**Useful extracts from ‘Gothic’ by Fred Botting (1996)**

“Gothic signifies a writing of excess. It appears in the awful obscurity that haunted 18th century rationality and morality. It shadows the despairing ecstasies of Romantic idealism and individualism and the uncanny dualities of Victorian realism and decadence.”

“In Gothic fiction certain stock features provide the principal embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties. Tortuous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images and life-threatening pursuits predominate in the 18th century. Spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits populate Gothic landscapes as suggestive figures of imagined and realistic threats. This list grew in the 19th century, with the addition of scientist, fathers, husbands, madmen, criminals and the monstrous double signifying duplicity and evil nature. Gothic landscapes are desolate, alienating and full of menace. In the 18th century they were wild and mountainous locations. Later the modern city combined the natural and architectural components of Gothic grandeur and wildness, its dark and labyrinthine streets suggesting the violence and menace of Gothic castle and forest.”

“Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own times, despite the heavy historical trapping. In later fiction, the castle gradually gave way to the old house: as both building and family line, it became the site where fears and anxieties returned in the present. These anxieties varied according to diverse changes: political revolution, industrialisation, urbanisation, shifts in sexual and domestic organisations and scientific discovery.”

“Illegitimate power and violence is not only put on display but threatens to consume the world of civilised and domestic values. In the skeletons that leap from family closets and the erotic and often incestuous tendencies of Gothic villains there emerge the awful spectre of complete social disintegration in which virtue cedes to vice, reason to desire, law to tyranny.”