



THE LONGMAN ANTHOLOGY OF GOTHIC VERSE

EDITED BY
CAROLINE FRANKLIN

ROUTLEDGE

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OF GOTHIC VERSE



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Edited by

CAROLINE FRANKLIN
Swansea University

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PREFACE

AIMS

This is the first anthology of its kind, as most Gothic selections are dominated by prose. Its primary aim is to offer a coherent, varied body of stimulating material to students and scholars of Gothic and to poetry lovers. Though readers will pick and choose at random, were anyone predisposed to read through from beginning to end they would easily be able to trace influences, developments, rewriting and interactions between these texts. The historical context for the rise and development of Gothic verse is sketched in the Introduction.

Secondly, this selection poses a number of questions to the academy. It resists the conventional categorisation of 'Romantic' and Victorian verse, and the usual assumption that Gothic was largely the province of prose fiction. Demonstrably, there was an interaction between poetry, prose and drama in Gothic. The anthology challenges distinctions between 'high' and 'low', and in this is probably more representative of the verse that was read and enjoyed in its own time than modern selections based on the Romantic poetry canonised in the twentieth century. Gothic continues to be a burgeoning area in contemporary critical and cultural studies. Many of these poems are not only entertaining texts, but particularly susceptible to a variety of sophisticated literary approaches – cultural materialist, psychoanalytical, deconstructionist, postcolonial and gender-centred. Yet Gothic verse has hitherto been relatively neglected as an area of research.

SCOPE

The anthology is presented chronologically and begins with examples from the first collections of traditional ballads and meditative passages from the 'graveyard poetry' of the eighteenth century and concludes with some late Victorian excursions into sinister magical or mythic worlds. However, most of the verse selected was written in the first half of the nineteenth century, and in English – though one or two influential translations of German ballads have been included. Other than two important American writers, all the poets are British. 'Gothic', like most literary labels, defies precise definition, but most of this poetry deals with the supernatural, the afterlife, apparitions, monsters or the marvellous. The Introduction explains that it was produced by a late Enlightenment religious scepticism in dialogue with the Gothic revival in art and architecture which heralded the Anglo-Catholicism of the Oxford Movement. Later verse uses meta-Gothic or Gothic clichés as imagery to symbolise psychic states. A heterogeneous group of poets of the period is represented: major and minor, men and women; and the verse ranges from well-loved favourites such as 'The Lady of Shalott' to neglected gems, some in Scots or dialect. Though

narrative predominates, generically the selection is varied and often experimental: there are ballads, fragments, verse tales, lyrics, songs and comic verse. In addition, a metrical romance by Scott, a verse drama by Byron and a fairytale for children by Christina Rossetti are all included in their entirety. Some of the poetry was written merely to shock and entertain, but Gothic also liberated the creative imagination and inspired Romantic poets to enter disturbing areas of the psyche and to portray extreme states of human consciousness. This anthology illustrates that journey. In order to suggest links between the literary and the broader artistic movement of Gothic, a selection of illustrations is provided of paintings and art which inspired or were inspired by this poetry.

LEVEL

The anthology is directed at a sophisticated readership, and scholarly apparatus is suggestive rather than exhaustive. Each poet is introduced with a brief biographical headnote focused particularly on relevance to the Gothic, while each poem is provided with a brief introductory note and explanatory footnotes gloss difficult passages, dialect and archaic terms. The substantial Introduction provides historical context and indicates promising theoretical and critical approaches. A full bibliography and a timeline provide further information. The poems are indexed by (i) author, (ii) title/first line.

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I have had a great deal of help with this anthology from friends, colleagues and students, and have also relied on invaluable scholarly resources such as *OED*, *ODNB*, *ECCO*, and Google Books, as well as the staff and facilities at the British Library and Swansea University library. I would like to thank particularly: Patrick Crotty, Gavin Edwards, Mike Franklin, Kit Fryatt, Tim Fulford, Ian Glen, John Goodridge, Peter Kitson, Ian Packer, Lynda Pratt, Marie Mulvey Roberts, Andrew Smith and Martyn Sullivan for support, useful suggestions and information. In addition, my students of EN214 Gothic and the Fantastic seminars gave me lively feedback and thought-provoking comments, as did the anonymous readers and my editors at Longman, Philip Langeskov and Kate Ahl.

TIMELINE

- 1742–5 Edward Young's *The Complaint: or, Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* published.
- 1743 Robert Blair's *The Grave* published.
- 1746–7 James Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs* published.
- 1747 Thomas Warton, *On the Pleasures of Melancholy* published.
- 1749 William Collins, 'An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland' written (published 1788).
- 1751 Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* published.
- 1757 Edmund Burke, *Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* published.
- 1760 James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland* published.
- 1762 Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* published.
- 1763 Thomas Percy's *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry, translated from the Icelandic* published.
The Works of Ossian edited by James Macpherson.
- 1764 Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* published.
- 1765 Thomas Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry* published.
- 1768 Thomas Gray's *Poems* including 'The Fatal Sisters' published.
Horace Walpole privately printed his drama *The Mysterious Mother*.
- 1769 *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* by Elizabeth Montagu published.
- 1770 Paul Henri Mallet published *Northern Antiquities*, tr. T. Percy.
- 1771 James Beattie's *The Minstrel* published.
- 1773 Anna Letitia Aikin published her essay 'On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror' and *Poems*.
- 1774 John Aikin's translation of Tacitus's *Germania*.
- 1778 Clara Reeve published her novel *The Old English Baron*.
Thomas Warton published *The History of English Poetry*.
- 1781 Johann Heinrich Fuseli painted first version of *The Nightmare*.
- 1783 James Beattie, *On Fable and Romance* published.
- 1784 Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* published at her own expense.
- 1785 Sophia Lee published the novel *The Recess*.
Clara Reeve published *The Progress of Romance*.
- 1786 Robert Burns's *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* printed in Kilmarnock.
Helen Maria Williams published 'Part of an Irregular Fragment' in *Poems*.
William Beckford published the novel *Vathek*.
- 1789 Ann Radcliffe published *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*.
Johann Friedrich von Schiller published *The Ghost-Seer; or, Apparitionist*, tr. D. Boileau.
William Blake published *Songs of Innocence*.

TIMELINE

- 1790 Ann Radcliffe published *A Sicilian Romance*.
 Joanna Baillie published *Poems*.
 Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* published.
 Frank Sayers published *Dramatic Sketches of the Ancient Northern Mythology*.
- 1791 Ann Radcliffe published *The Romance of the Forest*.
- 1791 'Tam o'Shanter' was published in the *Edinburgh Magazine*.
- 1794 Ann Radcliffe published *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.
 William Godwin published *Caleb Williams; or, Things as They Are*.
 Blake published *Songs of Experience*.
- 1795 Joseph Ritson published *Robin Hood: A Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs and Ballads now Extant related to that Celebrated English Outlaw* (1795).
- 1796 William Taylor's translation of Gottfried Bürger's ballad 'Lenore' published.
 M. G. Lewis's novel *The Monk* published.
 Mary Robinson published *Hubert de Sevrac*.
- 1797 Ann Radcliffe published *The Italian*.
 Robert Southey published *Poems*.
 'On the Terrorist System on Novel-Writing' published.
 M. G. Lewis's drama *The Castle Spectre* performed in Drury Lane.
 Young's *Night Thoughts* published with Blake's illustrations.
- 1798 Goethe's 'Erl-King' and 'The Bride of Corinth' published in Friedrich Schiller's *Musen Almanach*.
 Charles Brockden Brown published *Wieland*.
 Walter Scott published a translation of Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen*.
Plays on the Passions appeared anonymously but was later acknowledged by Joanna Baillie.
 William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge published *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems*.
 William Wordsworth and Coleridge visited Germany.
 Wordsworth wrote 'The Danish Boy' and began *The Prelude*.
 Following criticism, 'Monk' Lewis published an expurgated fourth edition of *The Monk*.
 Nathan Drake's essay 'On Gothic Superstition' published.
- 1799 Robert Southey published *Poems*.
 Francisco Goya produced his etching 'The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters'.
- 1800 Sharon Turner's Tory *History of the Anglo-Saxons* published.
 Mary Robinson's 'The Haunted Beach' published in *Lyrical Tales*.
 Coleridge published a translation of Friedrich Schiller's play *Wallenstein*.
- 1801 M. G. Lewis published his Gothic anthology *Tales of Wonder* and his tragedy *Alfonso, King of Castile*.
 Robert Southey published his oriental verse tale *Thalaba the Destroyer*.
- 1802 *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* edited by Walter Scott.
 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' by Ann Radcliffe published.
- 1803 Thomas Moore wrote 'The Lake of the Dismal Swamp'.

- 1805 Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* published.
Charlotte Dacre published *Hours of Solitude* and the novel *The Confessions of the Nun of St Omer*.
M. G. Lewis translated *The Bravo of Venice* by H. Zschokke.
- 1806 Herman Merivale's 'The Dead Men of Pest' published in *The Athenaeum*.
Charlotte Dacre published *Zofloya; or, The Moor*.
M. G. Lewis published *Feudal Tyrants; or The Counts of Carlsheim and Sargens. A Romance*.
Robert Southey published his verse tale on a medieval Welsh prince: *Madoc*.
- 1807 Charles Maturin published *The Fatal Revenge; or, The Family of Montorio*.
Wordsworth published *Poems in Two Volumes*.
- 1808 Walter Scott's verse tale *Marmion* published.
Goethe's drama *Faust*, part one, published.
M. G. Lewis published *Romantic Tales* the second edition of *Tales of Terror and Venoni; or, The Novice of St Mark's*.
- 1809 Coleridge's 'The Three Graves: A Fragment of a Sexton's Tale' appeared in his periodical *The Friend*.
Byron published *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.
- 1810 Percy Bysshe Shelley published the Gothic novel *Zastrozzi*.
George Crabbe's *The Borough* published.
Leigh Hunt's 'Politics and Poetics' published.
John Stagg published 'The Vampire'.
Robert Southey's oriental tale *The Curse of Kehama* published.
- 1811 P. B. Shelley published *St Irvine, or, the Rosicrucian* and wrote 'Zeinab and Kathema'.
Diary of A Resurrectionist published by James Blake Bailey, giving accounts of body-snatching.
- 1812 *Tales of the Dead*, tr. Mrs Utterson from German of *Gespensterbuch* (1811–15).
Charles Maturin published *The Milesian Chief, a Romance*.
Byron published *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.
- 1813 James Hogg published *The Queen's Wake*.
Byron's Oriental verse tale *The Giaour* published.
John and Leigh Hunt imprisoned for two years for criticising the Prince Regent.
- 1814 Robert Southey published his *Roderick, the Last of the Goths*.
Walter Scott published *Waverley*.
- 1815 Wordsworth published *Poems*.
- 1816 *Christabel; Kubla Khan, a Vision; The Pains of Sleep* by Coleridge published.
Thomas Love Peacock's novel *Headlong Hall* published.
P. B. Shelley published *Alastor, or the Poet of Solitude*.
Charles Maturin's drama *Bertram* performed in Drury Lane Theatre.
- 1817 George Crabbe wrote but did not publish 'The World of Dreams'.
Thomas Love Peacock's novel *Melincourt* published.
Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and *Sibylline Leaves* published.
Byron's play *Manfred* published.

TIMELINE

- 1818 James Hogg published *The Brownie of Bodsbeck and Other Tales*.
 Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* published.
 Thomas Love Peacock published *Nightmare Abbey*.
 Jane Austen published *Northanger Abbey*.
 Arthur Hallam's *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* published.
 Coleridge published 'The Gothic Mind' and 'Gothic Literature and Art'.
- 1819 *The Vampyre* by Dr Polidori published.
 P. B. Shelley published his verse drama *The Cenci* and wrote the essay 'On the Devil and Devils'.
 The first two cantos of Byron's *Don Juan* published.
- 1820 John Clare's *Poems, Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*, published by Taylor and Hessey.
 Charles Maturin published *Melmoth the Wanderer*.
 John Keats published *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes and other Poems*; and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' in Hunt's *The Indicator*.
- 1821 Joanna Baillie published *Metrical Legends*.
 Thomas De Quincey published *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.
The Village Minstrel published by John Clare.
 P. B. Shelley probably wrote 'Ginevra' at this time.
- 1822 Thomas Love Peacock published *Maid Marian*.
 Thomas Lovell Beddoes published his Gothic drama *The Bride's Tragedy*.
- 1823 James Ingram's translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle published.
- 1824 James Hogg published his novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.
 Mary Shelley published 'On Ghosts'.
 Thomas Hood published 'The Last Man'.
- 1826 Mary Shelley published her dystopian novel *The Last Man*.
 Thomas Hood published 'Mary's Ghost'.
- 1827 Walter Scott's 'On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition' appeared in the *Foreign Quarterly Review*.
- 1829 Felicia Hemans published 'Second Sight'.
- 1830 Walter Scott's 'Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft' and 'Essay on the Imitations of the Ancient Ballad' published.
 Alfred Tennyson's *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* published.
- 1831 Goethe's drama *Faust*, part two, published.
- 1832 Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' published in *Poems*.
- 1834 Felicia Hemans published *National Lyrics and Songs for Music*.
- 1836 Robert Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' appeared in W. J. Fox's *Monthly Repository*.
- 1842 Tennyson's *Poems* and Robert Browning's *Dramatic Lyrics* published.
- 1845 *The Raven, and other poems* published by Edgar Allan Poe.
- 1846 Edgar Allan Poe published 'The Philosophy of Composition' in *Graham's Magazine*.
Poems by Acton, Ellis and Currer Bell (the Brontës) published.

- 1847 *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë pseudonymously published.
Tennyson's *The Princess* published.
- 1848 J. A. Giles's *The Life and Times of Alfred the Great* published.
- 1850 Publication of Tennyson's *In Memoriam A.H.H.*
Posthumous publication of William Wordsworth's *The Prelude*.
Posthumous publication of Thomas Lovell Beddoes' *Death's Jest Book*.
- 1854 John Ruskin's *On the Nature of Gothic Architecture and herein of the True Functions of the Workman in Art* published.
- 1855 Robert Browning's *Men and Women* published.
Alfred Tennyson's *Maud* published.
- 1857 *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Sickness) by Charles Baudelaire published.
- 1858 William Morris published *The Defence of Guinevere*.
- 1862–3 'I Like a Look of Agony' and other lyrics written by Emily Dickinson and made into 'fascicles'.
Goblin Market and other Poems by Christina Rossetti published.
- 1864 Robert Browning's *Dramatis Personae* published.
J. H. Newman published *Apologia pro vita sua*.
- 1866 Algernon Charles Swinburne published *Poems and Ballads*.
- 1868–9 Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* published.
- 1870 D. G. Rossetti published *Poems*.
- 1880 James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night and other Poems* published.
- 1881 James Thomson published *Vane's Story, Weddah and Om-el-Bonain and other Poems*.
- 1886 R. L. Stevenson published *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.
- 1890 Rudyard Kipling published *Barrack Room Ballads*.
- 1891 Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* published.
- 1894 John Davidson's *Ballads and Songs* published.
- 1897 Rudyard Kipling's poem 'The Vampire' published, inspired by Philip Burne-Jones's painting of that name.
Bram Stoker's *Dracula* published.

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Poems

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INTRODUCTION

I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchymist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge . . .

P. B. Shelley, *Alastor*, lines 23–37

There has been a marked reluctance to acknowledge the existence of a category such as ‘Gothic verse’ despite the unflagging critical interest in Gothic generally during the last thirty years. Most studies of Gothic literature barely mention poetry despite the fact that the ubiquitous prose romances by M. G. Lewis and Ann Radcliffe were drenched in it. Verse was cited in epigraphs and prefaces, was composed and recited by characters, and provided the lyrics for songs in popular adaptations as melodramas. Gothic verse – influenced by folklore and mythology from ancient or exotic cultures – was just as enthusiastically received as were prose and drama in their own day. Presumably the problem with verse is that it was *too* successful. Gothic cannot easily be disentangled from ‘High art’: witness the epigraph from Shelley’s *Alastor*.

Poetry in Britain sold in unprecedented numbers in the early years of the nineteenth century, making fortunes for stellar writers such as Walter Scott, Lord Byron and their publishers. Arguably it has never been so popular before or since. Twentieth-century critics, influenced by Modernism which valued the recondite, condemned it for that very reason. The influential critic M. H. Abrams privileged introspective lyrics such as odes over dramatic or narrative verse, and his view still epitomises what constitutes the Romantic poem. But a glance at this anthology will see most of the canonical Romantic and Victorian poets represented. The demise of classic Gothic by 1820 has been reported, it is true, but, to paraphrase Mark Twain, the accounts were much exaggerated – as with transfusions of new blood, it continued to haunt the nineteenth century from time to time.

ORIGINS

One could view Gothic as a constant. Certainly, morbid or pleasurable fascination with death and apparitions can be found in poetry from John Donne to Sylvia Plath, and in popular culture from Hammer Horror films to macabre video games. But it is also the case that a historically specific 'Gothic' revival in art, architecture and literature arose in the middle of the eighteenth century, triggering a self-conscious literary experimentation in the use of the supernatural. Romanticism came into being partly in response and partly in reaction to this Gothic aesthetic: in fact, some critics think they are two sides of the same coin (see Voller, 1994; Williams, 1995; Smith, 2000; Gamer, 2000). The fruitful interaction between Gothic and Romanticism turned the poetry inward: the source of the uncanny is increasingly likely to be detected within the perceiving psyche itself. In Victorian times, however, poets often treated a Gothic scenario objectively or insouciantly: sometimes in impeccably regular verse, producing an unsettling and highly ironic effect.

The word 'Gothic' derives from the 'barbaric' Northern tribes which sacked Rome in the fifth century (Sowerby, 2000). The term was pejoratively applied to any pre-modern art and architecture, seen as undisciplined compared with classical regularity (Bayer-Bernenbaum, 1982: 19). The word 'grotesque', similarly, likened primitive, peasant or crude art to that of prehistoric caves. Gothic haunted the imagination of Augustan England because it saw itself as a second Rome: the civilised centre of its rapidly expanding empire, in fear of being overrun in turn. On the other hand, Whig historian Edward Gibbon made a positive, even patriotic, association between the British constitution and the 'witan' of Anglo-Saxon times, on the basis of accounts of first-century Roman historian C. Cornelius Tacitus that 'barbarian' Germanic tribes, though unlettered, had been independent and egalitarian, chivalrous towards women and fierce in battle.¹ The *Germania* of Tacitus was translated by John Aikin (father of Anna Letitia, later Barbauld, and John) in 1777.

By the final third of the century, antiquarianism and sensibility combined in primitivist nostalgia for the pre-modern past; there was a reversal of values and the Gothic revival began in art and literature. Bishop Thomas Percy published his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), a collection of ballads, some of which had been transmitted orally since the Middle Ages. He appended an influential essay idealising the figure of the minstrel. The radical Jacobin and Jacobite Joseph Ritson also collected ballads, but his *Robin Hood: A Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs and Ballads now Extant related to that Celebrated English Outlaw* (1795) attempted to recuperate the subversive revolutionary energies of the peasantry rather than court culture. Right away, the Middle Ages came to be appropriated for right and left and romanticised in different ways.

The fact that medievalism could come into being tells us that the theocentric way of looking at the world of the Middle Ages had been replaced by a scientific and

¹ The idea crossed the Atlantic and a Saxonist treatise was published before the war of independence: 'Demophilus': *The Genuine Principles of the Ancient Saxons or English Constitution* (Philadelphia, 1776). See Clery and Miles, 2000: 223.

historical outlook. For Gothic poetry is always at a sophisticated remove from unquestioning belief in the supernatural. The Renaissance of classical learning had brought about the Reformation of the Church, so Protestantism marked the first stage of the Enlightenment. It was the Protestant cultures of Britain, Germany and New England that generated most Gothic literature, which was spiced with anti-Catholicism. As puritans internalised the notion of sin and guilt, they became pessimistic over the nature of mankind. Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and the preoccupation with death and dissolution in Jacobean drama led the way towards the eighteenth-century school of 'graveyard poetry', such as Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742), Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743), Thomas Warton's *The Pleasures of Melancholy* (1747) and Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* (1751). These poets exploited the sublime (etymologically – from beneath a threshold), which was described in the first-century Greek treatise *Peri Hypsous*, conventionally attributed to Longinus, as rhetoric inducing fear and awe in an auditor.² 'Graveyard poetry' expressed eschatological fear produced by a decline in belief in the afterlife. This was the dark night of the soul of eighteenth-century latitudinarianism, which usually emphasised the everyday morality of sunny sociability and civic virtue.

The traditional Christian mythology of hell and eternal torment was coming under question: for example, in Daniel Defoe's ironic *History of the Devil* (1726).³ However, the puritans' earlier success in eradicating the remnants of pagan beliefs inhabiting folklore had only strengthened superstitions within Christianity connected with the Devil and satanic possession. In 1736 an Act of Parliament repealed legislation against witchcraft, and declared such beliefs were merely illusions. Memories of barbaric seventeenth-century witch-hunts created a consensus view amongst the Enlightenment intelligentsia in the first half of the eighteenth century as to the pernicious effects of superstition. Philosopher John Locke urged true Christians to join the Enlightenment fight against irrationality, and this view impacted on literature. Atheist utilitarians and rational Christians united to disparage fantasy in favour of didactic or factual reading-matter, especially for women, the young or poor.⁴

Yet lively controversy continued over the existence of apparitions and magic in the public sphere of print culture. Some ministers feared that scepticism about apparitions would lead to a lessening of belief in religion itself. Popular texts such as the English puritan Richard Baxter's *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (1691) and the New England minister Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences Relating to*

² Boileau's 1674 translation and commentary was so influential that fourteen editions of the original Greek text were called for between 1710 and 1789. See Mishra, 1994: 28.

³ See also: Russell Scott's *An Analytical Investigation of the Scriptural Claims of the Devil* (1822), F. Hall's *The Pedigree of the Devil* (1883) and R. Brown's *The Personality and History of Satan* (1887). For a recent addition to the genre, see Muchembled (2003).

⁴ For example, *Anti-Canidia, Or Superstition Detected and Exposed* (1762) argues that belief in apparitions depreciates the value of Christ's miracles and resurrection. *Magic, Pretended Miracles and Remarkable Natural Phenomena*, a tract of 1799, rationally explains how conjurors perform tricks and how machines can produce images, but affirms the truth of the biblical miracles in the New Testament.

Witchcrafts and Possessions (1702) were challenged by Enlightenment philosophers such as Francis Hutchinson in his *An Historical Essay concerning Witchcraft* (1718). Empirical philosophers John Locke, David Hume and David Hartley, as well as condemning superstition, began to ask how such fears arose, when fearful associations took root in the mind. The development of this new study of psychology paralleled and would strongly influence Gothic literature right up to and including the time of Sigmund Freud. For example, in 1830 the eminent medical practitioner William Newnham, who had earlier investigated subjects such as phrenology and human magnetism, published a study of the physiological effect on the brain of the early habit of reading fairy tales and ghost stories. He argued that it predisposed the 'moral fibres' to weaken and, in a striking anticipation of Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), called for science and religion to aid each other against the forces of irrationality in Roman Catholicism, Islam and Hinduism (Newnham, 1830: 48).

Literary theorists feared that literature would be impoverished if entirely secularised.⁵ John Dennis in *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) argued that the reason that ancient Greek tragedy was superior to modern drama was its origin in religious ritual. Terror and sublimity were central to the sacred notion of fate, and plays representing dreams and apparitions revealed the operations of the divine. Greek poetry and religion flourished and decayed together, for: 'Passion is the characteristical mark of poetry' (Dennis, 1701: 25). Joseph Addison's *Spectator* essay, 'The Fairy Way of Writing' (1711), suggested that fanciful poets could use superstitious stories for purely aesthetic purposes, to arouse 'a pleasing kind of horror in the mind of the reader'.

However, the boldest schema categorising how the emotions previously belonging to religious experience could be secularised and aestheticised was Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757). Burke's system of aesthetics was based on a gendered binary: the feminine beautiful promoted social order, while its Other, the masculine sublime, expressed fear of death and dissolution of identity in the face of overwhelming forces or power. These contraries look ahead to Freud's contrasting instinctual drives of Eros and Thanatos at the end of the nineteenth century. Burke's categories of obscurity, power, privation, vastness, infinity, and so on, helped produce the 'picturesque' taste for mountainous scenery, chiaroscuro in art, melodrama in theatre and towering ruins whose grandeur was softened by creepers or moonlight.

Whilst reading a medieval tale of the marvellous which reflected beliefs of the time could be justified as scholarship, inventing one merely for entertainment was felt to be regressive. A controversy over authenticity had arisen when Bishop Percy was accused of having completed or 'improved' some of his ancient fragments, and James Macpherson of so much augmenting his slender sources that he had virtually invented the 'ancient' Gaelic saga, *The Works of Ossian* (1765). The young

⁵ Even into the nineteenth century poets such as Wilde (1814) were worrying that 'since the belief of supernatural agency has almost totally ceased among the more sober and enlightened ranks of mankind, the higher species of poetry have received so fatal a blow, as never to be able to recover themselves'.

Dissenting poet Anna Letitia Aikin published an influential essay, 'On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror', to reassure moralists that what we would now call 'Gothic' narratives could be put to didactic uses. They 'teach us to think by inuring us to feel: they ventilate the mind by sudden gusts of passion and prevent the stagnation of thought, by a fresh infusion of dissimilar ideas' (Aikin, 1773: 46).

Influential Scots poet James Beattie idealised an alienated genius torn between poetry and moral philosophy in his autobiographical poem *The Minstrel* (1771–4), which inspired William Wordsworth, and, like his successor, Beattie expressed a puritan fear of the excessive fictionality of romance. Yet even he made an exception of Northern literature from the age of chivalry (Beattie, 1783: 233). Nathan Drake's essay 'On Gothic Superstition' went further, warning that if such romantic legends of Northern and Celtic mythology were laid aside, 'our national poetry will degenerate into mere morality, criticism and satire; and that the sublime, the terrible and the fanciful will no longer exist' (Drake, 1798: 88–9).

The growing nationalist prestige of the Gothic revival in literature had been greatly enhanced by Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), which questioned the French-dominated aesthetics of neo-classicism and revalued the 'romantic' William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser. Both had frequently used the supernatural, and Spenser's flexible narrative verse would especially inspire Leigh Hunt, Byron, Shelley and Keats.⁶ Elizabeth Montagu, in her celebrated *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear* (1769), cited 'our Gothic bard' as an example of her patriotic view: 'While there is any national superstition which credulity has consecrated, any hallowed tradition long revered by vulgar faith; to that sanctuary, that asylum may the poet resort' (Clery and Miles 2000: 34). Poets were inspired to turn away from urbane Popeian wit and turn their hands instead to Spenserian romances and verse drama featuring morally ambiguous protagonists in the manner of *Macbeth*.

The rediscovery of the ballad was another crucial stage in the generic experimentation which enabled poets to embrace the supernatural wholeheartedly rather than relegating it to comic machinery or allegorical imagery (Spacks, 1962: 89). The ballad was a 'low' form, as broadsides were the people's poetry sold in city streets and passed on orally. Eighteenth-century poets usually used the form only in light verse. Yet by the 1790s, in the age of revolution, the simplicity of ballads was admired and taken seriously. A modern historian of the broadside ballad defines Gothic as 'the thematic or discursive eruption of a traumatic past into the present, distorted into a suggestion of the supernatural' (Shepard, 1973: 12). That the past could be mythologised in this way was realised even during the eighteenth century itself, and ancient poetry began to be recovered by antiquarians as a vital historical resource rather than childish fantasy. In his study of medievalism, Michael Alexander comments that 'Gothic poetry still shows as a minor byway. Yet it proved to be the way to enchanted ground' (Alexander, 2007: 8, 23).

⁶ Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* (1774–81) quoted passages from the manuscripts of medieval poems *Pearl* and *Purity*; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* would be published in 1839.

INTRODUCTION

The young poets Walter Scott and Samuel Taylor Coleridge found that dramatising spirits inhabiting the earth was a liberating fantasy in comparison with either orthodox religious verse imagining a distant creator or succumbing to a scientific materialist view of an inert nature. In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Scott envisages a dynamic medieval world infused with spiritual power in which rational boundaries and laws are transgressed. Coleridge has his mariner floating free of medievalism into a nightmare existence where modern certainties and even coherent identity begin to dissolve. Linda Bayer-Berenbaum recognises the Gothic imaginary when: 'what is customarily hallowed as real by society and its language is but a small proportion of a greater reality of monstrous proportion and immeasurable power' (Bayer-Berenbaum, 1982: 21). A fatalistic or mysterious world may be made to seem natural; or the everyday scene seen through a distorting mirror.

Some artists of the late eighteenth century produced paintings depicting the imagination fearfully or in a visionary way. In *The Nightmare* (1782) the Swiss painter Johann Heinrich Fuseli has the viewer voyeuristically observing a woman in the grip of a nightmare, fearsome animalistic desire squatting in the form of an incubus on a heart we infer will gallop like a wild horse. The poet Erasmus Darwin detected the sado-masochist eroticism of the picture, of which Fuseli painted different versions:

On her fair bosom sits the Demon-ape
Erect; and balances his bloated shape;
Rolls in their marble orbs his gorgon-eyes,
And drinks with leathern ears her tender cries.

The Botanic Garden (1799), Part 2, Canto 3, lines 75–8

In 1783 a magnate, Brooke Boothby, arranged a surprise Gothic pageant at midnight in the grounds of his mansion for 'the great Wizard painter', where Fuseli was greeted by friends dressed as fairies and monsters (one gnawing a bleeding head) and Anna Seward as the muse of elegiac verse (Myrone, 2005: 227). In 1799 Francisco Goya produced the famous etching *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*. A writer is pictured asleep: we could read the benighted monsters as his dreams, or as superstitious fancies that will be banished as soon as he rouses his intellect. Goya wrote of it: 'Fantasy, abandoned by reason, produces impossible monsters: united with it, it is the mother of the arts and the origin of their marvels.' William Blake, the friend of Fuseli, would have agreed. His was a visionary imagination and he declared to a friend that 'The Soul of a Flea' represented something he had actually seen.

GOTHIC AND ROMANTICISM

By the end of the eighteenth century, Gothic verse, fiction and drama had become a craze. In 1795, 38 per cent of new novels can be defined as Gothic even if the term was not used in the title (Garside et al., 2000: 56), with Ann Radcliffe, leader of female-authored novels of psychological terror, rivalled by M. G. Lewis's graphic

horror in *The Monk*. One genre morphed into another as ballads and lyrics studded these novels, which were in turn adapted into musicals or melodramas. To the Marquis de Sade, violent novels such as Lewis's *The Monk* were by-products of the French revolution: 'the necessary fruits of the revolutionary tremors felt by the whole of Europe' (Sage, 1990: 49). Sentimental poetry by liberals such as Francophile Helen Maria Williams demonised the feudal institutions of castle and church in Gothic poems, imagining the secrets known only by dungeons and crypts. On the other hand, in his polemic *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), a founding text of modern conservatism, Edmund Burke bewailed the passing away of the values of chivalry, which he claimed had hallowed the medieval institutions of the Church and monarchy, now defiled by the revolutionary mob. After Britain declared war on revolutionary France in 1793, reviewers from Tory Anglican periodicals began to denounce 'the Terrorist school' for its scepticism towards religion, sexual immorality and unpatriotic admiration for foreign (German) drama celebrating revolt.

Poets we now describe as 'Romantic' (although the term was rarely used at the time), such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Joanna Baillie, Walter Scott, Robert Southey and later Lord Byron, were ambivalent. While they were greatly attracted by the popularity and high sales of Gothic, they all feared being stigmatised as 'terrorists' or mocked for producing low-status fodder for female and circulating library readers. Their 'Romantic' poetry embraced the introspective subjectivity of the graveyard poets and the awful Burkean sublime, but often repressed or internalised the existence of the supernatural itself into psychological phenomena. One reason they so highly idealised the vocation of the poet was to differentiate themselves from popular culture. Much like Gothicism, Romanticism was produced by a reaction to the secularisation of culture, but whereas the former was produced by a clash within Protestantism between Enlightenment rationalism and fascinated ambivalence towards the Catholic past, the latter response expressed a yearning for faith. The collapse of the French revolution into Terror, dictatorship and imperialist adventures had disillusioned William Blake, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge with the secular Utopia promised by rationalist philosophers. Byron, Shelley and Keats saw Napoleon defeated and no prospect of social reform. Technological advance and industrial revolution were producing urban slums. Romantic poetry sought spiritual inspiration to transcend materialism and scientific rationalism. The Romantics transformed the religious genres of spiritual autobiography and ballad-like hymns into humanist terms. Wordsworth's autobiographical poem *The Prelude* adapts the form of a conversion narrative, building up to epiphanies of quasi-mystical 'enthusiasm' idealising the creative imagination itself. Seeking redemption in this world, the Romantic poet was a secular prophet with a special relationship with Nature and a mission to change the world through verse. Abrams attributes this development to a 'radical solution to the problem of poetic fictions, one which would sever supernatural poetry entirely from the principle of imitation', replacing the poem as a "mirror of nature," by that of the poem as heterocosm, "a second nature," created by the poet in an act analogous to God's creation of the world' (Abrams, 1971: 272).

Wordsworth and Coleridge believed the moral power of 'imagination' to be greater than the wilder 'fancy' of Gothic, to use Coleridge's terms.⁷ Michael Gamer points out that when they did succumb to the attractions of Gothicism, Romantic poets often maintained a certain distance from such controversial material through framing devices such as glosses and footnotes, or by defensive self-parody, while their own Romantic ideology was shaped by 'a sustained response to the reception of Gothic writing' (Gamer, 2000: 200). For example, the leading verse dramatist Joanna Baillie expressed ambivalence towards both home-grown Gothic and German *Sturm und Drang* and sentimental drama in a substantial 'Introductory Discourse' to her 1798 *Plays on the Passions*. Today, we would find it difficult to distinguish the latter from Gothic drama, as with William Wordsworth's revenge tragedy: *The Borderers* (ms 1795, pub. 1842). Yet in his 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth, too, distanced himself from 'frantic novels [and] sickly and stupid German tragedies'. Both Romantic theorists derided mere sensationalism of the supernatural, not merely through snobbery, but because they wished to push Gothic further – to use associationist psychology to depict the origin of such beliefs in characters from former ages or the minds of unsophisticated peasants or children.

Walter Scott, a leading medievalist through his antiquarian collecting of folk poetry, justified writing his own romances by simultaneously producing weighty scholarship such as 'Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft', 'Essay on the Imitations of the Ancient Ballad' (1830) and 'On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition' in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* of 1827, as well as in prefaces to Ballantyne's *Novelist's Library*. His verse romance *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) was one of the most sensationally popular poems of the nineteenth century, yet the supernatural elements and his mischievous goblin page attracted the sarcasm of the *Edinburgh Review* and the lash of Lord Byron's tongue in the Juvenalian satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). Scott's great innovation was to use magic alongside historical fiction: not merely for entertainment but to turn his verse into an ideological spell exerted over the imagination of the reader. Scott took up Burke's conservative medievalism and put it to use to glamorise warfare against the French. His poem was published when Napoleon was at the height of his success, having had himself crowned hereditary emperor in 1804. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* echoed Burke's lament for the lost the age of chivalry and called for national unity and the end of internal feuding between Scots and English.

In 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere' and 'Christabel', Samuel Taylor Coleridge pioneered a new Gothic aesthetic: dramatising an individual undergoing a terrifying spiritual crisis in an explicitly Christian cosmos. He valued psychological complexity over narrative coherence, painting moods indirectly through evocative settings and symbols, as had Ann Radcliffe in her poetic novels. Freer metre allowed Coleridge to convey the evanescence and mutability of consciousness. His fellow poets followed his lead, in experimenting with irregular and fragmentary forms to capture shifting

⁷ R. D. Hume (1969) differentiates between Romanticism and Gothic in this way. For Coleridge's distinction between imagination and fancy, see *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life* (1817).

states of mind. Byron's oriental tale, *The Giaour* (1813) and lyrical drama, *Manfred* (1817) are examples. However, instead of remaining within Christian paradigms – terrifying the audience with a Faustian overreacher being sent to hell, or gratifying it with a comic repentance – Byron's *Manfred* acknowledges the grandeur of spiritual despair and even heroises human endurance in a post-spiritual age.

VICTORIAN GOTHIC VERSE

Although conventional periodisation usually separates the Victorian poets from their Romantic predecessors, focusing on Gothic allows us to appreciate continuities as well as dislocations and reversals. The ballad was now accepted as a mainstream genre and was much discussed. In an 1851 article on 'Modern Ballad Writers', an anonymous reviewer surveyed the numerous modern ballads written since the publication of Percy's *Reliques*, and commended the genre. He stressed that the supernatural should be evoked only if employed in the service of psychological realism:

Far be it from us to attempt to remove from man the belief that 'millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen,' though many of this generation may deny their presence and agency. But at present they are not legitimate agents for the poet's purpose, unless very discreetly and indefinitely employed. There are not wanting to him who would steep his pen in fancies akin to realities, terrors, vague and shadowy, inseparable from the place stained by murder; or lamenting spirits of the forsaken and betrayed, to track the wrong-doer through life. On this boundary land, between the unseen and the present, where conscience, aided by man's fear and indignation, assumes a double aspect, and plays the part of a spirit of vengeance, in performing its own allotted office, appears to be the last allowable resort of the ballad writer for the supernatural.

Westminster Review 55: 108 (April 1851), p. 4

While this critic is at pains to emphasise the moral value of a modern poet Gothicising sin and repentance, another reviewer, writing on 'The Ballad Poetry of Scotland and of Ireland', prizes the lack of didacticism in oral culture, which he reverences as constituting a link with an age of faith.

The actual superstitions which have lived among men are the raw material out of which men of genius are enabled to construct the poetry of the supernatural. The most powerful imagination is limited to that which has been believed, however much it may range into that which is in itself impossible. Without this condition the poetry of the supernatural would cease to be poetry, because it would cease to appeal to anything capable of stirring the human heart. All great artists dealing in the supernatural, if they did not believe in it themselves, have studied profoundly the communications of those who did, for the purpose of giving life to their narratives. It is one of the qualities of our purely traditional ballads that they are still a living fountain of the supernatural. It must be of infinite value to all writers of the imaginative, so long as our language lasts, to possess, permanently embodied in print, those rhythmic legends which long lived among the people, not so much in the shape of a literature made for and taught to them, as of the embodiment of the things passing in their own minds – of the events which they believed to be true, and the supernatural agencies of which they stood in actual awe.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 84 (Oct. 1858), p. 470

By the mid-nineteenth century a 'crisis of faith' was apparent, generated by scientific materialism, Darwinism and a revulsion against joyless Evangelicalism. The supernatural in poetry continued to appeal to a readership which even resorted to spiritualism and séances in search for proof of an afterlife. On the other hand, the 'Gothic' aesthetic of the Middle Ages was burgeoning into a new Anglo-Catholic religious sensibility, expressed in the poetry of Christina Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. For the Oxford Movement or Tractarianism, led by J. H. Newman, aimed to transfigure Anglicanism by returning to the medieval ideal. Newman acknowledged how much the poetry of Robert Southey and Walter Scott had shaped his ideas. A religious practice was desired which embraced beauty, music and the senses, rather than the iconoclasm of radical Protestantism.

John Ruskin was the tragic prophet of a religion of humanism, and his genius was to theorise medievalism as an inspiration for socialism rather than conservatism. Ruskin was an art historian who led the movement revaluing Gothic architecture, and he listed the characteristics of the medieval builder as savagery or rudeness, love of change, love of nature, a disturbed imagination, obstinacy and generosity in a famous chapter in *Stones of Venice* headed 'Nature of Gothic'. Like William Morris, Ruskin attacked mechanisation which de-humanised workmen, and challenged the elitism dividing art from craft, work from pleasure:

... go forth again to gaze upon the old cathedral front, where you have smiled so often at the fantastic ignorance of the old sculptors: examine once more those ugly goblins, and formless monsters, and stern statues, anatomiless and rigid; but do not mock at them, for they are signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charters, no charities can secure; but which it must be the first aim of all Europe at this day to regain for her children.

Let me not be thought to speak wildly or extravagantly. It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves. Their universal outcry against wealth, and against nobility, is not forced from them either by the pressure of famine, or the sting of mortified pride. These do much, and have done much in all ages; but the foundations of society were never yet shaken as they are at this day. It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure.

On the Nature of Gothic Architecture and Herein of the True Functions of the Workman in Art (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1854), p. 9

The socialist poet and artist William Morris was sufficiently inspired to produce *The Defence of Guinevere* in 1858, 'a book of poems exploring the modern Grotesque, ... exploring the ways in which modern poetic form and consciousness are materially shaped by the form and nature of work in the nineteenth century' (Armstrong, 1993: 235). Victorian poetry of the grotesque, sometimes inhabiting medievalism and using the ballad form, was produced by a dislocation between the real and the ideal: it could be playfully ludicrous or violently ironic. It was not necessarily evasive of social concern, as the examples of William Morris and Thomas Hood demonstrate.

Whereas Romantic poets had represented themselves as specially chosen visionaries when portraying the creative process, Victorian writers favoured indirection, wishing to distance themselves from the egoism of Romanticism. For example, Tennyson dramatised the alienation of the artist in an Arthurian allegory, 'The Lady of Shalott', while Robert Browning developed the Victorian poetic form of dramatic monologue. Nevertheless, poetry was an ideal medium through which to continue the Gothic exploration of mental processes through representation of dreams, abnormal psychic states, delirium and madness. While Romantic-period poets such as George Crabbe and John Clare had used the confessional Romantic lyric to express the disintegration of self, their successors combined third with first person, subjectivity and objectivity in presenting a grotesque character. Gothic fascination with abnormal psychology, with the unfolding of narrative and with dramatising the performance of speech are all combined in Browning's dramatic monologue 'Porphyria's Lover', but objectively staged for our empathetic judgement. Gothic allowed radical bohemians such as Thomas Lovell Beddoes and Algernon Charles Swinburne, influenced by the sensual verse of Keats and the musicality of Shelley, to repudiate bourgeois moralism by waving their morbidity and perversity in our faces on beautiful flags.

The Victorians also adapted Gothic and the fantastic for children, as a rebellion against the rationalism of Evangelicals and utilitarians, who had condemned fanciful or supernatural fairy tales. Poets such as Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll and Christina Rossetti, in 'Goblin Market', indulged the Romantic cult of the child by revelling in the playful inventions of the grotesque, and relishing sensual excess now relegated to infancy by the serious new age of the puritan work ethic. Victorian poets brought to Gothic not only their intense concentration on visual pictorial detail but also their relish for the sound-patterning of words and dialects old and new. They released ludic linguistic energies in their experiments with colloquial street voices, ventriloquised, for example, by Thomas Hood and Rudyard Kipling.

Gothic poetry was originally a heady mixture of Enlightenment scepticism about institutional religion and a lingering susceptibility to the supernatural sublime. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Victorians had developed the medieval revival, out of which it had emerged, from a corrective of hyper-rationalism into a new full-blown nationalist orthodoxy. Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* could hardly make more of a contrast with the perverse eroticism of Bürger's 'Lenore' or Keats's 'Lamia'. In place of the strident anti-Catholicism of 'Monk' Lewis and Ann Radcliffe came the Emancipation Act of 1829, the Oxford Movement in religion, the collaboration of Charles Barry and the Roman Catholic convert A. W. N. Pugin in designing the Houses of Parliament, the Pre-Raphaelite movement in art and a positive orgy of church building and restoration, testifying to fear of modernity and nostalgia for Christian art.

The 'Goths' had ceased to be a synonym for barbarians. Northern tribes related to them were now acknowledged as ancestors in Sharon Turner's *Tory History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1799), Arthur Hallam's *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818), James Ingram's translation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (1823) and J. A. Giles's *The Life and Times of Alfred the Great* (1848). Historians now interrogated the humanists' contempt for the 'dark ages' and explored the age-old tensions

between ancient Northern culture and Graeco-Roman civilisation. University degrees in English literature now became necessary in order that this newly valorised national identity be known through Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse and medieval texts, and promulgated through the education system. A canon had to be constructed, and it was one which favoured the strenuous mountain-climbing humanism of high Romanticism over a darker and unhealthy Gothic morbidity.

INTERPRETING GOTHIC POETRY

Despite the upsurge of critical interest in literary Gothic in the last thirty years, very few monographs or indeed essays and chapters relate exclusively to verse.⁸ One possible explanation is that the overlap between Gothic and canonical Romantic poetry makes it impossible to delimit a popular sub-genre.⁹ Perhaps this is just as well. Though cultural theorists have comprehensively revalued Gothic prose romances, once the despised Other of Leavis's 'Great Tradition' of realist novels, they have thereby reinscribed their separation, albeit unintentionally. Such categorisation over-values texts which are easy to pigeonhole but neglects the pervasiveness of Gothic amongst a wider variety of texts and genres. Literary historians David Punter and Robert Kiely, who argue that Gothic was poetic in origin, have been accused thereby of trying to make 'the school of Walpole and Lewis appear more serious and respectable' (Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall in Punter, 2000: 215) by associating it with canonical Romanticism. Yet poetry acquired the 'Romantic' label on account of such poets' habit of writing long narrative poems, frequently set in the past or in exotic climes, often with Gothic elements. Early writers on Gothic, such as Eino Railo (*Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism*, 1927), set the poetry and prose side by side. Mario Praz does not use the word 'Gothic' at all in his *The Romantic Agony* (1951): a study of the erotic sensibility of Romantic poetry which includes the melancholy, decadent, dark side instead of consigning it to a separate category.

In its own time, Gothic writing was often seen as satiric. For example, the early communist Thomas Spence read Gothic chapbooks as political allegories demonising aristocratic landlords (Clery, 1995: 69). Karl Marx himself frequently used Gothic metaphors of vampires and ghouls to depict capitalism leeching on the populace. In this, he doubtless felt he was drawing on the people's own metaphors transmuted into folklore. Gothic poets, however, appropriated and imitated folk poetry for a sophisticated bourgeoisie. Ronald Paulson's work usefully historicises the relationship between aesthetics and revolutionary political energies (Paulson, 1987). New Historicist Marie Mulvey Roberts has also provided a fascinating insight into

⁸ As well as Voller (1994), Williams (1995) and Gamer (2000), see David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1980, revised 1996); 'Shape and Shadow: On poetry and the Uncanny', in *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 193–206.

⁹ See Emma McEvoy on how critics have seen the relationship between Gothic and Romanticism in Spooner and McEvoy, 2007: 19–28.

the imagery of freemasonry and Rosicrucianism in poetry by Robert Burns, P. B. Shelley and Rudyard Kipling (Roberts, 1986). Some of the most successful Marxist approaches to nineteenth-century verse have been those which looked at ways in which categories such as gender, class and race overlapped or were deployed together. For example, the ambivalence expressed towards consumption and commodification of and by the feminine has evoked some rich readings of women's poetry such as 'Goblin Market'.¹⁰

The most influential critical approach, however, has undoubtedly been psycho-analytical, taking off from Sigmund Freud's 1919 essay, 'The Uncanny', which analyses E. T. A. Hoffmann's Gothic tale 'The Sandman'. Freud is a good 'fit' for literature, as he was himself intensely literary and named his theories after characters from classical mythology such as Narcissus, Oedipus, Electra and Eros. Though he admits he rarely strays into the realm of aesthetics, Freud prides himself on his rationality and lack of susceptibility to uncanny effects, at the opening of his sortie into literary criticism. Beginning with an etymological examination of the range of meanings in the word 'unheimlich' or uncanny, he uncovers a significant paradox. Though the usual meaning of 'heimlich' is 'homely' or 'familiar', one usage is 'concealed', 'hidden from view or secret', which seems to bring the word close to its opposite, 'uncanny'. What frightens us most is that which comes closest to home.

Freud likens this to the strange sensation of *déjà vu* which we have all experienced, where the borderline between strange and familiar becomes distorted. He reads Hoffmann's story in terms of the Oedipal stage in a child's development, which he believes is universal in the formation of the psyche into its constituent parts: the id, ego and superego. He suggests that the imagery of eyes functions as displaced symbols of testicles: relating Nathaniel's fear of the Sandman to the return of repressed Oedipal fears of castration, which have resurfaced from childhood and cause mental disintegration. Freud notes Gothic fiction's fascination with doubles, which originated in antiquity with the wish-fulfilment idea of a second self which survived death. He takes all these examples as evidence that the uncanny effect in literature is produced from the return of something familiar which had been repressed.

Freud's own fascination with Gothic showed the way, and his friend and pupil, Marie Bonaparte, followed with a psychobiography of Edgar Allan Poe in 1933, linking the author's life-experience with a pathology of necrophiliac desire expressed in his work. Freudianism has since then taken more sophisticated forms in literary criticism which continues to investigate the formation of the subject. Jacques Lacan opened his influential *Écrits*, written in the mid-1950s, with an analysis of Poe's short story, 'The Purloined Letter', demonstrating concentration on the signifier not the signified, the form not the content. Since the publication of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* in 1976, there has been a recognition that early Freudian interpretations merely reiterated and reconfirmed the cliché of Victorian sexual repression. Foucault argued that in fact the medicalisation of sexuality in the nineteenth century points to the Victorians' discovery and preoccupation with

¹⁰ See, for example, Helsinger (1991).

sexuality rather than repression. Matt Hill has commented in *The Pleasures of Horror* (2004) that ‘when horror texts draw reflexively on psychoanalytic theory it can be argued that they are participating in an ongoing circuit or dialectic of theory/fiction semiotic appropriation’ (p. 153). Maggie Kilgour comments that ‘Psychoanalysis itself is a Gothic necromantic form that resurrects our psychic pasts’ (Kilgour, 1995: 220).¹¹ Robert J. C. Young notes that Romantic-period essayist Thomas De Quincey in his *Confessions of an Opium Eater* had provided the prototype of autobiography through dream which Freud utilised in *The Interpretation of Dreams* without acknowledgement (Young, 1999; Thomas, 1990: 341).

Some critics censure Freudianism as unhistorical because its own theories are supposedly universal and take no account of cultural specificity; in addition, they postdate the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century texts we are considering here. But one could always historicise the discourse of psychoanalysis itself as a by-product of Gothic and Romantic preoccupation with the ‘history’ of the self.¹² Generically, Freud’s case studies use narrative similarly to a Victorian detective story, where a male scientist sceptically listens to the stories put to him and divines what has been kept unrevealed. His concept of the unconscious and its dynamic relationship with everyday rationalistic mental processes has provided literary theorists with a way of accounting for the part played by the irrational and accidental in artistic composition. For example, he likens the creative process to dreaming, which has a manifest and a latent content. He indicates that the dream-work like the poem expands beyond the remit of conscious control:

A dream-thought is unusable so long as it is expressed in an abstract form; but when once it has been transformed into pictorial language, contrasts and identifications of the kind which the dream-work requires, and which it creates if they are not already present, can be established more easily than before between the new form of expression and the remainder of the material underlying the dream. . . . Any one thought, whose form of expression may happen to be fixed for other reasons, will operate in a determinate and selective manner on the possible forms of expression allotted to the other thoughts, and it may do so, perhaps from the very start – as is the case in writing a poem. . . . There is no need to be astonished at the part played by words in dream formation. Words, since they are the nodal points of numerous ideas, may be regarded as predestined to ambiguity; and the neuroses (e.g. in framing obsessions and phobias), no less than dreams, make unashamed use of the advantages thus offered by words for purposes of condensation and disguise.¹³ . . . Yet, in spite of all this ambiguity, it is fair to say that the productions of the dream-work, which, it must be remembered, *are not made with the intention of being understood*, present no greater difficulties to their translators than do the ancient hieroglyphic scripts to those who seek to read them. (Freud, 1967: 340–1)

Freud’s uncovering of the tensions and unconscious rivalries at the heart of the family was useful to feminist theorists, who viewed nineteenth-century literature

¹¹ Compare also Williams, 1995: 242–3.

¹² See Castle (1995) and Falflak (2007).

¹³ See my volume on jokes (1905c) especially the later part of Chapter VI and the use of ‘verbal bridges’ in the solution of neurotic symptoms [Freud’s note].

as conflicted over domestic ideology. Normally a refuge, in Gothic the home may be a prison too, harbouring secrets, usually sexual in nature. Freudianism has been critiqued by feminists as male-centred; some have followed female psychoanalysts such as Melanie Klein in changing the focus to the mother-child dyad, or Julia Kristeva in theorising the very earliest drives to individuation in the unborn. Psychoanalysis was central to the Anglo-American feminist elucidation of Gothic texts as venting repressed anger or fear of mental disintegration (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979; De Lamotte, 1990). A specifically female Gothic was proclaimed (Moers, 1978; Fleenor, 1983). Gothic texts certainly often featured female protagonists, damsels in distress or hysterics. Again, the literary approach was perhaps a too obviously good fit, as the genre itself arguably reinscribed the idea of woman as victim (Hoeveler, 1988).

Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1982) provides a post-structuralist meditation on the significance of abjection in literature, in the course of considering novels by the neo-fascist French author Louis-Ferdinand Céline. She attempts to theorise visceral horror as had Freud the psychological uncanny and Burke the sublime.¹⁴ Abjection takes us beyond the pleasure principle and into the instinctual revulsion (edged with the sublime) we feel at filth or a corpse. Such taboos remind us of the border between human and animal, and Kristeva suggests they re-enact 'our earliest attempts to release the hold of *maternal* entity' (Kristeva, 1982: 13) and establish a secure identity.

The female corpse unites two sources of the abject, mortality and the female, and Kristeva's work has been one inspiration behind recent sophisticated studies of gender in Gothic verse. Poe's belief that the most poetical subject was the death of a beautiful woman seems to have been shared by many male poets. Elisabeth Bronfen (1992) surveys a broad sweep of art and literature in a nuanced psychoanalytical study, which includes but also exceeds Gothic. Adriana Craciun (2003) and Jacqueline Labbe (2004), writing specifically on Mary Robinson, Charlotte Dacre and their contemporaries, find that, despite the conventional binary between a feminine 'terror' and masculine 'horror', female as well as male poets created examples of the *femme fatale* and openly emulated the graphic eroticism of M. G. Lewis. The concept of abjection is also central to Gothicised representations of homoerotic yearning in poetry by Coleridge, Byron and Keats, as Ellen Brinks argues in *Gothic Masculinity: Effeminacy and the Supernatural in English and German Romanticism* (2003).

Gothic poetry is particularly susceptible to psychoanalytical approaches because it combines a Romantic preoccupation with the psychic processes of perception, experimentation with free metrical effects and its use of fragments and ellipses in imitation of manuscript transcriptions. Poetic fragmentation suggests dissolution of the subject. Gothic also stimulated the development of poetry with regard to form. The artificiality involved in imitating romance genres, enhanced by 'archaic' spelling, often fetishised the literary quality of such poetry, in contrast to the movement towards naturalism in the novel that gathered pace in the nineteenth century. The early twentieth-century formalist Roman Jakobson has suggested that all poetry works by defamiliarising language. He remarks that the naturalist aesthetic,

¹⁴ An excellent essay on the relevance of this concept to Gothic is Miles (2001).

INTRODUCTION

in contrast, 'involves the requirement of the least possible palpability of poetic form and tries as much as possible to subdue the clash between form and material, design and empirical reality' (Jacobson, 1985: 694). Gothic poets such as Scott and Byron certainly not only deliberately defamiliarised language in their adoption of the romance genre, but heightened the contrast by drawing attention to themselves in the separate and modern personae of authors and sceptical men of the world, in their prominent prefaces. This is in complete contrast to the Victorian meta-gothic of Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson, where we are plunged into intimate experience of a universe with its own Gothic microclimate, where we see-saw sickeningly from homely to horror.

Critics of Gothic literature often refer to the doomed attempts of structuralist theorist Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic* (1973) to categorise the genres of prose fiction which use the marvellous. Though his scientific approach was clumsy, it does make sense to analyse the way a text plays with the reader, especially when s/he is kept uncertain as to whether the genre is obeying naturalist conventions or not. For as one twentieth-century Gothic writer stressed:

The one test of the really weird is simply this – whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread and of contact with unknown spheres and powers, a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim.

H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1973: 105)

THOMAS PERCY (1729–1811) – EDITOR

According to the legendary story, Thomas Percy, a rural clergyman with antiquarian interests, was visiting his friend Humphrey Pitt in his country house in Shifnal near Bridgenorth, when he spied a seventeenth-century folio manuscript, lying under a bureau, for the maid had been using it to light the parlour fire. This rescued manuscript, now in the British Library, would form the core of Percy's three-volume collection of folk ballads, *The Reliques of English Poetry*, published in 1765. Though Dr Johnson offered his help as well as mockery, it was the poets William Shenstone and Thomas Warton who most aided Percy in the task of combing other manuscript collections and collecting oral transmissions in order to supplement and contextualise the traditional ballads which had first sparked his interest. Percy was not interested in the musical settings of these poems and did not sufficiently prioritise textual accuracy, according to Joseph Ritson, a more meticulously scholarly collector of ancient ballads. Percy appended a scholarly essay on the role of the minstrels, the original performance poets whose names had been lost to posterity. Though he considered ballads a link with the distant past, Percy was perfectly willing to compromise the historical integrity of his sources by patching, bowdlerising and modernising in order to mediate them to a polite readership paying a high price for his anthology. Nevertheless, Percy has to be credited with helping to revive British poetry by taking seriously the narrative verse of the people: a complete contrast to mannered Augustanism. Ballads that told a supernatural story such as 'Sweet William's Ghost' became especially popular and were eagerly adapted or translated by German writers Gottfried Bürger and Johann Gottfried Herder who, in their turn, inspired young British men such as Walter Scott, Matthew Lewis and William Taylor with a craze for the Gothic. Percy was a keen linguist and his interest in exotic or ancient cultures led him to translate a Chinese story from a Portuguese manuscript, the *Ebba* from the Icelandic in *Northern Antiquities* (1770) and the 'Song of Songs' from the original Hebrew.

Edward

Percy noted that the manuscript of this Scottish ballad was transmitted by Sir David Dalrymple, who shortly brought out *Ancient Scottish Poems* (1770). 'Edward' is generally judged from internal evidence to be authentically medieval: note the dramatic unfolding of a story through dialogue, and its lack of sentimentalism and poetic embellishment. The mystery of why the son's sword is dripping with blood arrests our attention immediately. His initial answers to his mother's questions are obvious lies, though the idea of a knight killing his hawk or steed hints at the unnaturalness of what is to follow. The climax comes with the horrific

revelation of a son's murder of his own father. The 'twist' in the final line shocks us even further, with its implication that Edward's mother had connived at the deed. The Oedipal tensions anticipate the concerns of much Gothic fiction. The poem is built on antithesis: the simple rhyme scheme bolstered by the repetitions, refrain and question and response, which all serve to intensify the tension and impact as the mystery is decoded.

'QUHY¹ dois your brand² sae³ drap wi' bluid,
Edward, Edward,
'Quhy dois your brand sae drap wi' bluid,
And quhy sae sad gang⁴ ye O?'
5 'O I hae killed my hauke⁵ sae guid,
Mither, mither,
O I hae killed my hauke sae guid,
And I had nae mair but hee O.'

'Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
10 Edward, Edward,
Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
My deir son I tell thee O.'
'O I hae killed my reid-roan⁶ steed,
Mither, mither,
15 O I hae killed my reid-roan steed,
That erst was sae fair and free O.'

'Your steed was auld, and ye hae gat mair,
Sum other dule⁷ ye drie⁸ O.'
O I hae killed my fadir⁹ deir,
20 Mither, mither,
O I hae killed my fadir dear,
Alas, and wae¹⁰ is mee O'

¹ Why.

² Blade of a sword.

³ So.

⁴ Go.

⁵ Hawk.

⁶ Red mixed with some white or grey.

⁷ Grief.

⁸ Suffer.

⁹ Father.

¹⁰ Woe.

- 'And quhatten¹¹ penance wul ye drie for that,
 Edward, Edward,
 25 And quhatten penance will ye drie for that?
 My deir son, now tell me O.'
 'Ile set my feit in yonder boat,
 Mither, mither,
 Ile set my feit in yonder boat,
 30 And Ile fare ovir the sea O.'
- 'And quhat wul ye doe wi' your towirs and your ha',
 Edward, Edward?
 And quhat wul ye doe wi' your towirs and your ha',
 That were sae fair to see O?'
 35 'Ile let thame stand til they down fa',
 Mither, mither,
 Ile let thame stand til they down fa,
 For here nevir mair maun¹² I bee O.'
- 'And quhat wul ye leive to your bairns¹³ and your wife,
 40 Edward, Edward?
 And quhat wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,
 Quhan ye gang ovir the sea O?'
 'The warldis room,¹⁴ let thame beg throw¹⁵ life,
 Mither, mither,
 45 The warldis room, let thame beg throw life,
 For thame nevir mair wul I see O.'
- 'And quhat wul ye leive to your ain mither deir,
 Edward, Edward?
 And quhat wul ye leive to your ain mither deir?
 50 My deir son, now tell me O.'
 'The curse of hell frae¹⁶ me sall ye beir,
 Mither, mither
 The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
 Sic¹⁷ counseils ye gave to me O.'

¹¹ What sort of.

¹² Must.

¹³ Children.

¹⁴ Space, i.e. nothing.

¹⁵ Through.

¹⁶ From.

¹⁷ Such.

Sweet William's Ghost

'Sweet William's Ghost' had first been published in Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724) and is an example of many ballads on the theme of the revenant, which were common throughout Europe and probably originated in stories from classical times. Here her lover asks Margaret to plight her troth to him, but she replies demanding a kiss in exchange, even though her death rather than marriage will be the result. The story unfolds through incremental repetition of dialogue, its sensationalist premise made concrete by realistic touches such as when the ghostly lover 'tired at the pin' (rattled the latch) or complained that his coffin was 'made so meet' that Margaret cannot creep in. A version of this ballad inspired Gottfried Bürger's 'Lenore' (1773) as well as Walter Scott's 'William and Helen' (1796), and it was translated by Herder. The wish-fulfilment theme of a romantic love strong enough to defy all barriers and taboos, even the division between love and death, was given an especially morbid emphasis by M. G. Lewis, whose novel *The Monk* (1796) featured his own version: 'Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene'.

THERE came a ghost to Margaret's door,
With many a grievous grone,
And ay he tired¹ at the pin;
But answer made she none.

5 Is this my father Philip?
Or is't my brother John?
Or is't my true love Willie,
From Scotland new come home?

10 'Tis not thy father Philip;
Nor yet thy brother John:
But 'tis thy true love Willie,
From Scotland new come home.

15 O sweet Margret! O dear Margret!
I pray thee speak to mee:
Give me my faith and troth,² Margret,
As I gave it to thee.

20 Thy faith and troth thou'se nevir get,
'Of me shalt nevir win,'
Till that thou come within my bower,
And kiss my cheek and chin.

¹ Rattled.

² Pledge, engagement.

If I should come within thy bower,
 I am no earthly man:
 And should I kiss thy rosy lipp,
 Thy days will not be lang.

25 O sweet Margret, O dear Margret,
 I pray thee speak to mee:
 Give me my faith and troth, Margret,
 As I gave it to thee.

30 Thy faith and troth thou'se nevir get,
 'Of me shalt nevir win,'
 Till thou take me to yon kirk³ yard,
 And wed me with a ring.

35 My bones are buried in a kirk yard
 Afar beyond the sea,
 And it is but my sprite,⁴ Margret,
 That's speaking now to thee.

40 She stretched out her lilly-white hand,
 As for to do her best:
 Hae there your faith and troth, Willie,
 God send your soul good rest.

Now she has kilted⁵ her robes of green,
 A piece below her knee:
 And a' the live-lang winter night
 The dead corps followed shee.

45 Is there any room at your head, Willie?
 Or any room at your feet?
 Or any room at your side, Willie,
 Wherein that I may creep?

50 There's nae room at my head, Margret,
 There's nae room at my feet,
 There's no room at my side, Margret,
 My coffin is made so meet.

³ Church.

⁴ Spirit.

⁵ Tucked up.

55 Then up and crew the red red cock,
 And up then crew the gray:
 'Tis time, 'tis time, my dear Margret,
 That you were gane away.

60 No more the ghost to Margret said,
 But, with a grievous grone,
 Evanish'd in a cloud of mist,
 And left her all alone.

 O stay, my only true love, stay,
 The constant Margret cried:
 Wan grew her cheeks, she clos'd her een,
 Stretch'd her saft limbs, and died.

Text: Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old, Heroic and other pieces of our earlier poets; together with some few of later date. By Thomas Percy, Lord Bishop of Dromore. With memoir and critical dissertation by the Rev. George Gilfillan, The text edited by Charles Cowden Clarke. In three volumes. Edinburgh: James Nichol. London: James Nisbet and Co. Dublin: W. Robertson. Liverpool: G. Philip and Son. 1864.

WALTER SCOTT (1771–1832) – EDITOR

The Cruel Sister

Realising how many of Percy's *Reliques* were in fact Scottish, the young Scottish advocate Walter Scott was inspired by nationalist pride to publish his own collection, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. He collated as many versions of each ballad as he could find, and stated that 'The Cruel Sister' was a composite, taken from one of three manuscripts recording those known by Mrs Brown of Falkirk 'intermixed with a beautiful fragment of 14 verses' given him by Irish antiquarian, J. C. Walker, who himself had it from the pioneer folk song collector Charlotte Brooke, who had transcribed it from the rendition of an old woman. Interestingly, Mrs Brown later objected to being mentioned in this context, as oral ballads were thought too 'low' for respectable ladies to recite. As a folk song collector, Scott's editorial method was to fuse the incomplete versions together into one fixed text, rather than to respect the authenticity of individual fragments. His collection, the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, was full of supernatural stories in verse, framed by the massive scholarly apparatus of antiquarianism. The first edition was published in two volumes in 1802. Thomas Longman had paid the princely sum of £500 for the copyright and copies sold for the high price of a guinea. A three-volume second edition appeared in 1803, to which Scott and his fellow-collectors had contributed extra poems.

'The Cruel Sister' was a very popular ballad: it was still being transmitted orally in Scott's lifetime, and versions of it were known throughout Scandinavia and northern Europe. The refrain is repeated throughout, perhaps sung as a chorus by the audience. The story of two sisters competing for a suitor centres on their passionate antagonistic dialogue and brutal struggle in the stream, as the younger unsuccessfully offers to give William up in exchange for her life. The coda takes the form of a surprising reversal: a minstrel makes himself a harp from her breastbone and strings it with her hair, which plays itself and reveals to her family the story of the murder. The audience's ambivalent reactions to this grotesque image of a female corpse would have been intensified further had the song indeed been accompanied by a harp.

THERE were two sisters sat in a bour;¹
Binnorie, O Binnorie
There came a knight to be their wooer.
By the bonny mill-dams² of Binnorie

¹ Chamber, inner apartment.

² A dam built across a stream to build up the height of the water sufficiently to drive a mill wheel.

- 5 He courted the eldest with glove and ring,
 But he loed³ the youngest aboon⁴ a' thing.⁵
- He courted the eldest with broach and knife,
 But he loed the youngest aboon his life.
- The eldest she was vexed sair,⁶
10 And sore envied her sister fair.
- The eldest said to the youngest ane,⁷
 'Will ye go and see our father's ships come in?'
- She's taen her by the lilly hand,
 And led her down to the river strand.
- 15 The youngest stude upon a stane,⁸
 The eldest came and pushed her in.
- She took her by the middle sma,
 And dashed her bonnie back to the jaw.⁹
- 20 'O sister, sister, reach your hand,
 And ye shall be heir of half my land.'
- 'O sister, I'll not reach my hand,
 And I'll be heir of all your land.
- 'Shame fa the hand that I should take,
 It's twin'd¹⁰ me and my world's make.'¹¹
- 25 'O sister, reach me but your glove,
 And sweet William shall be your love.'

³ Loved.

⁴ Above.

⁵ Anything.

⁶ Sorely.

⁷ One.

⁸ Stood upon a stone.

⁹ Gorge, channel.

¹⁰ Twained, tore apart.

¹¹ Earthly mate, lover.

'Sink on, nor hope for hand or glove,
And sweet William shall better be my love.

30 'Your cherry cheeks and your yellow hair
Garrd¹² me gang¹³ maiden evermair.'

Sometimes she sunk, and sometimes she swam,
Until she came to the miller's dam.

'O father, father, draw your dam,
There's either a mermaid or a milk-white swan.'

35 The miller hasted and drew his dam,
And there he found a drowned woman.

You could not see her yellow hair,
For gowd¹⁴ and pearls that were sae rare.

40 You could na see her middle sma,
Her gowden girdle was sae bra.¹⁵

A famous harper passing by,
The sweet pale face he chanced to spy.

And when he looked that ladye on,
He sighed and made a heavy moan.

45 He made a harp of her breast-bone,
Whose sounds would melt a heart of stone,

The strings he framed of her yellow hair,
Whose notes made sad the listening ear.

50 He brought it to her father's hall,
And there was the court assembled all

¹² Made.

¹³ Go.

¹⁴ Gold.

¹⁵ Fine.

He laid this harp upon a stone,
And straight it began to play alone.

‘O yonder sits my father, the king,
And yonder sits my mother, the queen.

55 ‘And yonder stands my brother Hugh,
And by him my William, sweet and true.’

But the last tune that the harp playd then,
Was ‘Woe to my sister, false Helen!’

Text: *Scott’s Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, Consisting of Historical and Romantic ballads . . . 3 vols, Fifth edition, Edinburgh: Longman, 1821.

EDWARD YOUNG (BAP. 1683–1765)

Edward Young was educated at Winchester College and Oxford, and supported himself through a university fellowship and his writing before becoming ordained in 1728. His earlier poetry included 'A Poem on the Last Day' (1713), a meditation on the resurrection of the dead; *A Paraphrase on a Part of the Book of Job* (1719); the popular melodramatic tragedy *The Revenge* (1721); and Horatian satires entitled *The Universal Passion*, later collected as *The Love of Fame* (1728). Young married in middle age but his new-found domestic happiness was not to last long. Within ten years he had lost his wife, stepdaughter and best friend/son-in-law. This personal tragedy intensified Young's tendency towards melancholy meditation in his poetry. Young, Robert Blair and Thomas Gray would later be labelled 'the graveyard poets', for, instead of taking a stoical or optimistic view of human existence, their verse voiced the alienation and dread of the solitary individual contemplating mortality. Other such writers were James Hervey, who published *Meditations Among the Tombs* (1745–7), and Thomas Warton, author of *On the Pleasures of Melancholy* (1747). This literature challenged the belief in progress generated by the Enlightenment and contrasted with Augustan satiric and comic verse such as that of Alexander Pope. The sense of awe in the face of death which graveyard poetry communicated was one of the inspirations behind Edmund Burke's aesthetic treatise, *Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). 'Graveyard poetry' and Burke's theories were prime influences on the rise of Romantic and Gothic poetry.

From *The Complaint: or, Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality*

Night Thoughts (1742–5) was the meditative blank-verse poem that Young wrote out of his despair: it was addressed to a sceptical friend, Lorenzo, and argued against Deism and religious doubt. *Night Thoughts* affirmed the sublimity and mystery of the Christian faith in the face of death. The nine 'nights' of the soul were published serially in quarto and struck a chord with a readership ready to embrace revived religious enthusiasm. Drawing on the Christian practice of meditating in concentrated detail on the process of death and decay, in order to realise the worthlessness of the material life, by comparison with the hereafter, such 'graveyard' poetry contributed to the emergence of Gothic. Written in blank verse, this Hamletian Augustan poem employs dramatic devices such as apostrophe and rhetorical questions which would make it ideal for declamation.

90 LORENZO! such the glories of the world!
 What is the world itself? thy world? – A grave.
 Where is the dust that has not been alive?
 The spade, the plough, disturb our ancestors;
 From human mould we reap our daily bread.
 95 The globe around Earth's hollow surface shakes,
 And is the ceiling of her sleeping sons.
 O'er devastation we blind revels keep;
 Whole buried towns support the dancer's heel.
 The moist¹ of human frame the sun exhales;
 100 Winds scatter, through the mighty void, the dry;
 Earth repossesses part of what she gave,
 And the freed spirit mounts on wings of fire;
 Each element partakes our scatter'd spoils;
 As Nature, wide, our ruins spread: man's death
 105 Inhabits all things but the thought of man!
 Nor man alone; his breathing bust expires,
 His tomb is mortal; empires die. Where now
 The Roman? Greek? They stalk, an empty name!²
 Yet few regard them in this useful light;
 110 Though half our learning is their epitaph.
 When down thy vale, unlock'd by midnight thought,
 That loves to wander in thy sunless realms,
 O Death! I stretch my view; what visions rise!
 What triumphs, toils imperial, arts Divine,
 115 In wither'd laurels, glide before my sight!
 What lengths of far-famed ages, billow'd high
 With human agitation, roll along
 In unsubstantial images of air!
 The melancholy ghosts of dead renown,
 120 Whispering faint echoes of the world's applause,
 With penitential aspect, as they pass,
 All point at earth, and hiss at human pride,
 The wisdom of the wise, and prancings of the great.

(Book 9, lines 90–123)

Text: Edward Young, from Book IX, *The Complaint: or, Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality*. Seventh edition (London: R. Dodsley, 1747).

¹ Moist parts of the body.

² *Sic transit Gloria mundi* theme: 'thus passes the glory of the world'.

ROBERT BLAIR (1699–1746)

Robert Blair was educated at the University of Edinburgh and in the Netherlands, and became ordained in 1731. He was the minister at Athelstaneford in Haddingtonshire and married Isabella Law, daughter of the Professor of Moral Philosophy, in 1738. They had five sons and a daughter. Blair was a keen botanist, a poet and a powerful preacher. He was writing verse at a time of religious revival when an emphasis on emotion and imaginative apprehension of religious truths was sweeping the country. He attempted to get his masterpiece published by sending it to the well-known hymn-writer, Isaac Watts, but the latter was unsuccessful. Next, he sent it to Dr Philip Doddridge, who succeeded in 1743. The poem was extraordinarily successful in America as well as Europe, though some wished that more emphasis had been given to anticipation of the Resurrection.

From *The Grave*, A Poem

Blair's 767-line masterpiece, *The Grave* (1743), ostensibly an attempt to convert the reader to Christianity by imagining being on one's death-bed, is a brilliantly-realised evocation of the physical horror of death which contributed to the emergence of Gothic. His personification of the murderer Death attacking the feminine Soul evokes traditional Christian iconography, and his exclamatory style draws on hell-fire sermons which had been designed to terrify their listeners since medieval times. William Blake was commissioned to design twelve plates for an edition of the poem which was published in 1808 and 1813, his illustrations having been etched by Louis Schiavonetti.

350 How shocking must thy Summons be, O Death!
 To him that is at Ease in his Possessions;
 Who counting on long Years of Pleasure here,
 Is quite unfurnish'd for that World to come!
 In that dread Moment, how the frantick Soul
355 Raves round the Walls of her Clay Tenement,¹
 Runs to each Avenue, and shrieks for Help,
 But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks
 On all she's leaving, now no longer hers!

¹ A dwelling occupied by someone other than the owner.

A little longer, yet a little longer,
360 Oh! might she stay, to wash away her Stains,
And fit her for her Passage! Mournful Sight!
Her very Eyes weep Blood; and every Groan
She heaves is big with Horror: But the Foe,
Like a stanch Murth'rer steady to his Purpose,
365 Pursues her close through ev'ry Lane of Life,
Nor misses once the Track, but presses on;
Till forc'd at last to the tremendous Verge,
At once she sinks to everlasting Ruin.
Sure! 'tis a serious Thing to Die! My Soul!
370 What a strange Moment must it be, when near
Thy Journey's End, thou hast the Gulf in View!
That awful Gulf, no Mortal e'er repass'd
To tell what's doing on the other Side!
Nature runs back, and shudders at the Sight,
375 And every Life-string bleeds at Thoughts of parting!
For part they must: Body and Soul must part;
Fond Couple! link'd more close than wedded Pair.
This wings its Way to its Almighty Source,
The Witness of its Actions, now its Judge:
380 That drops into the dark and noisome Grave,
Like a disabled Pitcher of no Use.

(lines 350–81)

Text: Robert Blair, *The Grave, A Poem* (London: M. Cooper, 1743).



1. Thomas Bewick (1753–1828) became famous for his wood-engravings of the natural world but he often teased the imagination with mysterious or gloomy scenes such as this.

(Graveyard by Bewick in Hugo, Thomas 1784.b.13 figure 1055;
© British Library Board The British Library)

THOMAS GRAY (1716–1771)

Thomas Gray was born in the city of London, the fifth of twelve children. His father was a scrivener and his mother was the joint proprietor of a millinery business that she ran with her sister. His mother supported her academic son's desire for a higher education rather than following his parents into commerce, but until he inherited a small legacy, Thomas Gray struggled with poverty as well as his father's opposition. His parents' marriage was acrimonious and they separated. Gray was delicate in physique, shy and homosexual. At Eton he had formed a defensive 'quadruple alliance' with three friends to counter bullying. The friendships, especially with Richard West and Horace Walpole, survived into their student years at Oxford and Cambridge and beyond. Gray accompanied Walpole, the Prime Minister's son, on his grand tour to Italy in 1739–41. On his return, he was inspired to compose verse by his friendship with West. They had just begun to exchange their poems in their correspondence when in 1742 came news of his friend's tragic early death. Gray managed to combine mourning his loss with the creation of a public voice resonating with a wide readership. He is now best known for creating the sensitive, alienated persona of *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751) which infused 'graveyard poetry' with philosophic sensibility. The poem became enormously popular, as were Gray's odes when published with the help of Walpole in 1757. Gray managed to survive financially through his writing and later became a professor of Modern History in 1768, having turned down the offer of the Laureateship. In the late 1750s and early 1760s, both Gray and Walpole immersed themselves in the Middle Ages and shared an interest in Gothic architecture. In 1764 Walpole published *The Castle of Otranto*: usually considered the first Gothic novel. Meanwhile, Gray was researching the Welsh, Scandinavian and old English origins of British poetry and published three verse translations: 'The Descent of Odin', 'The Triumphs of Owen' and 'The Fatal Sisters: An Ode'.

The Fatal Sisters: An Ode

'The Fatal Sisters: An Ode', published in *Poems* (1768), demonstrates the crucial role Gray played in the history of Gothic: as a pioneer who inspired other writers such as Walter Scott with his recreation of Viking sagas; and cultural theorists of Romanticism such as Madame de Staël with the myth of northern primitivism. Gray began studying Old Norse, English and Welsh poetry in preparation for writing a history of English poetry, though the project was eventually dropped and taken over by Thomas Warton. Gray had 'gone mad' about James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland* (1760), despite questions over its authenticity. At about the same time he became equally excited by the work in progress of the antiquarian Evan Evans, who was about to publish

translations of early medieval Welsh poetry, which was most definitely genuine. Gray's Viking interest anticipated that of Thomas Percy, who published *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry, translated from the Icelandic* (1765). He was aided by the parallel translations in Norse and Latin provided by Thormodus Torfaeus (1636–1719) in his *Historia Orcadum of the Icelandic Njáls Saga*, and those of the Elder Edda by Thomas Bartholin (1659–1690). The incident Gray powerfully rendered in incantatory quatrains was taken from an account written not long after the battle of Clontarf, which had taken place on Good Friday, 23 April 1014, and was later incorporated into the thirteenth-century *Njáls Saga*. It depicts the Valkyries or Fates deciding which warriors will be slain in the battle whilst weaving a web of human body parts. Though more explicitly brutal, the scene echoes that of the weird sisters in *Macbeth*. Shakespeare was also used by Wapole to justify the use of the supernatural in fiction, in the Preface to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*. Nothing could have been more of a challenge to Augustan notions of taste than 'The Fatal Sisters', and though the critic Nathan Drake praised its 'thrilling horror' (1800), others such as Percival Stockdale found it 'disgusting' (1807).

PREFACE

In the eleventh century Sigurd, Earl of the Orkney Islands, went with a fleet of ships and a considerable body of troops into Ireland, to the assistance of Sictryg with the silken beard, who was then making war on his father-in-law Brian, King of Dublin: the Earl and all his forces were cut to pieces, and Sictryg was in danger of a total defeat; but the enemy had a greater loss by the death of Brian, their King, who fell in the action. On Christmas-day (the day of the battle),¹ a native of Caithness in Scotland saw at a distance a number of persons on horseback riding full speed towards a hill, and seeming to enter into it. Curiosity led him to follow them, till looking through an opening in the rocks he saw twelve gigantic figures resembling women: they were all employed about a loom; and as they wove, they sung the following dreadful song; which when they had finished, they tore the web into twelve pieces, and (each taking her portion) galloped six to the north and as many to the south.

Now the storm begins to lower,
 (Haste, the loom of hell prepare,)
 Iron-sleet of arrowy shower
 Hurtles in the darkened air.

5 Glittering lances are the loom,
 Where the dusky warp² we strain,
 Weaving many a soldier's doom,
 Orkney's woe, and Randver's bane.

¹ Torfaeus has Good Friday.

² The warp of entrails weighed down with human heads hangs perpendicularly from the loom of lances, the weavers crossing it with the woof, using the bloody shafts of spears as their shuttles.

10 See the grisly texture grow,
 ('Tis of human entrails made,)
 And the weights that play below,
 Each a gasping warrior's head.

15 Shafts for shuttles, dipped in gore,
 Shoot the trembling cords along.
 Sword, that once a monarch bore,
 Keep the tissue close and strong!

20 Mista black, terrific maid,
 Sangrida and Hilda see,
 Join the wayward³ work to aid:
 'Tis the woof of victory.

 Ere the ruddy sun be set,
 Pikes⁴ must shiver, javelins sing,
 Blade with clattering buckler⁵ meet,
 Hauberk⁶ crash and helmet ring.

25 (Weave the crimson web of war)
 Let us go and let us fly,
 Where our friends the conflict share,
 Where they triumph, where they die.

30 As the paths of fate we tread,
 Wading through the ensanguined⁷ field:
 Gondula and Geira, spread
 O'er the youthful King⁸ your shield.

35 We the reins to slaughter give,
 Ours to kill and ours to spare:
 Spite of danger he shall live.
 (Weave the crimson web of war.)

³ Self-willed, determined.

⁴ Weapon with a spike or a pickaxe.

⁵ A small round shield sometimes strapped to the arm to ward off an opponent's blows.

⁶ A tunic of chain mail.

⁷ Bloody.

⁸ Sictryg.

40 They, whom once the desert-beach
 Pent within its bleak domain,
 Soon their ample sway shall stretch
 O'er the plenty of the plain.

Low the dauntless Earl⁹ is laid,
 Gored with many a gaping wound:
 Fate demands a nobler head;
 Soon a King shall bite the ground.

45 Long his loss shall Eirin weep,
 Ne'er again his likeness see;
 Long her strains in sorrow steep,
 Strains of immortality!

50 Horror covers all the heath,
 Clouds of carnage blot the sun.
 Sisters, weave the web of death;
 Sisters, cease. The work is done.

55 Hail the task, and hail the hands!
 Songs of joy and triumph sing!
 Joy to the victorious bands;
 Triumph to the younger King.

60 Mortal, thou that hear'st the tale,¹⁰
 Learn the tenor of our song.
 Scotland, through each winding vale
 Far and wide the notes prolong.

Sisters, hence with spurs of speed:
 Each her thundering faulchion¹¹ wield;
 Each bestride her sable steed.
 Hurry, hurry to the field.

Text: *The Poetical Works of Thomas Gray* (London: 1826).

⁹ Sigurd.

¹⁰ Many Gothic poems depict oral transmission by including a narratee.

¹¹ Broadsword.

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE (1749–1832)

The German polymath Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was a poet, playwright, novelist, philosopher and scientist. He studied law at the University of Leipzig and at Strasbourg, where he met J. G. Herder (1744–1803) and came under the influence of the *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) movement, which affirmed passionate love of nature and liberty in the face of tyranny and stifling convention. In 1773 Goethe published *Götz von Berlichingen*, a play about the knight who had led the peasants' revolt, and the following year a sentimental novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. In 1775 he settled at the court of Weimar and became a privy councillor of the Duchy. In 1786 he travelled in Italy and pursued wide interests in science and anatomy. Both 'The Erl-King' and 'The Bride of Corinth' are literary ballads; the first given here is translated by Walter Scott and the second is from a mid-Victorian anthology. Such translations can only be a poor substitute for reading the poems in the original German, but they give an idea of how they were transmitted in Britain at the time. These ballads were written at the height of Goethe's and his friend Friedrich Schiller's enthusiasm for folk poetry, and were published in Schiller's *Musen Almanach* for 1798. Goethe also explored the theme of the supernatural in his acclaimed drama *Faust*, part one of which was published in 1808, though it was not completed until 1831.

The Erl-King

Goethe had read Gottfried Herder's translation of the traditional ballad, 'Erlkönig's Tochter', and scholars hypothesise that Herder's mistranslation of the Danish 'erl' (meaning 'elf') as 'alder' may have suggested the idea of a wood demon. In his own 1782 ballad, Goethe takes the subject of child-stealing, often found in folk tales, but endows it with a modern lyric intensity and psychological depth. He elaborates the dramatic interweaving of dialogue, traditional in ballads, by employing three contrasting speakers as well as the narrator. The privileging of the child's imaginative sensibility at the heart of the poem is typically Romantic. The reader is simultaneously offered contrasting viewpoints: the child's vision of the supernatural demonic forces in the forest which snatch him away, or his rational father's explanation that he is already ill and delirious. The Erl-King's tempting of the child through female figures gives an erotic dimension to the symbolism. The young Franz Schubert composed a dramatic setting to the poem, fully bringing out its urgent galloping rhythm.

The Erl-King is a goblin that haunts the Black Forest in Thuringia. – To be read by a candle particularly long in the snuff. [Scott's note]

O, who rides by night thro' the woodland so wild?
It is the fond father embracing his child;
And close the boy nestles within his loved arm,
To hold himself fast, and to keep himself warm.

5 'O father, see yonder! see yonder!' he says;
'My boy, upon what doest thou fearfully gaze?' –
'O, 'tis the Erl-King with his crown and his shroud.'
'No, my son, it is but a dark wreath of the cloud.'

(The Erl-King speaks.)

10 'O come and go with me, thou loveliest child;
By many a gay sport shall thy time be beguiled;
My mother keeps for thee full many a fair toy,
And many a fine flower shall she pluck for my boy.'

15 'O, father, my father, and did you not hear
The Erl-King whisper so low in my ear?' –
'Be still, my heart's darling – my child, be at ease;
It was but the wild blast as it sung thro' the trees.'

Erl-King.

20 'O wilt thou go with me, thou loveliest boy?
My daughter shall tend thee with care and with joy;
She shall bear thee so lightly thro' wet and thro' wild,
And press thee, and kiss thee, and sing to my child.'

'O father, my father, and saw you not plain,
The Erl-King's pale daughter glide past thro' the rain?' –
'O yes, my loved treasure, I knew it full soon;
It was the grey willow that danced to the moon.'

Erl-King.

25 'O come and go with me, no longer delay,
Or else, silly child, I will drag thee away.' –
'O father! O father! now, now keep your hold,
The Erl-King has seized me – his grasp is so cold!'

30 Sore trembled the father; he spurr'd thro' the wild,
 Clasping close to his bosom his shuddering child;
 He reaches his dwelling in doubt and in dread,
 But, clasp'd to his bosom, the infant was *dead!*

Text: *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh and London: 1847).

The Bride of Corinth

Goethe has daringly eroticised the Christian legend of vampirism, fusing it with a story of a revenant taken from late classical sources. He provided the appropriate historical setting, when there was a clash between two religious cultures in Greece: the old pagan gods in the process of being replaced by monastic and priest-ridden Christianity. Goethe thought of 'The Bride' as a Gothic poem, referring to it in his diary as his 'vampire poem' and in a letter as a 'ghost romance'. Ambiguous language leads the young man to believe the girl who visits him in his bedroom is a nun transgressing her vows. Only later does it become clear she is an undead spirit making love to a human. Goethe's expert mixing of natural and supernatural worlds thus creates an essentially modern and sophisticated division within the reader: an uncertainty between willed suspension of unbelief and a rationalist interpretation of the psychological significance of myth. There is a philosophical dimension, too. Though he avoids crude didacticism, by giving a precise historical setting and by allowing his vampiric revenant the last words of the story, Goethe's 'Bride' implicitly questions Christianity's quashing of pagan sensuality.

I

 A YOUTH to Corinth,¹ whilst the city slumber'd,
 Came from Athens: though a stranger there,
 Soon among its townsmen to be number'd,
 For a bride awaits him, young and fair:
5 From their childhood's years
 They were plighted feres,²
 So contracted by their parents' care.

II

 But may not his welcome there be hinder'd?
 Dearly must he buy it, would he speed.

¹ Corinth had an early Christian community but was also the centre of the cult of Venus.

² Mates, partners.

10 He is still a heathen with his kindred,
 She and hers wash'd in the Christian creed.
 When new faiths are born,
 Love and troth are torn
 Rudely from the heart, howe'er it bleed.

III

15 All the house is hush'd; – to rest retreated
 Father, daughters – not the mother quite;
 She the guest with cordial welcome greeted,
 Led him to a room with tapers bright;
 Wine and food she brought,
 20 Ere of them he thought,
 Then departed with a fair good-night.

IV

But he felt no hunger, and unheeded
 Left the wine, and eager for the rest
 Which his limbs, forspent with travel, needed,
 25 On the couch he laid him, still undress'd.
 There he sleeps – when lo!
 Onwards gliding slow,
 At the door appears a wondrous guest.

V

By the waning lamp's uncertain gleaming
 30 There he sees a youthful maiden stand,
 Robed in white, of still and gentle seeming,
 On her brow a black and golden band.³
 When she meets his eyes,
 With a quick surprise
 35 Starting, she uplifts a pallid hand.

VI

'Tis a stranger here, and nothing told me
 Am I then forgotten even in name
 Ah! 'tis thus within my cell they hold me,
 And I now am cover'd o'er with shame!

³ Black and gold were the colours of the early Christian church.

40 Pillow still thy head
 There upon thy bed,
 I will leave thee quickly as I came.'

VII

 'Maiden – darling! Stay, O stay!' and, leaping
 From the couch, before her stands the boy:
45 'Ceres – Bacchus,⁴ here their gifts are heaping,
 And thou bringest Amor's gentle joy!
 Why with terror pale?
 Sweet one, let us hail
 These bright gods – their festive gifts employ.'

VIII

50 'Oh, no – no! Young stranger, come not nigh me;
 Joy is not for me, nor festive cheer.
 Ah! such bliss may ne'er be tasted by me,
 Since my mother, in fantastic fear,
 By long sickness bow'd,
55 To Heaven's service vow'd
 Me, and all the hopes that warm'd me here.

IX

 'They have left our hearth, and left it lonely –
 The old gods, that bright and jocund train.
 One, unseen, in heaven, is worshipp'd only,
60 And upon the cross a Saviour slain;
 Sacrifice is here,
 Not of lamb nor steer,
 But of human woe and human pain.'

X

 And he asks, and all her words doth ponder –
65 'Can it be, that, in this silent spot,
 I behold thee, thou surpassing wonder!
 My sweet bride, so strangely to me brought?
 Be mine only now –
 See, our parents' vow
70 Heaven's good blessing hath for us besought.'

⁴ Ceres was the fertility goddess associated with cereals and bread, Bacchus the god of wine.

XI

'No! thou gentle heart,' she cried in anguish;
 'Tis not mine, but 'tis my sister's place;
 When in lonely cell I weep and languish,
 Think, oh think of me in her embrace!
 75 I think but of thee –
 Pining drearly,
 Soon beneath the earth to hide my face!⁵

XII

'Nay! I swear by yonder flame which burneth,
 Fann'd by Hymen,⁶ lost thou shalt not be;
 80 Droop not thus, for my sweet bride returneth
 To my father's mansion back with me!
 Dearest! tarry here!
 Taste the bridal cheer,
 For our spousal spread so wondrously!'

XIII

85 Then with word and sign their troth they plighted,
 Golden was the chain she bade him wear;
 But the cup he offer'd her she slighted,
 Silver, wrought with cunning past compare.
 'That is not for me;
 90 All I ask of thee
 Is one little ringlet of thy hair.'

XIV

Dully boom'd the midnight hour unhallow'd,
 And then first her eyes began to shine;
 Eagerly with pallid lips she swallow'd
 95 Hasty draughts of purple-tinctured wine;
 But the wheaten bread,
 As in shuddering dread,
 Put she always by with loathing sign.

⁵ Her words are ambiguous, as 'cell' could refer to her nun's narrow room or a tomb.

⁶ The god of weddings.