea-borne dimensions that the threat has assumed, he recounts how “Zombies, hundreds of them, were swarming over the hull. More were arriving each second, stumbling across the barren sand, climbing over each other to claw, scrape, actually bite the *Zheng’s* steel” (Brooks 2006: 251). Beset by flesh-eating monsters that swarm globally with the insistence of enraged and bloodthirsty insects, the world as it is rendered in Max Brooks’s *World War Z* is a Gothic one indeed.

Brooks’s novel is not the only contemporary Gothic fiction to bear witness to what we might term a “Gothic world.” Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006), for instance, offers up a terrifying vision of post-apocalyptic existence that is rendered all the more “Gothic” by the fact that the nature of the disaster that underpins it remains forever undisclosed. Part-human and part-environmental, the founding catastrophe is knowable to the reader only through its palpably horrific effects, as a dying father and his emaciated son make their way across a moribund but still vaguely recognizable landscape in search of food and shelter. Armed with neither the hope of the fugitive nor the gratitude of the survivor, the two are locked into a state of living death, one poignantly described by the boy’s mother just prior to her suicide as a form of zombieism: “We’re the walking dead in a horror film” (McCarthy 2007: 57). Figured in McCarthy’s characteristically sparse but highly evocative style, the landscapes that the two traverse are as shrouded in the mists of terror as the vague but terrifying nightmares that grip the father from the novel’s opening pages: smoke momentarily clears to reveal a burned-out wasteland, stinging rain and sleet hold up to reveal a gutted house, hideous shrieks resound out of the darkness as the boy attempts to sleep, nameless and faceless men march by with lines of shackled slaves, and others feast cannibalistically on the bodies of human survivors. Though its precise coordinates are never clearly articulated, danger in the world of the novel is

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omnipresent, and death litters the landscape throughout: “The mummied dead everywhere. The flesh cloven along the bones, the ligaments dried to tug and taut as wires. Shriveled and drawn like latterday bogfolk, their faces of boiled sheeting, the yellowed palings of their teeth” (McCarthy 2007: 23). Death, in fact, becomes in *The Road* the only certainty, the only force that is capable of puncturing the prevailing veil of vagueness and terror with the visceral immediacy of horror: “Shapes of dried blood in the stubble grass and gray coils of viscera where the slain had been field-dressed and hauled away. The wall beyond held a frieze of human heads, all faced alike, dried and caved with their taut grins and shrunken eyes” (McCarthy 2007: 94).

Like Brooks’s *World War Z*, Justin Cronin’s recent apocalyptic novel, *The Passage* (2010), figures a “Gothic world” beset by swarms of monstrous creatures. Cronin begins his narrative on a note of infection and disease. The world in which *The Passage* opens is an America of the not-so-distant future, a world that has been devastated by the growing escalation of the “War on Terr-rah” (Cronin 2010: 85). America has been waging war for 15 years, its enemies including Iran, Iraq, Russia and various other countries: “war was everywhere,” we are told, cancerously “metastasizing like a million maniac cells run amok across the planet, and everyone was in it” (Cronin 2010: 84). An expedition funded by USAMRIID is sent to the jungles of Bolivia to investigate a virus. However, members of the expedition are attacked by hundreds of thousands of bats, “a huge swarm that blotted out the stars” (Cronin 2010: 24), and eventually succumb to “some speeded-up version of Bolivian hemorrhagic fever – bleeding from the mouth and nose, the skin and eyes rosy with burst capillaries” (Cronin 2010: 23). Survivor Tim Fanning, who in due course becomes Subject Zero, is taken back to America, and the power of the virus harnessed by the military to produce the ultimate weapon of mass destruction: “the human form itself, weaponized” (Cronin 2010: 85). Part vampire, part zombie, these beings resemble, more than anything, “some kind of giant insect” (Cronin 2010: 68).

From the outset of Cronin’s novel, swarming is metaphorically employed as a means of signifying the onset of horror. Sensations of “a buzzing weightlessness, like a swarm of bees” convey that “something had happened, something terrible” (Cronin 2010: 101), while dreams of a “massive swarm of bees covering [one’s] body” (Cronin 2010: 454) become part of the infection process itself. America has been transformed into the empire of the undead, and it is thus fitting that the central analogy in *The Passage* becomes that of the hive. A group of survivors who strike out across a new American frontier, the “Darklands,” soon realize that the virals are like bees, traveling in swarms when they attack and sending out scouts to establish new hives where more bees might cluster. Although *The Passage* does not envisage the apocalypse in quite the same universal and global dimensions as *World War Z*, it nonetheless consistently gestures toward a broader sense of a “Gothic World.” The disaster here may well be the product of American military aspirations, of a project appropriately named Project Noah, but this, it turns out, is just one in a series of such apocalyptic moments that have taken place throughout history, ever since that first apocalypse, in fact, when, according to Genesis, “all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth” (Genesis 7.21). Ancient statues of these virals are found in the jungles of

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Bolivia, and are much like those found in cave drawings, temples and gravesites around the world. As Cronin's use of Shakespeare's Sonnet 64 as an epigraph to the novel indicates – "When I have seen by Time's fell hand defac'd" – this epidemic has occurred countless times before: the outbreak in America is only the regeneration of a primitive germ that already exists in nature, facilitated this time by warfare and scientific research. Appropriately, then, the second book in the series, *The Twelve* (2012), repeatedly links the attack of virals to the attacks of creatures from the natural world. Where the rotting flesh of the virals' victims remains, flies buzz in "vast black swarms" (Cronin 2012: 94–95), and as the heroes of the new frontier hack their way through undergrowth toward what is left of Houston, "nature unveiled its true malevolent purpose: everything here wanted to sting you, swarm you, bite you" (Cronin 2012: 385). It would seem that nature, too, is capable of swarming in Cronin's apocalyptic world.

Though bound by similar terms and metaphors, the exponents of what we have subsequently come to regard as the political "myth of Gothic origins" in the long eighteenth century figured their particular sense of a "Gothic world" in ways that are quite antithetical to that of Brooks, Cronin and McCarthy. From around the time of the Glorious Revolution and throughout much of the eighteenth century, British historiographers, both Scottish and English, and of both Whig and Tory political affiliations, sketched out various versions of a powerful political ideology, clothed in historical garb, concerning the Goths' gradual movement across, and eventual inhabitation of, much of the known civilized world. Though there are considerable differences between them, the historiographic narratives that were peddled initially by such ancient historians as Cornelius Tacitus in *Germania* (AD 98), Jordanes in *Getica* (c. 551) and the Venerable Bede in *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (731), and then later by Nathaniel Bacon, Richard Verstegan, Lord Bolingbroke, Paul Henri Mallet, William Temple, James Thomson, Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, Richard Hurd, Thomas Warton and numerous others, consistently sounded a few common themes: the Gothic tribe that was said to originate in Germany or central and Northern Europe "swarmed" through various parts of the known world, bringing with them the powers of civilization, democracy, Liberty and Enlightenment as they did so. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this sense of the past was especially popular amongst English historiographers of a whiggish political affiliation in the eighteenth century, in all their investments in teleological narratives of continuous progress and improvement. Samuel Klinger and R.J. Smith have outlined its constituent elements as follows (Klinger 1952; Smith 1987): in wishing to assert the prerogatives of Parliament against the autocratic measures of the Stuart line, antiquarian thinkers from the end of the seventeenth century onward made a strategic appeal to a tradition of democratic power-sharing between the Monarch and the Parliament – the so-called "Gothick balance" – that was said to have originated with the "witenagemot" of the Gothic tribe in the "woods of Germany," and which was felicitously imported onto English soil with the arrival of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes in the year 449 AD. Through a series of mistranslations and strategic misrepresentations, all Germanic tribes, including those that originated from Scandinavia, were construed as "Goths" in the work of the sixth-century historian Jordanes, thus substituting the name of one particular Barbarian tribe – the people who crossed the Danube in 376 AD, and who were responsible for the sacking of the

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Roman Empire in the year 410 AD – as a moniker for all invading Germanic nations. Although, in the work of Jordanes, the Goths, having originated in Scandza in Southern Scandinavia, were said to have spread to most parts of Europe and Asia, thus dividing the tribe into the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths, it was their presence on English soil that most preoccupied eighteenth-century historians in Britain.

Sir William Temple's *An Introduction to the History of England* (1695), for instance, having sketched out a history that includes an account of ancient Albion, the arrival of the Romans, the establishment of Britannia and the confining of the Picts and Scots to the savage territory north of Hadrian's Wall, turns to address the matter of English antiquity in the period following the Roman withdrawal. Vexed by the endless cycles of violence and aggression emanating from the Scots and Picts, their belligerent northern neighbors, the Britons under Vortigern, rendered especially vulnerable by the Romans' retreat, made their famous "Gothick appeal" to the Saxons under Hengist and Horsa for much-needed military assistance and reinforcement. Through recourse to a metaphor that, by 1695, was already well established, Temple claims that "The Saxons were one Branch of those Gothick Nations, which swarming from the Northern Hive, had under the Conduct of *Odin*, possessed themselves anciently of all those mighty Tracts of Land that surround the Baltick sea" (Temple 1695: 44). Their presence on English soil marks as much an importing of the Gothick tribe's "great Love of Liberty, and their Valour in preserving it" (Temple 1695: 46) as it does the affirmation of military power and prowess (Temple 1695: 47–48). Subsequent arrivals of the Goths on English soil brought about the further subjugation of the Picts and Scots, the deeper entrenchment of the Scottish/English national and geographic divide, as well as the establishment of a Northern and Southern Saxon Kingdom. Enmity between the invading Goths and the native Britons seems initially to have ensued, and in Temple's account, the political tensions and religious and cultural differences between the two nations seem not to have been inconsiderable. The Saxon presence in England, though, was soon augmented by the further "swarming" of similar Gothic tribes in the form of the Angles and the Jutes:

These [Saxons] heartened with Success, and proud of so great Possessions and Territories, invited and allured still greater Numbers of their own from abroad, who being of several Branches, and from several Coasts, arrived here under several names; among whom the Angles from *Schonen* and *Iutland*, swarmed over in such numbers, that they gave a new Name at length, to this Province, which from them was called *Angle-land*, and for easier sound *England*.

(Temple 1695: 54–55)

In turn, the spaces left vacant in Europe by the departure of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes for Britain were soon, themselves, "fill[ed] up again by new Swarms from the great Northern Hive" (Temple 1695: 62). The movement of the Goths across parts of Europe is one metaphorically akin to the movement of bees, ants or similar insects. Temple's *An Introduction to the History of England* concludes with an account of the establishment of the seven Kingdoms of the Saxon Heptarchy, and the fleeing of the vestiges of the native Britons westward into Wales and southward into Cornwall.

Temple's *History* is by no means a simple encomiastic tribute to the virtues of the conquering Gothick nations: the seven Kingdoms of the Heptarchy, for instance, are

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wooded by the meretricious attractions of luxury, and plagued by political power-struggles that resulted only in further strife. Throughout his study, in fact, the semantic implications of barbarism and violence that had accreted around the word “Gothic” ever since Renaissance historiographers such as Giorgio Vasari had used it pejoratively as a means of denouncing the architectural remains of the benighted medieval past seem to persist: “few and mean Authors of those barbarous and illiterate Ages, and perhaps the rough course of those lawless Times and Actions,” he concedes, “would have been too ignoble a Subject for a good Historian” (Temple 1695: 61). Nonetheless, it is to this complex historical process of invasion, conquest and eventual assimilation that Britain – or, more narrowly and accurately, England – owes its origins, not least of all the system of constitutional Law upon which the nation so prides itself: “The Laws of this Country which before were Roman, changed now into Old Saxon Customs or Constitutions” (Temple 1695: 64). As this indicates, most of the historical narratives that recounted the arrival of the Goths in England verged on the panegyric.

It is true that James Thomson, in his charting of the progress of the personified Goddess of Liberty in his lengthy *Liberty, A Poem* (1734), had largely reserved the term “Gothic” as a synonym for the darkness and barbarism that, in his estimation, had prevailed across Europe prior to the civilizing impetus of the Renaissance. His account of the Gothic siege of Rome in Part Three, in all its destructiveness and aggression, is especially suggestive in this regard, for here, “Gothic” serves negatively as an epithet for tyranny, darkness, scholastic discord, Catholic superstition, ignorance and violence, negative values, he claims, which were embodied in the form of the Gothic cathedral. Nonetheless, when Thomson turns to address Liberty’s gracing of Britain’s shores, from the arrival of the Saxons from Scythia and up to the time of the Norman conquest, his poem makes recourse to the culturally prevalent myth of England’s noble Gothic origins, constructing a past of agency and freedom that was merely threatened, but not entirely eclipsed, by the yoke of Norman Tyranny:

The haughty Norman seiz’d at once an isle,
For which, thro’ many a century, in vain,
The Roman, Saxon, Dane, had toil’d and bled.
Of Gothic nations this the final burst;
And, mix’d the genius of these people all,
Their virtues mix’d in one exalted stream,
Here the rich tide of English blood grew full.

(Thomson 1766: 2.126)

Notions of the “Gothic” in Thomson, having taken a rather circuitous historical and semantic journey, thus eventually come to serve as a byword for an aboriginal, particularly English form of democratic government:

Yet, o’er these Gothic states, the King and Chiefs
Retain’d the high prerogative of war,
And with enormous property engross’d
The mingled power. But on BRITANNIA’S shore

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Now present, I to raise My reign began
By raising the Democracy, the third
And broadest bulwark of the guarded state.
Then was the full the perfect [*sic*] plan disclos'd
Of BRITAIN'S matchless Constitution, mixt
Of mutual checking and supporting powers,
KING, LORDS, and COMMONS; nor the name of Free
Deserving while the Vassal-man droop'd.

(Thomson 1766: 2.129)

As Thomson's whiggish history continues to relate, the banner of national liberty would only be fully unfurled with the restoration of democracy under the reigns of Kings Edward III and Henry V, and, beyond that, with the vanquishing of the Stuart Dynasty and the "monstrous" doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings attendant upon it (Thomson 1766: 2.136).

In Bishop Thomas Percy's English translation of the Swiss writer Paul Henri Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* (1770), the Scythians or Goths are represented somewhat less equivocally as a noble and valiant aboriginal tribe that succeeded in spreading its values of liberty, democracy, piety, rationality and virtue across most of mainland Europe:

If we recur back to the remotest times, we observe a nation issuing step by step from the forests of Scythia, incessantly increasing and dividing to take possession of the uncultivated countries which it met with its progress. Very soon after, we see the same people, like a tree full of vigour, extending long branches over all Europe; we see them also carrying with them, wherever they came, from the borders of the Black Sea, to the extremities of Spain, of Sicily, and Greece, a religion simple and martial as themselves, a form of government dictated by good sense and liberty, a restless unconquered spirit, apt to take fire at the very mention of subjection and constraint, and a ferocious courage, nourished by a savage and vagabond life.

(Mallet 1770: 1.li)

In the course of *Northern Antiquities*, the system of Gothic values that Mallet wishes to celebrate comes variously to include courage, moderation, democratic forms of election, the checking of the absolute power of the sovereign, liberation from the yoke of Rome, an aversion to slavery and a "peculiar attention to the rights of humanity" (Mallet 1770: 1.liii). In keeping with the established metaphorical idiom, the movement of the Goths across civilized nations for Mallet is as much a "swarming" as it is a form of happy "impregnation":

In effect, we every where see in those swarms of Germans and Scandinavians, a troop of savage warriors who seem only born for ravage and destruction, changed into a sensible and free people as soon as ever they had confirmed their conquests; impregnating (if I may so say) their institutions with a spirit of order and equality; electing for their kings such of their princes of the blood royal as they judged most worthy to wear the crown; dividing between those kings and

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the whole nation the exercise of sovereign power; reserving to the general assemblies the right of making laws, and deciding important matters; and lastly, to give a solid support to the powers immediately essential to monarchy, distributing fiefs to the principal warriors, and assigning certain privileges proper to the several orders of the state.

(Mallet 1770: 2.166)

While Mallet's Swiss nationality made the appropriation of Gothic origins by British writers, even after translation of the text into English, a vexed and complicated issue, other writers turned with greater ease to the account of Goths offered up by the Roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus. In 1777, for instance, John Aikin translated Tacitus's *A Treatise on the Situation, Manners, and Inhabitants of Germany* into English, asserting in his Preface to the work the claim that all the most civilized nations of the known world, not least of all England, derived from the Goths:

The *Treatise on the Manners of the Germans* has ever been esteemed as one of the most precious relics of the political or historical writings of antiquity; and by the course of events has been rendered more important to modern times than its author probably expected, who could scarcely foresee that the government, policy, and manners of the most civilized parts of the globe, were to originate from the woods and deserts [*sic*] of Germany.

(Aikin 1777: vii)

Aikin's sense of history as a form of "presentism" in the above extract becomes especially significant when, throughout the remainder of the tract, the Goths, the Germanic tribe noted for the purity of their racial lines, are hailed as the civilized world's harbingers of moral virtue; proportionate forms of punishment; resourceful rural subsistence; monogamous sexual relations; democratic forms of government and a corresponding checking of the unlimited powers of the Sovereign. To claim Gothic origins was thus also strategically to install at the very foundation of the nation the same set of political values that were being embraced and enshrined by the intellectual processes of the late Enlightenment.

It is for reasons such as these that a writer such as John Pinkerton would exert so much energy in seeking to prove, even to the extent of fulmination and forgery, the laudable Gothic origins of his native Scotland. Pinkerton published *A Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths*, his introduction to the history of ancient and modern Europe, in London in 1787. His gesture is, in part, a recuperative one, seeking not only to map his understanding of what constitutes a "Gothic world" through an account of those places in Asia and Europe where the Scythians or Goths were thought to have settled, but also to retrieve "Gothic" from the negative connotations of barbarism that the term had accrued since the Renaissance, and in a time closer to his own, through the cultural hegemony of neoclassicism:

Now, tho almost all Europe be possessed by the descendants of the Goths, a people from whom, as shall be shewn, the Greeks and Romans also spring; and the Goths transcended, even when barbarians, all nations in wisdom and way:

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yet such is our ignorance, who are at present but slowly eloping from barbarism, that the name of Goth, the sacred name of our fathers, is an object of detestation!

(Pinkerton 1787: vii)

In the course of his study, the “*Scythia, Getae or Gothi*,” all avowedly “but different names for one and the same people” (Pinkerton 1787: 5), are described, contra claims to the Goths’ Scandinavian and German origins advanced by Jordanes and Tacitus respectively, as having originated in Persia, spreading from there “to the Eutine [*sic*], and almost over all Europe” (Pinkerton 1787: 18), “excepting only that of Russia, Poland, and Hungary” (Pinkerton 1787: 3); “All the rest,” he continues, “is in the hands of the progeny of the Goths, or as we may justly say of the Goths” (Pinkerton 1787: 3). Pinkerton’s sense of the Gothic world is thus considerably more capacious than that of earlier writers, encompassing, as it does, the Eastern settlements of Asia, Southern Europe, and the countries of England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark. Gothic swarming, in other words, appears in Pinkerton’s account to have been more geographically diffuse and less regionally concentrated.

Published in a context in which Scotland’s ancient origins had become a hotly debated aesthetic and political concern, Pinkerton’s determination to draw his native Scotland into the already extended boundaries of the Gothic world was a confrontational and deliberately controversial gesture. James Macpherson had published his first slim volume of Ossianic verse, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland*, in 1760; *Fingal, An Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books, Together with Several Other Poems Composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal, Translated From the Gaelic Language* followed in 1761, *Temora* in 1763, and a weighty anthology, *The Works of Ossian*, in 1765. Undertaken in the spirit of a fervent antiquarian interest in, and admiration for, the sparse but legible remains of Scottish antiquity, these poetic works, together with Macpherson’s later *Original Papers, containing the Secret History of Great Britain from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover* (1775), proudly attested to nothing if not Scotland’s noble Celtic past. But it was precisely Macpherson’s claims to an originally Celtic Scotland that motivated Pinkerton’s antiquarian endeavors, and henceforth his own efforts would be bitterly fuelled by the need to dispute Macpherson’s vision, dispel the myth of a Celtic Scotland, and replace it with a sound, empirical account of the nation’s Gothic past. At moments such as these in the *Dissertation*, Pinkerton’s pique is almost palpable:

The author [Macpherson] of that strange and truly Celtic work [*History of Great Britain*], having, with that overheated rashness, which genius colliding with perfect ignorance can alone inspire, attempted to introduce the most diseased dreams into the History of Scotland, thought he could, behind his Celtic mist, use equal freedoms with the history of Europe! Rash man, and ill advised!

(Pinkerton 1787: 91–92)

In his next tome, an *Enquiry into the History of Scotland, Preceding the Reign of Malcolm III* (1789), Pinkerton would continue to vent his spleen against Macpherson

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and his claims to a Celtic Scotland. Self-consciously situating himself within an extended tradition of Scottish historiography, Pinkerton here seeks to refute and counter Scottish Celticism by advancing the claim that the original inhabitants of Scotland, the Cimbri, were a Gothic or Germanic people who issued from present-day Jutland, a fact he deduces from, and presumes to demonstrate through, the empirical study of the Picto-Gothic language. Celtic was little more than a bastardized form of Gothic. The Celts were little more than natural savages, and the traces of their language that remain happily attest to Scotland's Gothic past:

The Celts being natural savages, and regarded as such by all writers of all ages, their tongue was simple and poor, whence they were always borrowing of others; while hardly in modern European language can one word derived from the Celtic be found. Our Celtic seers of etymology, ignorant of all these facts, derive modern words from the Celtic, without suspecting the real truth, that the Celtic words are derived from them. Without complete knowledge of the Gothic, and it's [*sic*] dialects, no man ought to meddle with Celtic etymology, else he will blunder in utter darkness . . . The Goths were the conquering people, and superior in all things to the Celts; and so numerous that they spread over all Europe, and great parts of Asia, many centuries before Christ, while the Celts were pent up in two or three little corners.

(Pinkerton 1789: 1.137–38)

The debate over whether Scotland was of Celtic or Gothic origins was fiercely entered into by antiquarians of both persuasions, and as late as 1816 Sir Walter Scott would both register and respond to the debacle in the extended interchanges between Jonathan Oldbuck and Arthur Wardour in *The Antiquary*. In the 1780s, Pinkerton's determination to purge Scotland of Macpherson-inspired Celticism and argue instead for its place within a noble Gothic heritage was largely motivated by the need to install at the nation's origins the system of Gothic values that he had labored to outline in *A Dissertation*, a range of familiar, Enlightenment values that included the principles of democracy, ordered feudal structure and regulated Sovereign authority: "In the woods of Germany every man had a voice in general council" (Pinkerton 1787: 140). To believe otherwise was to plunge Scotland back into the "Celtic night" from which the arrival of the Goths was said to have delivered Britain in Thomson's *Liberty* (Thomson 1766: 2.624–25).

GOTHIC WORLDS, NOW AND THEN

As the Pinkerton/Macpherson debate suggests, the Gothic world in the eighteenth century was a carefully crafted political and ideological construct, a history in which only the most enlightened of peoples could participate and a category to which only the most civilized of nations could aspire. It is for this reason that a writer such as George Perkins Marsh would attempt to stake an American claim for Gothic ancestry in his treatise *The Goths in New England* (1843), maintaining that, in fleeing Britain, the early settlers of America sought to restore the noble and Enlightened Gothic values that were being compromised at home (Kliger 1952: 107). Earlier, Thomas Jefferson had similarly appropriated the foundational myth of the Enlightened,

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freedom-loving Goth to the context of colonial, pre-revolutionary America (Michaud 2009: 21). In novels such as Brooks's *World War Z*, McCarthy's *The Road* and Cronin's *The Passage*, by contrast, the Gothic World is a world of horror, terror and waking nightmare, a global disaster-zone from which we can only wish to flee, even at the cost our own survival. Brooks's and Cronin's dystopian visions of a world inhabited by versions of the walking dead appear to be dark, mirrored inversions of the eighteenth-century Gothic utopia, and the swarming that is celebrated and actively invoked in the former becomes the source of ineffable fear and dread in the latter. Though both worlds are equally fictive – the not-so-brave new worlds of Brooks and Cronin are no less imaginary than the veritable “romance” of the Gothic past spun by numerous eighteenth-century politicians and historiographers – what separates one from the other is, of course, the different meanings ascribed to the word “Gothic” in the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries respectively. The negative connotations of the latter stand in stark contrast to the largely positive ones of the former, although, as Mark Madoff has pointed out, both the term's utopian and dystopian impulses were carefully exploited and contested even in the political interchanges between radicals and conservatives in the 1790s (Madoff 1979). Bound up in the semantic differences between late-eighteenth- and early twenty-first-century usages of the term “Gothic,” the notion of a “Gothic World” is nothing if not historically contingent. In the historiography of the eighteenth century, it was a vision of a glorious past world; in contemporary culture, it is the disturbing vision of the monstrous future: in both cases, it is a construct spun out of the political needs and anxieties of the present.

In attempting to account for that process whereby “Gothic,” often somewhat vaguely used in the eighteenth century to encompass a broad sense of the ancestral or the medieval past, eventually came to assume its modern literary-critical functions as a descriptor of a certain horrific and gruesome strain in fiction, Longueil has argued that fictions published in the wake of the second edition of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic story* in 1765 coupled their own renditions of “Gothic times” with a sub-Walpolean preoccupation with horror, terror and supernatural imaginings, to the extent that the latter set of meanings eventually came to exceed and replace the former (Longueil 1923). But before this moment, the connection between the pervasive “myth of Gothic origins” the early “Gothic” fictions of writers such as Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee, Charlotte Smith, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, Francis Lathom, Isabella Kelly, W.H. Ireland, Eleanor Sleath, Regina Maria Roche, T.J. Horsley Curties, Charlotte Dacre and countless others seemed remote, if not entirely tenuous. As E.J. Clery has argued, fictions that we today designate as distinctly “Gothic” were neither conceived, designated, marketed nor reviewed in such terms in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Clery 2002: 21); the most frequently recorded names for the mode used in the contemporary periodical press included, simply, “romance” or “modern romance,” “horrid novels” or “German tales,” “The Radcliffe school of novel writing,” “hobgobliana” and, most dismissively, “the trash of the circulating libraries.” And yet, it is through the recurrence of the familiar metaphor of “swarming” in Hannah More's archly conservative two-volume conduct-book, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), that one is afforded a rare glimpse of the connections between the political discourse of the Goths, on the one hand, and the particular brand of

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supernatural fiction that we today call “the Gothic,” on the other. In a discussion of “The Effects of Influence” in the first volume of her *Strictures*, More turns to confront the “swarms” of modern romances that are disturbingly making their way from Europe onto British soil, the pernicious effects of which she calls upon all English women of sound mind and taste to resist:

They are called upon, therefore, to oppose with the whole weight of their influence, the irruption of those swarms of publications now daily issuing from the banks of the Danube, which, like their ravaging predecessors of the darker ages, though with far other arms, are overrunning civilized society. Those readers, whose purer taste has been formed on the correct models of the old classic school, see with indignation and astonishment the Huns and Vandals once more overpowering the Greeks and Romans.

(More 1799: 1.39)

Via a rhetorical turn that is common in Britain of the 1790s, More looks to Germany as the source of the Gothic fictional aesthetic, figuring, in a subversion of the prevailing political ideology of the felicitous arrival of the Goths, the contemporary vogue for Gothic romance as an invasion by barbaric German nations. As she continues, continental fictions written in the tradition of Schiller “behold our minds, with a retrograde but rapid motion, hurried back to the reign of ‘chaos and old night,’ by distorted and unprincipled compositions, which unite the taste of the Goths with the morals of Bagshot, ‘Gorgons, and Hydras, and chimeras dire!’”; they “terrify the weak” and “disgust the discerning” with their “wild and mis-shapen superstitions,” for only those “who most earnestly deny the immortality of the soul are most eager to introduce the machinery of ghosts” (More 1799: 1.40). For More, the Gothic romance is a monstrous hybrid formed by the conjunction of non-neoclassical taste and depraved morality, swarming into Britain from both Germany and France with a fury that enacted the original invasion of the nation by the Barbarian Goths. Thus, by 1799, “Gothic” already served, in some senses, as a way of decrying a particular fictional aesthetic, one synonymous with the terrors, monstrosity, superstition and disgust invoked by More.

From an historical category to a political ideology to a term of aesthetic and stylistic description: of all the fields of relevance outlined so far, it is perhaps the signifier “Gothic” itself that has “swarmed” with the greatest insistence. Forever extending its remit, and continuously enlarging the realms of its critical purchase and applicability, the term “Gothic” has become as culturally ubiquitous as that which it is used to describe. Though once exclusively the preserve of a select group of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British politicians, historians and antiquaries, the term has substantially extended its semantic field so as to become one of the most important terms of aesthetic identification, classification and description in western cultural production of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As Alexander Warwick has noted, though, this process has not been without its perils, its critical over-application often amounting to little more than a vague sense of “feeling Gothicky” (Warwick 2007). For Nick Groom, similarly, the over-determination of the signifier suggests that “the Gothic now risks being emptied or nullified as a meaningful term” altogether (Groom 2012: xv). Originally the product

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of a complex intercultural exchange between Britain, Germany and France in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, the Gothic in its aesthetic dimensions has spread well beyond these European frontiers so as to become a thoroughly international, even globalized phenomenon (Byron 2012). While critics might remain divided as to its precise meanings, one aspect of the Gothic mode seems incontrovertible: encompassing fields as diverse as literature, politics, film, architecture, music, visual art, sartorial style and subcultural identity and more, the Gothic is nothing if not multidisciplinary. It is precisely to this, the inherently multidisciplinary nature of the mode, that *The Gothic World* seeks to respond, aiming to provide an overview of some of the most important forms and manifestations that the Gothic has enjoyed since the eighteenth century. Consisting of 42 new, specially-commissioned essays by upcoming and established scholars in the field, *The Gothic World* seeks, in line with recent critical impulses, to extend critical understandings of the Gothic well beyond the literary, and into such fields as film, politics, fashionable style, architecture, fine art and cyberculture.

THE GOTHIC WORLD: TIME, SPACE AND ACTION

Informed by the metaphor of the globe figured in its title, *The Gothic World* seeks to attest to the Gothic as a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional force, as a style, an aesthetic experience and a mode of cultural expression that traverses genres, forms, media, disciplines and national boundaries. Exploiting the spatial and temporal dimensions implied in the metaphor of the globe, the chapters in this collection are clustered and organized around five thematic parts: Gothic histories; Gothic spaces; Gothic readers and writers; Gothic spectacle; and Contemporary impulses, respectively. This structure, in itself, is not intended as a commitment to literary-historical coverage – a history of Gothic fiction from 1764 to the present day, via Victorianism and modernism. Neither is it intended as a means of exhaustive national coverage – the division of Gothic into so many regional varieties and traditions (Scottish; Irish; American; Mexican; Australian; Japanese), with each strain presided over by a number of canonical writers, literary texts and films. Rather, the structural approach adopted here, while informed by the dimensions of time, space and action, is one intended to draw critical attention to sites, topics and issues of particular interest and significance, some of them familiar to students and scholars of the Gothic, but others hitherto only cursorily considered. In addition to providing an overview of the field, each chapter also seeks to extend critical debates in new and engaging directions, thus providing as much a contribution to scholarship as a survey of existing work.

The chapters in Part I, “Gothic histories,” variously seek to address the deployment and circulation of “Gothic,” in both the political and the aesthetic meanings of that term, across a range of different historical or temporal contexts, including seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain (1; 2); post-revolutionary America (3); the Celtic peripheries of Scotland and Ireland and the eighteenth-century discourse of British nationalism (4; 5); the nineteenth-century colonial endeavor (6); and trauma-gripped post-9/11 America (7). It has become somewhat of a critical cliché, of course, to regard the Gothic as that which, at its most characteristic, conjures with the unbearable persistence of history, with a traumatic, painful and nightmarish past

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that, however deep our wishes, will not simply disappear. In Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Jonathan Harker sums up this Gothic sense of time in two pithy sentences: "It is nineteenth century up-to-date with a vengeance. And yet, unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere 'modernity' cannot kill" (Stoker 1998: 67). And yet, as a modern Gothic fiction such as Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977) indicates, the persistence of the past involves far more than the heavy sense of burden that Harker's entry describes. King's novel, in fact, emblemizes at least three of the ways in which it might return: in the quick and unprovoked flashbacks of trauma and traumatic memory (Danny in relation to the Overlook hotel, Jack in relation to his father); evanescently in the form of a ghostly palimpsest or veil (Jack's reliving of the Masquerade Ball in the Colorado lounge); or through a relation of angry and violent possession (Jack's eventual succumbing to the evil forces in room 217). Gothic time works always in mysterious ways.

The chapters in Part II, "Gothic spaces," seek to focus critical attention upon specific spaces or sites of Gothic production from the eighteenth century to the present day, including the fanciful architectural constructions of some of Gothic fiction's earliest practitioners (8); the imaginative geographies of Romantic-era Gothic romance (9); the uncanny abodes and domiciles of Victorian England (10); the strange and unsettling landscapes of nineteenth-century America (11); the alienations of the modern city and its suburbs (12); and the haunted architectural formations of cyberspace (13). If there is such a thing as a poetics of Gothic space, it is certainly not the "felicitous space" that lies at the heart of Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) – the sanguine spaces of childhood to which we fondly return in our memories, dreams and daydreams – but rather the "hostile spaces," such as those seen in the tales of Poe, that his study deliberately chooses to ignore (Bachelard 1994: xxxv-vi). For these are spaces in which the Gothic most characteristically deals: the spaces in which we have been hurt and wounded, but to which we obsessively return, the sites we remember in painful and horrific recollection, the spaces that return unwittingly *to us* in moments of lurid, traumatic recall.

Part III, "Gothic readers and writers," traces the long-standing investment of the Gothic aesthetic in the practice and experience of reading and writing, be that through locating its position within Romantic-era reading and publishing practices more generally (14; 15); outlining the primary literary forms in which it circulated across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; (17; 18; 23); tracing its relation to various forms of "recycling" and "retelling" (16; 19; 20); or through considering its age- and institution-defined readerly audiences across time (21; 22; 25; 26; 27). However, as far as Samuel Taylor Coleridge in that famous footnote in *Biographia Literaria* (1817) was concerned, the countless hours idly frittered away in the perusal of a Gothic romance were as remote from the active, "muscular" engagements of the ideal reading-experience as conceivably possible: "For as to the devotees of the circulating libraries, I dare not compliment their pass-time, or rather kill-time, with the name of reading. Call it rather a sort of beggarly day-dreaming during which the mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness and a little mawkish sensibility" (Coleridge 1975: 28). Instead, Coleridge continued, the readers of Gothic were akin more to those passive, all-too-indolent audiences of the age's mass visual entertainment, the entire imagery of their vacant "doze" being "supplied *ab extra* by a sort of mental *camera obscura* manufactured at the printing office, which *pro*

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tempore fixes, reflects and transmits the moving phantasms of one man's delirium, so as to people the barrenness of a hundred other brains afflicted with the same trance or suspension of all common sense and all definite purpose" (Coleridge 1975: 28). Although, as Jonathan Crary has argued, the camera obscura in the eighteenth century served as a guiding metaphor in the work of Leibniz, Descartes, Newton and Locke for rationalism and empiricism's accurate and truthful inferences about the world that the act of visual observation could provide, it remained invariably haunted by the spectral conjurations and ghostly illusions of the magic lantern show (Crary 1992: 33). Synonymous in the mind of Coleridge and other detractors with the phantasmagoric displays of the magic lantern show, the Gothic imagination is one of ghostly and ghastly spectacle.

Albeit not in these damning terms, the chapters in "Gothic spectacle," Part IV of this collection, seek to sketch out precisely the visual coordinates of the Gothic imagination foregrounded in Coleridge's critique, tracing, as they do so, its manifestations across eighteenth-century painting (28); nineteenth-century illustration (29); Gothic theatricality from the eighteenth century to the present (30); Victorian ghouls and monsters (31); early and contemporary horror cinema (32; 33; 34); and modern visual art (35). Tacitly sketched out here, perhaps, is a history of Gothic in and of visual culture that runs from the panoptical arrangements of Michel Foucault's modern discipline – the public spectacle of torture and punishment figured with such gruesome attention to detail in such early Gothic fictions as Lewis's *The Monk* and Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) – through a version of Guy Debord's "Society of the Spectacle" in Gothic fictions of the Victorian *fin de siècle* – the fetishizing of the images, trappings and commodities of the Life Beautiful in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), or the bourgeois dependence on the technologies of industrial modernity for the vanquishing of vampirism in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* – to the Baudrillardian world of simulation and simulacra figured in, say, Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) and Will Self's *Dorian: An Imitation* (2002), thoroughly Gothic worlds in which any sense of the "real" has been eclipsed and replaced by only so many simulations of already groundless images and signs (Foucault 1991; Debord 1983; Baudrillard 1994). Theoretically, the visual trajectory of Gothic production from the eighteenth century to the present is the movement from Foucault's panopticism, through Debord's spectacular consumerism, to the naturalized and forgotten spectacles of Baudrillardian simulation. Indeed, the relationship between Gothic and the culture of simulation becomes an ever-present concern in the chapters brought together in "Contemporary impulses," Part V of this collection, be that through the sonic simulation of ghosts (36); the simulated digital environments of Gothic gaming (38); the fictional and televisual reiterations of so many life-drained tropes (39; 41); the pursuit of the thrills and accoutrements of an already simulated "Gothic lifestyle" (37; 40); or a world that has been robbed of its "real" monsters altogether, but which remains all the more Gothic for it (42).

THE GOTHIC CHRONOTOPE

If the coordinates of time and space are the two structural principles and conceptual categories that are privileged across this collection, it is because, together, they lend

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themselves as crucial elements in the definition of what might constitute a “Gothic” aesthetic. While, with the passage of time since the eighteenth century, the political meanings of the Gothic have become ever remote, and while, for all our economic and environmental anxieties, the world in which we currently live does not *actually* resemble the dark, apocalyptic Gothic worlds represented in *World War Z*, *The Road* or *The Passage*, the Gothic in twenty-first-century culture remains primarily a matter of stylistic and aesthetic concern, and one that countless critics and cultural commentators have sought to define. Few academic studies in the field, in fact, fail to advance a definition of the Gothic in their opening pages. But it is to Chris Baldick’s often-cited definition of the Gothic advanced in his “Introduction” to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (1992) that we ought at this point to return, particularly if we are to recuperate for the term a critical function and utility in the face of what recent critics have identified as its over-application, its redundancy or even possible meaninglessness. “For the Gothic effect to be attained,” Baldick claims, “a tale should combine a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration” (Baldick 1993: xix). The Gothic effect, he argues, is constituted at that point of intersection between time and space, between “the tyranny of the past” (often in the form of a family curse, the survival of ancient despotisms and benighted superstitions) and “the dead-end of physical incarceration” (in such spaces as dungeons, the locked room or the family mansion at large) (Baldick 1993: xix). In its references to “effect,” and in its allusions to the “sickening descent into disintegration” that the Gothic text, at its most characteristic, is said to “produce,” Baldick’s definition ultimately relies upon a theory of spectator or readerly reaction, one that seems less useful when attempting to describe and define the Gothic beyond the vagaries of subjective emotional response.

Working within an earlier and different formalist tradition, Mikhail Bakhtin had made comparable recourse to the dimensions of time and space in his own approach to the problem of generic classification as early as 1937. Borrowing the term from Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, Bakhtin in the essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics” advanced the notion of the “chronotope” (literally, “space-time”) as a means of referring to “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin 1981: 84). Taken to refer to the point of intersection between the temporal and spatial axes, that place at which the distinctions between the two dimensions become almost negligible, the chronotope for Bakhtin is a formally constitutive category of “generic significance” (Bakhtin 1981: 84) insofar as it lends to any literary mode its distinctiveness. In other words, the way in which any given literary genre organizes, arranges and distributes the elements of time and space internal to it is central to its self-constitution and critical definition as such. Ancient Greek romance, for instance, becomes in this way of thinking the genre that is formed at the point of fusion between a particular conceptualization of time (“in one and the same place”) and a particular representation of space (“in one and the same place”) (Bakhtin 1981: 97). By contrast, Bakhtin describes the chronotopic arrangement of time and space that is particular to the chivalric romance as “*a miraculous world in adventure-time*” (Bakhtin 1981: 154), the former referring to the magical

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unreadable, unstable nature of the romance world and the latter to the numerous temporal interruptions, sudden occurrences and short, sequential adventures into which time in medieval romance is often divided.

Some of the other chronotopes considered by Bakhtin in the essay include the literary Idyll and the Rabelaisian novel: in each instance, generic peculiarity is said to lie in a particular manifestation of, and connections between, the coordinates of time and space. But it is when Bakhtin turns to consider the Gothic that the usefulness of his chronotopic approach becomes especially evident:

Toward the end of the seventeenth century [. . .] in England, a new territory for novelistic events is constituted and reinforced in the so-called “Gothic” or “black” novel – the *castle* (first used in this meaning by Horace Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto*, and later in Radcliffe, Monk Lewis and others). The castle is saturated through and through with a time that is historical in the narrow sense of the word, that is, the time of the historical past. The castle is the place where the lords of the feudal era lived (and consequently also the place of historical figures of the past); the traces of centuries and generations are arranged in it in visible form as various parts of architecture, in furnishings, weapons, the ancestral portrait gallery, the family archives and in the particular human relationships involving dynastic primacy and the transfer of hereditary rights. It is this quality that gives rise to the specific kind of narrative inherent in castles and that is then worked out in Gothic novels.

(Bakhtin 1981: 246)

The Gothic castle, in other words, is chronotopic insofar as it bears witness to an “organic cohesion of spatial and temporal aspects and categories” (Bakhtin 1981: 246): in addition to being the site in which much of the narrative action in early Gothic fiction occurs, the ruined Gothic pile is, itself, the spatial embodiment of historical time. Consequently, it is in this chronotopic structure that the singularity of the genre might be said to inhere, and extending Bakhtin’s mode of reasoning, we might thus define the early Gothic fictions of Walpole, Reeve, Lee, Radcliffe, Roche, Lewis, Maturin and others as “adventure-time in Gothic-architectural space”: “adventure-time” is the temporal schemas of the romance form, composed of so many digressions, interruptions, false turns and circuitous returns, and “Gothic-architectural space” the dark and gloomy interiors of the ruin, cathedral, monastery, labyrinth or dungeon in which this temporal schema is usually enacted. Adventure-time in Gothic-architectural space: Gothic writing is constituted at the place of intersection between these interrelated spatial and temporal coordinates.

Of course, to speak, as Bakhtin does, of a “Gothic genre” is also potentially to strap this, the most adaptive and mercurial of aesthetics, into a critical straight-jacket, reducing it to a standardized and somewhat predictable constellation of tropes and conventions. When one attempts to draw together two texts as historically remote and aesthetically diverse from one another as *The Castle of Otranto* and David Fincher’s horror film *Seven* (1995), such an approach quickly reveals its shortcomings: here, not even the ghost, that apparently most stable and consistent of Gothic tropes, is capable of forging any common ground between them. And yet, they both remain in some ineffable sense quintessentially “Gothic.” As several critics

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have thus argued, the Gothic is more a mode than a consistent, stable and formally recognizable genre, one that permeates several forms of cultural expression and one that continuously metamorphoses and reinvents itself across time. Its characteristics are seldom stable. But a chronotopic approach to the challenge of defining the Gothic aesthetic remains useful insofar as it provides a critical vocabulary for, and technical point of purchase upon, an otherwise rather nebulous sense of Baldick's "Gothic effect": "this poem, this novel, this painting, this film or this piece of music undoubtedly 'feels' Gothic or 'Gothicky', and we might put this feeling into words in the following way." The works of Walpole, Reeve, Lee, Radcliffe and Lewis are "Gothic," in other words, because they all give expression to the chronotope of "adventure-time in Gothic-architectural space."

Its applicability far exceeds the well-known fictions of the early tradition, too. Perhaps *Frankenstein's* major contribution to the Gothic was to employ the language of horror and terror beyond what by 1818 had become the mode's established chronotope: devoid of any prominent sense of architectural ruin, Mary Shelley also cuts the Gothic free of the historical past by setting her narrative in the more recent past of the eighteenth century. While for the most part maintaining the familiar elements of Gothic space, her parents William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft had effected similar temporal modifications to the Gothic chronotope in *Things as they Are: Or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and *Maria: Or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) respectively: almost two centuries before Angela Carter made her famous declaration, Godwin, Wollstonecraft and other radical writers in the Jacobin tradition were of the conviction that they lived and wrote "in Gothic times." With *Frankenstein*, then, the Gothic chronotope is reconfigured as the spectacle of the monstrous body, as what we might term the "romance-time of monstrous corporeal space": though it is never represented in any detail in the course of Shelley's narrative, the image of the monster's body that the reader, in a chilling mirroring of the actions of Victor Frankenstein himself, pieces and stitches together from the shards of available description is one that rapidly took cultural hold. From *Frankenstein* onward, a particular strand of dramatic and literary Gothic would be given over to recounting the romance-fuelled adventures of deformed and Othered bodies, a tendency that persists in such nineteenth-century literary texts as Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" (1872), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Victorian Gothic, in fact, renders the architectural spaces of the earlier Gothic tradition considerably more capacious, daring to display the bodies of its inverts, degenerates, doubles and criminals in their sometimes secretive, sometimes bold perambulations across the urban spaces of the modern city. "Perverse adventure-time in urban space" might serve as its chronotopic description.

With the rise of cinema in the early twentieth century, the spectacular body becomes the stuff of the big screen: F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932); its post-Frankensteinian legacy continues in the spectacular corporeality of the modern horror film, from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), through Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) and Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), to the recent Saw franchise of "torture porn." In such modern and contemporary Gothic fictions as William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971), Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974), Iain Banks's *The Wasp*

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Factory (1984), Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* (1989), Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) and John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Let the Right One In* (2004), the spectacular body of the Other becomes ever more disgusting, threatening and abject. In film, it serves as ghastly spectacle in George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982), Wes Kraven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) and Eli Roth's *Hostel* (2005), among countless others. At times, the spectacle is the body of the victim, at times the body of the monster / vampire / zombie / slasher / serial killer itself. Throughout the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, though, the Gothic chronotope of old persists, in the "adventure-time in Gothic-architectural space" figured in a broad and diverse range of canonical Gothic fictions that includes, amongst others, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), the tales of Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), Henry James's shorter Gothic tales and *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), the ghost stories of M.R. James, Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1911), Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* Trilogy (1946–59), Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), Sarah Waters's *The Little Stranger* (2009), Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) and Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind* (2001). Filmically, it endures in such titles as Robert Wise's *The Haunting* (1964), Alejandro Amenábar's *The Others* (2001), David Fincher's *Panic Room* (2002), Juan Antonio Bayona's *The Orphanage* (2007) and James Watkins's recent *The Woman in Black* (2012). As such, the chronotope of the early Gothic tradition remains, to date, the most dominant, even within a contemporary context in which the Gothic has been subject to such widespread appropriation and diffusion across the entire panoply of cultural forms and media.

What, though, of the slew of recent Gothic texts the likes of those discussed at the start of this Introduction? How do contemporary fictions such as *World War Z*, *The Road* and *The Passage* relate to the enduring Gothic chronotope of "adventure-time in Gothic-architectural space"? None of them contains any pervasive sense of architectural structure, and the action that does occur in their laboratories, wastelands, offices, boardrooms, cyber-worlds and ruined cityscapes across the globe is not always of the order of "adventure." Perhaps what we are witnessing here, in our own "Gothic World" of the twenty-first century, is the instantiation of another Gothic chronotope, new in that it is inflected with current socio-economic anxieties but old insofar as it marks a return to swarming, the dominant metaphors of the Gothic from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Metaphors of swarming, to be sure, recur throughout modern and contemporary Gothic writing: in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let me Go* (2005), the monstrous clones persistently "swarm" around Madam when they try to gauge her fear of them; in Adam Nevill's *Apartment 16* (2010), Seth describes what he senses on the eighth floor of the old house as "an active energy. A kind of swarming, bustling sensation in the air, as if the presence of former activity was locked in place and unable to escape" (Nevill 2010: 45). But, more than this, contemporary Gothic production, with all its apocalyptic economic and environmental fears, in all its concerns with global terrorism and its anxieties concerning technology and the advent of a monstrous, post-human future, might

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chronotopically be described as “swarming-time in global space,” as vampires and viruses, clones and cyborgs, zombies and other aberrant beings swarm the globe with regard for neither nation, politics nor human identity. Deterritorialized, mobile and ever-more ferocious, these are the Gothic figures that insistently swarm, invading all forms of contemporary cultural production with the violence of their ancient forebears.

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PART I
GOTHIC HISTORIES



CHAPTER ONE

THE POLITICS OF GOTHIC HISTORIOGRAPHY, 1660–1800



Sean Silver

The Gothic did not begin as the kaleidoscopic category that it has become. It did not refer to the occult, the macabre, or the supernatural; it was not a genre of horror-driven art, a subgenre of rock music, a style of soaring architecture, or a post-punk subculture with its own recognizable fashion. Nor did it mean, simply, “of or pertaining to the Goths” – the fourth-century civilization in upper Germania – or even, more loosely, “medieval,” “antique,” or “barbaric.” In its original acceptance, the Gothic referred to a partly misremembered, partly manufactured, yet still historically potent myth of origins for the balanced model of English politics. During the century following the 1660 Restoration of the Stuart dynasty to the English throne, the Gothic, in its most important English language usage, emerged as the word that summarized a particular form of constitutional politics. It referred to a way of conceptualizing the present as the legacy of a mythologized past, a way, that is, of imagining history. We might say, then, that the Gothic did not begin as anything at all, for its ultimate origins are lost in a loose mix of myth and mystified national causes.

How the Gothic got here, from there, from a politics to an aesthetics, hinges first on the work of one man, the author of what we have now come to call the first Gothic novel. This author is Horace Walpole, who condensed a lifelong interest in the objects of the past into a hasty proto-novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). The initial inspiration was a dream, a medieval dream of the supernatural, but the tale’s obsessions and major themes are with the Gothic way of telling history. As unlikely as it may seem, then, Gothic historiography, the writing of English history as Gothic history, is the common stem that has blossomed into the word’s many modern applications. A mainstream, politically-motivated way of thinking about the past has proliferated into a distinct form of fiction, a sort of music, a category of revival architecture and, more generally, a decidedly counter-cultural lifestyle and aesthetic.

THE POLITICAL ORIGINS OF THE GOTHIC

The story of the Gothic starts with an absence. The critical fact of English politics, driving centuries of tense consensus punctuated by violence, is its lack of a

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foundational document. British law has no firm beginning to which to point, no original charter which, like Roman law, is etched in stone, and certainly no constitution in the sense that Americans use the word today. The Magna Carta, often referred to in discussions of the English constitution, is an outsized agreement to abide by precedent, and therefore itself stands on the statute books, rather than the other way around. Likewise, the monarch's authority flows from no primitive contract; instead, it stands upon an imposing precedent and the rule of custom. By the seventeenth century, the King could point to nearly six hundred years' worth of lineage; he belonged to a long, admittedly complicated line of authority stemming from William I, the first Norman King of England. When William the Conqueror defeated the Anglo-Saxon King Harold at Hastings in 1066, he forged by force of arms a title to the throne and to centralized, executive power. Upon assuming the role of supreme head of the church in 1534, King Henry VIII additionally united sacred to secular supremacy, adding to the weight of precedent the doctrine of the divine right of rule. The Tudor and Stuart dynasties thereafter wielded a nearly unchallengeable justification for political power, even in the absence of any contract initiating this legal and political tradition.

The Gothic first emerged as a political category during the long and ruinous Civil War (1642–49), which pitted the largely Puritan, commercially inclined Parliament against the centralized government of king and court. In 1616, King James I published (in a revised edition) what was perhaps the strongest statement of the monarch's own inalienable rights; the *Trew Law of Free Monarchies* posed a strong version of the divine theory of rule, sketching a broad justification of power which was vigorously pursued by his son, King Charles I. Nathaniel Bacon, during a life that crossed statecraft and political philosophy, established himself as an active parliamentarian, becoming one of the chief mouthpieces in the argument for republican government. Bacon had no interest in overthrowing the doctrine of the divine right of rule, whereby political authority descends ultimately from divine providence. His *An Historical Discourse on the Uniformity of Government in England* (1647–51) argues instead for representative government as a component branch under the general rubric of divine right. "The utmost perfection of this nether world's best government," Bacon insists, "consists in the upholding of a due proportion of severall interests compounded into one temperature" (Bacon 1647: np). Thus envisioned, the republican parliament tempers the king's will and pleasure, just as the king's single voice and vested authority restrains the state from lapsing into a chaos of competing interests. This sounds reasonable, but it was nevertheless treasonous: according to Bacon's argument, the "Uniformity" of English government would not flow from a single person – that is, the king – but from the dynamic tension emerging out of the constantly shifting, generally opposed interests of Parliament and court (see Pocock 1957).

Against King James's weighty appeal to tradition, what Bacon called his "Arbitrary rule over English Subjects" (Bacon 1647), Bacon sought to identify an ideological counterweight, a tradition of representative rule that could justify the parliamentarian side in the Civil War. The King could point to 600 years of rule, stemming from the Norman King William; Bacon's *Historical Discourse* identified a much older tradition of distributed power, originating ultimately in the government by assembly practiced amongst the northern tribes of Europe. The first of these tribes

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to appear on the English scene, according to Bacon's argument, was the Saxons, who mingled and married with the Britons following the fifth-century withdrawal of the Roman Empire. To them, Bacon ascribes what would become traditional: the division of "their Country . . . into Counties or Circuits," the "election of [their] Princes . . . by the general assembly" (the "wittagenmote") and the "worship of an invisible and an infinite Deity" (Bacon 1647: 14–15, 58). With their suspiciously English institutions, the Saxons therefore provided a plausible tradition for the recognizable features of English government; like the English, the Saxons boasted distributed legal authority and government by a parliament of freeholders, both of which were nevertheless compatible with a monotheistic church. When Bacon mentions the Saxons, then, it is clear that he is also talking about the parliamentary side in the Civil War; each is called "a free people," Bacon insists, "because they are a Law to themselves" (Bacon 1647: 15).

If the story ended here, however, Neil Gaiman and Anne Rice would be shelved in the Saxon section, and bands like Joy Division and The Cure would have inaugurated a new wave of music called Sax Rock. But the very immemoriality of Saxon political custom called for a more mythic origin, a deeper wellspring of traditional causes. "The Saxons," writes Bacon, "were in name our first matter," that is, our "first mater" or "mother," yet it was "not they onely," for "they having once made the breach open, and entered this Island," they were followed by "those Eastern peoples of the Angles, Danes, Almaines, and Goths" (Bacon 1647: 96). Among these, the "Angles" offered to England their name: the Angles becoming the "Engl-" of "England." The "Goths" offered something more. The "Saxon King," Bacon writes, himself received them "as sworn brethren, kinsmen, and proper Citizens of this Common-weale" (Bacon 1647: 96), because they brought with them the perfection of certain critical laws of government and primogeniture. Later commentators would go further, ascribing to the Goths themselves the strong set of republican laws only later adopted by the Saxon commonwealth. But the outlines of the narrative were already clear: the English government would henceforth be Gothic in origin, the Gothic influence on Anglo-Saxon political tradition accounting for England's uniquely mixed mode of government. "Nor can any Nation upon earth," Bacon concludes, "shew so much of the ancient Gothique law as this Island hath" (Bacon 1647: 96).

Though Bacon did not invent this narrative, ascribing it instead to remarks by Julius Caesar and Cornelius Tacitus, the Gothic would eventually come to serve as the traditional source of republican institutions, a site where a scholar tracing the history of British custom might plausibly pause before plunging into time immemorial. If the line of English kings could be traced all the way back to William the Conqueror, Parliament, as a native institution, could be traced back much farther, indeed to the very people that William defeated at Hastings in the first place. Because of the priority it assumed, the Gothic thereafter became a standard part of British history, figuring in such politically-motivated tracts as James Harrington's *Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), Henry Neville's *Plato Redivivus* (1681), Algernon Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government* (1698, published posthumously), and the anonymous *Vox Populi, Vox Dei* (1709). By 1716, statesman and essayist Joseph Addison might archly remark of "an old Justice of Peace who lives in the Neighbourhood, and will talk you from Morning till Night on the *Gothic Balance*"

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(Addison 1716: 53). By the middle of the century, even Viscount Bolingbroke, a Tory statesman so conservative he would end up in exile during Robert Walpole's Whig administration, might celebrate "The Freedom of our Gothic Institution of Government . . . transmitted down from our *Saxon Ancestors*" (Bolingbroke 1735: 102). The Gothic began as an appeal for radical parliamentarians, but would come to be used by Whig and Tory alike, strange bedfellows united by their appeal to the past as a guide for the political present.

For good and ill, then, the Gothic way of telling history would prove to be an important early component in the development of the modern British nation-state. It was the first experiment in what would emerge as a necessary precondition for the nation generally as, in Benedict Anderson's terms, "new-emerging nations imagined themselves antique" (Anderson 1991: xiv; see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Chapter 5 of this volume). It is not just that the Gothic historically explained the British constitution, providing a genealogical story for a whole community, and an explanation for what sets it apart from others. It is what guaranteed, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, the exceptionalism of British culture, anchoring a community as much by ethnicity as by a shared way of being in the world, a shared commitment to a set of inherited values. This, then, is where the Gothic began: as a way of anchoring British parliamentary politics.

STADIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE GOTHIC AESTHETIC

By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, Gothic historiography would be swept up in an even more ambitious historiographic mode. Abandoning the traditional interest in the actions of great men and moral exemplars, early modern historians began the more ambitious task of recapturing the narratives of whole societies, including the patterns in which civilizations might be thought to develop. The so-called stadial model of history, developed largely among the university culture of Scotland, proposes a set of natural laws guiding the development of civilizations. According to this theory, every civilization will inevitably follow the same set of more-or-less universal stages: from the hunter-gatherer phase, a civilization will develop into the pastoral-agricultural, the feudal, and, eventually, the modern-commercial, one predictable phase giving way to the predictable next (Berry 1997; Pocock 1999; Phillips 2000). An analysis of the sources of production would therefore be expected naturally to suggest a set of legal institutions, habits and literary and artistic forms. Each age implied an entire way of being in the world: a cultural consciousness, a general aesthetics, a politics.

The place of the Gothic in stadial historiography is most clearly articulated by Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762). Hurd was an English divine, who would become a bishop, but in the years during which he composed his popular *Letters*, he was a translator and theological writer toiling in obscurity in London. The *Letters*, which in some ways were unlike anything else he wrote, were nevertheless destined to become his most popular achievement, setting the tone for what the Gothic would become. They aim to explain two things: the rise of chivalry as a system of manners, and the aesthetic of the romance as the major art form of the late-medieval and early-Renaissance eras. Each of these, as Hurd understands it, is

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routed through the Gothic, for the same Gothic system of government that gave rise to the British brand of liberty also gave rise to the arts and decorum of the chivalric romance.

The system of manners known as chivalry, Hurd writes, “seems to have sprung immediately out of the Feudal Constitution” (Hurd 1762: 7). This constitution, which directly expressed the Gothic tradition of distributed government, put power in the hands of local barons and freeholders. The central paradox of the Gothic system as understood by Bacon – that a stable system could emerge as the articulation of differences (Pocock 1957) – would become, for Hurd, the defining feature of the Gothic tradition in culture and the arts. Because of the continual political tension between autonomous freeholders, the continual skirmishes and border conflicts which arose between them, soldiers would “go in quest of adventures” (Hurd 1762: 14), which Hurd understands to be a kind of patrolling; the quest narrative might be seen as a natural outcome of the perpetual struggle between small communities of relatively autonomous barons. Hence, too, a system of “Justs and Turnaments” would naturally follow, as a way of maintaining “the military discipline of their followers” (Hurd 1762: 9). “Courtesy, affability, and gallantry” might emerge as a necessary consequence of the neo-urban castle complexes in which men and women were forced to live (Hurd 1762: 15). Even “the free commerce of the ladies,” and the “gallantry” evinced by men, could be welded into a political interpretation of Gothic feudalism; “violations of chastity being the most atrocious crimes they had to charge their enemies,” Hurd supposes, “they would pride themselves in the glory of being its protectors” (Hurd 1762: 17–18). Chivalry, as a martial tradition and a system of manners, was therefore “no absurd and freakish institution, but the natural and even sober effect of the feudal policy” (Hurd 1762: 9), that is, of the Gothic distribution of power.

Liberated from the exemplary model of history – history as the story of great men – amateur and professional historians alike turned to the Gothic as the opportunity for all sorts of cultural narratives. Among other things, the new historiography enabled the expansion of political histories from the narrow stories of the holders of high office to more general considerations of the conditions of day-to-day life for the politically active population at large. Gothic chivalry, for instance, offered a pre-history of politeness, part of the story of a general civilizing process from barbarity to the development of modern, British modes of political debate. Perhaps more important was a vibrant tradition of female historiography, histories by and about women, emerging alongside and under the banner of the Gothic. While past histories might view the state of women as a kind of gauge or index of the progress of civilization, eighteenth-century histories would henceforth identify women both as keepers of the civilizing influence of manners generally, and, more ambitiously, as movers of culture and politics in particular. The Gothic past, imagined and real, provided a number of such examples, not least of which were Gothic and Saxon women who, historians argued, occupied important martial and political offices (see O’Brien 2009).

Hurd’s account has an additional beast in view. Under Hurd’s pen, Gothic historiography, the Gothic tradition in England, implies an aesthetic. When Hurd was composing his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, the style that prevailed in fashionable England was based on a neo-Aristotelian preference for order, regularity and

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stately symmetry. This style, variously called Grecian, Roman and classical, came to be associated with centralized power, especially in the offices of the increasingly bureaucratized British government. Scholars and collectors of antiquity noted, however, a vibrant tradition in Europe and Britain, fully coherent as a style but lacking this classical symmetry. This aesthetic described the medieval castle, which, according to the peculiar accretive logic of siege architecture, displayed centuries of outworks, adaptations and defensive innovations. It also described the soaring, enclosed spaces of the medieval cathedral, overlaid with the patina and pastiche of generations of worshippers living, dying and buried there. As a general articulation of a distributed, more democratically equal system of power, the Gothic emerged as a revived alternative to the art, architecture and even literary genres of centralized monarchy. “When an architect examines a Gothic structure by Grecian [that is, neo-classical] rules,” writes Richard Hurd, “he finds nothing but deformity. But the Gothic architecture has its [*sic*] own rules,” a “unity resulting from the respect which a number of related actions have to one common purpose” (Hurd 1762: 61, 66). This paradoxical twist is, of course, the familiar signature of the Gothic: the uniformity arising from diversity, the various interests compounded into one temperature. From the political to the aesthetic, the route could be surprisingly direct; as Horace Walpole concisely put it, “the Grecian is only proper for magnificent and public buildings”; the Gothic, on the contrary, is marked by its “variety,” its “charming irregularity,” and, in short, by its “liberty of taste” (Lewis 1960: 127).

The particularly British, anachronistically modern aesthetic that justified Gothic architecture also justified the medieval romance, which tended toward the quixotic, open-ended, episodic form of the quest. Each recaptures the Gothic political tradition’s core ideal of liberty, echoes its etiological narratives, and rediscovers its fundamental paradoxes, not least that it continually combines the wildest diversity, including even the supernatural, around a focused set of aesthetic ends. While the romance rose to prominence during the Italian Renaissance, the characteristic qualities of the romance quest, writes Hurd’s contemporary Thomas Percy, might be “discovered as in embryo in the customs, manners, and opinions of every branch of [the Goths]” (Percy 1767: 3). Beginning with Ariosto and Tasso, Goths anyway by association with that tribe’s post-Roman expansion into Italy, “our old romances of chivalry,” Percy writes, “may be derived in a lineal descent from the ancient historical songs of the Gothic bards and scalds” (Percy 1767: 3). Romance, by this logic, would turn out to be a particularly British tradition, for the literary innovations developed among the Italian poets would be passed, in a Gothic line of descent, to the English poets Edmund Spenser and John Milton. The great epics of England, just like the songs and romances unearthed and recirculated by eighteenth-century antiquarians, were to be experienced as a cultural inheritance marking England as the contemporary bastion of Gothic liberty. The aesthetic work (of a political category) is clearly once again political: Percy might celebrate England as the unique place where the Gothic tradition of liberty could blossom once again into song.

GOTHIC MODERNITY

In eighteenth-century Britain, then, the past age of the Gothic medieval meant more than a mere rhetorical gesture or political resource at the highest levels of

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government. It was a reservoir for contemporary action and for political identification in day-to-day life: a repertoire of gestures, habits, materials, expressions, and tendencies which turned up continually, anachronistically, long after their proper time. Joseph Roach invites us to think of the eighteenth century as the paradigmatic moment of “deep” time, the present as the “percolation” of the past from the vast aquifer of history (Roach 2010); the Gothic is the possibly paradigmatic articulation of that tendency, of the tendency of the past to turn up continually in the present. The very survival in the eighteenth century of post-chivalric “gallantry” is one sign of the deepness of time, but the pervasiveness of the Gothic was much broader than this. The British landscape was, after all, littered with debris from its own medieval past; plows turned up burial urns; villagers repeated in ballads the relics of ancient poetry. The British subject lived among fragments of the Gothic on a daily basis.

British law itself, the custom-based “law of the land,” remained vitally important in the day-to-day lives of British subjects even while it pointed continually to a dimly remembered, multiply reconstructed past. This is to say that the politics of Gothic historiography diffused themselves across important aspects of the ordinary experiences of British citizens. “We inherit,” argues eighteenth-century legal theorist William Blackstone, a constitution of “fictions and circuities,” an ancient constitution which is itself

an old Gothic castle, erected in the days of chivalry, but fitted up for a modern inhabitant. The moated ramparts, the embattled towers, and the trophied halls, are magnificent and venerable, but useless. The interior apartments, now converted into rooms of convenience, are chearful and commodious, though their approaches are winding and difficult.

(Blackstone 1765–69: 3.17)

The Gothic was, consciously or not, continually re-enacted and renewed in the present; it was a way of living through the past, of carving out ways of being within the foreign cultural architecture of a native national history. The placid moment of the Gothic present conceals a limitless depth of custom. This history provides the stability of continuity. It also threatens continually to erupt into the present – whether anyone wants it or not. This tension, the tension that marks the presence of the Gothic, therefore predictably provides what emerges as the genre’s fundamental formal feature. “No other form of writing is as insistent as the Gothic,” Jerrold Hogle reminds us, “on juxtaposing potential revolution and possible reaction,” present and past, surface and depth, generic and fantastic (Hogle 2007: 13).

It is worth pausing to remember what the Gothic story of English origins forgets. This is not least because, as we know from countless reworkings of the Gothic project in the plot of the Gothic novel, no inconvenient truth ever stays forgotten: the Gothic mode itself guarantees the return of such truths. For one thing, Gothic myth anchored a fantasy of liberty that neglected anyone who was not a freeholder, including the masses of disenfranchised British men and women, agricultural leaseholders or wage-laborers who in the end had no representation under the Gothic system of government. Despite its claims regarding the veneration

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of women, it perpetuated an asymmetrical relationship between men and women; as John Stuart Mill would much later observe, “it may be permitted to doubt whether the fopperies [of chivalric gallantry] contributed much to the substantial happiness of women, or indicated any real solicitude for their welfare” (Mill 1826: 94–95). Even more significantly, the Gothic story of Britain as a culture ethnically uninflected by anything outside of Northern Europe categorically ignores the dark facts of empire (Doyle 2008). The rhetoric of Gothic liberty erases the often-violent extension of British power, the perpetuation of draconian systems of property laws, and the impressment or forced servitude of the men and women of Britain to fuel the machine of imperial expansion. A Gothic history threatens perpetually to descend into a theory of racial superiority (Kidd 1993: 247–53; and Chapter 4 this volume); this is the case, for instance, of John Pinkerton’s late and enormously controversial *Dissertation on the Origin and Progress of the Scythians or Goths* (1787). It masks the British participation in the buying and selling of Africans as slaves, a commerce which Britain dominated after defeating Spain in 1713. Partly through the popularity of Paul de Rapin’s *L’histoire d’Angleterre* (1724), which advanced a Gothic history of Anglophone culture, the stadial theory of history could in fact *justify* slavery by posing slavery as the natural intersection of societies at very different phases of development (Kaufmann 2004). Finally, by no means did everyone agree that the British constitution was Gothic in origin. James Thomson, a Scottish poet whose *Liberty* (1734–36) was among the most popular in a genre celebrating British character, generally means “Gothic” as a synonym for “barbaric,” tending to refer the special mixed quality of the British constitution to the meliorating leadership of Kings Edward and Henry IV. David Hume, the Scottish scholar whose *History of England* (1754–61) became a standard resource, was likewise comfortable discussing the virtues of what he called Britain’s Gothic constitution, while remaining skeptical that the Gothic tribes themselves had actually supplied much more than a history of bloodshed and ignorance.

In fact, it is partly because of the way that political historiography papers over the controversial past that the Gothic, as a counter-historical mode, re-emerged as a lasting resource. The Gothic began as a counter-historical political mode, and though the story it told slipped into normativity, its oppositional form has persistent force. Horace Walpole’s name has already turned up several times in this account; he was the proponent of the Gothic as an aesthetic of liberty, the author of *The Castle of Otranto*, and, not-at-all coincidentally, son of the same Robert Walpole who drove Bolingbroke into exile. He was a dilettante and a polymath, a belletrist of enormous ambition who sought to pen a history of his time entirely through letters to his friends and colleagues. He built a house in the neo-Gothic style, the style he admired for its “liberty of taste”; this is the rambling villa he called Strawberry Hill, which still stands in the London suburb of Twickenham. He compiled an enormous collection of Gothic antiquities, with which he stuffed his neo-Gothic house. He pursued a history, based largely on Gothic documents and material fragments, that sought to rescue King Richard III from what he took to be Tudor propaganda. It is not all that he is known for, but Walpole’s long and productive life adumbrated the major themes of the Gothic, especially as it tended toward the overthrow of power in the name of the especially British form of liberty.

— CHAPTER I: *The politics of Gothic historiography, 1660–1800* —

Walpole's only extended fictional prose narrative, published two years after Hurd's *Letters*, provides the major hinge between Gothic historiography and the first use of the Gothic in its modern acceptation. Romantic-era author Sir Walter Scott, whose *Ivanhoe* (1820) itself recapitulates the politics of Gothic historiography, cemented Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* as the source of the Gothic genre, providing both a modern way of telling historical romance, and the name it still bears. We are ready to see, however, that Walpole himself was merely working within and against a rich way of thinking about the past. *The Castle of Otranto*, subtitled (in its second edition of 1765) "A Gothic story," takes its name immediately from its setting. It is set in medieval Italy, in an area settled by the Goths after the Roman occupation. But the novel takes its major themes from the rich network of associations clustered around the Gothic as Walpole understood it: as a liberty of effects, as a way of telling a story, and, especially, as a way of articulating present and past.

The narrative turns on the House of Manfred, the dynasty of the tyrant-prince of Otranto who is prince because of an ancient regicide, the murder, generations previously, of the martyr-king Alfonso the Good. The tale opens when a young man named Theodore arrives in Otranto, instantly becoming popular both with the people of Otranto and the women of the court. Though he is the rightful heir to the throne, he himself believes that he is a peasant, and, because the official history insists that no claimant to the throne exists, everybody else believes he is a peasant, too. Put differently, Manfred's rule is justified by generations of precedent, and a political mode of history that obscures an ancient act of violence. The plot of the story is not precipitated, then, by politics in the present. It is kicked off, instead, by the emergence of a series of portents, relics and documents welling up from the buried past. The first of these is a giant helmet that looks precisely like the head of a statue of Alfonso. Later, a portrait comes to life, massive pieces of armor appear unexpectedly in the twists and turns of the castle, a giant scimitar appears with an encoded message, a skeleton in a monk's cowl drifts through secret passages. Each of these points, more unambiguously than the last, to the act of violence that the official history obscures. What begins as the story of a prince perpetuating a historiographically legitimized dynasty becomes instead the story of a helmet, a portrait, a suit of armor, an unearthed sword and a skeleton from the closet. These are the revenants of the uninterrable past, the elements of the Gothic. People do not so much write or rewrite history as the objects of history themselves step in, sometimes literally, to repair the traumas of the present. In the end, a popular (though unwilling) prince, with the legitimation of a greater precedent than the tyrant-prince he replaces, will assume the throne of Otranto.

The special case of the Gothic as a resource against the polemics of kings and magistrates becomes, under Walpole's able pen, the general contest between the everyday and the erupting occult. *The Castle of Otranto* therefore provides, according to more than one account, the first major step in the rise of supernatural fiction, in what would become the Gothic. It is episodic; it is interested in the roles of women; it concerns the actions of ordinary people under extraordinary circumstances; it remarks on the contest of manners (between the gentle Theodore and the vicious Manfred); and it poses a contest between a tyrant and a tradition of popular kingship, the line of Manfred against the line of Alfonso the Good. It stages the

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documented claims of the current order against a much older, vanquished order of being. Finally, most importantly, *The Castle of Otranto* signals the beginnings of what we know as the Gothic not as a moment of something new, but as the turning-up of something immemorially old, an irruption figured as the supernatural, or, if you like, the return of the repressed. In its beginning, and in ways that echo in its continuing influence, the Gothic articulates a deep sense of the past as an ineluctable, inconvenient, possibly unwanted, but nevertheless abiding element of the present. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the general contours of the Gothic are therefore already clear: it is a political, historiographic mode emerging as a way of being in the present, the experience of modernity as continually routed through and ruptured by the past.

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