CHAPTER SIX
Ghosts of the Gothic

The Gothic as Genre, the Gothic as Mode

At this point I have in effect told the same story three different ways, the story of the rise and fall of the Gothic novel from Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* to the final generation of Maturin and Shelley. These literary-historical narratives cover much the same ground and discuss many of the same texts; their explanations are convergent, though not identical. Like the three Hindu gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, their provinces are creation, maintenance, and destruction. The Althusserian Marxist version of the Gothic was in effect a story about origins, of how the ground was laid for a literary form by a perversely accurate vision of authority. The formalist version was essentially a story of how the Gothic novel continued; how and why it had become effectively entrapped within a literary form that spun ever more baroque and outlandish variations on a standard plot line, but perversely kept it from the full artistic achievement that ultimately became possible for it in a later era. And the Jaussian analysis of the Gothic is by and large an explanation of the Gothic’s decline, how it began by creating a series of appetites for visionary escape that it ultimately could not maintain.

And now the story is over. Or is it? It is in one sense, but not in another. As an episode in literary history, the vogue of the Gothic from its beginnings in Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* to its demise in the early 1820s is indeed a story with closure, since, as a genre, the Gothic is to all intents and purposes dead by 1822. But like the revenants that haunted its pages, the Gothic has continued to lead a subterranean counterlife as a "mode" until the present day. That is, once the Gothic had become part of literary history it became accessible as a source, not merely of spare parts—characters, plot elements, and devices of disclosure—that could be borrowed and used at will, but also of emotional resonances that could be put to other ends.
In a text like *Bleak House* (1852–53), for example, the Gothic influence is pervasive as a system of allusions that envelops Dickens's representation of the High Court of Chancery, London as a whole, and finally all of England. In effect Dickens took the elements of the Gothic novel and put them forward as a “romance of familiar things” (v). The ruined castle that pervades the Gothic from *Otranto* on appears in *Bleak House* as the tottering slum tenement, Tom All-Alone's, haunted by its ruined owner. The mysterious warnings of the Gothic appear in the ghost that walks in Chesney Wold that sparks Lady Dedlock's flight. The midnight prowlings and secret persecutions appear as Guppy and his friends harass Esther and Lady Dedlock. The vampire appears as the lawyer Vholes, and the witch as Miss Flite. And the death of Krook from “spontaneous combustion” is as mysterious and supernatural as any Gothic manifestation—down to its cindery and slimy aftermath.

One could write a chapter about the Gothic qualities of *Bleak House*—and yet they remain mere qualities, aspects of a text whose central motivation and significance have very little to do with the Gothic in a historical sense. Historically, the Marxist would have to insist that the social relations of the industrial age, whose dysfunctions stand at the heart of all Dickens's late masterpieces, were in their infancy when *Otranto* and *Udolpho* were written. Historically, the reception theorist would note that the implied reader of *Bleak House* is required, not to escape from reality into dream, but to participate in constructing a coherent sense of mid-Victorian England out of Dickens's fragmentary satirical representations. Historically, the formalist would have to argue that even the melodramatic plot of *Bleak House* differs immensely from the melodramatic plots of the Gothic novels. If like Ellena Rosalba in Radcliffe's *The Italian*, Esther Summerson has a vague history that conceals her mysterious and sinister origins, origins that the plot of the novel will eventually bring to light, Dickens's plot places that discovery in the service of his more general revelation: of the characteristic irresponsibility of mid-Victorian people, agencies, and institutions.

My point is not to argue that *Bleak House* is Gothic or that it is not Gothic. Instead, it is that, like *Bleak House*, every text subsequent to the Gothic vogue is going to bear some relationship (even if only a negative one) to the phenomenon. But the analogical relationships of one text to another text or set of texts are not history, in the way we have been using the term. Can we talk about the history of the Gothic as a mode? In the strict sense in which I have been considering literary history up to this point, it cannot have a history as such, any more than there can be a “history” of all
the novels that have had a heroine named Sarah or of all the poems that have begun with the word *When*.

Nevertheless, there are three aspects of the Gothic as mode that present questions of more than passing historical interest. (1) As the novel evolved through the nineteenth century, it developed in loose overlapping generic groupings that operated in a dialectical relationship to one another. At any given time, there was usually one of those generic groups that was significantly more “romantic” and thus more closely related to the Gothic than the others. In this sense the locus of Gothic influence on mainstream nineteenth-century fiction shifted over the course of the century in ways and for reasons that can be traced. (2) Around the end of the nineteenth century the Gothic underwent some sort of revival. What I term the neo-Gothic of the 1890s did not have the same immense impact on the fictional field that its predecessor genre of a century ago had, and the texts are, needless to say, extraordinarily different from the earlier set. But this is the point at which the literature of terror and horror reached its closest contact with the so-called great tradition, and engaged the talents of canonical novelists like Henry James. (3) During the twentieth century, the split between popular fiction and fiction with some pretension to aesthetic merit became stabilized as a split between fiction that can be generically categorized (as romance, mystery, fantasy, and so on) and fiction that cannot. Most of the categories of genre fiction derive, in ways that can be followed, sometimes directly, sometimes through intermediate forms, from the Gothic novel. This chapter briefly and at times schematically takes up these three issues.

**Gothic Modalities in Nineteenth-Century Prose Fiction Genres**

The Gothic genre, which I considered from my Chicago formalist perspective as an institutional form on its own, was of course part of a complex literary scene. From the perspective of a historian like Yuri Tynyanov, the Gothic novel proper came into existence as part of a dialectical system of genres: specifically as the successor-form (the nephew or grandson) of the novel of sensibility, in an era otherwise dominated by two other fictional forms. The first was the realistic novel of manners, often shaped as a bildungsroman or as a comedy of fulfillment. Such novels originate with Richardson and Fielding half a century before; their most canonical author in the Radcliffe period is Frances Burney, whose *Cecilia* and *Camilla* may stand for the type. The other major form was the didactic novel of social
criticism. During the revolutionary period, many of the major practitioners were radicals with Jacobin tendencies or their polemical opponents. Works like Robert Bage’s *Hermosprong, or Man as He Is Not*, Elizabeth Inchbald’s *A Simple Story*, and Robert Holcroft’s *Anna St. Ives* are typical of the form in the period. The arrival of the Gothic novel in succession to the novel of sensibility—the only one to hark back to the exciting romance tradition—continued a trifurcated literary system for fiction, as shown in figure 1.

This chart illustrates some of the ambiguities of literary history, especially for the novels that straddle two genres. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* needs to be seen simultaneously in relation to the Gothic novel and the didactic novel; it is at once a horror story and a moral fable investigating the relationship of man in nature to man in society. On the one side, Shelley’s novel had its impetus from the storytelling contest at the Villa Diodati (at which Mary, Percy Shelley, Byron, and the physician John Polidori each told hair-raising tales), and the structure of emotion in the novel is clearly related to the Gothic. But like *Caleb Williams*, by her father, William Godwin, *Frankenstein* is an examen of “things as they are,” of the roles of “nature” and “nurture” in the development of the individual, and of the question of how man might develop as a solitary rather than a socialized individual as the Monster is forced to do. To call *Frankenstein* a Gothic novel is to do it only half justice. It is a genuine amalgam, and some of the contradictions that various critics have pointed out over the years have their origin in the mixed nature of its affiliations. Like many hybrids, *Frankenstein* had vigor—it was a successful novel at the time—but it did not have progeny, at least not immediately, not for a great many years.

I have placed Scott too in an ambiguous position relative to the realistic novel and the Gothic, but as you would expect from my analysis of *Redgauntlet* in chapter 4, the relation of Scott to realism and romance is not
precisely the same as Shelley's ambiguous position relative to Gothic romance and didactic fable. Scott's impulse was essentially realistic: his primary ambition was to present the truth about historical moments with the immanent clarity that might come from following the fate of a sympathetic fictional character (rather than that of a world-historical individual) during a moment of major historical change.  

Between the death of the Gothic in the early 1820s and its revival in different form in the 1890s, the romance modality was carried along by a number of successive fictional genres as the literary scene evolved over seventy years. The following is a schematic rendering of that history, which would take another book in itself to present fully.

**The Generation after Scott**

For the first generation after the vogue of the Gothic, roughly the era 1825–40, a rather different map of the dominant genres of fiction has to be set up, as the historical romance of Scott, a hybrid form at the outset, becomes itself one of the most imitated forms, shifting the dialectical relations between the other literary genres.

The 1820s and 1830s is a dark age of the novel, often ignored in literary histories, partly because there is no strong canonical novelist except Scott at work, partly because it was a period of experimentation in which versatile novelists tried on various genres to see what suited their temperaments. In this period it is hard to say just what the single dominant genre of prose fiction is: the list of best-sellers includes wild comedy like Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* and atrocious penny-dreadful versions of melodrama like G. W. M. Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*.

Probably the dominant form is the historical romance, and this genre is healthy enough to split (along lines of probability) into two related subgenres corresponding to the split within Scott himself: one group of novels descending from Scott's *Waverley* (of which Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* is perhaps the best known today) emphasizes the factual basis of history; the other, descending from *Kenilworth* and *The Talisman*, uses a detailed historical backdrop primarily for the purpose of weaving a melodramatic plot of the sort that bears a strong resemblance to that of the Gothic novel. None of these works is currently canonical, and only a few have been reprinted in this century. William Harrison Ainsworth's *The Lancashire Witches* (1844) is a strong exemplar readable today. Like Scott himself, Edward Bulwer-Lytton wrote in both historical forms, and also
wrote "Newgate novels" like Paul Clifford and domestic novels of society, like Pelham. Another case is Dickens himself, who began like Thackeray in the "humorous sketch" genre of journalism with Sketches by Boz (1833), developed a novelistic version of this genre in Pickwick, then shifted to the Newgate novel genre for his second novel, Oliver Twist; he was soon to try on the historical romance in Barnaby Rudge.

Other major genres of this period display the same hybrid characteristics as historical romance. While there is a minor group of elegant comic novels (usually known as the "silver fork" school) that descends directly from the work of Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen, there also grows up a less trivial "novel of society," which is a hybrid between that subgenre and the Jacobin didactic novels of Godwin, Holcroft, and Bage. Set formally as a social comedy within the upper reaches of English society, the "condition of England" novel (the most famous of which is Disraeli's Sybil, or The Two Nations) takes up the debate over reform and the other political and social questions of the day.

Concerned with the social questions of the day, and yet as resolutely attached to low life as the condition of England novel was attached to high life, was the Newgate novel, begun (like so much else) by Bulwer-Lytton and continued by William Harrison Ainsworth, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, and (of course) other minor hands. Ideologically the Newgate novel characteristically took the side of the criminal against the propertied classes, insisting at least that criminals were driven to crime by social conditions that were by no means in their control. This was a popular but not a long-lived genre or one with an enormous number of exemplars; even its historian, Keith Hollingsworth, admits that only "eight or nine titles claim special attention" (15). The only one we read today is Dickens's Oliver Twist, unless one is willing to admit Vanity Fair as a late and unusually complex version of this genre. (See table 1.)

The Gothic in Eclipse (1840–1860)

During the 1840s and 1850s, the genres collaterally related to the Gothic are spread out rather than concentrated in a single genre of fiction. It primarily surfaces within "mainstream" literature as an "element" within what Ernest Baker refers to as the "romantic" novels by canonical figures like Dickens and the Brontës. At the same time, the Gothic begins also to surface on its own as a short fictional form. Possibly taking off from exemplars like "Wandering Willie's Tale" in Redgauntlet, along with chapbooks from the earlier
TABLE 1
Gothic within Historical Romance in the 1825–1845 Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newgate Novel</th>
<th>History-Romance</th>
<th>Satiric-Comic Sketches</th>
<th>Novels of Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack Sheppard</td>
<td>Waverley</td>
<td>Nightmare Abbey</td>
<td>Granby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Ainsworth)</td>
<td>(Scott)</td>
<td>(Peacock)</td>
<td>(Thomas Lister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Clifford</td>
<td>Lancashire Witches</td>
<td>Sayings and Doings</td>
<td>Sybil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Bulwer-Lytton)</td>
<td>(Ainsworth)</td>
<td>(T. E. Hook)</td>
<td>(Disraeli)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentine Vox</td>
<td>Last Days of Pompeii</td>
<td>Yellowplush Papers</td>
<td>Pelham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cockton)</td>
<td>(Bulwer-Lytton)</td>
<td>(Thackeray)</td>
<td>(Bulwer-Lytton)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Twist</td>
<td>Damley</td>
<td>Pickwick Papers</td>
<td>Mothers and Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Dickens)</td>
<td>(G. P. R. James)</td>
<td>(Dickens)</td>
<td>(Gore)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysteries of London</td>
<td>Masterman Ready</td>
<td>Jorrocks's Jaunts and Jollities</td>
<td>The Widow Barnaby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reynolds)</td>
<td>(Marryat)</td>
<td>(Surtees)</td>
<td>(F. Trollope)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gothic era, the ghost and horror story is pioneered by writers like Dickens, Collins, and Bulwer-Lytton, and of course by Poe in America. There are few texts that certainly seem Gothic in any recognizable sense today, including ones by novelists who had been experimenting with various romance forms in the earlier period. Bulwer-Lytton’s supernatural manifestations, the ghost of *The Haunter and the Haunted* and the spirits of *Zanoni*, are not spooks to frighten but physical truths that science was temporarily unable to explain.

Of the two historical forms that Scott had pioneered, the romance based on history (e.g., *Kenilworth*) and the historical novel (e.g., *Waverley*), both continued to be written, but the former was in severe decline. Though novelists like Ainsworth and G. P. R. James continued to publish romantic melodramas placed in historical settings, the novel-reading public was acquiring a stronger sense of what was history and what was not. Instead the most prestigious versions of the historical novel became attached to facts and to documentation—so much so that readers occasionally wondered whether there was much difference between historical narrative written by an imaginative author like Carlyle and Macaulay and the documentary novels of Bulwer-Lytton, like *Harold, Last of the Saxons*.

A fourth genre that came into existence in the later 1840s and flourished in the 1850s, the domestic saga, is discussed primarily in the next section,
since it laid the groundwork for the themes—if decidedly not the values—of the sensation novel. (See table 2.)

I have already discussed in chapter 4 the way the Brontë sisters (in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, both 1847) created well-formed versions of Isabella's Tale and Manfred's Tale. It is probably worth repeating in this context that Jane Eyre gains enormously from being assimilable to the bildungsroman. This is also true of Dickens's David Copperfield and even his Bleak House, discussed above, which carry the Gothic impulse in a very different shape than the Brontës' work did.

A very different version of early Victorian Gothic is the now-forgotten Zanoni, by Bulwer-Lytton (1842). Like Bleak House, Zanoni is a work whose power is split among a number of didactic and affective intentions, but the overarching theme is metaphysical rather than social. As Tennyson was to do in In Memoriam, Bulwer-Lytton attempts to argue the consistency of faith and reason, art and science, at a time in which the scientific view of the world was beginning to drive a wedge between the categories. Society is seen as at the mercy of demagogues inspired by an overreaching version of science and reason and out of sympathy with those whom their new order may crush. But the literary form Bulwer-Lytton chose was not the historical novel, in which he excelled, but something closer to Godwin's St. Leon and (in a way) Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer with its Faustian protagonist: a fable in which a character whose occult science has made him effectively
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immortal ultimately sacrifices himself for the woman he loves and the unredeemed humanity she represents.8

Mid-Victorian Fiction and the Sensation Novel (1860–1880)

Around 1860 the dominant form of fiction is "domestic realism": stories of characters working out their destinies within a contemporary provincial or London setting. The setting signifies that society as a whole, if not the protagonist of the novel, becomes a sort of "character" whose limited moral and spiritual views (in the form of "public opinion") have an impact on the outcome of the story. Currently canonical examples would include Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861), George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1863), Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right* (1869), Gaskell's *Cousin Phillis* (1865) and *Wives and Daughters* (1866), and George Meredith's *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) and *The Egoist* (1871). The form was also practiced by some of the prolific and popular producers of Victorian fiction who are still hovering at the edge of the literary canon, such as Dinah Maria Mulock (*John Halifax, Gentleman* [1856]) and Margaret Oliphant (*Miss Marjoribanks* [1866]).

The period is also characterized by the efflorescence of epic novels: realistic works structured as serious actions with dozens of important characters and multiple plots and protagonists, set in the present or the recent past, and designed to (at least metaphorically) characterize English society as a whole. Dickens's late epics (like *Little Dorrit* [1857] and *Our Mutual Friend* [1865]) are usually baroque complications of domestic novels whose simple versions run something like the bildungsroman *Great Expectations* (1867). That is, the center of the tale is usually occupied by a young man or woman whose uneven moral development or lack of stable social position (or both) provides the primary instability of the plot. Other typical examples are Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–72) and *Daniel Deronda* (1875) and Trollope's parliamentary novels (1864–80) and the satirical *The Way We Live Now* (1875).

The historical novel, dominant earlier in the century, is at this point in a severe decline. It is still, of course, attempted by major novelists, occasionally with enormous success, as in Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and Eliot's *Romola* (1863). Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), though atypical of his output, is probably the most canonical text of this nearly forgotten novelist. And below this level this vein continues to be
mined by prolific word-spinners like Charlotte Yonge (in works like *The Prince and the Page: A Story of the Last Crusade* [1866]).

The strikingly successful new genre in this period—and the one in which the Gothic mode is brought home and up to date—was the sensation novel. Collins's *Woman in White* (1860) is archetypal of the form. Other important examples include Collins's *No Name* (1862), *Armadale* (1866), *The Moonstone* (1867), Charles Reade's *Hard Cash* (1863), *Griffith Gaunt* (1866), *Foul Play* (1868), Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864) and *Wylde's Hand* (1864), Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863), and Ellen Price Wood's *East Lynne* (1861). Dickens himself started (but did not finish) one in *Edwin Drood* (1870).

Though the sensation novel provided most of the huge sellers in the period, it was a controversial form, like the Newgate novel of the 1830s, preached against and attacked in the popular as well as the educated press. These works of sensation, according to their historian, Winifred Hughes, share "a general affinity with the eighteenth-century gothicism of Ann Radcliffe and 'Monk' Lewis, the historical romances of Sir Walter Scott . . ., as well as with the more recent and somewhat more suspect performances of the Newgate novelists." These earlier texts, for Hughes, are similar to one another in being set in remote places and times, or among people of a very different class from the ordinary middle-class reader: in this sense their subversion is contained and may be read in comfort. What differentiated the sensation novel is that it was "an everyday Gothic, . . . a middle-class Newgate: its romantic and horrendous events were, in addition, narrated in a style of the most detailed and scientific realism" (Hughes 16).

The sensation novelists prided themselves not merely on realism but on assiduous attention to factual detail. When a reviewer complained that the time scheme of *The Woman in White* had gotten muddled at the crucial point of Count Fosco's intrigue to place Laura Fairlie, Lady Glyde, in a private asylum under the name of her (dead) double, Anne Catherick, Collins made sure to correct the problem in the next edition. Charles Reade subtitled *Hard Cash* (1863) a "matter-of-fact romance" and insisted that his fiction was "built on truths . . . gathered by . . . systematic labour." Probably the truths the English most wished were mere fictions were Reade's revelations about private madhouses, which function as the Castle Udolpho in this text. Reade's hero, Alfred Hardie, is kidnapped by attendants on his wedding day and signed into a private asylum by his father in order to keep control of his son's fortune. He endures months in Dr. Baker's snake pit, where order is kept with opiates, blisters, and restraining hardware, before being trans-
ferred to Dr. Wycherley's more humane institution. In a letter to the Lon­
don Daily News, an asylum director named Bushnan questioned the con­
temporary possibility of the abuses Reade had chronicled. Reade was ready 
for this response: he had in fact based this plot line of Hard Cash on the 1851 
court case of Mathew v. Harty, and he cited that and other cases to show that 
it was Dr. Bushnan and not he who was ignorant about the workings of the 
private asylum system (Reade 3:361–69).

What was the relationship of the sensation novel to the other genres of 
the literary system? Against what was it juxtaposed? Nicolas Ranee suggests 
that the sensation novel was dialectically opposed to a genre of fiction that 
flourished during the decade or so before 1860 and that he calls "the domes­
tic saga." These were (as one might expect) the least sensational fictions pos­
sible, the plots waning to the near-vanishing point, but with strong didactic 
interests (Bulwer-Lytton tellingly referred to one of his own domestic sagas 
as a "series of Essays"), primarily in support of the values of the Victorian 
home and hearth.11

The domestic saga Ranee refers to is a subgenre of what I have called 
"domestic realism." The titles of some of the exemplars are well known, 
though the texts are largely unread today. The genre begins (according to 
Ranee) with Bulwer-Lytton's The Caxtons (1848–49) and My Novel (1852– 
53), and would include works like Charlotte Yonge's The Heir of Redclyffe 
(1853), Dinah Mulock's John Halifax, Gentleman (1856), and Margaret 
Oliphant's The Athelings (1857). Ranee cites Wilkie Collins's review in the 
Leader of Cleve Hall (1853), an anonymous domestic saga, to indicate what 
the father of sensation thought about this mode of fiction.

The latest in a long series of stories of the moral and religious sort, which have sold 
freely in the moral and religious market, but which, as it appears to us, are for the 
most part utterly destitute of any literary merit whatever. The especial sermon in 
fiction now before us is full of good pattern characters (appropriately set off, of 
course, by the bad); full of long, prosy dialogues which lead us to nothing but 
moral conclusions and pious truisms—full of everything, in short, but interest, 
fancy, invention, and fair observations of life as it is. (45–46)

If Ranee is right, the sensation novel arose out of the domestic saga in a 
sort of Bloomian "swerve": not a matter of direct influence but of reaction­
formation.

What made the sensation novel sensational was a violent plot narrated 
with moral ambiguity. As Winifred Hughes puts it, "The plight of Lady
Dedlock, a subplot in Dickens’s *Bleak House*, becomes the mainspring of the typical Sensation Novel. . . . If Braddon or Collins had written *Bleak House*, Lady Dedlock would probably have married her original lover, committed bigamy, and then patched things up with Sir Leicester. Or else she would have been an out-and-out villainess, doing away with both lover and blackmailer before she got caught” (ix-x). These alternatives delineate two different subgenres of sensationalism, an Isabella’s Tale of guilty suffering and a Manfred’s Tale of villainy followed by nemesis.

These alternatives are not only formally different; they have an ideological component as well. Nicholas Ranee posits a dialectical split between radical sensationalists, like Collins and his disciple, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, who questioned the morality of Victorian England, and conservative sensationalists, like Dickens and Ellen Wood, for whom sensation is stimulated by the process of justified retribution that society takes upon those who break its rules (Ranee 4). (See table 3.)

Ranee and Hughes both begin their discussion of the sensation novel with *The Woman in White* (1860), which seems to have been the successful model to which writers less talented than Collins aspired. Anthea Trodd, however, traces the major theme of Satanic rebellion within the household back to Bulwer-Lytton and his novel *Lucretia, or Children of the Night* (1847), whose title character, more like the Borgia than the Roman matron, successively eliminates her guardian, her husband, and her son. But of course many of the facets of the sensation novel, including the melodramatic, fast-moving plots, hark back to the historical romance of Ainsworth and Bulwer-Lytton, but others—the emotional cruelty of the suspense and tension in the plots—seem to look back to the Gothic novel of Radcliffe and Maturin.

Ranee claims that the recurrent allusions within sensation novels to the older Gothic fiction are there precisely “to mark a distinction. . . . If ghosts in Gothic fiction signified a past as liable to erupt into an enlightened present, Collins substitutes the present for the past as a source of dread. As . . . a challenge to the early Victorian orthodoxy . . . Anne Catherick is more disturbing than any mere ghost” (53). Ranee’s point, I think, is that mere ghosts can be exorcised, but the varieties of evil chronicled in the sensation novel need more than mere bell, book, and candle to eliminate them. The novels turn on two interlocking sorts of evil: institutions that don’t work or (like private asylums) lend themselves to abuse, and the straitjacket of respectability itself, which drives members of the middle class to murderous violence in order to protect their names or incomes.
TABLE 3
Mid-Victorian Genres of Fiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epic Novel</th>
<th>Historical Romance</th>
<th>Novel of Sensation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Dorrit</td>
<td><em>A Tale of Two Cities</em></td>
<td><em>The Woman in White</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Our Mutual Friend</em></td>
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<td><em>Armadale</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Middlemarch</em></td>
<td><em>Romola</em></td>
<td><em>The Moonstone</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Deronda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palliser novels</td>
<td><em>Hereward the Wake</em></td>
<td><em>Edwin Drood</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Way We Live Now</em></td>
<td><em>The Cloister and the Hearth</em></td>
<td><em>Hard Cash</em></td>
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<td><em>North and South</em></td>
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<td><em>Foul Play</em></td>
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<td><em>Harry Richmond</em></td>
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<td><em>Beauchamp's Career</em></td>
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<td><em>Lady Audley's Secret</em></td>
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<td></td>
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<td><em>Uncle Silas</em></td>
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<td></td>
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<td><em>Camilla</em></td>
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The Radcliffean strain in the sensation novel may best be seen in Ellen Price Wood’s *East Lynne*, the story of Lady Isabel Vine, who marries a lawyer, is tempted into adultery, elopes with her lover, is divorced, and disappears onto the Continent. Morally dead, written off by society, Lady Isabel returns to East Lynne as the governess for her own and her successor’s children (improbably, no one at all recognizes her), is torn to pieces emotionally at the death of her own son, and finally herself dies like her son of consumption, unwept, unrecognized, and unforgiven. The emotional tensions of *East Lynne* recall the Spanish convent scenes in Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* or the imprisonment of Emily in Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho*; in fact they return us to genesis of the Gothic novel in Richardson. Unlike Clarissa, Lady Isabel is guilty and morally stained, but Wood portrays her temptation as beyond anything the average reader is likely to feel immeasurably superior to, and the pathos of Lady Isabel’s living death wrung the hearts of a generation of Victorians.

The other side of the sensation novel—the Manfred’s Tale, the radical romance of guilt—is seen in Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862). Lucy Audley’s secret is bigamy, committed in ignorance but de-
fended with violence. When her first husband, whom she had thought long dead, turns up in England, Lucy impulsively arranges for him to fall into a disused well on the Audley estate. For the rest of the novel, her nephew, once suspicious, runs his step-aunt inexorably down. The cat-and-mouse game between them is excellent fun, though it is one-sided, since his mental and physical resources are beyond anything Lucy can command. Novels of this sort seem to be at the beginning of the tradition of the crime novel.  

The novel that set the pattern for sensation was also one that managed to combine Isabella's Tale with Manfred's Tale. The success of The Woman in White was partly owing to Collins's ability to combine intense interest in his persecuted heroine with at least equal attention to a pair of genuinely credible villains. Laura Fairlie would be almost entirely uninteresting in herself, but her version of Isabella's Tale can be told to good effect by the man and woman who love her best. Collins brilliantly solved the problem of the villain of the novel by splitting the role in two. In his Italianate love of machinations and hypocrisy, Count Fosco is a worthy heir to Ambrosio and Melmoth, and in his cleverness (and his vanity about his cleverness) a distended mirror image of Collins himself. So shrewd and ruthless is Fosco that, were he the only villain, Collins would have needed to invent some improbable accident to explain why his plot did not succeed. But Fosco's plot is formed to enrich himself only indirectly, through the enrichment of Sir Percival Glyde, and it is the latter villain, cruel but mean-spirited, cowardly and indecisive, whose weaknesses can be exploited to release Laura from her living death in the asylum in which she is entrapped.

Within the matter-of-fact probability scheme of the sensation novel, the use of supernatural elements was bound to be incidental. We must remember, of course, as I have argued in chapter 4, that even in the heyday of the Gothic novel, the use of the supernatural was more often than not merely incidental—more frequently a way of providing factitious threats to the hero or heroine, reasons for acting or failing to act, than of directly influencing the plot. In The Woman in White it is used to invest the events of the story with uncanny vibrations. It is extremely improbable but hardly supernatural that the "woman in white" who engages the kindness and gallantry of Walter Hartright on the Avenue Road in London should be the illegitimate half-sister of the "woman in white" with whom he falls in love, the next day, at Limmeridge House in Cumberland. In fact the family resemblance between Anne and Laura is not supererogatory but necessary for Count Fosco's plot to substitute the latter for the former in the private madhouse in which Anne has been kept. Nevertheless, Collins insists on a meaning be-
yond the natural of Anne Catherick's life and death: "Through what mortal crime and horror, through what darkest windings of the way down to Death, the lost creature had wandered in God's leading to the last home that, living, she never hoped to reach! . . . Like a Shadow she first came to me, in the loneliness of the night. Like a Shadow she passes away, in the loneliness of the dead!" (232-33). As the vogue of the sensation novel continued, however, ways of creating the necessary thrills had been milked till most of the legitimate ones were dry, and writers began to use the supernatural in other ways. It seems likely that the most important transitional text between the school of sensation and the rather different revivification of the Gothic in the 1890s was a now forgotten novel titled Called Back (1884), by "Hugh Conway" (pseudonym for Frederick John Fargas). This novel concerns a young man suddenly gone blind, the ear-witness to a horrible murder, who must try to call back from the amnesia to which it has fled the mind of his beloved, a mind destroyed by being eye-witness to the very same murder; the resolution of Conway's plot requires the sort of supernatural interventions that would lead to a reopening of the issues out of which the Gothic sprang. Out of this side of the sensation novel, I think, the second phase of the Gothic was reborn in the Purple Nineties.

This dialectical succession of genres over about a century can be kept straightest with the aid of the combined chart in figure 2.

The Neo-Gothic of the Decadence (1880–1900)

In the late 1880s and 1890s, the sensation novel takes a new turn back into the supernatural, and in effect the Gothic novel that had begun over a century before with The Castle of Otranto is reborn. Reborn, though, with a difference: whereas most of the Gothic novels of the late eighteenth century had been structured as suspense actions, as melodramas, the neo-Gothic is more typically a supernatural morality tale. Some of the most important texts of this period are Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891), George du Maurier's Peter Ibbetson (1892), Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897), H. G. Wells's Island of Dr. Moreau (1896), and Henry James's The Turn of the Screw (1898).

The generic backdrop against which the neo-Gothic emerges is another transitional period, like that of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis. Most of the major Victorian novelists are dead but the major modernists are
not yet quite at work. The novel itself is in transition: three-volume novels and sagas are still being produced, but the monopoly of the "three-decker" has already been broken, and shorter forms are much on the rise. New popular magazines are experimenting with short fiction of various kinds, and this has become a new way for writers to break into print. Conrad will begin his work with Almayer's Folly in 1895. The important novelists canonical today are Hardy and James; other writers popular at the time include naturalistic writers like George Gissing, George Moore, and John Galsworthy. There is also a distinct aroma of romance in the air, though—exotic tales like the novels of Stevenson, Rider Haggard, and Kipling; historical fiction by Doyle such as The White Company and Micah Clarke; and Ruritanian swashbuckling like Anthony Hope's The Prisoner of Zenda (1894).

This is another experimental period, and the neo-Gothic was one of the forms in which experimentation was carried out. Indeed, few writers specialized in the neo-Gothic; instead it was usually a sideline to some other more traditional form of writing: comic drama for Wilde, psychological re-
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Table 4
Genres of the 1890s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Naturalistic Realism</th>
<th>Neo-Gothic</th>
<th>Romance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Man of Property</td>
<td>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</td>
<td>Treasure Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther Waters</td>
<td>Dorian Gray</td>
<td>Prisoner of Zenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Grub Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</td>
<td>Island of Dr. Moreau</td>
<td>The White Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Princess Casamassima</td>
<td>The Turn of the Screw</td>
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It was an important form, in the sense that many of these texts are by canonical authors and are themselves canonical. But—one needs to stress this strongly—the neo-Gothic was not as quantitatively important a movement within popular culture as the first Gothic vogue had been. (See table 4.)

Around the time Freud was beginning his anatomy of the unconscious, neo-Gothic works like Peter Ibbotson and Dorian Gray explored the paradoxes of the dreaming self. Du Maurier's fantasy is constructed precisely on the pleasure principle. Peter Ibbotson, incarcerated for life in a prison for the criminally insane after the murder of his uncle, "sleeps" away his sixteen hours of waking life in order to "awaken" into dreams where, together with his soul mate, Mary Duchess of Towers, he can at will dine in the salon of a Parisian countess or walk under the pines of Yosemite. Tragedy briefly intrudes with the death of the duchess, but in a final dream she with difficulty returns to let him know that soon they will be reunited forever beyond the grave. In du Maurier the rejection of Victorian materialism and the split between the real and the ideal become almost total. It would be hard to overstate how alienated du Maurier's stance is from real life with its
pleasures and pains—and in particular from work and its sense of conflict and achievement.

Wilde's novel is also remote from life; here the dualism took its cue from our earliest fantasies about guilt. We remember that our mothers could read our secrets in our faces, and there is a secret pang that this doesn't continue into adult life, when the world remains ignorant about our peccadillos unless we are foolish enough to reveal them. The fantasy that there must exist some such secret record of sin, that our guilty experience can be read in our face, is what feeds Dorian Gray. Dorian himself is granted a magical exemption from this rule: painted as a beautiful and innocent youth, he finds that as he grows older and more self-indulgent, cynical, and evil, it is the painting, rather than his face, that bears the marks of his corruption. If the representation of Dorian's soul is horrifying, it is also reassuring to an age losing touch with the traditional basis of religious faith, since in effect it asserts that we each have a soul separate from our perishable bodies and immortal as not even art can be immortal.16

The same reassurance consoles in James's The Turn of the Screw, even as the plot turns and twists on the problem of whether it is better to have two children alive and well but haunted by the immoral ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, or one child in a nervous breakdown and the other dead, "saved" by the exorcism performed by the nameless governess. Much ink has been spilled on the various reasons why the governess may or must be an unreliable narrator and the ghosts phantoms of her wayward imagination or repressed unconscious. Such explanations appeal to members of the MLA, but common readers rightly resist such explanations as destroying the point of the story. The real trick of the narrative, as George Haggerty has aptly pointed out, is that it puts the evaluating reader into the same position with respect to the evidence provided by the governess's story, as the governess is with respect to the evidence she says she sees, and we thus cannot attack her good faith without attacking our own.

Good faith, of course, does not necessarily guarantee good works, and we are left with the fact that the governess inadvertently kills Miles by her dispossessing intervention. But if the ghosts are presumptively real, then the child, like the ghosts, has a soul that survives separation from the mortal body, and dying dispossessed, little Miles goes directly to heaven.

The thematics of Dracula seem social or political as much as psychological. Dracula's invasion of England may dramatize contemporary fears of foreigners from Eastern Europe—here the invader is a southern Slav—bringing chaos to the calm scientific order of Western Europe. Or the evil count him-
Ghosts of the Gothic

self may typify a landed aristocracy with its fixation on blood, blue or otherwise, and the past triumphs of its race. Dracula is immortal as peasants must once have felt about the baron in the great house for whom they toiled: immortal in his title and his possessions if not in the body. And he is opposed and ultimately defeated by two thoroughly middle-class and commercial married lovers, Mina and Jonathan Harker (who even keep their diaries in Pitman shorthand), and by two doctor/scientists (Van Helsing and Seward) who bear the intellectual ideology of bourgeois progress (Punter 260).

Nevertheless, the secret of the mythic success of this often crudely written adventure story is the sexual symbol at its heart: the vampire’s contagious love-death. More explicitly than in Byron’s “Fragment” (1819) or John Polidori’s The Vampire (1819), Stoker’s Dracula attracts the respectable women of the story with a supernal but mortal sexual embrace, just as his brides (the three in Castle Dracula and Lucy in England) tempt the men with a sensuality denied to the Victorian virgin:

The girl went on her knees and bent over me. . . . There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the sharp white teeth. . . . I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited, waited with a beating heart. (52)

There is, of course, a material component even to this symbolic enactment of the Liebestod that runs through nineteenth-century literature so insistently (see Praz and Fass). The connection between love and death, which today reminds us of AIDS, was then even more common as the end effect of syphilis, in the days before salvarsan and penicillin essentially incurable. Stoker himself probably died of the disease in 1912.

The earliest of these neo-Gothic texts, Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, has also been viewed as a subterranean allegory. Stevenson’s moral, fittingly for the last decades of the Victorian era, seems to be that it is the need for respectability itself, the need to show forth in exemplary perfection, that generates the bifurcated soul of Jekyll/Hyde out of elements that are present in us all. The duality, that is, preexisted Jekyll’s drug, which was capable merely of isolating one phase of it. It seems beyond an accident that the last important text of the Gothic period—Hogg’s Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824)—and this first important text of the neo-Gothic should both be by Scots writers, and that both should center on the spiritual separation
between the evil and the good side of a man, expressed in the form of a multiple personality disorder, visited as a punishment upon a person who would be "unco guid." The moral is, in a way, an immoral one: we are better off as fallen creatures, mixed bags of evil and good as the Lord created us, than attempting to separate out the elements of the mixture even to create a saint on earth.

One of the fascinating aspects of Jekyll and Hyde is not only the way it combines qualities of the masterpieces of the neo-Gothic but also the way it looks forward to the important romance-derived genres of the twentieth century: the detective story and science fiction. The novel chronicles the solution to a murder—of Sir Danvers Carew—by a criminal whose violence stems from a hypothetically possible splitting of the self. This does not mean that one must in fact read Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as either a mystery story or science fiction. But the temptation to read it as genre fiction suggests that a certain historical point has been reached in the development of the Gothic romance. The new flowering of nineties neo-Gothic was not as pervasive as that in the previous century, but it marks an end point nevertheless. From this point on, the split between serious and popular fiction, growing since the 1870s, becomes a nearly unbridgeable gap, and the Gothic strains essentially become detached from the development of the serious modern and postmodern novel and instead become wedded to the forms of popular fiction. Instead of propagating as in the nineteenth century, as an element in the historical romance, the Newgate novel, or the sensation novel, the Gothic impulse becomes the site of what is today called "genre fiction"—novels that are sold and often bought not as individuals but as exemplars of a formulaic subgenre.18

The Gothic as Genetrix: Twentieth-Century Genre Fiction

There is a sense in which the Gothic is the genetrix of five major genres of twentieth-century genre fiction: the detective story, the horror story, science fiction, adult fantasy, and the Harlequin (or in England, Mills and Boon) romance. These are genre fiction in the most literal sense: novels that people buy in bulk, often without thinking about who the author is, or tales available in collected generic forms.19 These subliterary texts are commodities in the strict sense and are referred to in terms of their manufacturer.
When people speak of "Harlequin romances" the identifying noun is that of the most successful publisher.\textsuperscript{20} Similarly, much science fiction is known by its editor—as when people speak generically of "Gernsbach," referring to the stories and novellas published in the periodicals edited in the 1930s by Hugo Gernsbach, \textit{Amazing Stories} and \textit{Astounding Stories}. Today one speaks of subgenres like "cyberpunk," again without an author's name.

The late twentieth century is, as we are all well aware, an age in which the sales of generic fiction of no particular literary import far outstrip the sales of "serious" fiction (I am here designating by that term any works of sufficient literary pretensions to be reviewed separately in a publication as middlebrow as the \textit{New York Times Book Review}—a journal with separate columns to deal quickly with superior mystery novels and science fiction). I think it fascinating that a chart of the descendants of the Gothic novel includes most of what is published today. The lineages of these commodified forms are tolerably complex, but it can be simplified into the graphic pattern in figure 3.

There are in fact only a few genres of these commodified texts, what the German reception theorists sneer at as \textit{kulinarliteratur}, that are not represented here. One is what might be termed "money-porn," perhaps a degenerate descendant of the silver fork novel or of Balzac's \textit{Comédie humaine}—but far more likely of naturalistic texts like Theodore Dreiser's \textit{The Financier} and \textit{The Titan}. This is a class of novel dealing with the temporary pleasures and desperate maneuvers of the wealthy and corrupt (of the sort written by Harold Robbins, Jacqueline Susann, Irving Wallace, Arthur Hailey, and lately Judith Krantz); \textit{Dallas} was its television-series version. The other is the saga, a historical novel tracing the development of a single region of a country over several generations, often using a single family or set of families, to illustrate social trends.\textsuperscript{21}

\textit{Science Fiction}

Brian Aldiss defines science fiction as "the search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode" (Aldiss and Wingrove 25). Did the genre begin in 1818, with \textit{Frankenstein}, as Aldiss thinks, or in 1871, with Bulwer-Lytton's \textit{The Coming Race} and Samuel Butler's \textit{Erewhon} (Suvin 325)? Or still earlier with Cyrano de Bergerac's \textit{Voyage to the Moon}? None of these texts belongs to the


<table>
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<tr>
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<td>fantasy</td>
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<td>stories</td>
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Figure 3.
The Gothic as Genetrix of Twentieth-Century Generic Fiction

genre we know today, whose pioneers were Jules Verne and H. G. Wells.

The socioeconomic impulses behind both Verne and Wells were industrialization and imperialism, and both authors were ambivalent about the ideology of late nineteenth-century capitalism. Verne's heroes are masters of the machine but not captains of industry: they are scientists, travelers, naturalists—loners all. The archetypal Verne hero is the alienated leader Captain Nemo of *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1870), who takes untold wealth from the sea but finds it dross compared to the sea's wonders, which are being exploited and destroyed by national navies. Wells's *War of the Worlds* (1897) takes a similarly jaundiced view of imperialism; the novel
“is saying in effect to his fellow English: ‘Look, this is how it feels to be a primitive tribe and to have a Western nation arriving to civilize you with Maxim guns’” (Aldiss and Wingrove 120–21). Wells’s best science fiction novel is also the closest to the Gothic: *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) is a retake on *Frankenstein*, in which Moreau attempts to create a new humanity by vivisecting the bodies and brains of animals. He succeeds in part, producing various combinations of animals with quasi-human intelligence, but when Moreau is killed on a forest hunt, the mutated beings revert to savagery. “Before they had been beasts, their instincts fitly adapted to their surroundings, and happy as living things may be. Now they stumbled in the shackles of humanity, lived in a fear that never died, fettered by a law they could not understand; their mock-human existence was one long internal struggle, one long dread of Moreau—and for what?” (93). The obvious moral is that God made men no better than Moreau made his half-men, that we too were better off as beasts than as aspiring angels. The narrator, like Gulliver among the Yahoos, returns to an England whose human population—in its sheeplike conformity, its doglike fawning, its simian chattering of meaningless maxims—reminds him all too often of the Beast-Men of Moreau’s Isle.

**Adult Fantasy**

Literary fantasy, defined by Cyril N. Manlove as “a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings, or objects with which the reader or the characters within the story become on at least partly familiar terms” (10–11), is clearly a post-Gothic genre dominated by Charles Kingsley, George MacDonald, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Mervyn Peake. Gothic novels themselves are eliminated—their affect is terror or horror, expressing “the revolt of a purely human subconscious against reason” (Manlove 6), not primarily the wonder of fantasy—but it seems clear from Manlove’s analyses not only that the Gothic vogue lies in the filiation of fantasy but that fantasy represents a certain *refinement* on the general structure of the Gothic. The lovingly created worlds of Tolkien and (even more) Eddison and Peake are themselves objects of contemplation in ways that the worlds of Gothic romance and science fiction are not. The world of Ursula LeGuin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* was created as a hypothetical answer to the question: What would it be like if our sexuality were unstable, if we mutated from male to female
and back again? The story has resonance—or fails—according to whether we view her answer as plausible or not. The whole point of a supernatural world is that it operates by quite different and particular laws, creating a world—often a world with its own chronicle history given within the text—whose workings must be endlessly explained.

The atmospheric world of adult fantasy varies a great deal, but one could say rather roughly that it is compounded of three simples mixed in varying degrees: the epic, the fairy tale, and the Gothic. Tolkien's world is primarily a compound of epic and fairy tale, quest myth and beast fable; Eddison's is a mixture of epic and Gothic; while the dark and morbid world of Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast trilogy (1946–59) casts an ironic underglance toward the Gothic itself. As in many of these genres, one is struck by the enormous gulf in quality between the few genuinely imaginative, original, even profound works of romance published in this century, like C. S. Lewis's Perelandra trilogy, E. R. Eddison's *Worm Ouroboros* and his Zimiamvia books, and Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast novels and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954–55), and the endlessly churned out "sword and sorcery" books that are generally sold on science fiction revolving bookracks. The market for quality is apparently stable—Peake's trilogy was recently dramatized in London—but (aside from *Lord of the Rings*, which had an immense vogue in America some twenty years after its first publication) neither the quality nor the junk has had any really big sellers. It's not clear to me precisely what the audience of the sword and sorcery books is, but it would appear to be an even more deeply alienated group of the same class of people who read science fiction.

*The Mystery Story*

The mystery story, or detective fiction, descends from the Gothic in a relatively direct route. In the same sense that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* provided the first usable model for science fiction (which continued to provide various versions of a Faustian story in which pushing the scientific envelope leads to unforeseen disasters), Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* belongs to the necessary prehistory of the mystery story. In particular, Radcliffe suggests that the strange events at Udolpho that Emily interprets as supernatural are in fact fully rational signs of criminal activity. But Radcliffe's resolutions are grotesquely disappointing and anticlimactic, and come so far after the thrill that they seem an afterthought. William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* is
also part of this prehistory. There is no mystery in the usual sense, since the reader is never kept in doubt as to the murderer’s guilt, but at least the central interest is in a crime, Falkland’s murder of Tyrrel, and his persecution of the servant, Caleb Williams, who discovers his guilt.\textsuperscript{23}

The detective story and the mystery novel begin their real history around mid-century with Edgar Allan Poe’s Dupin stories (1841–44) and Wilkie Collins’s \textit{The Moonstone} (1867), and the tradition is massively influenced by Poe’s concomitant interest in the horror-Gothic and Collins’s pioneering of the sensation novel. The crime in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” may be solved by pure ratiocination, but the story itself is Gothic in atmosphere, from the crumbling chateau that the narrator and Dupin inhabit, emerging like bats after sundown, to the hideously mutilated corpses of the victims.\textsuperscript{24} Collins too emphasizes the exotic and bizarre qualities of the Hindu travellers who trail the Moonstone, the melancholy suicide of Roseanna, the uncanny efforts of the ill-fated Doctor Candy in exploring the mystery of Franklin Blake’s drug-induced trance, and ending with the hideous death of its actual thief. If \textit{The Woman in White} is a crime novel with stronger characters and a richer plot, \textit{The Moonstone} seems to have invented all the paraphernalia of the detective story (including a genuine detective, Sergeant Cuff of the Metropolitan Police, in addition to various amateurs).

The twinning of mystery novel with sensation is clearest when one looks at the four Sherlock Holmes “novels” of Conan Doyle. Three of them—\textit{A Study in Scarlet} (1887), \textit{The Sign of Four} (1890), and \textit{The Valley of Fear} (1914)—are split between a longish detective story and a novella-length sensation story, set respectively in Utah among the Mormons, in India under the raj, and in a mining valley in Pennsylvania. Only \textit{The Hound of the Baskervilles} (1902) is a unified story. Here the sensation novel can be left behind only because Doyle’s Gothicism in this case reaches further back than Collins, to the seventeenth-century curse on the Baskerville family and the spectral hound that pursues their heirs. \textit{The Hound of the Baskervilles} became an instant classic of the murder mystery partly because the motivation of Holmes’s intervention is more to protect Sir Henry Baskerville, the vulnerable baronet from Australia (and the lonely “sister” of the naturalist Stapleton) rather than merely to avenge Sir Charles. It is this and not just the lonely haunted atmosphere of Dartmoor that brings the emotional tessitura of \textit{Hound} close to that of the “love, misery and mystery” of the Gothic novels of the previous century.

Conan Doyle was not the inventor of the detective story, but he was its
Mozart: he brought the form to a classic pitch that was subsequently imitated by lesser hands. Starting in the 1890s through the 1930s, trailing off through the next two decades, there developed a so-called golden age of the detective story as a genteel and literate puzzle, in which the writer "played fair" by covertly revealing clues to the solution, and readers had the pleasure of guessing and, perhaps, asserting their intellectual superiority by solving the mystery before the author revealed it at the denouement. The artificiality of this motive evolved equally artificial plots, characters, and writing. Some of its best practitioners, like Dorothy L. Sayers, tried to humanize and naturalize the form, but the puzzle novel was by its very nature resistant to change.25

Beginning around 1930, the mystery began to split off into a variety of other, more "realistic" forms. In Britain the "crime novel" (pioneered by Francis Iles) kept the intense interest of the murder plot but eliminated the detective with the standard plot pattern. In America, the hard-boiled detective story took the murder mystery away from country houses and cathedral closes and put it among the people who actually commit crimes. Eventually this form too hardened in its conventions and lost its verisimilitude as well—particularly the convention that private detectives (who in real life trail erring husbands and do industrial espionage) spend their time trading shots with underworld figures and solving murder mysteries for the police. George Simenon developed the roman policier centering on a police detective (Maigret) and his investigation of violence (usually within stuffy and repressed middle-class families), and later hands in Holland, France, Sweden, Britain, and America developed a more-or-less realistic police novel that focuses neither on the victim nor on the killer but on the police and their investigative methods.26

Yet one more way of bringing genuine affect back into the mystery is through the thriller. As in the spy novel, murder is merely a means to an end, but the ultimate ends are mere McGuffins, pretexts for action.27 The familiar international form involved men and women innocently caught up in international intrigue, usually saved (in the conservative ideology of the plots) by the professionals of the CIA.28 At present writing, the best-selling (and hideously written) novels of John Grisham (The Firm, The Pelican Brief, etc.) constitute an attempt to bring affect back into the crime novel by returning to the Gothic in yet another way, by placing an innocent character at the center of a pervasive criminality within the power elite of American society, and searching desperately for a way out of the "castle."29
The Horror Story

Perhaps the most obvious modern descendant of the Gothic novel is the horror story, which began with the chapbooks and shilling abridgements of the classic Gothic romances. Nevertheless, as Jack Sullivan claims in *Elegant Nightmares*, "the modern ghostly tale is as much a reaction against the Gothic as an outgrowth of it" (130). Sullivan’s point is that most Gothic ghosts, like the Bleeding Nun and the Wandering Jew in *The Monk*, have a tendency to display moral purpose—the achievement of revenge upon their enemies and of repose for their spirits—while the novels themselves take place in a comfortable Christian framework (which guarantees that, at least in heaven, our fates and our deserts will be equated) and in an aesthetic ideology that demands poetic justice in this world. Many Victorian ghosts, like Marley’s in Dickens’s *Christmas Carol*, behave the same way: they punish vice and reward virtue. But Sullivan claims that the most influential Victorian ghost stories, such as those of the Dublin-based sensation writer Sheridan Le Fanu, are much less comforting. Sometimes the supernatural is never explained, not convincingly. More important, the ghost-story genre itself, far from demonstrating moral purpose, "moves us toward an ever-darkening vision of chaos in a hostile universe" (130).

Le Fanu’s ghost stories lead on to the tradition of Arthur Machen, M. R. James, and Algernon Blackwood, lyrical, quiet-voiced tales, in which typically an innocent individual naively lifts the corner of what separates the spirit world from our own, releasing horror upon himself and others. The lyricism, like that of fantasists like Lewis and Eddison, is akin to the childlike revival of romanticism we see in Georgian poetry and is most visible in the prose of Machen’s "The White People." But other influential horror stories were written in prose of unsurpassed ugliness, such as those of H. P. Lovecraft, purveying in pulp magazines visions of Cthulhu and his mythic kin, Nylarathotep and Yog-Soggoth, dreaming in an Antarctic city "of no architecture known to man or to human imagination, with vast aggregations of night-black masonry embodying monstrous perversions of geometrical laws."³⁰

About the only thing Machen and Lovecraft had in common was being completely unfit for life in the modern world. This may not be a mere coincidence: the world of the modern horror story may be deeply disturbing, but it is disturbing in a very different way from the England and America that developed after World War I. The horror in their tales represents the revenge
taken by old archetypal forces of the universe against (quintessentially) scien-
tists or other more-or-less comfortable inhabitants of the modern world
who are bent on understanding and dismissing them. The motivation of the
stories is thus deeply reactionary, a way of rejecting and destroying the mod-
ern world in one's fantasies. The readership of texts like these is likely to
have this sort of alienation in common with the writers.\footnote{31}

Contemporary horror stories are invariably pulp, but a few works, like
those by James Herbert in England (The Rats [1974], The Fog [1975], and so
on) or in America by Ira Levin (Rosemary's Baby [1975]), or Anne Rice (In-
terview with the Vampire [1976]) and Stephen King (Salem's Lot [1976], The
Shining [1977], and many others) can still become best-sellers. Nevertheless,
the genre of horror has declined since the 1930s, partly because the horror
film—with its ability through special effects to provide the graphic experi-
ence of monstrous beings and their gory victims—has superseded all horror
fiction.\footnote{32}

\textit{Romance}

The generic term with which we started, Gothic romance, has probably the
least prestigious descendants. Eileen Fallon, editor of the first reference
guide to the genre (Words of Love), was astonished to find that there were
over forty reference books about mystery novels, horror fiction, and science
fiction, but nothing about what may be the single best-selling category of
fiction for at least the last generation. One possible reason for this is intrinsic
to the genre itself. Centering on a courtship hindered by both interior and
exterior obstacles, the romance ends, traditionally and unexceptionally,
with marriage. The sort of sequelae that have become commonplace for
mystery and science-fiction writers are impossible for the romance, for their
plots end happily ever after. This may mean that a romance author has a
somewhat harder time developing a following than a mystery writer with-
out continuing characters to develop audience familiarity.

Although there are best-selling romance authors, such as Barbara
Cartland and Danielle Steele, the marketing of romance novels, indeed, has
tended to stress the genre more and the unique qualities of particular authors
less. Readers tend to acquire loyalty to "brand names" of romance fiction,
such as Harlequin, Dell Ecstasy, Second Chance at Love, Silhouette, and
Silhouette Desire, which promise a particular sort of experience.\footnote{33} As Janice
Radway discovered in researching \textit{Reading the Romance}, her group of readers
had a very well-defined sense of precisely what sort of love story they
Ghosts of the Gothic

wanted to read, and they were very wary of surprises: in particular how re­strained or sensual should be the reader’s participation in the lovers’ ecsta­sies. The various brand names of romance constitute a guarantee that the romance will not be too torrid or too tepid for the reader. But naturally the quality of writing for brand-name fiction is not going to be high, not even as high as the imitative Gothic romances that so exasperated literary critics of the early nineteenth century.

The sort of proliferation with which we are now concerned has never re­ally been addressed by the Russian formalists, and it is difficult to find ade­quate terms to describe it. Metaphorically, the process we have seen occurring to the Gothic since the vogue ended in the 1820s is less like the inheritance of a grandfather’s traits in his grandson than like the division process of the most primitive single-celled or colonial animals. As the animal divides, some of its substance goes into one of the offspring, some into an­other; the offspring themselves grow, subdivide, and clone daughter organ­isms with lives and histories of their own.

The Gothic had never been one univocal thing, even during its vogue. The most popular form had been the terror-Gothic of Ann Radcliffe, with the stronger horror-Gothic solidly in second place; there were also hybrid forms like the didactic-Gothic of William Godwin and Mary Shelley. The straightest and least involved descent is that of the horror-Gothic of Lewis and Maturin, which descends directly through the ghost stories of Dickens and Collins to the more refined ghost and horror stories of Le Fanu. Starting in the 1890s after the neo-Gothic of Stevenson, Wilde, and Stoker, the horror-Gothic finds its most elegant expression in the ghostly tales of M. R. James, Algernon Blackwood, and David Lindsay before descending a notch in class to the popular pulp fiction of Ira Levin, Stephen King, and Anne Rice. The descent from Shelley to today’s science fiction is equally direct. Adult fantasy seems to derive less directly from the Gothic, partly because its roots go back even further, and like the uncanny tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Hans Christian Andersen, returns to some of the oldest romance traditions (including the Icelandic sagas; the matter of France, the stories of Charlemagne and his paladins; and the matter of Britain, the Arthurian legends).

The most complex derivation is from Mother Radcliffe herself. The aspect of mystery in Radcliffe—mystery solved through the “explained su­permatural”—is rationalized and reshaped the mystery novel, which begins contemporary with, indeed as an aspect of, the sensation novel. Poe, Collins, Le Fanu, and minor writers like Israel Zangwill are important in the
creation of this new form, which in the 1890s is codified by Conan Doyle into a popular fiction form that has maintained its popularity for over a century. By now the mystery novel itself has subdivided into various subgenres: the standard private-inquiry agent form, the roman policier, the hard-boiled detective story, the crime novel, and further developments and cross-cousinly forms in the thriller and the spy novel. But in a totally different line of descent from Radcliffe, the terror-Gothic is back-crossed with Richardsonian plot forms to create the romances of the Brontës, which then become the model for the intensely romantic love stories grace-noted with other Gothic themes, which we see in Daphne du Maurier and her degenerate, nearly anonymous descendants of the houses of Harlequin and Mills and Boon. All these forms are dark daughters of the Gothic novel, which died around 1825 but which looks as though it will be with us, in its avatars, the various genres of popular fiction, for the foreseeable future.