

What is usually understood by the term “Gothic” is the distant and rather obscure period of Middle Ages connoting severe wars, fortified inhospitable castles and the burning of witches. Apart from that, the word is very often used specifically to describe the architecture of this time. However, especially in an English cultural context this word gained a secondary meaning which is not completely unrelated to the first one and which is to a large extent connected with literature. Under the influence of Romanticism, the second half of the eighteenth century bears witness to extended interest in uncanny Gothic castles or ruins, forlorn scenery and other melancholy places, with even greater stress put on its mysterious, obscure and frightening aspects that finally resulted in something which may be called the Gothic revival. Victor Sage writes that, “‘Gothic’ could connote any of a wide range of overlapping senses: horrid, barbarous, superstitious, Tudor, Druid, English, German, and even Oriental.”¹ One of the primary goals of Gothic literature was to create strong emotion of fear or even horror. Among the most popular settings of its fiction belong gloomy ancient chambers, buildings with rich pasts, abandoned decaying mansions, graveyards and similar places which help to establish the right atmosphere for ghosts, revenants and other supernatural beings that form an intrinsic part of the Gothic genre.