

Chapter 1

Introduction to the History of Gothic and Irish Gothic with Le Fanu's Carmilla

1.1 HISTORY OF GOTHIC: AN OVERVIEW

Gothic is a complex cultural term, and its meanings have changed significantly over the 400 years of its existence in English. The term ‘Gothic’ comes from the Germanic tribe—Goths, who settled in much of Europe from the third to fifth centuries AD. Historically, a pejorative synonym for barbarism and vulgarity, the term came to be used in the mid-eighteenth century, in part because of its association with a spectacular but by then archaic tradition in northern European architecture, as an appropriate umbrella term for an innovative form of literature: the Gothic novel (Hughes). Before coming into the world of Fiction Writing, especially Gothic Fiction Writing, it was commonly used to describe the architectural style prevalent in Europe from the late twelfth to the sixteenth century. The prime example is the Basilica of Saint-Denis, France, built in 1144, the first Gothic Cathedral in history (see Fig. 1 in the appendix).

Punter in *Literature of Terror* (1996) describes Gothic as, if used in a literary context, it is mostly applied to a group of novels written between the 1760s and the 1820s. Gothic Fiction writing started to gain popularity in the mid-eighteenth century. Fiction writers began to shift their focus from emotional writing to something which started to give them the feeling of horror and terror. The writers began to incorporate dark and picturesque landscapes, surprising melodramatic narrative gimmicks, and an atmosphere of exoticism with the overtones of horror and terror (see Figs. 2 and 3 in the

appendix). Davison states, “Since its inception in the mid-eighteenth century, Gothic fiction has been critically contested, misunderstood and maligned. Although they were originally consumed by the same, largely middle-class, audience that read novels, Gothic novels were especially vilified as vulgar, due to their frequently macabre subject-matter, reputed immorality and exceptional popularity, particularly among women readers” (2). With the employment of these things, something else started to come up in the plot scene. The authors began to add a character that looked like a human being but acted like an undead person, and hence, the character Vampire came into existence. The thought was to have a creature that has the features of a human being but looks grotesque in appearance, with sharp teeth used for sucking the blood out of the victim’s body. In the folktales, the depiction of vampires is associated with plagues; whenever any plague hits the neighbourhood, deaths start to emerge. The general thought is that the Vampire has visited his loved one once for the final time to seek revenge or fulfil his sexual desires (see Fig. 4 in the appendix). With these norms in mind, we see the rise of Gothic and Vampire Fiction and the usage of the word Gothic in Horace Walpole’s 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*, becoming the first Gothic novel. According to Robert D. Mayo, “[d]uring the years from 1796 to 1806 [,] at least one-third of all novels published in Great Britain were Gothic in character while on the London stage one Gothic melodrama succeeded another.’ The Gothic novel was, veritably, ‘the major fictional form in English’ in the 1790s. An explosion of Gothic abridgements, plagiarisms and imitations, in the form of tales, fragments and novellas published in magazines and ‘bluebooks’ or ‘shilling shockers,’ followed in the wake of Ann Radcliffe’s tremendous success. In an era when over seventy per cent of the books borrowed from circulating libraries were novels and less than one per cent were religious in nature, and women were producing and reading more novels than men ‘Gothomania’ was a guilty pleasure for many and a social concern for some” (Mayo qtd. in Davison 2).

Gothic literature can generally be defined as writings that employ dark and picturesque landscapes, surprising melodramatic narrative gimmicks, and a general atmosphere of exoticism, mystery, horror, and terror. Gothic novels and stories revolve around large, old houses that have terrifying secrets or serve as sanctuaries for particularly frightening and menacing characters. With this new genre and the addition of a new style in writing, the Gothic style was given a new impetus in the mid-eighteenth century with the emergence of Enlightenment beliefs that extolled the virtues of rationality. Further, these ideas were challenged by the Romantics at the end of the eighteenth century; they argued that the complexity of human experience could not be explained by an inhuman rationalism (Smith 2007). Although the Gothic often shares the anti-Enlightenment ideas of focusing on thoughts and feelings, it is essential to note that the early Gothic appears to be formulaic, reliant on specific settings like castles, monasteries, and ruins, and with characters, such as aristocrats, monks, and nuns, who appear to be interchangeable from novel to novel.

Gothic fiction also comes with a history that intersects with Romantic literature and has some connections with Romanticism. The early nineteenth century English literature Romantic movement has its roots in the Gothic novel, the novel of sensibility, and eighteenth-century poetry. This includes the graveyard poets, a group of pre-Romantic English poets who wrote in the 1740s and later and are known for their gloomy meditations on mortality, particularly when applied to the graveyard's skulls and coffins, epitaphs, and worms. Later practitioners added a sense of the "sublime" and the uncanny, as well as an interest in traditional and old English poetic forms. These ideas are frequently regarded as the texts of the Gothic subgenre. Thomas Gray, one of the most prominent graveyard poets, wrote the poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), which is also the best-known product of this kind of sensibility.

Another key aspect of the Gothic genre is its concern with the representation of "Evil," especially with the demonisation of particular types

of behaviour, which makes evil more visible in the covert political views of a text. Given the fact, the 1790s were a time when fear or enthusiasm for revolutionary ideas, exemplified by their practical implementation by the French Revolution, profoundly influenced British Gothic. For example, the relationship between terror in France and literary versions of terror can reveal particular writers' moral views and political sympathies. Nevertheless, it is important to approach this apparent clarity with caution. David Punter, in his seminal study of the Gothic, rightly notes that one of the major terms in the Gothic is "ambivalence" because the Gothic often appears to delight in transgression.

1.2 THE INDUCTION OF A GROTESQUE BEING IN GOTHIC LITERATURE/FICTION

The concept of a grotesque being/creature in the Gothic defines a new set of focal points in fiction writing. It signifies a pivotal change in the genre, redefining the narrative structure and thematic concern. The induction of a grotesque being in the Gothic tradition often bridges the uncanny with the terrifying, asking readers to confront their fears through dark and enigmatic images. This transition from atmospheric gothic to characteristics gothic underscores a critical moment in the development of the Gothic genre. Where now, traditional elements—haunted castles and malevolent beings gave way to more instinctive, corporeal horror.

The first accounts of vampires trace back to ancient Greece, when legends of entities that preyed on humans while they were fast asleep and drained their body fluids were prevalent. In times of epidemic, stories of walking corpses who sucked the blood of the living and spread plague prevailed in medieval Europe, and people without a contemporary understanding of contagious disease began to think that individuals who turned vampires preyed first on their own families. The reason could be the lack of scientific progression, not knowing the logic behind the diseases and the absence of curing systems. Therefore, all kinds of stories started to

flourish to explain unexpected death, and it gave birth to the idea of the undead. Depending on mythology, there were always different titles for them; therefore, they were not always referred to as vampires. However, that phrase only became well-known in the early eighteenth century. During that time, legends about vampires proliferated, and belief in them grew quickly. In popular belief, a vampire, also written as a vampyre, is a fanged monster that preys on humans, usually by sucking their blood. Vampires have appeared in mythology and fiction for hundreds of years, mostly in Europe. Because vampires are blood-sucking creatures, in several Gothic novels, Vampires were introduced as creatures with sharpened teeth.

The term “hand in hand” holds perfect significance with Gothic and the idea of having a character in the storyline. While ghosts, witches and other supernatural entities existed before the nineteenth century, they were not the ones who gave the chills to a reader. Something new and terrifying has to take up the role to uplift the dead spirit Gothic was hiding under its sleeves, and with that, we see the birth of a terrifying figure—Vampires and Dracula. This blood-sucking monster took the stage and created a new history in Gothic fiction. According to Hogle, “The figure of the vampire and ‘Gothic’ fiction by that name came into English writing quite separately in the eighteenth century. One of the first published references in English to ‘vampire’ in its most common sense appeared in a travel narrative of 1745” (65). Though Hogle’s reference suggests a strong connection vampires hold with the eighteenth century, certain aspects still hold the crux that the popularisation of vampires happened in the 1800s.

The introduction of the Vampire in a Gothic scene happened through a challenge between three writers—Percy Bysshe Shelly, Mary Shelly and John Polidori, right after Coleridge left his 1800 poem “Christabel” unfinished. The poem is the first to hold the introduction of a vampire figure in literature. The challenge between the three is the reminiscence of their talent, highlighting their spin on Gothic fiction. “From that challenge, we now know, emerged Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), in which the title

character comes to see his creature ‘in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave’ and Polidori’s novella *The Vampyre* (1819), the site of the first male aristocratic vampire, based partly on Byron, that helped spawn a succession of others over the next eight decades, culminating most famously in Stoker’s *Count Dracula*” (66-67).

Before these three writers, the account of the coming of vampires comes from the folkloric tradition around the world. Twitchell argued that the accounts of blood-sucking monsters reached England relatively around the eighth century; utilising this, the word ‘vampire’ entered English much later, probably at the start of the eighteenth century. Gaining recognition from the folkloric tradition, vampires in English inherited a mixture of Slavic, Scandinavian and Greek stock (7). Further, within the lines, Twitchell also expands upon the lore of vampires in the English region, explaining their nature and why this malevolent being becomes infamous in Gothic fiction. He argues and cites Garden’s myths of vampires and ghouls in justifying his argument. For him:

The English vampire by the end of the eighteenth century was not simply a ghost or a wraith but the devil's spirit which had possessed the body and trapped the soul of a dead sinner.... The vampire in English lore was therefore distinct from a ghoul, which was a living soulless body which ate corpses but did not drink blood. Also, unlike the ghoul, which operated from external orders usually given by a sorcerer, the vampire obeyed internal commands. The vampire's body had not always been under the control of the devil; in fact, it had once belonged to a perfectly normal human who by some sin lost the protection of Christian guardianship, thereby allowing the devil admittance. This usually happened either because the sinner refused to obey religious law or was himself the victim of a vampire’s attack. (8)

With a mass expansion of vampires in the writings, character development also came along. The induction of vampires in the storyline reflected the intentions of writers for a change in the subject matter. This beloved being,

coming from the world of folklore/myth and mythology, created a name for himself, in just a nick of time, when the Gothic world needed him. This did not stop there; the expansion of vampires in fiction continues, because their uncanny presence gave breathtaking chills to the readers. “The Gothic vampire keeps widening and deepening its symbolic suggestiveness from the 1820s to the 1890s because of its special figurative capacity, coalesced between 1816 and 1819, for abjecting the psychological and cultural conflicts in the unconscious of the West as they themselves mutate from decade to decade” (Hogle 75). This induction of the Vampire in Gothic literature suggests that this was a starting point for the safe to get haunted back with something else, and we will never get tired of him: “I do not think we will ever tire of the vampire. An expert shape-shifter, the vampire constantly changes form to embody whatever contemporary society dreads the most. As soon as we think we have conquered it, it rises anew—like the reanimated dead of old—to haunt us in yet another form” (Guiley xiii).

1.3 GOTHIC WITHIN ENGLISH LITERATURE

The term Gothic has a very influential account when it comes to the world of fiction. Till the sixteenth century, Gothic was considered only an architectural design until the late mid-eighteenth century, precisely the 1760s, but what about before the mid-eighteenth century? The canon of English literature typically starts from the Anglo-Saxon Period or the Old English Literature period, so there has to be something that resonates with the Gothic literature cult. Literary scholars who specialised in Anglo-Saxon literature to Augustan literature (c. 450–1745) have not said anything about the inclination of the term Gothic in any of the works produced during the said time frame. *The Battle of the Goths and Huns* (see Fig. 5 in the appendix) is an old Norse heroic epic poem that exists; however, it does not comply with the traditional idea of Gothic work, placing it somewhere in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, very close to the original timeline of the Goths.

The closest that we can go to find who could have implemented Gothic elements can only be reflected in the work of Shakespeare (1564–1616). An outstanding Elizabethan poet and dramatist, Shakespeare, in his works, has implemented the major themes and elements surrounding the genre of Gothic fiction. Plays like *Hamlet* (1603 Q1, 1604 Q2 and 1623 F1) and *Macbeth* (1623) incorporated spectral elements, supernatural settings and psychological complexity. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare uses the elements of Gothic not to give us a ‘ghost’ which is central to the entire plot of the play; however, he uses the elements of nature, macabre imagery, decay, etc., to further elaborate upon what future Gothic writers will focus upon. As for *Hamlet* now, “I have of late, but / wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all / custom of exercises and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame the earth seems / to me a sterile promontory,” (*Hamlet* 2.2.261-265) his [Hamlet] sadness highlights Gothic themes like loneliness, decay, and the strange. The term “sterile promontory” suggests a twisted version of beauty, where something that should be lovely feels heavy and lifeless. Hamlet’s feelings of isolation reflect the loneliness often seen in Gothic stories, while the unknown reason for his despair shows deep existential fear. Hamlet is a haunted character trying to find his way in a decaying world. Meanwhile, *Macbeth* has a slight alternative turn of gothic. The supernatural forces and the use of the occult through the character of Witches make it cryptic; it also sets the tone for the play. Witches’ cryptic prophecies for *Macbeth* emphasise the mysterious and foreboding element in which Gothic takes a slight pride. Early on in the play, the magic by the three Witches, “Fair is foul, and foul is fair, / Hover through the fog and flighty air” (*Macbeth* 1.1.9-10), creates the atmosphere of moral inversion and ambiguity, highlighting the two most important hallmarks of Gothic literature. On the other hand, it also describes the common condition of fallen humanity (129).

Another aspect of the play is the Witches’ potion brew act, which highlights the concept of ‘necromancy’ in Gothic literature. In Act 4, Scene 1, the art of incantation is prevalent to its peak point:

Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed.

Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whined

Harpier cries, 'Tis time, 'tis time.'

Round about the cauldron go;

In the poisoned entrails throw.

.....

Double, double, toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Fillet of a fenny snake,

In the cauldron boil and bake;

.....

Double, double, toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,

Witch's mummy, maw and gulf

.....

Cool it with a baboon's blood,

Then the charm is firm and good. ([4.1.1-38] emphasis mine)

The above line, especially the emphasised ones "Double, double, toil and trouble..." evokes the sinister essence of Gothic with the dark art necromancy embedded in them. This potion brewing/incantation scene by the witch trio serves as the intermediate path between the mortal and the dark, in other words. Their chant, with its ritualistic tone and eerie atmosphere, blends with the supernatural and grotesque imagery of the Gothic. The repetition of "double" not only suggests chaos but also emphasises the theme of moral ambiguity central to Gothic fiction.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, the “cauldron” symbolises creation and destruction, and summons a sense of damnation and existential dread. This ritualistic and dark scene becomes the crucial element within the framework of Gothic, indicating Macbeth’s tragic fall into a dark realm of ambition and moral decay, where the glamour of power leads him inexorably toward ruin.

Both the works of Shakespeare considerably have some elements of Gothic; however, the main elements which scream Gothic are missing from his work. *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* both portray tragic flaws and showcase the evocation of supernatural entities and an eerie environment still considerably lack what the later Gothic fiction writers have achieved. As a proto-Gothic work, Shakespeare’s work was ahead of its time and gave a starting idea for the development of the Gothic work, which gave Shakespeare the nickname “Gothic Bard.” Elizabeth Montague in *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769), referred to Shakespeare as “The Gothic Bard.” The dubbing of the name by Montague reflects the historical setting and themes used by Shakespeare in his play, often focusing on the medieval and early modern English character settings. According to her, their countryman had a different kind of superiority over the Greek and Roman poets,

“even the earliest of them, who, having imbibed the learning of mysterious Egypt, addicted themselves to allegory; but our Gothic Bard, instead of mere amusive allegory, employs the potent agency of sacred fable. When the world becomes learned and philosophical, fable refines into allegory. But the age of fable is the golden age of poetry: when reason, and the steady lamp of inquisitive philosophy, throw their penetrating rays upon phantoms of imagination, they discover them to have been mere shadows, formed by ignorance.” (129)

To her, this dubbing of the name implicitly connects Shakespeare’s genius to the qualities that are associated with the Gothic tradition, though the term Gothic carries a complex cultural connotation. A further explanation of this comes from Anne Williams in “Shakespeare’s Gothic Transmigration,”

elevates upon the dubbed name, justifying the reason why Elizabeth Montagu uses the term "...All but the last of these would have been available to Walpole before he conceived *Otranto*, and as Walpole's tribute to Shakespearean authority in the second Preface to the novel implies, throughout the eighteenth century a growing number of English literary critics deemed the writer whom Elizabeth Montagu dubbed the 'Gothic Bard' worthy of their attention, including John Dryden, John Dennis, Joseph Addison, Pope and Johnson" (143).

Till now, the focus has been on what Gothic was before its implementation in the eighteenth century to figure out whether there was something to even call 'Gothic.' Though the elements were very prevalent in Shakespeare's work, his works were missing something. Though it is hard to pinpoint those hindering points, it still justifies that his work gave a starting point to Gothic fiction. As mentioned in the earlier paragraphs, Gothic takes a lot of inspiration from the Romantic period (1785–1830); the main focus was emotion, imagination and individualism, which countered the notion of reason and industrial progress in the Enlightenment period or Age of Reason. "Romanticism is typically linked with the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but there was actually a complex interaction of cultural, political, and intellectual influences at this time. These environmental circumstances not only aided in the development of Romanticism but also made it easier for Gothic themes to be included in this literary style" (Bagthaliya). Romantics celebrated nature as a spiritual and sublime force, contrasting with urbanisation—focusing on personal experience, rebellion, supernatural, and elements of fear and the uncanny, reflecting on the dark romantics. This shared connection between the two has been pointed out by Vincent Quinn in "Graveyard Writing and the Rise of the Gothic," pointing out that the eighteenth century and the Gothic inhabit a shared discursive field where numerous strands intersect and cross over, sometimes running parallel, at other times diverging.... More broadly, graveyard writing has left a trace on Romantic aesthetic theory and on Gothic fiction (37-38).

The notion of fear and the uncanny is also reflected in graveyard poetry, including other elements of Gothic fiction. A big chunk of the contribution given to Gothic is from graveyard writers, where elements were first mentioned in the poem and were later added to the fiction:

“By their very nature, poems set in graveyards at night are likely to include ‘priesthood and monastic institutions,’ ‘sleeplike and deathlike states,’ ‘subterranean spaces,’ ‘nocturnal landscapes and dreams’ and the ‘charnel house.’ Many of these poems further heighten their atmosphere with an ‘impressive ruin’ or a ‘wild landscape’: Parnell’s ‘Night-Piece’ invokes a starlit ‘Place of Graves’ where a yew tree ‘bathes the Charnel House with Dew’. When the moonlight weakens, the ‘Shades’ who lie beneath the ground ‘rise in visionary Clouds [*sic*].’ These figures are ‘slow, and wan, and wrap’d with Shrouds.’ Slow-moving bodies wrapped in shrouds rising from a graveyard at night? It would not be altogether flippant to describe this as an early instance of a zombie resurrection.” (Quinn 43)

One of the best examples of graveyard poetry comes from Thomas Parnell’s 1721 poem “A Night Piece on Death,” offering a blend of Gothic imagery, philosophical reflection and Christian consolation. The King in the poem is the persona of Death (representing the duality of death)—as a feared ruler and a liberator. Parnell in the poem takes on the task to critique human intellectual arrogance and redirect its focus on the existential truth, enabling the cosmic imaginary to reflect upon the ethereal beauty, contrasting with the silent graves in the backdrop. The graveyard scene, enriched with a Gothic undertone, symbolises the social disparity between life and death: “The bursting earth unveils the shades! / All slow and wan, and wrapped with shrouds” (lines 48-49). Another element that the poem reflects is the ‘Voice of Death,’ personifying it as a figure addressing fear, dismissing it as irrational, but reframing it as a necessary change to divine unity: “Death’s but a path that must be trod, / If man would ever pass to God” (lines 67-68).

The inevitability of the Graveyard poems reflects what the Gothic reflects; without its spectrum over the Gothic fiction, the world would not

have what it has today. This reflection of the past over the present signifies the importance of precursors over the successors: “One of the most important lessons that graveyard poetry holds for historians of the Gothic is that framing is not an extraneous device—on the contrary, it can be a way of acting out the narrative’s moral crux” (Quinn 44).

So far, the crux of finding the inspiration for Gothic has come from either Theatre/Drama or Poetry, which in itself was the start; however, the main premises of this research work look at a novella. The rise of the Gothic in the eighteenth century also came with a rise in prose reading. The popularity of reading a long-form work shifted readers’ attention from short-form to long-form fiction work, and therefore, the birth and the “rise of the novella” came into existence. The terminology “The Rise of the Novel” is attributed to Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novella*, first published in 1957. Watt, in his book, investigates the development and genesis of the most popular of all literary forms in the eighteenth century, reflecting upon the shifting cultural, social and intellectual trends. Watt notes that “The novel’s formal realism, we have seen, involved a mansided break with the current literary tradition. Among the many reasons which made it possible for that break to occur earlier and more thoroughly in England than elsewhere, considerable importance must certainly be attached to changes in the eighteenth-century reading public” (35). With this notion and shift in the style of writing, Gothic writers started to put much more attention to novel-based writing, and the cult of Gothic novels began.

The first official account of Gothic can be found with Horace Walpole, an eighteenth-century fiction writer from England who used the word “Gothic” for the very first time in fiction writing. His 1764 novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, set the pace for other Gothic fiction writers to experiment with the genre and follow the cultic flow. The subtitle of the novel, *A Gothic Story*, initiated what we call Gothic Fiction today. Townshend, Wright and Spooner, in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic*, further elaborate upon this and argue that “In the first Preface to *The Castle of Otranto* (published late

1764; dated 1765), Horace Walpole's literary avatar, the editor and translator William Marshal, tethers the story to follow to a precise year: 'It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529'" (i). With experimental writing being a success and learning from the past, after Walpole's novel, many Gothic fiction writers started to indulge themselves in Gothic writing. Since its induction in the eighteenth century, a lot more novels have started to flourish. William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) is also one of the most prestigious Gothic novels of the time. Following the same tradition of supernatural plots with emotionally realistic characters, *Vathek's* narrative indulges in dark art and demonic forces, which later ruin his life. *Vathek* is a prime example of what Gothic researchers call "Deal with the Devil" or "Faustian Bargain."

"One night, however, while he was walking as usual on the plain, the moon and the stars at once were eclipsed, and a total darkness ensued; the earth trembled beneath him, and voice came forth, the voice of the Giaour, who, in accents more sonorous than thunder, thus addressed him: 'Wouldest thou devote theyself to me? Adore then the terrestrial influence, and abjure Mahomet. ...It was thence I brought my sabres, and it is there that Soliman Ben Daoud reposes, surrounded by the talismans that control the world.'" (Backford 35-36)

Going along with the theme of darkness with the wisp of suspense, Ann Radcliffe, one of the pioneers of it, also achieved the heights of Gothic fiction. Her works, like *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and others, focused on the "unique fusion of romance, travelogue and terror" (Wright 306). Matthew Lewis's *The Monk: A Gothic Romance* (1796) tells the story of monk Ambrosio's descent, who committed the heinous crime of letting his sexual desire take over his life. Both novelists follow romantic themes in their work, focusing on the aspect of human nature with the induction of horror and terror; however, their works differ, "with Radcliffe embracing the 'feminine' aesthetics of terror and Lewis the opposing 'masculine' practice of horror, in the late 1790s" (304). The eighteenth century saw the start of the Gothic fiction train, from

Walpole to Lewis and others, whose works most commonly followed the romantic theme here and there. The shift from human emotions and individual struggles from earlier Gothic, with the rise of the novel genre and infusion of Gothic highlights, much more focused on the personal fears, desires and the darker facets of human nature.

In the nineteenth century, Gothic saw a massive upsurge in its rise, especially with writers from the Second generation or younger romantics (Jünger Romantik) continuing to write with the Gothic tones. Writers like P.B. Shelly, Mary Shelly, etc., were crafting new Gothic stories for the world. Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818), also known as *The Modern Prometheus*, kept the reader engaged and talking about Gothic fiction. However, till the Brick of 1818, the concept of Gothic was about terror and horror from the atmosphere, nature, art and architecture, and most importantly, the fear of self. Novelists and poets still used the old traditional style of elements in their work, and something new was not coming up. Though the human moralistic concept was the main embedded point, something new has to give the chills to the world. In 1819, John Polidori decided to infuse the notion of the Gothic with the character Vampire in his short prose fiction *The Vampyre*. "*The Vampyre* was the first story successfully to fuse disparate elements of vampirism into a coherent literary genre. Polidori's style, an unusual combination (for the time) of clinical realism and weird events, was also influential, and (like the author) has been much neglected" (108) is mentioned in Christopher Frayling's 1992 work on *Vampyre: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*. The nineteenth Century saw a mass upliftment in Gothic fiction, like short stories, novellas, novels and poetry, along with and because Polidori introduced a Vampire, the fiction world has much more to experiment with. It is a mammoth work of task to introduce all the fantastic work which came between 1837 and 1901; however, writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Elizabeth Gaskell, the Brontë sisters, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Dickens and many more gave a lot to the Gothic World. In the current twentieth century, Gothic flourished more; we have Shirley Jackson, Angela Carter, William Peter Blatty, Stephen King, etc. The list is endless.

1.4 GOTHIC IN IRISH LITERATURE AND LE FANU'S *CARMILLA* (1872)

The Irish Gothic fiction emerged in the Victorian period, 1837–1901, when the Anglo-Irish population was perceived as neither sufficiently English by the English nor sufficiently Irish by their Catholic counterparts. The Irish Gothic novel illustrates an Irish Anglican response to historical realities and allegorises the worries of a minority community who (rightly or incorrectly) regarded themselves as under attack from local Catholics over whom they had a tenuous grip. A defining function of Gothic Fiction is the exercise or exorcism of repressed anxiety. Irish authors frequently turned to the Gothic for imagery and plots that would enable them to find new ways of defining a secure identity in the face of enormous upheaval. Another important aspect was to have a character that subsists by feeding on the vital essence of the living. Britain has often been compared to a vampire that sucked the blood from its colonial nation, Ireland. During the height of the British Empire, Irish people were treated as second-class citizens who had no political representation and little control over their destinies. Ireland experienced centuries of oppression under British rule, including famine, poverty, and displacement, which had a lasting and detrimental effect on the Irish nation. During this period, the British subjugated and exploited the Irish people and their resources, resulting in extreme poverty and a lack of economic opportunities.

Britain not only colonised the physical land of Ireland, but also its culture, language, and identity, leaving a lasting and oppressive imprint on Irish history. With that in mind, the idea of having Vampires as the central characters in stories becomes the central motif. In all the novels, vampires always belong to the aristocratic class. In literature, *Carmilla* (1872) by Sheridan Le Fanu and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) are quintessential and portray Britain as Vampiric. In *Dracula*, it is evident that Stoker changed one particular line. Harker hears the three vampire women whispering at his door, and Dracula tells them they can feed on him tomorrow night. However, in the

American version, Dracula insinuates that he will be feeding on Harker that night: “To-night is mine! To-morrow is yours!” (Stoker 57). It reflects on the facts of men feeding on men and Vampiric Britain feeding on Ireland.

In the history of Irish Gothic fiction, before Bram Stoker's contribution, two Huguenot Protestant writers, Charles Robert Maturin and Sheridan Le Fanu (see Fig. 6 in the appendix), had already started creating a remarkable amount of literary work for Irish literary history. Le Fanu especially reached success with his work, *The Purcell Papers* (1880). It is a collection of thirteen Gothic, supernatural, historical, and humorous short stories by Le Fanu, originally written for Dublin University Magazine. His ancestors fled to Ireland from France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Coming from the Calvinist heritage and its relation to aesthetics, psychology, and politics, he had an irresistible attraction towards the effects of terror and horror.

Fanu's gothic stories show the elements of “Faustian Bargain” with its link to a psychological and political nightmare. His works also show the uncanny transaction which begins with *The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh* (Dublin University Magazine, March 1838) and *Shalken the Painter* (Dublin University Magazine, May 1838). In his version of the bargain, he combines the elements of Faust and Judas, where the victim sells their soul but not for long life. His version of the bargain relies on the horrible physical reality of his ghosts. At 58, Le Fanu passed away from a heart attack in his native Dublin on 7 February 1873. Kirk in *The Surly Sullen Bell* states that Le Fanu is “believed to have died of fright” (240); however, Kirk does not specify the circumstances. His childhood home in Ballyfermot, southwest Dublin, is now home to a road and a park that bears his name. Fanu was an outstanding writer of his time; M. R. James described him as absolutely in the first rank as a writer of ghost stories (Sullivan 233).

Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla* becomes a major part of Irish literary history. Published in 1872, it became one of the earliest works of vampire fiction in the genre of Gothic fiction. The novella was published as a

serial in *The Dark Blue* in late 1871 and early 1872, but later it was reprinted in Le Fanu's short-story collection *In a Glass Darkly* (1872). Interestingly enough, Le Fanu's novella became an inspiration for the 1897 novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, with an entire gap of 26 years between the two magnificent works of Gothic Fiction. His work portrays the trope of a lesbian vampire, which became popular in the twentieth century; it also became an explorative idea in the twentieth century to play with this trope in novels and films as well. It became an explosive idea because it was a way of suggesting or making fun of the taboo idea of lesbianism in a fantasy context outside the heavily censored realm of social realism.

Le Fanu's novella is set in nineteenth-century Styria (a state in the southeast of Austria). The story is narrated by a young woman named Laura (the protagonist), describing her relationship with a vampire in the form of a young woman her age named Carmilla. The first encounter that Laura details in the novella is an episode from her childhood: a six-year-old Laura is attempting to sleep when she is visited by a mysterious young lady who bites her on her breast.

“I was vexed and insulted at finding myself, as I conceived, neglected, and I began to whimper, preparatory to a hearty bout of roaring; when to my surprise, I saw a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of the bed. It was that of a young lady who was kneeling, with her hands under the coverlet. I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling; I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again. I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly. The lady started back, with her eyes fixed on me, and then slipped down upon the floor, and, as I thought, hid herself under the bed.” (Laura, *Carmilla* 13-14) (see Fig. 8 in the appendix.)

The narration then jumps forward thirteen years. Laura's father receives a letter from his friend, General Spielsdorf, wherein the General reveals that his

ward, Bertha, has died. The general implies that a monster of some sort has killed Bertha. Though Laura has never met Bertha, both of them are connected in a way. She says, “Though I had never seen Bertha Rheinfeldt my eyes filled with tears at the sudden intelligence; I was startled, as well as profoundly disappointed” (20).

1.5 THE CLOSING OF THE CRYPT

As a previous era ended, a new rise in the same happened with Gothic. The world needed something experimental and out of the box. The shift from emotional writing to terrifying and chilling marked a significant change in history. Human morality changed, and the world became a different place for new styles of writing. English literature inducted a new genre which became famous for its uncanny surroundings, haunted mansion, dead and decay, and most importantly, the beloved character Vampire. The Gothic gave birth to new challenges for scholars to work on, opening the path for critical criticism. Its introduction, especially in the Victorian period, made it more famous for writers to experiment with tropes and architectural history, while also keeping the essence of the past in it.

The enduring appeal of Gothic lies in its ability to adapt, blending timeless fears with the anxieties of the contemporary. While the early focus of the Gothic was on haunted spaces, later it indulged in the psychological depths, mirroring humanity's darkest struggles. Writers pushed their boundaries to keep the themes of terror and transgression to interrogate morality, identity and the unknown, moving. Today, the genre of Gothic persists, evolving in the new mediums of narratives, making its crypt remain a site of rebirth, where old shadows inspire future stories. With this, the Gothic stands equally as a relic and a reflection of an ever-changing world.

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