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GOTHIC WRITING
1750-1820

A genealogy

EDITED BY ROBERT MILES



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GOTHIC WRITING
1750–1820

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For Bryan Burns

1945-2000

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A genealogy

Second edition

Robert Miles

Manchester University Press

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Preface to the second edition

Much has changed since *Gothic Writing* was first published in 1993. During the 1980s, when this book was largely written, there did not seem to be a great deal of critical interest in the larger historical and theoretical questions posed by David Punter's seminal *The Literature of Terror*, a work which can be described, accurately I think, as the first properly cultural study of the Gothic.¹ *Gothic Writing* was an attempt to move the argument forward. Since its appearance, it has become clear that actually quite a few critics were mulling over the critical and cultural issues raised by Punter's book, as can be seen by the flood of recent monographs. 'Flood' is, of course, a loaded term, one that begs an important question: do these works reflect the ebb and flow of critical fashion, or do they constitute the stable beginnings of a new disciplinary area of critical work? In considering this question I have an obvious interest to declare, not least because, since the publication of *Gothic Writing*, I have become involved with *Gothic Studies*, a new journal launched on the premise that the Gothic does constitute a particularly fruitful, multi-disciplinary field of cultural investigation. My present sense of the field is that it is situated both at the margins and at the centre of 'English': at the margins, because the study of the Gothic is not primarily occupied with the best that has been thought and written, with those aesthetic concerns which constituted the canonisation on which traditional English studies were based; but at the centre, because it involves itself with those wider questions about the work of culture that have inspired much of what is innovatory in English. Of course, there are many who would argue that English does not currently exhibit a centre or a margin – that it features, rather, dynamic flux, or terminal confusion, depending upon one's point of view. Whatever the case, it remains true to say that the best work in the Gothic has had to be methodologically inventive, as traditional disciplinary skills do not equip the critic with what he or she needs in

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order to secure a deeper purchase on the puzzling phenomenon we call the Gothic, the surprisingly stubborn and recurrent interest, best described, not simply as, say, the 'macabre', but as a vibrant dialect in the Western, cultural imagination.

All this by way of putting the re-publication of *Gothic Writing* into context. As our market research for *Gothic Studies* showed, the Gothic is now a common feature of university syllabuses throughout the English speaking world; Macmillan, Blackwells, Cambridge University Press, Manchester University Press, Routledge, the English Association and the MLA, have all published – or are in the process of so doing – support material, 'handbooks', for the study of the Gothic;² and amongst the 'flood', there have been a large number of excellent studies which have not just changed, but expanded the field. My assumption is that readers will want to know how *Gothic Writing* relates to this changed scene. The first purpose of this preface, then, is to sketch out how it does relate. Rather than a comprehensive description of the criticism that has appeared in the last seven years I shall restrict my references to those works having a bearing on the critical ground staked out by *Gothic Writing*, on what E. J. Clery and Maggie Kilgour have called (after Ian Watt) the 'rise' of the Gothic.³ An advantage of reviewing one's work retrospectively, in the context of a changing discipline, is that it provides an opportunity for observing issues, half-covered at the time, which have since been laid bare. I want to avail myself of this opportunity by pointing out some aspects of *Gothic Writing's* methodology which time has helped clarify. That is my second purpose; my third is to give a brief indication of the changes I have made to this new edition of *Gothic Writing*.

As Diane Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism* (1998), Anne Williams' *Art of Darkness* (1995), and E. J. Clery's *Gothic Women Writers* (2000) all demonstrate, feminist scholarship continues to make a significant contribution to the field of Gothic studies.⁴ But in terms of *Gothic Writing*, the relevant area of work has been the recent spate of historicist readings that have examined the emergence of the Gothic with a new particularity. E. J. Clery adopts a cultural materialist approach in *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (1995); James Watt attempts to sketch out the generic and cultural heterogeneity of the literary-historical solecism we know as the 'Gothic novel' in *Contesting the Gothic* (1999); in *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (1999) Robert Mighall demonstrates how the Gothic's recurrent tropes were imbricated in the emerging disciplines of anthropology and medicine; Michael Gamer usefully reconsiders the important question of the relationship between the Gothic and Romanticism; in *Alien*

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Nation (1997) Cannon Schmitt initiates a discussion of the much overlooked issue of nationalism and the Gothic; while Jacqueline Howards *The Gothic Novel: A Bakhtinian Approach* (1994) complements what *Gothic Writing* has to say about the carnivalesque.⁵ What these studies have in common is a desire to catch the Gothic's contemporary inflections, thus placing Gothic works in their cultural and historical context. As such they largely turn their faces against the powerful Freudian paradigm of the unconscious, and 'uncanny', which had previously been so influential.⁶

The lament I made at the end of *Gothic Writing*, about the paucity of sophisticated literary histories of the Gothic, is no longer relevant. *Gothic Writing* was, it is now clear, part of a general reassessment of the Gothic. It shares the broadly historicist agenda of the works I have mentioned; but in at least one respect it remains, if only for the moment, unique: I refer to its Foucauldian methodology.⁷ While many of the critics mentioned above invoke Foucault – including Gamer, Hoeveler, Schmitt, and Mighall – none do so in a systematic fashion.⁸

What is the significance of this difference? I can best explain by referring to a point recently made by Clifford Siskin.⁹ According to Siskin, Roland Barthes' essay, the 'Death of the Author', has regularly been confused with Foucault's 'What is an Author?', with unfortunate results. Foucault's point is not the Barthesian one that making a fetish of the author forecloses on a text's possible meanings; it is that an analysis which is organized around the concept of the author produces very different results from one that focuses on, say, genre. Foucault is not saying that an author-centred analysis is not valid; but he is saying that it comes at the cost of the non-author-centred analyses one accordingly does not make. Although *Gothic Writing* gives a number of writers special prominence, it is not an author-centred study; it is, rather, discourse-centred.

It is because *Gothic Writing* is discourse-centred that one might think it unique within its particular field; for the same reason, one might also think it odd. When I wrote *Gothic Writing* a central question regarding the relationship between Foucault's body of thought and literature was not sufficiently clear to me; but neither was it, I believe, entirely clear to others. What is problematic about this relationship can be put in a deceptively simple question: is imaginative literature discursive? I can illustrate the force of this question by referring to a debate that occurred in the pages of *New Literary History* in 1995, between John Bender and Dorrit Cohn.¹⁰ The exchange was sparked off by Cohn's review of Bender's *Imagining the Penitentiary*, a systematically Foucauldian study of the interconnections between the

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eighteenth-century novel and penal discourses. Bender's basic argument was that free indirect discourse was discursive, not just in the linguistic, but also in the Foucauldian sense. Critics accept that free indirect discourse (or FID) emerges in the novel towards the end of the eighteenth century. Bender's argument turns on a congruence between FID and Jeremy Bentham's theory of the Panopticon, which Bentham imagined at around the same time as novelists developed FID. In the Panopticon, the prisoners believe they are alone, but are closely watched; enjoy the illusion of autonomy within their cell, but are secretly subject to surveillance. Just so with FID in the novel: characters appear to achieve autonomy through FID, but are in reality controlled by the consciousness that imagines them. Benders thesis is that this congruence between the discourse of carcerality, and the fictional technique, is discursive in the Foucauldian sense. That is, just as the way Bentham imagines the knowing of prisoners witnesses a conjunction of knowledge and power, so, too, do the modes in which novelists come to know their characters. Cohn, an expert in the traditional meanings of FID, objected on the grounds that the way a novelist knows his or her characters could not be discursive in a Foucauldian sense. Cohn's argument was that in Foucault's system, power had to obtain on the same 'ontological plane'; in other words, the relationships Foucault imagines between warder/prisoner; doctor/patient; lawyer/criminal are fundamentally different from those between a real entity (a novelist) and an imaginary one (the novelists character).¹¹ However, Bender is entitled to reply that FID is discursive in the sense that it reproduces a model of knowing present elsewhere in the culture, and that the reception of this model of knowing by the reader is not fundamentally different from, for instance, a woman reading a nineteenth-century treatise on hysteria, which Foucault clearly does see as a discursive act. Even so, Cohn does have a simple, powerful point: in the case of the warder and the prisoner, the flow of power is easy to chart. But how do you chart the flow of power when the same relationship between warder and prisoner is described in a novel, when it is depicted in a virtual space, rather than acted in a real one? And if one cannot chart the flow of power, a discursive methodology becomes of limited use; more to the point, the event one is describing, ceases to be, in any meaningful, Foucauldian sense, discursive. Hence the question: is imaginative literature discursive? Both Cohn and Bender agree that this was a question Foucault unfortunately left unanswered.

Gothic Writing constantly moves in and out of this problem. On the one hand it assembles materials which are straightforwardly

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discursive in Foucauldian terms, on genius, sublimity, national origins, and so on; but on the other it focuses on how these materials fare in fiction's virtual spaces. *Gothic Writing* employs a variety of terms to indicate the unpredictable flow of power in these imaginary domains: 'on edge'; 'turn'; 'transgress'; 'subvert'; 'belated'; and 'the carnivalesque'. I also use the phrase 'crossed with discourse' to indicate that a textual segment partakes both of the purely discursive, and the discursive within the frame of fiction. Hence, too, the tension between what I called the 'Gothic aesthetic' (basically, the discursive construction of an idealised Gothic-ness) and its textual expressions, where it tended to unravel. My point was not that Gothic writing was 'subversive', in the usual meaning of that phrase, but that the accustomed vectors of power that obtained in discursive acts occurring on the same 'ontological plane' outside the text, frequently exhibited symptoms of reversal within it. The final vision of Gothic writing that emerged from the book was that it was a multi-generic occasion whereby the discursive construction of the human subject was imaginatively disassembled, re-assembled, and generally re-figured.

Gothic Writing, then, stands both with, and against, the historicist readings that have come to dominate the field over the last seven years: 'with', because it too endeavours to be more precise about the Gothic's historic inflections; 'against', because of its militant eschewal of the biographical, of the kind of analysis that arises out of a consideration of the text's authorial origins (and in this respect against even much of my own later work). I am not saying that the historicist readings I have mentioned were tightly author-centred; I mean rather that they engage in the kind of materialist approach where the 'facts' of the historical record – including the record of the author's life – are material to interpretation. *Gothic Writing* rigorously excludes consideration of the author-function from its field of operations. To recur back to Clifford Siskin's comments on Barthes and Foucault, the point is not that one way is inherently superior to another; nor even that both are valid; but that in remaining author-centred we sacrifice the possibility of other kinds of interpretation that may (or may not) tell us important things about our culture, including, perhaps, why the pull of the author-function remains so powerful within it.

In preparing *Gothic Writing* for its second edition I have resisted the temptation to tamper unduly, and have let the book remain true to itself as a Foucauldian exploration of the Gothic. I have made a few minor alterations, the most substantial of which has been the removal of numerous quotation marks, especially around such terms as

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'ideology', 'popular literature', 'nation', 'nature'. In a discursive approach, the historical shadings of meaning are highly significant; indeed, for the Foucauldian, all words may be said to carry imaginary quotation marks with them, signifying that present meanings cannot be taken for granted, and that in each locution, a substantive history may be at issue. In the first edition, I tried instinctively (certainly not consciously) to signal this through the liberal use of quotation marks – as I now see, a quixotic, and distracting, tic. In the second edition I have restricted quotation marks to actual quotations; to 'signifiers' (where such indications are appropriate); or to occasions where the semantic history is particularly problematic. The next most substantial change was the alteration of a few sentences on the *Mysteries of Udolpho* which were not as precise as they needed to be. I have left the rest unaltered, apart from the odd word which I have changed for the sake of greater clarity.

Robert Miles

Introduction: what is 'Gothic'?

'What is "Gothic"?' Few literary questions appear so easily answered. A strain of the novel, the Gothic emerged in the mid-eighteenth century and since then has hardly changed. A quick glance reveals the same plots, motifs and figures endlessly recycled. What could be less problematic?

Nevertheless the question is worth asking. For a start, asking it reminds us that it is a literary historical solecism to equate the Gothic only with fiction. During its initial phase (1750-1820) Gothic writing also encompassed drama and poetry, and before it was any of these Gothic was a taste, an 'aesthetic'.

But as David Punter indicates in his review of Elizabeth Napier's *The Failure of Gothic*, Gothic is problematic not simply because it is heterogeneous. Napier's focus, on forms of disjunction in Gothic novels, leads her to conclude that the genre exhibited a collective failure of nerve. The Gothic novel inadvertently raised serious issues, but flinched before them: problematic areas of experience were opened and then uneasily closed. Punter queries the aesthetic value (the seamless narrative) on which Napier's charges rest. The 'schizoid' aspect of Gothic novels noticed by Napier frequently repeats itself, suggesting powerful drives rather than simple aesthetic misadventure. Punter then makes the relevant point. Gothic writing may falter, but it addresses itself to a 'deeper wound', to 'a fracture, an imbalance, a "gap" in the social self which would not go away' (Punter 1987: 26).

Two influential views rise to the surface here. The first is that Gothic writing is 'disjunctive', fragmentary, inchoate, so that, as in the case of fantasy, theory is required to sound the Gothic's deep structure in order to render the surface froth comprehensible. Second, the very repetitiousness of Gothic writing is regarded as mysteriously eloquent: in its inarticulate way, Gothic worries over a problem stirring within the foundations of the self.

Another way of putting this is that the Gothic has found itself embroiled within a larger, theoretically complex project: the history of the 'subject'. Punter's review implicitly works its argument through the figure of neurosis. Compulsive, repetitive, superficially meaningless behaviour somehow addresses a deeper 'wound', a rift in the psyche. Punter understands this as in some sense a collective psyche, one shaped by social and historical forces.

Although Punter is firm with Napier, his review hesitantly advances its thesis, at once driven by the conviction that the Gothic novel attests to an historical emergence of a gap in the subject while chastened by a sense of the theoretical difficulty involved in teasing it out. In this respect his review is a reprise of the tentative theoretical chapter of his highly influential *The Literature of Terror* (1980). Punter's reading of the historical importance of the late eighteenth century – as a period witnessing significant developments in the formation of the modern self – echoes the traditional view of Romanticism as an epiphenomenon of the modern. Michel Foucault's similar periodization of the late eighteenth century – where a series of archival ruptures constitutes the modern – is also relevant here (Foucault 1970: xxii). Relevant, because the upsurge in critical interest in the Gothic since Punter's book has to an extent been driven by these historical paradigms.¹ The Gothic, it is felt, constitutes significant textual evidence for the writing of the history of the subject, evidence only theory can properly interpret.

But what theory? Much of the criticism of the last fifteen years has been concerned with rectifying the crudity of earlier approaches. For instance, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's important *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* criticizes the naivety of traditional readings using depth psychology (Sedgwick 1980: 11-12). The Gothic novel is not fantasy in need of psychoanalysis but a coherent code for the representation of fragmented subjectivity, a code organized along structuralist principles. Somewhat later in a review article David Richter echoed Sedgwick by alleging that up until then (1987) theoretical approaches to the Gothic were largely distinguished by their simplistic use of Freud and Marx. Richter argued that Gothic was not a 'single' dialectic (Richter 1987: 169). Approaches failing to recognize the multiplicity of Gothic were therefore doomed to failure.

As far as I am aware, no single study since Richter's review has set out to chart the multiplicity of 'dialectics' shaping the Gothic. But the variety of readings that have emerged over the last decade do provide ample testimony for the manifold nature of the Gothic. Besides Richter's own, which combines reader response with Marxist theory,

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we have had psychoanalytic readings; interpretations centring on the Gothic as evincing a new metaphysical paradigm, where belief in providence persists, but not faith in its benevolence; scrutiny of the Gothic as an area of theological conflict; and, above all, feminist readings.²

Many of these approaches naturally overlap – as in Punter's book, one can detect a Marxist, psychoanalytic, feminist nexus – and overall there is, I believe, a consensus. The Gothic may evince no single dialectic, but there is broad agreement that the Gothic represents the subject in a state of deracination, of the self finding itself dispossessed in its own house, in a condition of rupture, disjunction, fragmentation. At the same time there is a guardedness against reading the Gothic as if it were governed by a model of surface/depth, of there being a deep structure that would explain Gothics irrationalisms.

My argument in this book is not that the consensus is wrong, but that it does not go far enough. Gothic writing needs to be regarded as a series of contemporaneously understood forms, devices, codes, figurations, for the expression of the 'fragmented subject'. It should be understood as literary 'speech' in its own right, and not the symptom, the signification, of something else 'out there', or 'in here'. The Gothic does represent a disjunctive subject, but these representations are in competition with each other and form a mode of debate. Gothic formulae are not simply recycled, as if in the service of a neurotic, dimly understood drive; rather, Gothic texts revise one another, here opening up ideologically charged issues, there enforcing a closure.

I say 'needs to be regarded' because only by being attuned to the historical inflections of Gothic writing can one begin to respond to the challenge of Punter's suggestion.³ But there is a methodological crux. If it is the case that the Gothic addresses a gap in the subject only a theoretical approach is capable of teasing it out; but theoretical approaches are always in danger of dehistoricizing the Gothic through retrospective reading. One may find oneself encountering, not evidence of a late eighteenth-century gap, only ghosts of twentieth-century ones. And yet Punter's suggestion haunts the agenda of Gothic studies, luring it on while remaining too intangible to grasp. In this respect it is best regarded as an enabling question, one to which we cannot expect ready answers, but which, in trying to answer it, pushes us forward. My response to this push may seem paradoxical. I argue that before one can theorize the Gothic as a response to a 'gap in the social subject' one needs to recoup the Gothic's contemporaneous meanings, itself a theoretical task. But this is only to say that the route through to a deeper understanding of Gothic's cultural meanings is a literary

historical one; and if that route is to lead anywhere, it must be theoretically sensitive.

‘What is “Gothic”?’ My short answer is that the Gothic is a discursive site, a carnivalesque mode for representations of the fragmented subject. Both the generic multiplicity of the Gothic, and what one might call its discursive primacy, effectively detach the Gothic from the tidy simplicity of thinking of it as so many predictable, fictional conventions. This may end up making ‘Gothic’ a more ambiguous, shifting term, but then the textual phenomena to which it points are shifting and ambiguous.

Before beginning I want to take the reader through the specialized terms I have employed while explaining why I have gone about the work in the way that I have. To begin with, I have adopted Michel Foucault’s ‘genealogy’ as the theoretically sensitive model of literary history just mentioned, and for several reasons. First, as already stated, we are dealing, not with the rise of a single genre, but with an area of concern, a broad subject matter, crossing the genres: drama and poetry, as well as novels. Foucault’s non-teleological theory of genealogy will help us trace these developments without losing a sense of their complex multifariousness. Genealogy initially prompts itself for a simple reason. In repudiating evolutionary models it directs our attention to the inter-textual character of Gothic writing. One text does not necessarily build upon a predecessor. On the contrary, it may initiate a dialogue with it, extending, or opening, a previous text, or texts, but also, at times, imposing closure upon it or them. But the theory of genealogy involves more than this, for it reads such dialogue as energized by the power implicit in discourse.

By its very nature this power is diverse, unpredictable, disorderly – thus genealogy as a conceit signalling the non-teleological brand of literary history such a recognition enforces (cf. During 1992: 119-46). I will be looking at the discursive inflections of Gothic material, and these inflections are axiomatically historical. But historical in a specialized sense: we encounter the vicissitudes, not of events, but of discourse, discourse, moreover, occurring in the highly mediated form of literary expression. I have approached this aspect of my genealogy through a series of ever more particular, or ever more literary, boxes. The first, in explicating genealogy, uses the theories of Michel Foucault and Lawrence Stone to problematize the late eighteenth century, as a means of gaining a focus on the kind, and character, of the discourses relevant to the Gothics provenance. The next box, on the Gothic aesthetic, closes on the construction of the Gothic as a taste, an ideology, a series of related discourses at the back of Gothic

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writing. The next three investigate discursive structures intermittently recurring through Gothic writing while the remaining chapters provide intertextual readings, exemplifications of contemporaneously understood, discursively inflected, debate. I want to stress here that these intertextual readings form the methodological lynchpin for interpreting Gothic writing as self-aware debate on the character of the subject.

If this book had an alternative subheading, it would be the 'Gothic turn', by which I mean an inner momentum to break open ideological figures, the tendency of Gothic writing to turn upwards hidden discursive seams, to reveal concealed lines of power. 'Genealogy' alerts us to the inherently carnivalesque quality of popular writing, writing growing out of ideological and/or discursive material. 'Ideological' and 'discursive' sometimes find themselves used synonymously, but I separate them here. I have retained the common usage of 'ideology' as referring to configurations of national or class values individuals might find themselves associated with, as for instance, 'liberalism' or the 'Freeborn Briton'. Discourse is comparatively impersonal, or 'suprasubjective'; the nuance shifts our attention to the textual destiny of power.

The figure 'turn' may call to the reader's mind the deconstructive practices of Jacques Derrida and Paul De Man. 'Deconstruction' has become an inescapable portmanteau word, combining the senses of 'analysis' and 'taking apart'. Here I want to invoke neither Derrida's and De Man's philosophical and rhetorical theories, nor 'deconstructions' familiar sense. I grant the slippery doubleness of language, but by the 'Gothic turn' I mean something implicit within Foucault's theory: the instability of discourse, its tendency, especially within the dialogic space of narrative, to fragment, or round on itself. As such the figure relates to my sense of a Gothic propensity scandalously to reverse closures. When texts invite considerations of self-consciousness in doing just that, I have employed the term 'belated'.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of the dialogic and the carnivalesque are frequently alluded to in the pages that follow. There are several obvious reasons for this. Superficially Gothic works often feature carnivals and masquerades – Charlotte Dacre's *The Confessions of the Nun of St Omer* (1805) and Charles Maturin's *The Fatal Revenge* (1807) both provide examples. More significantly, as Ronald Paulson reminds us, the shadow of the mob crosses the Gothic (1981: 532-54). As imagoes of rites of reversals and Saturnalias – sharply historicized by events in France – these moments of upheaval suggest challenged

authority. Even more importantly, as I shall argue, in the dialogic space of the Gothic suppressed voices find a hearing. Even so, Bakhtin's terms do not directly map onto the Gothic. Bakhtin had in mind the socially particularized voices of the novel, voices sharpened by class division, whereas the Gothic tends to the abstraction of romance. The dialogic and the carnivalesque are indispensable concepts for the Gothic, but they are here used in a highly modified way: one encounters, not contending voices, but contending discourses.⁴

It is in the chapters on the Gothic aesthetic and the hygienic self that I set out to particularize what these discourses are. Generally, they have as their foci issues of national origin, the sublime, genius, vision, reverie, a congeries tied together by a pedagogic concern for the self and its integrity. As such they are discourses in the Foucauldian sense, sites of power/knowledge. Much of this aesthetic material is familiar to students of the eighteenth century, but I rehearse it here because, to a significant extent, it forms the discursive texture of Gothic writing, which psychological approaches in particular have tended to obscure. But at the same time I trust that the novel context in which I discuss this material will help defamiliarize it, will provide new angles of approach.

In order to keep the heterogeneity of the Gothic before the reader I have employed a number of specialized terms. The 'Gothic aesthetic' is used to describe the discursive material (concerning Gothic as a taste) that first pre-existed, and then coincided with, Gothic writing. I speak of 'Gothic writing' or 'Gothic texts' when I want to refer to Gothic as it covers the range of literary genres. 'The Gothic' is used when references to both the Gothic aesthetic and Gothic writing are appropriate. The relationship between the two is complex, but at its simplest, within the dialogic space of Gothic writing one often catches the discursive inflections of the Gothic aesthetic. As is the case here, I primarily employ 'discursive' in the Foucauldian sense.

The solecism 'Gothic novel' has proved unavoidable. Late eighteenth-century critical terminology eventually separated novel from romance. Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous distinction between the two, in his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), is a concise précis of a usage that had hardened half a century earlier. Modern criticism has also found it convenient to keep the two separate. In accordance with both usages, Gothic fiction is unequivocally 'romance', but so are Gothic poems and dramas (in the modern critical sense of being displaced, dystopic representations of 'wish fulfilments'). Accordingly I have reserved 'Gothic romance' for the generality of Gothic writing. Gothic fiction, meanwhile, is

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unavailable as an alternative as it conflates longer works with Gothic tales, which as Chris Baldick has recently shown (Baldick: 1992), is a subgenre of its own, although not one discussed here.

I use Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1979) to bring into focus my thesis that Gothic writing constitutes a contemporaneously understood debate on the discontents of the 'subject'. After discussing Foucault I prepare other ground before returning to the relationship between sexuality and the fragmented subject. As this relationship is not obvious I want to state it baldly here in order to help the reader through the interregnum in my discussion. Foucault argues that the beginning of the modern period did not witness the repression of desire so much as it did an explosion of discourses on sex, discourses focusing on areas of experience now deemed problematic: the sensualized body of modesty, manias, reveries, hysteria. These foci form discursive presences within the Gothic; they at once implicate 'sexuality' and instabilities within the self.

Gender is, to say the least, problematic here. Ellen Moers's coinage the 'female Gothic' (1977: 107) has entered the critical vocabulary (Heller 1992: 2). I argue that it is also feasible – and desirable – to speak of a 'male Gothic'. In one respect one can take these terms as simply designating the sex of the writer. But at the same time the textual differences that validate these coinages are discursive structures, precipitates of culture. Moreover, a great deal of the meaning of the discussions generated by these terms derives from moments of cross-over – when, for instance, female writers mount interventions into the male Gothic, or vice versa, or when female writers hold up to scrutiny the conventions of 'female Gothic' itself, or male writers 'male Gothic'. Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya: Or, The Moor* (1806) and Coleridge's *Christabel* (1797, 1800) are examples of the first and second possibilities. Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) and Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'Rappaccini's Daughter' (Hawthorne 1844a: 107-48) are examples of the last two. One might argue that these exceptions invalidate the terms. But I would want to argue strongly that these crosscurrents of sex and gender, biology and genre, are crucial to an understanding of Gothic writing. I have not had space to review the texts supporting the generalization 'male Gothic', but would point to the novels of Edward Montague, Edward Mortimer and Karl Grosse as places from which to start. I have followed the conventional identification of Ann Radcliffe with the female Gothic (cf. Fleenor 1983). Otherwise I have left it to the reader to balance recognition of the writer's sex with the emerging picture of 'female' and 'male' Gothic as articulations of discursive structures.

There is another matter on which I will have to beg the reader's patience. Foucault's genealogy is the antithesis of the word's conventional meaning – history, not as a neat line of evolutionary descent, but as carnival. Yet the Gothic aesthetic incorporates conventional genealogy. The nations most prized characteristics – patriotism, a love of liberty, respect for women, the English genius for constitutional monarchy – are traced back to our Germanic, or Gothic, origins (Madoff 1979). Gothic texts, on the contrary, exemplify Foucauldian genealogy. To give an apposite example, Burke's Gothic grand narrative of the English constitution, natural, organic, evolutionary, is represented in Gothic writing by imagoes suggesting a contrary, disorderly, disreputable process. Rather than adopting the cumbersome 'genealogy' and 'anti-genealogy' I have trusted that the clear difference of meaning will make the preferred sense self-evident.

The thorniest methodological difficulty I have had to deal with concerns psychoanalysis. As Foucault implies in *The History of Sexuality*, one needs to historicize psychoanalysis before one uses it, a task dauntingly complex in itself (1979: 129-30). And yet, in relation to Ann Radcliffe especially, I continually found concurrence between psychoanalytic models of the subject and Radcliffe's texts. My solution has been to adopt an agnostic attitude: I juxtapose Radcliffe's version of the subject with psychoanalytical ones. Whether these juxtapositions are convincing, and what, historically, one is to make of them, I leave to the reader.

A final work about dates and my choice of texts. I have aimed for a series of judicious mixtures: of canonical and popular works, of works representing the three main genres, of early and late. The date 1750 in its very arbitrariness is meant to signify that Gothic has no strictly identifiable beginning; a genealogy, axiomatically, must begin with the discourses that in some sense precede the 'writing', nor will it content itself, arbitrarily, with the fate of a single genre. If critics were to pick out a terminal date for the close of the first phase of the Gothic, it would probably be 1820, the year in which Maturin's *Melmoth, the Wanderer* was published. I have remained within this conventional periodization. In order to make it easy for the reader to keep his or her literary historical bearings, I include within parentheses the original publication date of the texts cited. When actually quoting I cite the date of the edition used. For the policy here, see the prefatory note to the bibliography.

As regards choice of texts, there have been a number of regrettable exclusions: no Godwin, no Brown, no Hogg, no Maturin, no Scott, no Mary Shelley. The first, and most ready defence, is that, as Foucault

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defines it, there cannot be a single, comprehensive genealogy, only genealogies. One might cite the practical consideration of space, but mainly I would want to insist that a genealogical study including Godwin, Brown, Hogg and Maturin, or one featuring either Scott or Mary Shelley, would have to be substantially different, would have to prepare different, additional, discursive ground in order to enable its readings. No single dialectic includes all Gothic writing, and no single genealogy: there are only supplementary readings.

1

Historicizing the Gothic

In the Introduction I referred to several decisions crucial to historicizing the Gothic: to resist applying evolutionary narratives to the development of Gothic writing; to see the self in Gothic writing as in the first instance conditioned by historical conventions of representation; and to hold in abeyance the traditional lines of demarcation, evaluative and generic, that cross over the body of Gothic writing (so we look at 'inferior' works as well as poetry and drama). These decisions only take us so far, as David Punter's enabling question makes clear. Does Gothic writing address itself to a 'deeper wound', to 'a fracture, an imbalance, a "gap" in the social self which would not go away' (Punter 1987: 26)? The question pushes us towards a more ambitious literary history but also to a methodological crux. If it is the case that the Gothic addresses a 'gap' in the subject only a theoretical approach is capable of teasing it out; but theoretical approaches are always in danger of dehistoricizing the Gothic through retrospective reading.

There are two related ways in which circularity arises to balk the theorist. First, he or she may find that their theory is predicated on the very 'gap' they seek to historicize. Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytical readings are particularly vulnerable here in that they read the repression on which their theories are based back into Gothic texts, thus closing the hermeneutic circle. One may decide to choke off theory in favour of a more purely literary historical approach, but here matters are scarcely better. For all practical purposes there is an infinite number of contexts relevant to any given text. Moreover, the relationship between text and context is a highly mediated one. The process of selection is in danger of mimicking Marvell's 'mind' ('that Ocean where each kind/Does streight its own resemblance find'), while the task of explaining why a particular mediated relationship ought to be privileged plunges us back into the theoretical impasse (Perkins 1991: 1-8).

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These critical difficulties are, to say the least, problematic. The influence of Michel Foucault's theory of discursive practices is partially owing to the promise it holds out of finding a route through, and I have adopted it here as a means of negotiating a path through the methodological crux. The immediate advantage of Foucault's theory is that it rests on an assumption of the self as a radical cultural entity ('radical', because cultural all the way through). As such, representations of the self in Foucault's system never leave the field of history. Our central decisions are of a piece with this commitment to Foucault. For Foucault, history is non-evolutionary, a matter of genealogy or the tracing of successive, non-privileged layers; representations of the self are always conventional because always the precipitates of discourse; while the non-hierarchical relationship between discourses is simply axiomatic (Foucault 1986b: 76-100).

Foucault's theory is also helpful because a gap in the social self is not part of his theory's internal structure, and yet his theory addresses just such a 'gap'. In *Madness and Civilization* and volume one of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault looks at the late eighteenth century with a view to providing an historical reading for it as a period of seminal change where discontinuities (between earlier and later) reveal their edges. The disjunctive self of the Gothic may thus be grounded in historically analysable developments, not as some putative unity that is fragmented at around this period, as a sensibility abruptly experiencing dissociation, but as a clash between a series of conflicting codes of representation or discourses. In understanding the self as primarily a textual affair, un-verifiable postulates regarding the real nature of the self, or the experience of selfhood, are not called into question.

Foucault's theory of discourse (as technologies of power based on systems of knowing) will thus enable us to gain an historical purchase on Gothic writing. But as we have just seen, this purchase has its cost. Foucault's theory repudiates the notion of a gap by throwing out wholesale the language of the unitary self. In Foucault's view, it is wrongheaded to posit an entity experiencing a 'wound', 'fracture' or 'imbalance'. The 'self is always a site of conflict. The nature of this conflict may change, may constitute 'history', but not the fundamental fact.

The issue of Foucauldian discourse will be approached through the organizing assertion that Gothic writing is dialogic writing with a difference. Where the novel opposes social registers with ideological inflections, Gothic writing opposes discursive practices. In the place of the play of voices we need to look at the presence of residues from

discourses on nature and nurture, memory, willing, vision, the sublime, the Gothic itself. Foucault's reading of the disruptions of the late eighteenth century forms our avenue of approach, one revealing perspectives opening up on discursive presences within the Gothic.

There is, however, a problem, for it may be objected that Foucault's insistence on a radical decentring itself amounts to the assertion of a transcendental signifier (equivalent in magnitude to the 'unconscious').¹ This would mean that all texts are equal; in which case, moments of rewriting – on which we have pinned our procedural hopes – must be seen as simply more textual expressions of a deep 'archival' clash. The contemporary recognition of Gothic writing as a code for the representation, and the working out, of anxieties regarding the self's nature, would cease to be a possible view, for behind each response, each textual meditation on the problem, the dark, explicating shadow of discursive power would inevitably lurk. Whatever gestures Foucault may have made in this simplistic direction, his actual practice is far more complicated and useful:

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.

(Foucault 1979: 100-1)

As we shall see, a pattern of reinforcement and undermining is particularly relevant to Gothic rewriting, and to the Gothic aesthetic (the subject of the following chapter). We find more involved and compelling structures traced over the Gothic; from narratives which merely host discourses touching upon the representation of the self we move to ones which, internalizing the issue, issue it anew. In earlier texts, these discourses are comparatively raw; but in later they are increasingly mediated, a difference making an aesthetic of Gothic writing possible. As Gothic writing touches upon the sensitive and sensitized joins in the representation of the self, so it assumes the duplicitous character of Foucault's discourse which simultaneously supports and renders fragile, backs and thwarts, power.

A Foucauldian theory of discourse naturally brings with it concomitant methodological commitments. Historicizing Gothic writing implies a narrative of descent, of change over time. 'Discourse'

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disputes this as one no longer deals in agency, in causal change, but in discursive events which give rise, not to modulation, but paradigmatic, or archival, shifts, ruptures, discontinuities. 'History' becomes 'genealogy'. Here the delusive search for origin is abandoned with the recognition that the myth of origin reformulates the myth of the subject. In the places of these presences one finds a 'hazardous play of dominations' (Foucault 1986b: 83), a series of discursive events in the service of a decentralized, and difficult to articulate, power. The genealogist 'operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times' (Foucault 1986b: 76). The past, in this respect, is a multi-layered palimpsest where strata emphatically do not equal hierarchy. The objects of the genealogist's solicitude are not restricted to writing but extend to 'speech and desires' in all their acts, with their 'invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, ploys' (Foucault 1986b: 76). Accordingly 'genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species. . . . On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain events in their proper dispersion' (Foucault 1986b: 81).

Historicizing the Gothic, if true to its Foucauldian method, must thus aspire – when tracing complex courses of descent – to maintaining textual events in their 'proper dispersion'. But the aesthetic concern just mentioned contradicts this by emphasizing evolution: the critic's concern becomes, not the chasing down of the cultural provenance of a form, but an account of what made an excellence possible. This contradiction will not be resolved here. Rather I intend to use it as a constructive tension, one that highlights, in another form, the problem with which we have begun: to what extent does the complex and riven self of Gothic writing bear witness to historical forces outside of the form, and to what extent is it self-created? As earlier mentioned, my term for the latter will be 'belated' Gothic, meaning texts which, in their self-consciousness, bespeak both an awareness of the discursive subtext of the Gothic, and an attitude towards it.

In pursuing our genealogy of Gothic writing, then, we need to keep in mind that two different genealogies are in fact opposed: a primary one dealing in the descent of discourses which inform Gothic writing, and another, more literary in focus, which concerns the peculiarities of individual texts. The first is historical and intertextual in the capacious sense of drawing in discursive events conditioning the expression of subjectivity; the second is intertextual in the narrower sense of an interpenetration of literary codes and devices. The first is used to contextualize the latter but is not in itself self-sufficient in its explanatory power. The second concerns itself with the fate of what