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Part I

Introduction

The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness

The Gothic and the postcolonial are obviously linked by a common preoccupation with the Other and aspects of Otherness. This preoccupation shares areas of concern, but it can also differ in significant ways, especially across the colonial/postcolonial¹ discursive division. Hence, an examination of the ways colonial and post-colonial literatures within or influenced by the Gothic genre negotiate with and narrate (or fail to narrate) Otherness is a particularly fertile way to look again at postcolonialism and the Gothic.

Put simply, this book is not a study of the Gothic or postcolonialism; it is a re-examination of central (and pertinent) aspects of both through a discussion of the problematics of narrating the Other.² This takes it into the past and into areas of specialised academic concern, but it is also a book that is implicitly and yet vitally about the present and the wider world. It is a present and a world in which notions synonymous with simplified versions of Otherness – on all sides – play a dominant part, a (de)formative role that is best encapsulated in that catchphrase ‘War on Terror’. If, as Zygmunt Bauman suggests, the object of our fear tells us more about the epoch we live in than the substance of the fear itself (Bauman, 1995), then it is necessary to note how the ‘War on Terror’ has reconstructed or revived some colonial and even precolonial notions of racial³ and religious Otherness (Kundnani, 2007). What is as interesting, in the context of this study, is the *relative* failure of even major creative writers to engage convincingly with these issues.

In a paper in *Wasafiri*, Robert Eaglestone discusses three recent novels by Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie and Jonathan Safran Foer and a story by Martin Amis that engage with the current ‘War on Terror’.⁴ He concludes that “despite their many merits, they fail to address precisely the issues to which they lay claim” (Eaglestone, 2007, p. 18).⁵ Illustrating

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this statement with textual analysis, Eaglestone goes on to note, among other things, that the texts treat terror as “simply evil” (Foer and Amis), as “an illness” (McEwan) or as stemming from “universally comprehensible personal motives” (Rushdie). It is obvious, and I shall explicate and develop this matter throughout this book, that the partial failure of major writers to engage with terror stems from a flaw (which runs through European thought and played a huge part in making European colonisation such a traumatic experience for many peoples⁶) in our ability to conceptualise Otherness.

For instance, the above engagements with ‘terror’ posit the terrorist either in terms of absolute and absolutely negative Otherness (“evil”⁷) or in terms of an essential sameness, a difference waiting to be remedied into the Self-same (“illness”, “universally comprehensible personal motives”). This is, as I shall illustrate in this book, a common tendency in European thought and practice when it comes to the Other. In general, the Other is seen as a Self waiting to be assimilated (and hence effectively internal or secondary to the Self), or the Other is cast as the purely negative image of the European Self, the obverse of the Self. Either as lack or as an absolute incomprehensibility-read-negatively, this reduced Other is posited as inferior or secondary to the European Self – and utterly knowable in its very negativised unknowability.⁸

In colonial terms, these relations to Otherness defined the difference between the approaches of the civilising or evangelising gentleman, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the ‘school’ that posited non-Europeans as basically unmitigated/lurking cannibals (waiting to jump out of the skin of European acculturation at any moment and gobble up Europeans) or introduced homilies such as “the only good Indian is a dead Indian.” This, in current terms, is the difference between those who see terrorists as simply misled, ill, confused etc, and those who see terrorists as absolutely evil (and hence to be remedied by physical annihilation or contended against relentlessly as part of an idealist notion of universal evil directly or indirectly traceable to Lucifer as Satan). Both approaches, as we shall see, simplify the issue of Otherness and hence fail to come to grips with the fruitful and fulfilling ways in which the Self can live in a world of difference and sameness, a world in which, to some extent, all of us can claim along with Rimbaud: I am *another*.

It need scarcely be stressed that Otherness is a central concern of Gothic literature in general. The very reception of the Gothic has been seen by all major critics, such as Fred Botting or David Punter, as balanced between the past and the future, the old and the new: even as the Gothic was offered primarily as an antidote to the coldness of

Enlightenment Reason – thus going back beyond cultivated rationality to the early basis of humanity in ‘emotions’ (which I shall return to elsewhere in this book) – it was enabled by the very progress and rationality that it decried or critiqued. As David Stevens puts it, “social progress, relying largely on more and more rationally based political and social organization and on various scientific and technological inventions, had made it comparatively ‘safe’ to indulge in irrational fantasies. Middle class readers, safely tucked into their stable and unthreatened social positions, could feel secure enough to cultivate imaginary fears and fantasies” (p. 10).

Not surprisingly, as a genre the Gothic in English literature looks backwards in its adherence to ‘medieval’ settings, ghosts, castles, revenge, despairing maidens etc; it looks forward in its fascinated suspicion of aristocratic tyrants and similar beings, and its close connection to the novel and, more so, the entire range of popular genre writing that arose in the nineteenth century and accounts for the highest sales even today: science fiction, ghost stories, horror, adventure novels, crime fiction. Among other things, it is this ambivalent relationship of Gothic literature to place and time that makes it difficult to define: a problem that is solved, to some extent, by defining the Gothic as a “writing of excess” and transgression (Botting, p. 1).

It is, however, as I argue in this book, also a ‘writing of Otherness’. This claim does not detract from any of the major ways in which the Gothic has been read: Freudian, as by Elizabeth MacAndrew; Marxist, as by Rosemary Jackson; gender-related, as by Coral Ann Howells; Bakhtinian, as by Jacqueline Howard; or the many other readings within mainstream traditions of literary criticism. I can argue that, in different ways, all these readings stress the concern with difference in the Gothic.

This is so even in the postmodern Marxist tradition, which tends to be sceptical of the Gothic as a genre. Jameson, for instance, writes that the “Gothics are ultimately a class fantasy (or nightmare) in which the dialectic of privilege and shelter is exercised: your privileges seal you off from other people, but by the same token they constitute a protective wall through which you cannot see, and behind which therefore all kinds of envious forces may be imagined in the process of assembling, plotting, preparing to give assault” (p. 289). This perception is undoubtedly true and more so along the colonial/postcolonial axis, given the extreme interplay of privilege and power in a colonialist context, though it appears to be somewhat reductive in implying that privileges are the only source of difference: as if other factors do not exist and, at

times or in contexts, 'seal' off groups and individuals from one another. However, even within that limitation, which I do not accept in this study,⁹ it can be seen that Jameson relates the Gothic to the presence, real or imagined, constructed or imposed, of difference. It is this aspect that I take up and examine using the conceptual tool of the 'Other' and 'Otherness', while also placing it in a historical context, that of colonisation and imperialism.¹⁰ I do not claim that this was the only or even the dominant historical context for the writing of these primary texts; I only claim – and this can scarcely be contested – that it was significant enough, and perhaps particularly significant for a genre of excess, ambiguity, sensationalism, difference, novelty, (often) non-rationality and terror like the Gothic.

When I suggest that Gothic fiction is a 'writing of Otherness', I allude most simplistically to the fact that it revolves around various versions of the Other, as the Devil or as ghosts, as women, vampires, Jews, lunatics, murderers, non-European presences etc. From the first Gothic work in English, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), through all major examples – William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), Ann Radcliffe's novels, Lawrence Flammenberg's *The Necromancer* (1794), William Godwin's *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), M. G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or the Moor* (1806), John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, stories, novellas and novels by Sheridan Le Fanu, Wilkie Collins, Robert Louis Stevenson, H. Rider Haggard, Arthur Conan Doyle, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker etc, and fiction heavily influenced by the Gothic genre, such as some novels by Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) or Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) – the Other remains the lynchpin of all perceptibly 'Gothic' action. It is when the Other enters – as Satan, demon, orphan, the outsider, vampire, ghost, non-Christian gods, sexually dangerous women, racially different characters etc – that the action of most Gothic narratives really commences. And they usually end with the predictable destruction or containment of this Otherness.

As Mary Snodgrass puts it, "The concept of Otherness underlies Gothicism as a structural myth" (p. 267). This can be sustained by highlighting the defining elements of Gothic fiction from any standard book: "the disturbing return of pasts upon presents", the "negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic", "tales of darkness, desire and power", stories containing "spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats... madmen, criminals and the monstrous double", etc (Botting, pp. 1–3). Every definition of the Gothic highlights a version of Otherness, an event, personage or term that is finally a partial

or flawed attempt to conceptualise that which is vital to the Self and absolutely not the Self.

An uneasy negotiation with the 'foreign' runs through the Gothic tradition, as is evident even in the way the term from its root of 'Goth' has come to be applied, adopted and contended over. It is not surprising that this negotiation starts assuming urgency in the eighteenth century, when, as Pike puts it, "the unwanted spectres of prostitution [crime] and foreigners" were acutely, if somewhat unconsciously, perceived as having infiltrated the alleys and corners of old city centres (p. 135).

There were both internal and external reasons for this.

Internally, the novel-reading middle class lived in a relationship of ambivalence with both the aristocracy and the 'labouring classes'. Its calls for 'reforms' were balanced not only between these two internal 'Others' – the aristocracy and the 'labouring classes' – but also marked by the ambivalence of the middle class towards both. Gothic fiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is marked by this tension: by aristocrats as powerful and elegant as well as decadent and devilish, by the lower classes as vigorous and oppressed as well as childlike, crude, ludicrous or beastly. This is one reason why the mixture of serious and lowly, tragedy and the comic – a typical feature of Shakespeare (a major influence on Gothic literature) that had been decried into the eighteenth century – came to be defended by Horace Walpole and adopted in many Gothic texts. In fact, a good example of this ambivalence towards the two bracketing classes is provided even in that 'first' Gothic novel, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764),¹¹ and it can be traced through a number of succeeding narratives. Foreignness, in class and cultural terms, was internal and essential to this worldview and self-perception.

However, I am not simply concerned with 'foreignness' in Gothic fiction, for that has been examined and discussed by various critics. I am concerned with a special kind of foreignness, and in order to address this one has to note the second – external – impetus behind the fascination with the foreign and the Other in Gothic fiction.

This external impetus was empire, which had become a reality for Britain by the eighteenth century. More than that, by the eighteenth century, empire was no longer just out there; it had also started reaching the centre. Nabil Matar, among others, has convincingly documented that even in the early Elizabethan period, when empire was more a dream than a reality for the English, various non-English peoples – Moors, Jews, Arabs etc – did live in or pass through at least the main port-cities of England (Matar 1999). However, by the eighteenth

century, their numbers appear to have started swelling in a visible manner: thousands of black soldiers from the United States who had fought for the British in the American War for Independence, slaves, servants, ayahs, lascars as well as the occasional non-European nobleman or 'business partner'¹² (Khair *et al.*).¹³ This was supplemented by the growing number of Englishmen, Irishmen and Scotsmen who had been to the 'empire' and had returned, usually with living and non-living reminders of the empire in their possession. In other words, by the eighteenth century, empire was no longer just out there; it was also present in Leeds and London and Liverpool, and could sometimes, in the shape of tinkers, travelling sellers and gypsies, even penetrate the smaller towns and villages (Visram).

Strangely, mainstream English literature gives a rather muted account of this presence of the imperial 'periphery' in the 'centre' of empire all through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While a market was created for the accounts of Englishmen and women in the empire, everything from William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786)¹⁴ through Philip Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* (1839) to much of the oeuvre of Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling gives us, in various ways, *this penetration of Europe into non-Europe, the stories of 'us' dealing with 'them' out there*. Veritable mountains of literature – fiction and non-fiction (which we shall have occasion to look at again with reference to the discourse on cannibalism) – give us the experiences, real or imagined, of Englishmen on the 'peripheries' of the Empire. Nothing of comparable bulk exists about those colonial and racial 'Others' who had, by the eighteenth century, started arriving in and even settling down and marrying into England.

But there is a difference. In this book, I argue (among other things) that Gothic literature – and fiction influenced by the Gothic – has allowed greater space for the narratives of these Others in England than most of the mainstream branches of literature. Perhaps this was inevitable, given the very self-definition of the Gothic, its concern with excess and transgression, its ambivalence, the tense dialectic of 'us' and 'them', 'self' and 'Other' within which the genre achieves its elusive definition, as well as the fact that British narratives that took place out in the 'empire' naturally gravitated – as Kipling and Conrad demonstrate – towards the Gothic under the impetus of colonial definitions of the colonised. But I am not overly concerned with the Gothic and the non-European Other in those British stories and novels that are based outside Europe; I am interested mainly in those that take place in Europe. In this sense, however, Gothic fiction shows a deep

subterranean anxiety and awareness of a ghost that was already stalking England, but which mainstream novelists preferred to see mostly in the far-flung reaches of empire.

Thanks to recent scholarship, particularly because of major studies by Brantlinger, Malchow and Punter, it is no longer surprising to associate 'empire' with the 'Gothic'. As Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert puts it, the Gothic "was, from its earliest history in England and Europe, fundamentally linked to colonial settings, characters, and realities as frequent embodiments of the forbidding and frightening" (Paravisini-Gebert, in Hogle, p. 229). She goes on to point out that one of the earliest Gothic novellas, the much-admired Charlotte Smith's *The Story of Henrietta* (1800), was set "in the Blue Mountains of Jamaica". Patrick Brantlinger also writes illuminatingly about the 'imperial Gothic' in his book, *Rule of Darkness* (1996), as does Punter in his magisterial history of Gothic fiction. But these discussions tend to focus on the Gothic *in colonial settings outside Britain and/or the United Kingdom*.

My point of departure in this book is a complementary reading of the 'colonial' Gothic in a *British setting*. My reading here overlaps at times with that of Howard Malchow in his excellent *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth Century Britain*, who argues that social, sexual and, particularly, racial apprehensions of the literate middle and lower middle classes in England found an outlet and reflection in the nineteenth-century Gothic, but again I focus, of necessity, more on colonial/imperial Otherness *in* texts set *within* Britain than Malchow does. This focus makes me pass over many Gothic texts which negotiate identity in the colonies, and engage with texts – sometimes by the same author – that negotiate foreignness and colonial 'Otherness' in an English or British setting.

As far as this perception of 'foreignness' and 'identity' was concerned, one has to go beyond Stevens's observation, also quoted above, that "middle class readers, safely tucked into their stable and unthreatened social positions, could feel secure enough to cultivate imaginary fears and fantasies" (p. 10). Perhaps middle class readers were not as 'unthreatened' as that; perhaps the nightmares of empire had started seeping into their dreams in London, Leeds and Liverpool too. At least terse and worried accounts of 'foreigners' in England in newspapers and 'invasion-scare' fiction throughout the nineteenth century indicate this, as does, at the anecdotal level, the fact that at least some contemporary correspondents attributed the killings of 'Jack the Ripper' to esoteric Indian rites or escaped African animals (Whitehead and Rivett). Perhaps Gothic fiction was best situated to access, within the limits of

the genre, the hauntings and dreams, the nightmares and anxieties of empire brought home to roost in the British countryside, the English metropolis and the British castle.

As the early chapters in this book will show, Gothic fiction and fiction influenced by the Gothic tradition do not only bring the colonial/racial Other back to the (imperial) centre; they also depend on and examine the anxieties and complexities of such hauntings. That they do so more often and more powerfully than mainstream fiction might be due to the fact that, as Hogle puts it, the “deep fears and longings in western readers that the Gothic both symbolizes and disguises in ‘romantic’ and exaggerated forms have been ones that so contradict each other, and in such intermingled ways, that only extreme fictions of this kind can seem to resolve them or even confront them” (p. 4).

Much of the burgeoning critical writing on the Gothic has covered these deep fears and longings in the Western reader, usually from a Marxist, psychoanalytical or feminist perspective. These are all valid readings, and my book seeks neither to repeat nor to controvert them. What my book seeks to do is to explore another major source of “deep fears and longings” on the part of the Western reader – the colonial Other, the ghost from the empire, whose presence too is deeply ‘unconscious’ in the Gothic but no less significant than the other ‘unconscious’ ghosts of gender, madness, class etc that the Gothic also grapples with. In many “Anglo... middle-class, white readers” (who, according to Hogle and others, have been the traditional “audience of all such Gothics” (Hogle, p. 3)), the racial/imperial/colonial Other evoked or evokes as deep a fear – and one liable to a similar exaggeration and subconscious resolution or confrontation – as any other, and perhaps more so than most, fears. However, unlike other ghosts, the ghost of the empire has seldom been commented upon in mainstream studies of the Gothic, and almost never been considered as central to it as the other ghosts *in a British setting*. Until recently, it has been common to see and situate the Gothic solely within the European consciousness and maintain the myth of European centrality and selfhood, a tendency that goes a long way towards explaining both the unconscious presence of the non-European Other in Gothic fiction and the havoc often caused by it.

The Other – Gothic, gendered, imperial, colonial or racial – remains a key concern of not only Gothic fiction but also postcolonialism, even as discussions of Otherness (and related concepts) are central to an intellectual understanding of recent decades: “Few issues have exercised as powerful a hold over the thought of this century as that of ‘the Other’” (Theunissen, p. 1). Philosophers have increasingly noted that

“the identity of the European tradition is always impurely traced and contaminated by the non-European Other that it tries unsuccessfully to exclude” (Critchley, p. 137), and this perception is widely disseminated in postcolonial studies.¹⁵ The crucial question asked by Gayatri Spivak – Can the subaltern speak? – is, after all, a version of this concern, as is Homi K. Bhabha’s worrying of the ‘Other question’. In a more lucid manner, Edward Said has illustrated, in its essence, some of the limits and dangers of ‘narrating’ the Other in his seminal book *Orientalism*. Apart from this ‘holy trinity’ of postcolonial theory, postcolonialists return again and again in their engagements with narration, representation, power, gender, sexuality, subalternity etc to the question of the Other. However, to be honest, it is not often that postcolonialists pause to say what they mean by the Other. Hence, that is a task I have to stop for, even though a full description is part of the job of this book and not this chapter.

What is the Other – or the notion of Otherness – that, as we have seen, preoccupies both Gothic fiction and postcolonialism, and, according to some philosophers, is a major concern of recent times? This is a difficult question to answer, and that might be the reason why the ‘Other’ is so often used, not least in the field of postcolonial studies, as a gesture rather than a term. Non-Europeans were seen as the Other, we often write, without really defining what this notion of Otherness implies. Or the Other is seen, as it was often seen in colonial times and by colonialist discourses, as a negation of the European Self. Stuart Hall puts the dominant postcolonialist perception in pithy terms: he writes that the figure of the ‘Other’ was “constructed as the absolute opposite, the negation of everything the West stood for”¹⁶ (Hall, ‘West and the Rest’, p. 314). Kenan Malik, differing from Hall and what he considers a perspective that incorrectly privileges difference, also defines the perception of Hall, Edward Said etc in these words:

the differences between Western and non-Western cultures are rationalised through non-Western peoples being defined as the “Others”, distinguished solely through their antagonism to the dominant image of the “self”, and against whose peculiarities the self-image of the West is created. (Malik, p. 220)

While I partly differ from Malik’s perspective, he is nevertheless right in noting that many postmodernist and postcolonialist critics see the Other merely as a negation of or the obverse of the self. This is not

something they create out of thin air: they simply stress the dominant perspective on Otherness in European and, particularly, European colonial thinking.

As Todorov has noted in *The Conquest of America*, Columbus's evaluation of the 'savages' fluctuates widely and quickly from one pole of goodness to another of depravity and evil, and all of it without any ability to communicate with the newly discovered peoples (Todorov, 1982, pp. 36–41). It appears related to certain preconceptions that Columbus already had and to political considerations, but it is also influenced by what I have termed the alterity of the Other.¹⁷ When Columbus perceives the natives as an emptiness waiting to be civilised and converted into the Self-same, the natives are seen as good, innocent, generous etc; when the natives present any indication of a will that cannot or will not be reduced to sameness, they end up – on as little ground – being considered wicked, terrorising, cannibalistic, thieving etc. In short, Columbus's evaluation of the Other oscillates between the dominant colonialist poles of the (European) Self-same, and hence good/civilised or capable of goodness/civilisation, and the negative-of-the-(European)-self, and hence evil and incapable of being really civilised. Or, as Todorov puts it,

Columbus's attitude with regard to the Indians is based on his perception of them. We can distinguish here two component parts, which we shall find again in the following century and, in practice, down to our own day in every colonist in his relations to the colonized... Either he conceives the Indians (though without using these words) as human beings altogether, having the same rights as himself; but then he sees them not only as equals but also as identical, and this behaviour leads to assimilationism, the projection of his own values on the others. Or else he starts from the difference, but the latter is immediately translated into terms of superiority and inferiority (in his case, obviously, it is the Indians who are inferior). What is denied is the existence of a human substance truly other, something capable of being not merely an imperfect state of oneself. (Todorov, 1982, p. 42)

This historical and theoretical context explains why postcolonialists tend to consider the European notion of the colonial/racial Other as basically a negative and negating construct. It is not, as I have noted earlier, something that postcolonialists pull out of thin air; it is actually a perception of the dominant trend in European and colonialist

thinking. But, of course, in focusing solely on this trend, postcolonialists can also implicitly and against their conscious judgement accept the reduction of the concept of Otherness imposed on it by the very texts they set out to critique.

The Other, in philosophical terms, is not necessarily just a negative image, or a shadow of the Self.¹⁸ Yet, the tendency in postcolonialism to see Otherness as simply a negative imputation by the European self is grounded in historical facts, because often the difference of the European from the non-European, real or imagined, was cast in the light of a lack, a deficiency, an abnormality of the non-European, as (among others) Stuart Hall and Edward Said have highlighted in various publications. The postcolonial critique of this dismissal and the accompanying privileging of the European self is part of a larger questioning, also undertaken in radical European circles: the philosopher and scholar, Fred Dallmayr, even imputes “the post-Cartesian turn to ‘Otherness’ ... [to] dislocations manifest in the confrontation between Western and revitalized non-Western cultures on a global scale” (Dallmayr, ‘Introduction’, in Theunissen, p. ix). Moreover, even the rich European philosophical tradition of discussions of ‘self’, ‘other’, ‘subjectivity’, ‘transcendence’ and related matters has been seen by philosophers like Emmanuel Levinas, to whom I will often have recourse in this book, as employing the Other to put the ‘I’ or the ‘Self’ in question (hence finally privileging the Self over the Other). Levinas differs from this. As Pierre Hayat puts it in his preface to Levinas’s *Alterity and Transcendence*, for Levinas “the I does not put itself in question; it is put in question by the other” (p. xiii). It is this conception of Otherness that I will draw upon, and elaborate as the book proceeds.

In this initial clearing of ground, it needs to be added that, while it may be true, as Kenan Malik alleges, that the postmodernist, post-structuralist and postcolonialist use of the ‘Other’ to conceptualise the European(ised) negotiation of differences and identity with the ‘non-European’ is sometimes ahistorical (Malik, p. 222), this need not lead to a dismissal of the category of the Other. Neither should the concept of the Other be seen only in terms of the fixity and negativity imposed on it by colonialist power. This is implicit in Bhabha’s very complex engagement with the Other, which runs between the two categorical poles of, shall we say, a colonialist and a conceptual definition. Bhabha sees the “ideological construction of Otherness” by “colonial discourse” as dependent on “the concept of ‘fixity’” and “ambivalence”: in this sense he correctly identifies (sometimes reduces) the Other to the

'stereotype' (Bhabha, 'The Other Question', p. 66), an identification also made by Fanon (in *Black Skin, White Masks*) and Said (in *Orientalism*) in different ways. In this sense, which is the dominant sense of colonialist Otherness, Otherness is "at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (Bhabha, 'The Other Question', p. 67). In the process, "colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (Bhabha, 'The Other Question', pp. 70–1).

While I will keep this aspect of the 'other question' in mind, I also argue that this, unlike much of postcolonialism, by no means exhausts the concept of the Other even within Western traditions. Bhabha is aware of it when he talks about "a knowledge that is arrested and fetishistic and circulates through colonial discourse as that limited form of Otherness that I have called the stereotype" (Bhabha, 'The Other Question', pp. 77–8). In other words, there is a form (or forms) of Otherness which need not be "limited" to the "stereotype" – to the fetishised, fixed, negative, emptied, desired–derided Other of colonialist discourse.

Outside the colonial referent, one can argue that the category of the Other is a conceptual sign, whose referent changes across time and space – as Foucault, among others, repeatedly suggests. However, while the actual 'Other' might change in space and time, the category of the Other and, above all, the negotiation with Otherness seems to be a persistent feature of the negotiation with self and related ideas – though it needs to be stressed that this category is *not* to be confounded with the reduced and largely negative notion of Otherness that European colonialists often had in mind in the past and that postcolonialists critique today. On the other hand, at least in the centuries of European colonisation, the non-European was mostly constructed as the reduced, largely negative Other against which many Europeans defined and constructed the European Self, and to some extent still do. All this needs to be borne in mind by the reader of this study.

Hence, mine is not really a postcolonialist position on Otherness or subjectivity, and not even a common position associated with post-modernism or post-structuralism. In post-structuralist discourse too, as in postcolonialism, the European perception of the Other is often conceptualised merely in terms of negativity. For many followers of Michel Foucault, if not always for the 'master' himself, the Other, as a social object, is merely or predominantly the difference against which the (European)

Self measures itself. This focuses on only one side, if the dominant one, of a tendency. For, as Dallmayr notes, “Contrary to the assumption of a fixed or easily defined boundary, there is a strong tradition in Western thought – stretching back to Hegel, Schilling, and beyond – according to which the linkage between I and the Other is not a relation of exclusivity but one of mutual dependence” (Dallmayr, ‘Introduction’, in Theunissen, p. x). It is a point that also comes through in Jerrold Seigel’s magisterial study of the idea of the self in Western Europe.

And yet my position is defined by my post-colonial origins not only in my preference for Levinas over Hegel, but also in my choice of Levinas over Husserl, to whom Levinas openly acknowledges a debt. For I follow Theunissen in continuing to feel that, while Husserl insists on the fact that the Other represents the ‘I’, for Husserl – and for all major European thinkers of my acquaintance until Levinas¹⁹ – the ‘I’ still remains central and the Other is finally a means by which the I is represented. It is this centrality that one cannot accept from a post-colonial position, and that one has to reconceptualise without just turning the equation around and privileging the ‘Other’, so to speak. It is here that Levinas’s work has been most enabling for me, even though I came to it after I had already formulated a similar conception of the relationship between the Self and the Other.

Not wishing to linger over philosophical matters (though I shall perforce return to them elsewhere in this book), I will provide only a working definition of my usage of the Other here. Levinas follows Husserl in conceiving of the Other “as one who is not merely different from me in being this or that other (person) but who, as the I that he is for himself, is quite different from the I that I am for myself” (Theunissen, p. 17). With Levinas, this ‘difference’, which is essential for the Self, is teamed with a responsibility to the Other:

Does not that summons to responsibility destroy the forms of generality in which my store of knowledge, my knowledge of the other man, represents the latter to me as similar to me, designating me instead in the face of the other as responsible with no possible denial, and thus, as the unique and chosen one? (Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, p. 27)

Levinas’s Other is both “defenceless”²⁰ and always “oppositional” (Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, p. 29); essential for the Self, the Other cannot be reduced to the Self. And yet, the Other is not simply

“limit and menace”, a cause of terror, to the Self:

Who would dispute that it is so, for the most part, in a human society subjected, like all finite reality, to the formal principle according to which the other limits or cramps the same: the wars and violence of the world, of all ages, is sufficient proof of that. But the other man – the absolutely other – the Other – does not exhaust his presence by that repressive function. His presence can be meeting and friendship, and in this the human is in contrast with all other reality. (Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, p. 56)

This conception of the Other-Self relationship is, as Theunissen puts it with reference to the work of Martin Buber (with whom Levinas shares much), “dialogical” (p. 257) and opposed to the dominant tradition of transcendentalism in European philosophical discussions of Otherness.

I will follow Levinas (and, at least implicitly, Buber) in his establishment of a mutually equal relationship between the Self and the Other, without reducing the Other to the Self and doing away with either its oppositionality or its connectivity, as often happens in mainstream accounts of society or the Self. I will, however, differ from all these philosophers in thinking of the Other not just as an abstract concept but as an abstract concept with which to negotiate actual difference and sameness in concrete societies. In that sense, my use of ‘Otherness’ is not just philosophical but sociological, which is only appropriate because, whether or not literature reflects society, it is written in that most social of all human creations: language. I will also avoid splitting hairs over the relationship of the self and the Other, either in the postmodern and postcolonial tradition of Homi K. Bhabha or in the postmodern psychoanalytical tradition best exemplified by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*: such further engagements might be rich in some contexts, but they would not add much to, or detract much from, the main arguments that I have to make in this study.

As an initial working definition, then, one can do worse than employ Todorov’s words from *The Conquest of America*:

But *others* are also “*I*’s: subjects just as I am, whom only my point of view – according to which all of them are *out there* and I alone am *in here* – separates and authentically distinguishes from myself. I can conceive of these others as an abstraction, as an instance of any individual’s psychic configuration, as the Other – other in relation to myself, to *me*; or else as a specific social group to which *we* do not belong. This group can be interior to society: women for men, the

rich for the poor, the mad for the “normal”; or it can be exterior to society, i.e. another society which will be near or far away, depending on the case. (Original stresses; Todorov, 1982, p. 3)

More commentary is unnecessary at this moment, though two things still need to be stressed. The first, already stated, point relates to how much of colonial literature, including Gothic fiction, tends to see Otherness as either absolutely opaque and hence only capable of genocidal confrontation, or simply as a difference waiting to be redeemed into the Self-same by civilisation, conversion, education, capitalism etc.²¹ The second, less obvious, point relates to how the excess of Gothic fiction and its original privileging of emotions against rationality are not without a serious purpose, however unconscious on the part of the writers. For emotions, as Martha C. Nussbaum defines them in her important book *Upheavals of Thought*, arise at exactly the juncture in time and space when the human rubs up against, in Levinas’s words (quoted above), “all other reality”. I will have occasion to return to this later in this book, as it forms a central part of my larger thesis.

The chapters to follow

It is not my intention to deal with all of Gothic literature and its history, let alone associated genres like the sensation play, even though these may be used to illustrate similar points. I also do not wish to extend my study much beyond the circumference of the British empire, because it would be as much a mistake to suppose all modern European empires to have been identical as it would be to assume that they did not show some family resemblances. On occasion, I might deviate from the central texts to refer, though only in passing and as an illustration, to other genres or subgenres, to American literature or even the occasional Gothic text in Danish or French. However, as a rule, this study will restrict itself to fiction in English written in Britain or the United Kingdom and situated in Britain or the United Kingdom – initially providing a rereading of British Gothic fiction from the perspective of my thesis. The selection of texts is perforce eclectic, for my purpose is not a systematic study of Gothic literature but an examination of the role in it of the colonial/racial Other, which is then used to provide a basis for discussion of selective postcolonist texts and theoretical issues central to postcolonialism. Hence, I engage only with specific texts that enable me to highlight significant aspects of the way in which gothicised colonial fiction engaged with colonial

Otherness. This is mostly the general concern of the section entitled 'The Gothic and Otherness'.

In the section after that, entitled 'Postcolonialism and Otherness', I take up novels and stories by 'post-colonial' subjects (with a few necessary exceptions) from the 'empire' (or the post-colonial nation states it became) that mostly share or employ Gothic elements. Again, this selection is, of necessity, eclectic. The purpose here is to develop and re-examine the narration of the post/colonial Other, now visited from the 'peripheries' of the empire; to see how the postcolonial *project* of 'writing back', 'filling the gaps', 'breaking the silence', 'telling the other side of the story' or 'opposing colonial discourses of difference' impacts on the *purpose* of narrating alterity and Otherness. This aspect of the book makes a rather controversial point: that the postcolonial defence or explication of Otherness has, at times (but by no means always), narrowed down the scope for narrating difference. At its worst, it has indulged in a gambit associated by Michel de Certeau with European modernity: the reduction of Otherness to more of the Self-same. As Svend Erik Larsen put it recently, the bid to narrate the 'Other' in positivist terms often entails the disappearance of Otherness (Larsen, 2007, 2008).

While not a holistic study, my readings in this book do suggest a re-examination of Gothic fiction in the colonial context *and* a revaluation of postcolonialism as a consequence of this re-examination. In different ways, I argue in this book about the pitfalls and achievements of colonial and postcolonial attempts at depicting or 'giving voice' to the colonial or racial Other, as seen in Gothic fiction or fiction influenced by the Gothic. Hence, this study suggests not only points of departure and revaluation in the fields of postcolonialism and the study of Gothic fiction, but also, implicitly, in our political engagement with present-day global realities.

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