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Monsters, Murders and Vampires

The Gothic tradition

With all its associations of mortality and decay, it might be thought that the Gothic genre would be absent in the theme park, as being inappropriate to a family leisure experience. Other popular fictional genres, which similarly deal in death and violence, such as the detective novel or spy fiction, are not there, but Gothic superstition and horror is very much present. Spy fiction has political ramifications, which the theme park is anxious to avoid, while the detective novel is a form that is largely predicated on an urban environment. The Gothic genre relies on an isolated and unpredictable environment; the pleasures of the theme park include the frisson of an unfamiliar locale and the anticipation of the unexpected; the themes of the horror genre belong to the fairground. The images and stories of the Gothic are always present in the pleasure ground in some form; a ghost train or haunted house is a necessary attraction in the smallest fairground. The theme park frequently has an entire section devoted to Gothic themes. In Britain, Chessington offers 'Transylvania' and Alton Towers a 'Haunted House' situated in a 'Gloomy Wood'. Death and the supernatural are similarly present throughout the Disney parks, most visibly in the American Gothic of the 'Haunted Mansion'¹ (one of the original attractions at Disneyland), but many other rides use the mechanics and panoramas of the ghost train and, like 'Pirates of the Caribbean', end with a *memento mori* tableau. In Fantasyland, the Snow White ride has all the trappings of the traditional ghost train, including skeletons, witches, bats, tombs and trailing cobwebs.

Freud's description of the 'uncanny' comes close to the qualities to be found in any ghost train or its variants, which employ mirrors and darkness to disorientate the visitor:

The uncanny would always, as it were, be something one does not know one's way about in. The better orientated in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and events in it. (Freud 1985: 341)

The 'uncanny'² is allied in the theme park garden with a historic 'Gothic' past, and it is most often situated in areas landscaped as wild and untamed, in the tradition of the picturesque. The attractions of both the eighteenth-century

Figure 5.1 'And I looked, and beheld a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death and Hell followed with him' (Rev. vi.8). Engraving by Gustav Doré after a work by H. Pisan, 1865

pleasure garden and the theme park promise unfamiliar territory and exotic adventure, but are known to be unthreatening and contained environments. In many British theme parks, the park is situated in what was once a country house estate with extensive grounds; the ruined abbeys, caverns and forests that were key elements for the 'picturesque' garden have been turned to Gothic attractions in the new landscaping of the theme park. The ghosts of

aristocratic families linger on at Alton Towers, where the Gloomy Wood is situated in the shadow of the elaborate pleasure grounds of the Shrewsbury Estate. Chessington³ is built on the site of Burnt Stub Manor; the Zoo, which once was a private collection, has been reinvented as a horror attraction with a Creepy Crawlies display of snakes and insects.

The Gothic manifests many of the defining characteristics of the carnivalesque, particularly in its inversion of the imaginative over the rational. Fred Botting has described the features of Gothic fiction in terms that are closely allied to those of the carnival:

Associated with wildness, Gothic signified an over-abundance of imaginative frenzy, untamed by reason and unrestrained by conventional eighteenth century demands for simplicity, realism or probability. The boundlessness as well as the over-ornamentation of Gothic styles were part of a move away from strictly neo-classical aesthetic rules which insisted on clarity and symmetry. (Botting 1996: 3)

The theme park is similarly associated with 'imaginative frenzy'; it claims boundlessness, excitement and sensation. The ghost train replicates experiences that produce anxiety, in removing the participants from the light and populated world of the theme park. The carnival Gothic suggests transgression and danger while remaining entirely safe; the dark space of the ghost train arrives back into the bright lights of the fairground – theme park horror always returns its visitor back from the frightening to the familiar. Disney World's Haunted Mansion⁴ presents the contemporary as triumphing over the anxieties of the past; visitors are reassured that its dust and cobwebs are not really old but are regularly renewed. Its attractions similarly offer a strange reconciliation of life and death, of fear and pleasure:

The Haunted Mansion's happy haunts include ghostly dancers twirling to an eerie waltz, a spectral organist who sits at a cobweb-draped pipe organ, a creepy king whose crown is tipsy and a mournful bride whose heart still beats true for her long-lost love. (Walt Disney Company 1986: 53)

Disneyland's haunted houses and ghost rides promise visitors the sensation of 'hair-raising terror', but the disturbing tales of Fantasyland are situated in a satellite site that is first seen from the position of Main Street, and it is to Main Street that the visitor returns. The fantastic and the uncanny are framed at the Disney sites and other theme parks by the space of commerce and consumption.

For Freud, a sense of the familiar is integral to the quality of the uncanny:

[A]ll those properties of persons, things, sense-impressions, experiences and situations which arouse in us the feeling of uncanniness ... the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar. (Freud 1985: 340)

Among the elements that 'lead back' to the familiar are traditional stories, their familiarity framing and protecting the experience of terror. Theme parks

recurrently reference a 'literary Gothic'. If the key figures of the Gothic novel – Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, 'Monk' Lewis, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe and Bram Stoker – are rarely named, the characters of monks, fainting maidens, the monstrous suits of armour and the castles, dungeons and caverns that theme a fairground space as 'Gothic' are those of their imaginative worlds. Their monstrous creations are regularly invoked indirectly, as in Chessington's Transylvania space, which boasts The Vampire ride and a mad professor's laboratory. Icons denoting Frankenstein (a green monster sporting nuts and bolts) and Dracula (vampire teeth and a batwing cloak) are the most frequent and recognisable decorations for ghost trains and haunted houses.

Tzvetan Todorov makes a distinction between the categories of the 'supernatural', 'uncanny' and the 'fantastic' as literary genres. For Todorov,

The 'fantastic' is defined by a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from 'reality' as it exists in the common opinion. ... The fantastic ... seems to be located on the frontier of two genres, the marvellous and the uncanny, rather than to be an autonomous genre. (Todorov 1975: 41)

While this defines the fantastic in terms of a reading experience, and Todorov has little to say about the visual signifiers of the fantastic, a fascination in the inability to work out what is 'real' is a characteristic theme park experience. The hesitancy that Todorov describes is written into the disorientation of the rides, and in the mapping of the Disneyland sites, the location on the borders of genres is literal. The Gothic Haunted Mansion is literally balanced on the frontier of two genres between the borders of the Western-themed Adventureland and the fairy tales of Fantasyland.

Horror tales, like fairy stories, belong to popular legend and oral tradition, and it is difficult to make a firm distinction between the two forms, which regularly bleed into one another.⁵ The fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers are notoriously gory and frightening, and Disney's *Snow White* consciously employs Gothic elements.⁶ Fairy tales, like horror stories, act as a means of teaching moral acquiescence and are a means of exercising discipline. While the fairy tale allows the dead to awaken, in *Snow White*'s case to marry her Prince, in the Gothic and the horror tale, the undead body remains decayed and a source of terror; an invasion of 'the phenomenal domain (which) disturbs its causal order', in Žižek's phrase (Žižek 1991: 220). As Žižek discusses, the 'living dead' represent a disruption of the order of things, not only to the cycle of life and death but also to the symbolic and moral order. Stories of ghosts and supernatural events are a means by which communities have defined themselves; tales of murder and violence, sin and retribution are oral histories handed down from generation to generation and circulate as moral warnings.

The 'Spectacle of Death' was a regular popular entertainment in Britain. Until 1783, the London execution site of Tyburn was a public space for the

witnessing of executions with an accompanying spirit of carnival. When hangings were moved to Newgate prison and were no longer a public spectacle, the *Newgate Calendar* continued to publish the details of heinous criminals, with accompanying illustrations of their crimes and executions (James 1973: 182). What Foucault has described as the 'Spectacle of the Scaffold' was a means of instilling fear, but also relied upon popular spectacle for its effect:

The ceremony of punishment ... is an exercise of 'terror'. ... Its ruthlessness, its spectacle, its physical violence, its unbalanced play of forces, its meticulous ceremonial, its entire apparatus were inscribed in the political functioning of the penal system. (Foucault 1979: 49)

As Foucault points out, the effects of the execution as popular ceremony were equivocal, and while punitive violence did present the condemned prisoner as a terrible warning to potential criminals, it could also give them the status of a folk hero or heroine. The *Newgate Calendar* was only one among many similar publications that presented criminal histories for a popular readership. Murder, executions and suicide were frequent subjects for illustration in ballads, broadsides and chapbooks. Illustrations of hangings were so frequently replicated that the image of a body hanging from a scaffold became a stock image for woodcuts, recycled and attached to all manner of murders and public executions. As Patricia Anderson describes these images, '[i]n the starkness of their style and the finality of their content, stock images of the gallows must have aroused at least a small *frisson* of pleasurable dread in many viewers' (Anderson 1991: 23).

When the spectacle of 'punitive power' (Foucault 1979: 59) was no longer live once executions were no longer public, the spectacle continued on in tableaux and waxwork models of notorious felons displayed at fairgrounds, where their function remained much the same. The images of wicked criminality and violent executions illustrated in broadside and ballad sheets found a three-dimensional expression in waxwork and 'Freak' shows. These had moral fables attached to their displays; the horrors of sexual transgression were graphically displayed. The 'Chamber of Horrors' still often attached to wax museums presented replicas of famous criminals, their crimes and executions.

The term 'Chamber of Horrors' was first applied by *Punch* magazine to Marie Tussaud's Waxwork Museum, but the criminal waxwork was not her invention. Madame Tussaud's first waxwork museum,⁷ opened in eighteenth-century Paris, included a 'Caverne des Grands Voleurs'. With the French Revolution, Marie Tussaud fled to England, where she became a travelling show-woman, displaying her figures across Britain, ending with a permanent museum in Baker Street in London. Her travelling displays now included the horrors inflicted on aristocrats by French revolutionaries, and the Chamber of Horrors became a permanent fixture, which still survives. The Tussaud Group became a significant player in the leisure industry;⁸ Madame Tussaud's waxwork museum

now collaborates with Disney on its displays, and makes use of animatronics in its figures.

Almost every fairground or leisure centre now has some version of a Chamber of Horrors, which offers a potent spectacle of famous historical murders and violent executions. The more gruesomely explicit medical horrors and tableaux of moral panic once found in fairgrounds survive still in Blackpool's Louis Tussaud's Wax Museum, which has had a Chamber of Horrors since it was established in 1901 (Louis Tussaud's waxworks is emphatically not to be confused with Madame Tussaud's more celebrity-focused wax museum⁹). Louis Tussaud's museums are sited in the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen and at Blackpool, and are allied with several of the Ripley's 'Believe it or Not' sites, including Niagara Falls, confirming a continuation of the association of holiday with displays of violence and terror. The Chamber of Horrors has become an attraction in its own right, its contents remarkably unchanged; the London Dungeon¹⁰ declares its displays to be 'full of the most grisly punishments and unbelievably evil villains'. The lettering, iconography and language of the Dungeon map reiterate the images of dying maidens and the headlines of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century popular press.

While murder and violence are the focus of the Chamber of Horrors, extreme villainy was (and continues to be) accounted for in demonic terms. Superstition continued to be a significant part of everyday life, and particularly rural life, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as Louis James has explained:

[I]t is important to realize that, for the majority of the lower class, sectarian Christians and for many Anglicans, spirits and witchcraft were accepted as being authorised by the Bible. ... So horseshoes were nailed over doors. ... Sprigs of rowan, rabbits' paws and 'witch stones' (circular pebbles) were kept in the pocket to defeat evil spells. The future was read in a flight of magpies, a guttering candle, or a random opening of the Bible. ... This superstitious consciousness was to continue in rural areas through the century, and to some extent has never died out. (James 1973: 19)

Such folk tales of magic and superstition belonged to an oral tradition, and were the stuff of local legend. There continue to be local attractions based on such superstitious traditions, as in Somerset's Wookey Hole, which boasts the strange rock formation, the 'Witch of Wookey', reputedly turned to stone by a monk. This local legend, which has survived for centuries, has been repackaged as the 'Witch's Magic Cavern', with associated heritage attractions. The mythological power and local resonances of the legend have now been dissipated into a 'spellbinding new attraction ... a pleasant, safe environment for children' (Wookey Hole promotional flyer 2001).

The 'Gothic' was the best-selling genre of the eighteenth century, in the novel and in the short stories of the cheap periodical press. Horror and the supernatural were the popular sensations of the late eighteenth century,

the fashionable style in the visual arts and architectural style and in popular entertainments, as E.J. Clery has suggested: 'In the 1790s, the production of artificial terror becomes an industry' (Clery 1996: 165). Foucault directly associates the popular literature of villainy with the development of the Gothic novel in the late eighteenth century:

[A] whole new literature of crime developed: a literature in which crime is glorified, because it is one of the fine arts, because it can be the work only of exceptional natures, because it reveals the monstrousness of the strong and powerful, because villainy is yet another mode of privilege: from the adventure story to de Quincey, or from the *Castle of Otranto* to Baudelaire, there is a whole aesthetic rewriting of crime. (Foucault 1979: 68)

Horace Walpole's 1764 romance *The Castle of Otranto* is generally cited as the first Gothic novel. A 1765 letter, however, indicates that his tale is already framed by a familiarity with the genre: 'I waked one morning from a dream ... that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story)' (Walpole, letter to Rev. Cole (1765), in Walpole 1840: 4). *The Castle of Otranto* nonetheless established the conventions for the literary Gothic romance, with its castle setting, aristocratic families and (gigantic) suits of armour. Walpole, like the writers of chivalric romance, claimed historical authenticity for his Gothic romance. The Preface to the first edition claims the novel to be a translation of a text printed in Naples in 1529, while the events are vaguely set in the 'darkest ages of Christianity', which is dated (with deliberate pedantry) at any year between '1095 and 1243'. Although Walpole acknowledged authorship in the Preface to the second edition, his displacement of the claimed 'origin' of the text has an uncanny effect, confusing the reader in any attempt to distinguish between historical truth and supernatural fiction.¹¹

Sir Walter Scott was lavish in his praise for *The Castle of Otranto*, and wrote an introduction to the 1811 edition, an endorsement that guaranteed the novel's popular success. Scott claims the novel for the chivalric romance, but also heralds it as an originator of a new genre. Simultaneously, however, he relegates it to the status of 'lighter' literature:

This romance has been justly considered not only as the original and model of a peculiar species of composition, attempted and successfully executed by a man of great genius, but as one of the standard works of our lighter literature. (Quoted in Summers 1976: 22)

Walpole's 'light' romance was appropriate for the stage and for toy theatres. *The Castle of Otranto, or, Manfredi* was adapted from a stage production for the toy theatre in 1815, and a later toy theatre production featured Harlequin in *The Great Helmet – or the Castle of Otranto*.

By the time Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto* he was already immersed in the Gothic as an architectural style and setting, which he had emulated in his extravagant folly, Strawberry Hill in Twickenham. From 1749, Walpole

decorated Strawberry Hill by adding castellations, faux stonework and all the required accoutrements of a Gothic castle, including stained glass windows and disguised doorways and staircases.¹² He also landscaped the grounds in accordance with 'picturesque' principles. Gilpin's description of picturesque beauty included all the tropes of the Gothic landscape, artfully constructed ruins, grottos and caverns, and his illustrations include a very Gothic antique tomb embellished with an epitaph.¹³

Unlike Walpole, Ann Radcliffe's novels eschewed the supernatural in favour of (extraordinarily convoluted) rational explanations for their strange events, but her settings reproduced the same mountainous landscapes and remote castles, with winding corridors and suits of armour playing large roles in the plots. Radcliffe's fiction was hugely successful and widely imitated in magazine stories and cheap editions. Most popular were her novels *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797); both were set in wild European Romantic landscapes (although she herself never left England), and Radcliffe reiterated all the conventions of the Gothic. The pervasiveness of the Gothic setting and characters is evident in Jane Austen's parody of Radcliffe and her followers, *Northanger Abbey*, written in 1798, in which Catherine Morland, an ardent reader of Gothic romances, misreads the very English and respectable abbey as a sinister location, and casts herself in the role of a Gothic heroine. Catherine's misconception suggests the extent to which the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century imagination, and house and garden styles, now drew on the fantasies of Gothic fiction, while the Gothic novel adapted and exaggerated the settings of the picturesque in its monumental castles and landscapes.

The successes of Walpole, 'Monk' Lewis and Radcliffe were emulated in a host of imitations for the popular press, many of which came close to plagiarism. Printed on cheap paper and sold as penny issue magazines or blue book,¹⁴ cheaply bound novelettes, the popular romance favoured the literature of sensation, as a survey of the 'penny dreadful' explains:

The gothic craze, begun by Horace Walpole with *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and encompassing *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by Ann Radcliffe, and *The Monk* (1796) by M.G. Lewis, inspired a host of cheap imitations, full of castles, dungeons, ghosts, brigands and villainous monks in tales of terror and mystery. Some of the first manifestations of the Penny Dreadful were collections of such stories. (James and Smith 1998: xi)

These cheap imitations, with their castles, dark corridors and fainting heroines, were very often illustrated with woodcut images. The extremes of dark and light required for the shadows and apparitions of the horror tale were entirely appropriate to contemporary printing techniques and their limitations. These images of sinister dungeons and abbeys, of villainous monks, counts and fleeing maidens conventionalised a visual vocabulary and established the landscapes and character set of the Gothic romance.

Fashionable entertainments of the period reproduced the same sets of images of ruined abbeys, castles and mountainous landscapes. The follies of the picturesque gardens of the wealthy were conventionalised for a mass market in the scenes of panoramas and dioramas, and in pleasure gardens. Vauxhall Gardens offered its public picturesque landscapes and Gothic entertainments, including a Gothic temple, a Gothic Orchestra and a Grand Walk, which wound through a panorama that switched between the illusion of Picturesque Ruins and a Gothic temple. In 1832, the Colosseum in Regent's Park offered a series of grottos, which led to 'a cascade and lake' and 'The Stalactite Cavern'. As the 'grotto' and 'ruined abbey' were stock images in illustrations for popular romances, they also became conventional settings for pantomime scenes, regularly written into the scripts as a mysterious space from which the heroine must be rescued.

The supernatural had always been an intrinsic element in magic shows, and scientific displays drew on superstition to promote their magical effects. Ruined castles and abbeys, thunder and lightning were regular sets and special effects for stage shows and displays, reproducing images from the landscaped aristocratic and pleasure garden for a popular audience. A French invention, the 'Phantasmagoria', used the technology of the magic lantern to project bat-winged demons on clouds of smoke for the salons of Paris; graveyards, abbeys, skeletons and ghosts featured among the regular slides. The Phantasmagoria machine was displayed by a French showman at the Lyceum in 1801 (see Altick 1978: 217), and played in London for over two decades, eventually becoming a standard item on variety bills.

The production of terror was also a profitable spectacle in the theatre; the villainous monks who haunted the ruined abbeys of popular fiction were regular characters in contemporary melodramas. The medievalism of Walpole and the faux Europe of Radcliffe were inflected in the naming of the characters and in their stagings. Typical of such productions is the 'New Dramatic Spectacle' of *Julia of Louvain or, Monkish Cruelty* 'performed for the first time at the Royal Circus, May 15, 1797'. While the play's author claimed *Julia of Louvain* to be based on a story 'found in a paragraph in a Newspaper during the French Revolution' (Cross 1809: viii), the drama is very close to Radcliffe's plots of fainting heroines and villains. With its clanking chains and wicked Catholics, the play also owes much to Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, which had been published the year before. The most successful stage productions with Gothic themes and sets were reproduced in toy theatres, as in the 1811 *One O'clock, or, the Knight and the Wood Dæmon* by 'Monk' Lewis. The most theatrically successful productions of the early nineteenth century were adaptations of Vampire tales, based on John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* or versions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus*.

The story of the 'origins' of the two most notorious Gothic creations, the aristocratic vampire and the monster created from the dead, was in itself a work

of the Gothic sensibility. Frankenstein's monster and the vampiric Lord Ruthven were developed, in the most romantic of circumstances, during thunderous weather on an 1818 holiday in the Swiss mountains. By the time Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley, and Polidori shared their fireside tales, the tale of the undead creature (which structures both *The Vampyre* and *Frankenstein*) was a familiar theme in Romantic writings across Europe; vampires were established horrors in European folklore, and Coleridge and Byron had both penned versions. The Romantic travellers were reading a collection of German ghost tales, which had been translated into English and French, a measure of their popularity. Mary Shelley tells the story of the origins of her tale in distinctly Romantic terms, both in her original Preface and in a later introduction to *Frankenstein*. She also acknowledges that her own fictional creation has precedents in *The Tempest* and in *Paradise Lost* (a text that the monster reads in the novel). She recognises that her tale belongs to a European tradition of the supernatural, now fashionably discovered by the Romantic movement:

I passed the summer of 1816 in the environs of Geneva. The season was cold and rainy, and in the evenings we crowded around a blazing wood fire and occasionally amused ourselves with some German stories of ghosts which happened to fall into our hands. These tales excited in us a playful desire of imitation. (Shelley 1971: 7)

Both Polidori's *The Vampyre* and Shelley's *Frankenstein* were immediate popular successes, although neither author received due credit at the time of publication; *The Vampyre* was first published in 1819 under Byron's name, while *Frankenstein* was initially published anonymously and widely assumed to have been written by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Both texts were taken up for translation and for stage productions; by 1820, there were three Vampire plays on the London stage, of which the most successful was J.R. Planché's *The Vampire, or, the Bride of the Isles* (adapted as a toy theatre version for Hodson's Juvenile Drama in 1822).

Frankenstein's monster similarly found theatrical success. The first production was staged in 1823 at the Theatre Royal in London as *Presumption; or the Fate of Frankenstein* and led to a renewed interest in the novel, and to a second edition. As Mary Shelley herself reported,

But lo and behold! I found myself famous. Frankenstein had prodigious success as a drama, and was about to be repeated, for the twenty-third night, at the English Opera House. ... I was much amused and it appeared to excite a breathless eagerness in the audience. (Mary Shelley, letter to Leigh Hunt, 9 September 1823, quoted in Haining 1977: 15)

Frankenstein was indeed a 'prodigious success' on the stage; in 1824, *Presumption* was revived five times in London, and it was performed into the 1830s. Within three years of the first performance of *Presumption*, there were fourteen other English and French dramatisations of the Frankenstein story.

The production inspired versions that put the monster into the contexts of melodrama, burlesque, pantomime and musical extravaganzas; as Steven Earl Forry explains, '[i]n the course of three years, from 1823 to 1826, at least fifteen dramas employed characters and themes from Shelley's novel. Whether in burlesque or melodrama, things Frankensteinian were all the rage on stages in England and France' (Forry 1990: 34). In Paris, a version opened with the title *Le Monstre et le Magicien*, which featured spectacular special effects; a newspaper review noted, '[t]he success of *Monstre* is as monstrous as he is himself' (quoted in Forry 1990: 11). The production was a success too in America where the play opened in New York in 1825; it was still being performed in 1843.

Frankenstein was now indelibly associated with entertainment and the monster far removed from the 'exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue' that Shelley had claimed for her creation. The early theatrical melodramas based on Shelley's creature made use of the established successes of Walpole and Radcliffe's fictions, and situated Frankenstein's monster not as a 'modern Prometheus' but in a popular tradition of horror.

These popular productions also drew on established pantomime and burlesque conventions, often adding comic characters and scenes. The incompetent assistant who would become a key feature in film versions of *Frankenstein* (and who is so central to Mel Brooks's affectionate 1974 spoof, *Young Frankenstein*) was an imported stock character from contemporary melodramas. Melodrama and pantomime productions of versions of *Frankenstein* also succeeded in reducing the complexities of Shelley's text to a simple confrontation, in which the scientist and the monster become stock typologies of good and evil. The slippage between the monster and the creator that is now almost complete in contemporary popular culture, in which 'Frankenstein' has come to denote the monster, was already in place in these early theatrical performances. The condensation of the tale into a mythic battle between the human and the monstrous was established in the staged melodramas and continued into film versions.

Forry gives a comprehensive account of these numerous stagings and charts the progression of *Frankenstein* from novel to Gothic melodrama to burlesque. He notes the increasingly iconic status of the monster in popular culture, and traces

three movements in the dissemination of the myth: 1823 to 1832 are years of transformation and proliferation during which fifteen dramatisations were performed and the myth was mutated for popular consumption; 1832–1900 are years of diffusion during which the myth spread among the populace and began appearing regularly in various media; and 1900 to 1930 are years of transition during which dramatic and cinematic interpretations vied for popularity. (Forry 1990: ix–x)

The iconography and settings associated with *Frankenstein* derive largely from the sets for stage productions rather than from illustrations to the novel. Forry identifies only two nineteenth-century illustrated editions, the revised

version of 1831 and another in 1849. Sets and characters from printed sheets for toy theatres was one means through which the monster and Frankenstein's laboratory would become familiar cultural images, to the extent that these incarnations of the 'monster' and his inventor were sufficiently recognisable to appear in cartoons – an 1832 issue of *McLean's Monthly Sheet of Characters* presented 'Frankenstein Creating Peers', a *Punch* cartoonist drew 'The Irish Frankenstein' in 1843 and both Cruickshank and Tenniel produced versions. The conventions of the Gothic scene and accoutrements were parodied by Cruickshank in his 1841 illustrations 'Ghosts', which depicts a family of ghosts that is close to the ghostly family of Disney's Haunted Mansion.¹⁵

Popular publishers added borrowings from the successes of *The Vampyre* and *Frankenstein* to their imitations of Walpole, Radcliffe and Lewis. The 1847 *Varney the Vampire*, written by James Malcolm Rymer, was among the most widely circulated of these, and so successful that it continued for over forty instalments. The vampiric Sir Frederic Varney is clearly derived from Polidori's Lord Ruthven, but the serial introduced many of the narrative devices later found in *Dracula*, with a string of beautiful female victims, nefarious deeds on Hampstead Heath and a vampiric chase. Gothic tales, illustrated with engravings, were among the earliest popular part-published novels, their titles clearly owing much to the Gothic tradition of Walpole, Radcliffe and Monk Lewis. Among the many serial editions published from the 1840s and into the 1860s were *The Black Monk; or the Secret of the Grey Turret* (1844), *The Apparition: A Romance* (1846), *Angelina; or the Mystery of St. Mark's Abbey, published in 25 parts* (1849), *The Blighted Heart; or the Old Priory Ruins: A Romance* (1851) and *The Ghost's Secret: A Tale of Terror* (1863). Tales of horror, ghosts and Gothic melodrama were also available in cheaply available single volumes; Louis James's list of Gothic stories published as penny issue novels includes fiction from Byron, Monk Lewis, Ann Radcliffe, F. Sheridan and Mary Shelley.

The cheap periodicals of the 1840s and 1850s continued to rely heavily on the supernatural story and the proven successes of Gothic fiction, refashioning the wicked aristocrats, Catholics and imperilled maidens of Walpole, Radcliffe and Lewis in their own versions. George Reynolds, founder of *Reynolds's Miscellany of Romance, General Interest, Science and Art* (in which the Romance featured as the most significant fictional genre) and editor of many other popular periodicals, was himself a prolific author. He was a notorious pirate and author of 'sensation' fiction, and ensured that the illustrations that accompanied his romantic serialised sagas were 'sensational' too. In 1840 'T. Paine, of 22 Bride Lane, Fleet Street' issued *Angela the Orphan: or, the Bandit Monk of Italy*, which grafted melodrama on to a story reminiscent of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. This was declared as '[t]he most successful Romance ever published', with a weekly sale of 14,000 (James 1973: 33). The illustrations and stories found in such periodicals as *The London Journal*

and *Reynolds's Miscellany* were similarly indebted to Walpole, Radcliffe and Lewis; their titles include 'The Haunted Mirror', 'Tower of Terror', 'The Living Corpse' and 'The Drugged Chalice'. *Lloyds Newspaper* was another family magazine that regularly published Gothic horrors, its titles including more Radcliffe- and Lewis-inspired fiction, such as 'The Black Monk; or the Secret of the Grey Turret' and 'Almira's Curse'.

The horror novel was the favoured genre of working-class libraries, according to the 1858 *Scenes from My Life*: 'trashy romances of the Minerva Press, or Radcliffe, or Monk Lewish School' were the most borrowed volumes (quoted in James 1973: 6). E.S. Turner devotes an entire chapter in his 1948 study of 'Boy's Own Fiction' to what he terms the 'Gothic Hangover'; he suggests the extent to which popular horror stories depended upon a recycling of the Gothic romance derived from Walpole, Radcliffe and Monk Lewis:

[T]here were plenty of pens ready to imitate, translate, paraphrase or purloin for the benefit of the literate fringe of the working classes. In rising spate, and at even cheaper cost, came romances set in clammy castles in the German forests or in convents ruled by degenerate nuns. (Turner 1976: 19)

As the market for the popular press developed, tales that clearly belong to the Gothic genre were the most popular feature of the penny magazines, as Anderson explains:

Week after week through the 1840s and 1850s, these magazines captured the collective imagination of their readers with an array of short stories expressly conceived to titillate, intrigue, or pleasurably horrify all those who made up the ever-growing market for entertaining fiction. (Anderson 1991: 98)

These illustrated magazines were increasingly known as the 'penny dreadful' throughout the 1860s; also described as 'Bloods' (as their name implies), these cheaply available periodicals specialised in tales of horror, of both the supernatural and gory kind. Penny dreadfuls regularly pirated their images and stories – and so continued to recycle the iconography and characters that had already proved commercially successful. Joseph Bristow has argued that the popularised Gothic romance provided the foundation for the 'penny dreadful':

Bizarre and fantastic events prevailed in these eight-page publications, usually made attractive by a sensational engraving on the cover. Some of these stories sold not by the thousand but by the million. They were the first kind of truly mass reading. (Bristow 1991: 11)

The 'Bloods' included violent crimes along with ghosts and vampires as subjects for stories and illustrations. With their reports of criminal cases and executions, such journals as *Cleave's Penny Police Gazette* filled their pages with tales of murder and retribution along with those of the supernatural. As

Anderson puts it, '[a]stute publishers of such illustrated fiction were well aware of the popular appetite for graphic images of violence and horror' (Anderson 1991: 162). The stories and their illustrations recycled the chapbook and broadsheet themes, with stock images of gruesome crime. They also continued the tradition of the Chamber of Horrors in creating folk villains for the popular imagination. The tale of *Sweeney Todd* (the demon barber who sold his customers as sausage meat) was purportedly based on a real crime; it appeared in various versions in broadsheets, and as a Gothic shocker in *Lloyds Magazine*, where it outdid sales of *Varney the Vampire*. Its appearance in *The People's Periodical* as 'The String of Pearls' was dramatised in a version at the Hoxton Theatre, London in 1847 (see James 1973: 190), and Sweeney Todd became such a standard horror character that he was recycled in music hall song, cartoons and early cinema.¹⁶

George Reynolds was among the many publishers who pirated and translated tales of superstition from Europe. His series of urban Gothic tales, *Mysteries of London*, was a variation on Eugène Sue's popular success, *Les Mystères de Paris*. As Louis James has explained, there was a constant traffic of popular fictions between France, London and America, particularly in the literature of sensation. Baudelaire had a fascination with Gothic writers, and from 1846, began to read and translate Edgar Allan Poe, whose tales were published in France as *Histoires Extraordinaires* in 1852. Washington Irving and Poe were already familiar to British readers of the popular periodical press, but Baudelaire's interest in the American Gothic also claimed it for French decadence.¹⁷

Washington Irving was well travelled in Europe, and remade folk tales he encountered there into American legends; the headless horseman of 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' is a recurrent figure in British and European legend (associated with fallen cavalry soldiers), while 'Rip Van Winkle' owes something to the Grimm Brothers and to European folk tale. The headless horseman in Irving's tale has lost his head in the American War of Independence, while Rip Van Winkle's tale becomes an assertion of how outdated it is for an American to assert loyalty to the British crown. Irving became in his lifetime an American hero and continues to be celebrated as an originator of American folklore. Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane rapidly entered American popular culture, repeatedly reproduced in print and stage versions; a theatre script for *Rip Van Winkle* was published in 1826 under the title 'A National Drama'. Don Boucicault worked on a stage version for London in 1864, which transferred to New York. The lead actor went on to feature as Rip Van Winkle in a series of short films produced for the nickelodeon from 1896.

*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*¹⁸ inevitably became part of Disney's animation history, in a compendium children's cartoon that strangely brought Irving's American Gothic together with Kenneth Grahame's very English Mr Toad in the 1949 *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad*. It is, however, largely as

an American folklorist that Irving is remembered at the Disney parks. The Haunted Mansion in Florida is situated beside the celebration of America of Liberty Square, and the attraction directly references Irving in its tableaux. Disney's guide book description of the Haunted Mansion conflates the writings of Washington Irving and Edgar Allan Poe, presenting the writers as American legends in themselves:

[A] residence designed to scare up some early American fantasy and folklore ... the stone faced Haunted Mansion presents the ominous specter of a Dutch manor house from the Hudson River Valley. It's an architectural style perhaps best described as early Edgar Allan Poe ... one might well imagine Ichabod Crane riding this way on his fateful journey through Sleepy Hollow. (Walt Disney Company 1986: 52)

Poe was himself a journalist for periodical fictions, as an editor of *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*; like Irving, he would have known versions of the Gothic tales that were proving so successful in the British and European market. His 1839 collection *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, with tales such as 'The Fall of the House of Usher', echoed the Gothic of Walpole and Radcliffe in their narratives of ruined houses and families. Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* is in the mode of the urban mysteries of Eugène Sue and George Reynolds. Angela Carter has articulated the particularity of the American Gothic tradition in which Poe wrote; her description evokes the exaggerated characters and scenarios of popular sensation tales and also Freud's concept of the uncanny:

The Gothic tradition in which Poe writes ... deals entirely with the profane. ... Character and events are exaggerated beyond reality, to become symbols, ideas, passions. Its style will tend to be ornate, unnatural – and thus operate against the perennial human desire to believe the word as fact. Its only humour is black humour. It retains a singular moral function – that of provoking unease. (Carter 1974: 122)

Poe's stories were published in cheap periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic; *The People's Periodical* first published 'The Cask of Amontillado' in England in 1847. His work was also issued in lavishly illustrated editions; Gustave Doré published fifty full-page illustrations for 'The Raven' in a French edition in 1854, which were reproduced in an English translation of 1883 and in an American edition in 1884. In 1857, *The Poetical Works of Edgar Allan Poe* was published in an English edition with illustrations by Tenniel, among other artists. Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart' became an early silent film, renamed *The Avenging Conscience*, directed by D.W. Griffith in 1914.

If Poe's stories owed much to a European Gothic tradition, America had its own history of witchcraft and supernatural traditions. For nineteenth-century American writers and especially the many in Massachusetts, the 1692 witch trials of Salem were still a vivid history and source of superstition. Nathaniel

Hawthorne worked in the Customs House at Salem from 1846 until 1849, and Salem provides the setting for the beginning of *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* is based on an actual house (still standing) in Salem, and centres on the legend of a witch's curse. Hawthorne originally published many of his tales anonymously in magazines, and was himself an avid reader of periodical fiction and penny dreadfuls. Stories in the collection *Twice Told Tales* made use of plots and characters that are close to those of Scott, as in 'The Maypole of Merry Mount', and relocate them to a New England context.

Louisa May Alcott (whose father wrote a poem celebrating Hawthorne) also began her writing career in periodical fiction; publishing sensation tales regularly in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspapers* and *Frank Leslie's Lady's Magazine*, she also wrote regular novelettes for the pulp fiction publishers Elliott, Thomas & Talbot of Boston (Stern 1975: xxi). Jo's 'blood and thunder' plays and stories in *Little Women* (Alcott 1868) are clearly indebted to Walpole and Radcliffe; like Alcott's own tales, they demonstrate the familiarity of American readers with the conventions of the literary Gothic. Alcott's suspense stories are largely set in 'English' Gothic settings, and have all the accoutrements of the English Gothic tradition, with ghostly monks, ruined abbeys and castles and medieval armour, as in 'The Abbot's Ghost'.

Louisa May Alcott and her character Jo demonstrate a familiarity with the figure of the vampire, a myth familiar to American readers of sensation tales. While Polidori has regularly (if mistakenly) been credited as author of the first English vampire story, it was a convenient literary and Romantic myth to date the birth of the vampire at the same moment as that of the Frankenstein monster. The vampire had a long history in global folklore, repeatedly reproduced in localised versions across Europe. An 1876 English encyclopaedia entry describes vampires as if they were real, but safely contained within Eastern Europe (*Popular Encyclopaedia* 1876: 640). Bram Stoker, who created the most notorious incarnation of the vampire in his Count Dracula (whose name is reputedly Romanian), uses the same device to good effect in his 1897 novel *Dracula*. Stoker had an academic interest in vampires¹⁹ and researched Transylvania (as his hero Jonathan Harker does in the British Museum). Stoker largely derives his uncanny effects from the disconcerting relocation of the Count from Transylvania to Whitby, where the vampire wreaks his destruction on British victims. As Fred Botting has pointed out, while the vampire has its origins in ancient superstition, *Dracula* represents a thoroughly modern encounter with the vampire myth in which the Count is defeated through contemporary technology.

The vampire is a creature of legend who fast became a stock figure in popular culture, a creature who balanced the possibility of historical reality with superstition and folklore. David J. Skal has charted the transformations of the Dracula character across a range of media (in book that does for *Dracula*

what Forry's study does for *Frankenstein*). He suggests that the Count has been repeatedly made to fit different cultural and historical contexts:

Without knowing anything of the myth's origins, most of us can recite without prompting the salient characteristics of the vampire. ... We have received this information by a curious cultural transfusion, not by direct experience. ... Ever adaptable, Dracula has been a literary Victorian sex nightmare, a stock figure of theatrical melodrama, a movie icon, a trademark. ... Dracula and vampire stories in general have found their greatest expression in the popular media, be they Penny Dreadful novels, stage melodramas or movies. (Skal 1992: 4)

The signifiers of *Dracula*, the top hat, the cloak and the fangs, have developed from these representations across the popular media to become so familiar that they now connote the novel in a single image. Various combinations of these repeatedly appear in carnival attractions, from the backcloths of fairground Ghost Trains to the more sophisticated variants such as 'Transylvania' and the Vampire ride at Chessington. Bram Stoker was himself a showman and deeply involved in theatre, acting as business manager of the Lyceum Theatre in London for twenty-seven years. There was a theatrical meeting of vampire and monster in a comic burlesque, *Frankenstein, or the Vampire's Victim*, produced in 1887 at London's Gaiety Theatre, a lampooning of a successful Adelphi melodrama. A dramatised version of *Dracula* toured Britain with a company run by Hamilton Deane (who also produced a stage adaptation of *Frankenstein*); this version of *Dracula* was to become the basis for the Bela Lugosi film.

Peter Haining has charted the process by which *Frankenstein's* monster became a popular culture icon, and describes a very similar trajectory to that outlined in Skal's account of *Dracula*. Haining's is one of many popular accounts of the *Frankenstein* tale and its impact on popular culture. He describes the range of media that have exploited the image of the monster in terms that apply equally to the circulation of *Dracula* across fiction, film and comic books:

Endless reprints of the original novel by Mary Shelley have poured from the presses (in just about any language you care to name), and hardly a year has passed recently without some new variation on the old theme being presented as a film ... the scientist and his creation are now to be found in virtually all the media of entertainment: in literature, children's comics, records, advertising and promotion, besides their use as posters, T-shirt emblems, toys, games, rubber masks. (Haining 1977: 6)

It was not until the 1930s that the *Frankenstein* monster assumed his familiar form in illustration, after the success of the 1931 Universal film. It was this cinematic version that established the current metonymic icons of the demonic laboratory and the monster that continue to be reworked across forms of popular culture.

There is a direct relationship between the supernatural story and cinema. The phantasmagoria of the eighteenth century had relied on ghostly effects; the

medium of film first made its appearance in magic shows and made use of all the trappings of the occult to produce its sensations. George Méliès began his career as a stage magician with vanishing tricks, which were often hung around a 'Gothic' theme, and his films were first shown as part of magic shows. His 1896 *Le Manoir du Diable* has the claim to being the first horror film; it makes use of all the tropes of popular Gothic fiction, featuring a medieval castle, a vampiric bat (who vanishes at the sight of a crucifix), ghosts and witches. By the 1920s, 'The Vamp' had become a synonym for the fatal temptress, embodied in the silent screen star Theda Bara.

Thomas Edison's early films reproduced magic tricks with a supernatural gloss in films such as the 1899 *A Visit to the Spiritualist*, which employed animated ghosts. The Edison studios produced the first film version of *Frankenstein*, in 1910. The text's play with technology, science and the supernatural, coupled with a spectacle in which the inanimate creature becomes animated, made *Frankenstein* a key text for early cinema. A feature-length version followed in 1915, *Life Without Soul*, directed by Joseph W. Smiley. F.W. Murnau's²⁰ 1922 version of *Dracula*, *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie Des Grauens* (*Symphony of Horrors*) was the production that had the greatest effect on the *mise en scène* of the horror film, and especially *Dracula*. Murnau's Expressionist shadows, as early woodcuts had done for illustrations of the Gothic genre, established a new set of conventions for the representation of horror in cinema. The style was a direct influence on Tod Browning, the director of the big Universal Studio feature film *Dracula*. *Nosferatu* set up many of the tropes now expected in cinematic versions of the novel (and lampooned in Mel Brooks's *Young Frankenstein*): the gypsy inn, the coach journey to the castle, the suspicious local people.

Both *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* have produced an enormous number of film versions, independently and together as characters in Gothic compilations and in comedy horror. Skal has suggested that 'Dracula has been depicted in film more times than almost any fictional being' (Skal 1992: 7); Frankenstein's monster has a similar claim, and both characters have had a similar career trajectory in film. The early silent versions shaped the two films that established the dominant iconography for Count Dracula and Frankenstein's monster, which continue to pertain in contemporary popular culture. Universal Studios produced two black-and-white feature films of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* in 1931 as part of their Universal Horror series. The series also featured three films based on Edgar Allan Poe tales, starring Bela Lugosi, who had become a contract player with Universal.

The director of Universal's *Dracula*, Tod Browning, had a track record in vampire films (he also had a background in carnival and circus). The silent *London After Midnight* with Lon Chaney came out in 1927, and was remade in 1935 in a sound version, *The Vampires of Prague*²¹ with Lugosi as the Dracula figure. A Spanish version was made at the same time as Browning's 1931 *Dracula* for Universal. In the silent movie era, Universal had made half its revenue from foreign sales, but had not done so well with talking pictures, and so began to

make foreign-language versions of its American successes. Browning's *Dracula* was also dubbed into French and German. Carl Laemmle Jr was the producer for both Universal's *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, and reportedly acquired all the rights to the Frankenstein characters. Bram Stoker's widow had proved litigious over the rights to her husband's creation for *Nosferatu*, but in 1933, Florence Stoker sold the film rights to David O. Selznick, who produced a 1936 sequel to *Dracula*, in *Dracula's Daughter*. Universal now effectively owned the rights to both novels, and capitalised on them in a long series of sequels to the initial films, and later in their theme park.

The screenplay for the first Universal *Frankenstein* (dir. James Whale) was based on the John Balderston²² melodrama, produced by Hamilton Deane in England. Walt Disney's short film *The Mad Doctor* emulates scenes from Whale's 1931 film frame by frame, with Mickey Mouse in the role of the monster. Universal's *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* were lavish productions, made with much the same teams involved, and both confirmed their leading actors as stars. Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula and Boris Karloff as the monster were never to escape their associations with their roles. Lugosi played the role of the Count repeatedly on stage in England and America. From 1932, he performed on the vaudeville circuit and established himself as an icon of the horror genre.

The films were released with great media furore; *Dracula* was promoted with department store window displays of the novel (which had been reissued as a tie-in publication) and advertising billboards in Times Square. After a slow beginning, the film was Universal's top money maker of the year, and the novel was hailed as a classic. *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* were issued together as a 'classic' cinema double bill by Universal in 1947, and again in the 1950s. Both later appeared on television as the 'Shock Theatre' programming of vintage horror films (see Skal 1992: 190). In 1944, Universal brought their monsters together in a compilation of Universal horrors in *House of Frankenstein*, successful enough to be followed in 1945 by *House of Dracula*. By 1952 Lugosi was taking 'The Bela Lugosi Revue' to Las Vegas; the 'classic' horror of *Dracula* had become camp. Lugosi's last appearance as the Count was in the 1948 comedy *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (Abbott and Costello, like *Frankenstein* and Lugosi, were owned by Universal); the film also featured Lon Chaney and other players and characters from Universal's cast. The cinema was now producing spoofs of its own monster and horror movies, lampooning them as nineteenth-century burlesques and cartoons had sent up the sensational melodrama.

The role of major producer of the horror genre in cinema was taken over in the 1960s and 1970s by the low-budget companies Hammer Film Productions and American International Productions (AIP). The British Hammer Horror factory produced *The Curse of Frankenstein* in 1957, and filmed its first *Dracula* in 1958, *Horror of Dracula* with Christopher Lee. Roger Corman, a director for AIP, specialised in horror and filmed a number of Edgar Allan Poe titles, including *The House of Usher* (1960), *The Pit and the Pendulum*

(1961) and *The Raven* (1963). Hammer and Corman made Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing and Vincent Price into iconic figures of the horror genre; Price provided the voice for the original narration in Disney's Haunted Mansion.

The commercial successes of the Universal and Hammer Horror series were replicated in comic books devoted to horror. There was a long tradition of horror comics in Europe and America (variations on the penny dreadful, now illustrated in full colour), which in the 1920s and 1930s were closely aligned to and often produced by the same publishers as the science fiction genre. The 1923 *Weird Tales* published tales that, like *Frankenstein*, balanced between scientific fantasy and horror, and specialised in ghost stories, many clearly inflected by Edgar Allan Poe. The period from the 1930s to the 1950s in America has been described as the 'Golden Age' of the comic book (see Ashley 2005); this was the period of the height of the Universal Horror series and it also saw a proliferation of comics with 'terror', 'phantoms' and 'spectres' in their titles.

The horror genre was such an integral part of American and European popular culture that it could not be avoided at the time of the planning for Disneyland. Cross and Walton have claimed, '[a]bsent from Disneyland was any encounter with the fears and fascinations of adult life, disasters, death, and the hereafter' (2005: 177). However, Disney himself had a predilection for the Gothic, and Disney Studios had always had a line in comic ghosts and graveyards. The first of Disney's *Silly Symphonies* deployed a Gothic theme, with 'The Skeleton Dance' in 1929. The dancing skeleton probably owes something to Edison's comic ghosts, but Disney's animated film also draws on a long-standing set of Gothic iconography, as Robin Allan has explained:

The imagery of 'The Skeleton Dance' is taken from nineteenth century gothic melodrama. ... A howling dog, cat, bats and dancing skeletons are in a graveyard with a chapel, tombstones, the moon and waving branches. The film uses imagery of the ghost train or spook house of the fairground where skeletons rise from tombs and cobwebs brush the visitor. (Allan 1999: 25)

The ghost train and 'spook house' are integral to the fairground and continue to be part of the theme park. The carnival ground has always relied on superstition; both Coney Island and Blackpool had been the site of magic and fortune telling from their beginnings.

Coney Island featured a spectacle 'Night and Morning', which had its roots in panoramas and as an attraction at World's Fairs, here described by Cross and Walton:

[A] dark oblong room that turned out to represent a huge coffin. Through a glass ceiling, guests saw weeping willows and flowers and had the sensation that the 'coffin' was sinking into a grave. A lid appeared to close over the glass ceiling and the sound of dirt above could be heard dropping onto the 'coffin'. This dramatic anticipation of one's own funeral was followed by a tour of Hell and images of the resurrection. (Cross and Walton 2005: 86)

Although Cross and Walton insist that Disneyland 'stayed away from controversial themes of death and the afterlife' (Cross and Walton 2005: 171), this account of a 'dark' room and 'sinking' sensation is very close to the experience of Disney's Haunted Mansion. The ride similarly features a descent into hell, and ends with a *memento mori* tableau. The Haunted Mansion is by no means the only horror themed attraction in the Disney parks; in 1994 the 'Twilight Zone of Terror' was added to the Disney MGM Studios park in Florida, a physical thrill ride with a clear narrative of ghosts and death.

Disney's fascination with European folk and fairy tale inevitably involved an encounter with Gothic themes and style. His first feature-length animation, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), has distinctly Gothic elements, not only in the uncanny elements of the story but also in the use of landscape and shadow. One of the animators who worked on the film recalls the production team being required to watch German Expressionist cinema: 'The Cabinet of Dr Caligari, Nosferatu were things that we saw. I remember Metropolis' (Marc Davis, quoted in Allan 1999: 45). *Snow White* represents an alliance of European folklore, Expressionist styling and Hollywood. The wicked queen, while looking like Joan Crawford, transforms into a witch in a setting that is indebted to Doré backgrounds. This scene also evokes Dr Jekyll's dramatic transformation into Mr Hyde,²³ which had been successful as a silent film in 1920 and in a sound version in 1931. As Allan points out, '[a]t this early stage Disney was ... absorbing the gothic tradition from Europe via the German expressionist cinema as well as the rise in popularity of the horror film' (Allan 1999: 51). The Gothic elements of *Snow White* represent not only a conscious appropriation of a European style but also demonstrate the extent to which the tropes of horror had become conventionalised and familiar in cinema.

While the film *Snow White* incorporates elements of a European tradition (which are replicated in the 'Snow White's Scary Adventures' ghost train), the settings for most explicit gothically themed attraction in the Disney parks, the Haunted Mansion of Disney World and Phantom Manor in Paris, are emphatically American. The Ghost Houses of the Disneylands owe nothing to Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill or to the European Gothic in architecture, but belong to vernacular American architectural styles. Phantom Manor in Paris owes much to the styling of the Bates house in Hitchcock's 1960 *Psycho*. The Haunted Mansion of the American Disney parks is in the 'Queen Anne' style, which had been a popular 'Gothic style' in American architecture; by the 1860s, according to Russell Lynes, 'Gothic had turned from dignity to inexpensive jigsaw fussiness ... and had become what we now think of as "pure Charles Addams"' (Lynes 1980: 98). That 'pure Charles Addams' has become the architecture associated with the Gothic in the American theme park.

The Haunted Mansion may derive from a World's Fair and Coney Island attraction, and draw on a distinctly American style, but it still works with the long heritage of European Gothic. Disney imagineers have constructed an

elaborate backstory for the Haunted Mansions, which is clearly modelled on Washington Irving and Edgar Allan Poe, but like Irving and Poe, it continues to draw on a European literary tradition. While the American Gothic is prominent in the ride in tableaux of Poe's raven and ghostly tales from the Gold Rush, visual images from European literature and folklore abound. The abandoned bride references Miss Havisham from Dickens's *Great Expectations*, the Phantom Manor in Disneyland Paris borrows from Gaston Leroux's 1910 novel *Phantom of the Opera*.²⁴ The paintings on the walls of the Haunted Mansion derive from legends including the Flying Dutchman, while the suits of armour evoke *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The figure of Madame Leona with her crystal ball is a throwback to the fortune tellers of Coney Island and Blackpool.

E.S. Turner's description of the iconography of horror for the early nineteenth-century 'penny dreadful' is just as applicable to the imagery used in the Haunted Mansion:

Spectres gliding in a green phosphorescence, hags picking over the bones of charnel houses, deaths heads in closets, heirs to great estates chained in dungeons, forests stuffed with robbers and werewolves, graves creaking open in the moonlight to let the vampires out – these were the stock-in-trade of the Gothic, and bogus Gothic, novelist. (Turner 1976: 19)

All these images and sounds are still be found in the haunted houses and ghost trains of the contemporary fairground and theme park. They no longer need a novelist to sustain them, but survive in the iconic metonyms of the Gothic: the pair of fangs, the batwing cloak of Count Dracula, the stitching and nuts and bolts of Frankenstein's monster. Radcliffe's picturesque monks and Walpole's suits of armour continue to haunt carnival attractions from the Haunted Mansion to Prater Park in Vienna.

The images and stories of the horror genre were filtered by Gothic writers (both hack storytellers and literary novelists) from folk tales and popular superstition, and have always had a place in the fairground. The iconography associated with popular horror was mediated through the woodcuts, illustrations and waxworks of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These same images and stories found their way into twentieth-century comic and film imagery to become the hypersigns of the Gothic.

The Haunted Mansion (or Phantom Manor) is currently the only Disney attraction to have a version in all of its parks, an indication of how intrinsic the Gothic genre is to the carnival site, whether theme park or fairground. The Haunted Mansions are, however, sited in a different 'land' in each Disney Park, evidence of the pervasiveness of the Gothic and of its generic instability. At Disney World Florida, it is claimed for Americana, in the tradition of the American Gothic of Washington Irving and Edgar Allan Poe; at Disneyland Paris, it belongs to the Western; in Tokyo it is situated in Fantasyland, in an acknowledgement of the neighbourliness of the fairy tale and folk superstition.

Figure 5.2 Wicked Witches Haunt, Thorpe Park, 2009

Slavoj Žižek has described the persistence of the vampire and other monstrous bodies in popular culture in terms of their embodiment of the persistence of the pleasure principle. For Žižek these popular monsters represent

a desperate resistance of the Thing, of enjoyment fighting not to be evacuated from the body. ... One of the usual phrases about the Thing in the gothic novel is the horrified exclamation: 'It's alive!' – that is to say, the substance of enjoyment is not yet mortified, quartered by the transcendental symbolic network. (Žižek 1991: 221)

The same exclamation can be heard in the Doom Buggies of Disney's Haunted Mansions and in the carriages of ghost trains; that enjoyment becomes a physical experience in the trailing cobwebs, ghostly fingers and animatronic figures of the horror ride. The Gothic is the genre of sensation and excess, which allows for an acknowledgement of transgression and monstrosity. If its stories are tamed and rendered antique for the theme park, they still allow for a frisson of the remembered pleasures of wickedness.