Introduction

All the contributors to this issue of *Caliban* have been less concerned with establishing criteria for stable definitions of "genuinely" gothic motifs than with following the migration of these themes to other works. They have explored the dynamics of texts which have inserted, quoted, transposed, collected and reshaped the *disjecta membra* of the gothic genre. Identifying the remains in detective or forensic fashion was not a major concern: rather, the authors have wondered *why* these gothic motifs have so insistently appeared and reappeared in fiction as well as in critical discourse.

Maurice Lévy, who firmly delineated the frontiers of the gothic genre in *Le Roman "gothique" anglais* (1968), surveys the critical schools that have pushed the frontiers back and have proposed increasingly extensive definitions of the Gothic, envisaging it as a mode rather than a genre; Victor Sage gives us his own personal illustration of this mutation, drawing on comic possibilities of the Gothic, mapping its insights into the geography of fear and travelling in a hypertextual way through several layers of texts.

In the study of the uncanny persistence of the gothic mode, the psychoanalytical method obviously remains a fruitful approach. Marc Amfreville shows how the Freudian notion of the "uncanny" applies to a specifically American version of gothic ghostliness in which it is the solipsistic self that becomes radically estranged from itself. Maxime Lachaud uses Kristeva's concept of the abject to show how the grotesque body has become its own crumbling castle in Harry Crews's novels, while Sara Thornton proposes a Freudian and Lacanian interpretation of "hysteria, paranoia and perversion" in the imaginary and discursive mechanisms of Victorian advertising.

The psychoanalytical method has influenced many critical studies in which gothic fictions are seen as narratives of loss and in which insecurities about the stability of culture and the conscious self are given particular prominence; and yet, criticism has also absorbed or responded to the deconstructionist argument that Freud's narrative may not be an authoritative meta-narrative at all, but instead just one more gothic tale. It too, after all, has produced abject monsters such as repressed impulses and has plumbed mysterious depths in order, in the end, to make way for the triumph of Reason (Anne Williams's argument in the much cited *Art of Darkness*). Max Duperray reminds us that tables can be turned and contends that the "explanation itself is turning gothic." Magali Falco shows how Patrick McGrath's novels illustrate this thought-provoking approach to psychoanalysis. McGrath's talkative psychoanalysts and raving madmen can hardly be told apart; hence the discourse of psychoanalysis is given no particular authority over other forms of monster-making.

Generally, it seems that reading and studying gothic fiction has put critics in the position of ambivalent heirs and heiresses to the Freudian legacy, especially in England and the United States. More fundamentally perhaps, it has led them to

question their own status as authors of meta-discourses and, indeed, gothic fiction offers the ideal terrain for uncovering the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in any commentary. David Punter reminds us that since the relatively recent integration of gothic literature into the academic canon, the gothic concern with marginality or the instability of cultural and personal identity has become paradoxically central; he notably points out that "teaching Gothic" is itself a deeply paradoxical act since it involves precisely that posture of authority which is questioned by gothic narratives.

Many studies of "Female Gothic" narratives, to use the term coined by Ellen Moers, rest on the basic assumption that gothic plots tell a tale of domestic terror and turn the female psyche into a stage where the drama of female incompleteness is played out. The hysterical female body is often singled out as a favourite gothic motif, its symptoms manifesting the power of patriarchal scripts in which the female figure is quite specifically constructed as "man’s other." Beginning with the fundamental assumption that the gothic plot deals with female victimization, Laurence Talairach-Vielmas shows that in *Jane Eyre* the female subject is haunted by this pre-written script, as she deciphers the horrors being enacted on the gothic third storey of the mansion. Sylvie Maurel argues that in du Maurier’s *Rebecca*, the silent reiteration of a patriarchal plot is thwarted by the improved reading skills of the gothic heroine who, as an increasingly enlightened reader, comes to challenge the fixed categories of both "romantic" and "gothic" stereotypes; Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay similarly insists on the theme of the female character who embodies both the suffering addressee of a hidden text—which possesses her precisely because she has no access to it—and the triumphant reader of that hidden text. And indeed, Kirstin Jonson suggests that the gothic intertext directs our attention to issues of legibility. Even in Frances Burney’s comic treatment of gothic motifs, as Laure Blanchemain explains, the gothic imagination is ambivalently portrayed as a source of delusion and as an oblique purveyor of truth.

Many of the studies contained in the present volume envisage the comic as a way of registering the ghostly near-presence of what remains outside the conscious subject. Considering the cinematic adaptations of popular comics, Elena Vassilieva adopts a Jungian model to develop this hypothesis and to describe that which antecedes the self, whether we name it the "primordial" or the "instinctual." Phantasmal mirth and shadowy laughter are equally on the agenda of Sue Zlosnik and Avril Horner when they argue that the comic register implies a distance which is critical in more than one sense: detachment from this world results in confrontation with the otherworldly, for better or for worse; monstrosity spells the possibility of renewal and of the redefinition of gender roles. Comic aspects of the Gothic are also explored by Michael Hollington who, in his study of texts by D. H. Lawrence, shows how the uncanny life-in-death may be "affected with excessive familiarity" while life-forces become the true supernatural wonder.

In a different field of study, Robert Smart and Michael Hutcheson have also examined the role played by gothic themes in the context of ideologies in the making. They show how Irish postcolonial discourse has drawn on gothic motifs previously used in the building of British colonialist ideology.

Many critics still associate the Gothic with a thematic or structural concern with architecture: Elizabeth Durot-Boucé concentrates on the enduring theme of haunted houses in literature, while Gilles Ménégaldo looks into its treatment in recent films. As in "period Gothic," the emphasis on architecture in the gothic mode remains a powerful metafictional comment on the text as a reconstructed artefact. Some contributors have focused on the paradox of an openly non-realistic mode, endlessly reflecting on its own architecture, which nevertheless insists on dealing with the Real—the latter often being redefined as the disruptive horror evading representation: thus Jean-Michel Ganteau tells us that Ackroyd uses the gothic frame as a "theatre of affect." The frame, artificial as it is, is still endowed with suggestive power and allows the Real to haunt non-realistic discourses. Anne-Laure Fortin-Tournès studies the way in which Ian Sinclair combines a densely metafictional writing with the disruptive expression of an "affect" in the Deleuzian sense. In Conan Doyle's tales too, as Hélène Machinal demonstrates, the gothic scenes are optical devices serving the reflexive textual mechanism of the fantastic, which is then identified as the truly terrifying mechanism. In the field of film studies, Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard scrutinizes the structuring role played by the remains of Dickensian Gothic in *Broken Blossoms* by Griffith. As for Fred Botting, he turns the question of the Gothic on its head, considering not what is left of the genre, but what remains to come after it. Pushing to its extremity the fantasy of a global criticism capable of successfully addressing and assimilating all aspects of the mode, he encourages us to recognize the Gothic as a specifically human—i.e. neurotic—disposition to resist the dissolution of the liberal subject. And since this battle is already lost—such is, at least, the post-modern predicament—Cyberpunk may well represent the next generation, transvaluing despair and terror, transforming them into an ecstatic post-human, post-historical present. For, after all, if the Gothic is predicated upon loss, then this loss must be someone's gain, be it that of a new species.