CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

The word `Gothic’ originally refers to a style of art involving architecture and painting which was produced abundantly in Europe during the medieval period. Strong evidences are there for its connection to medieval days through settings such as castles, monasteries equipped with subterranean passages, dark battlements and trap doors. The theme of Gothic art was extended to romance and thereby paved the way for the birth of Gothic romance. Both the Gothic art and the Gothic romance lay their emphasis on emotions. There are many similarities between the Gothic and the Romantic novel. Both of them have a fascination for the horrible, the repellent, the grotesque and the supernaturalism. Some critics go to the extreme of considering Gothic as a sub-genre of Romanticism. The Gothic art is intended to have a magical effect on the viewer and create a feeling of awe and terror. In order to terrify the reader, the setting of Gothic art normally contains the Gothic architecture which is old, ruined, mysterious and menacing. This is considered to be the proper setting for the Gothic art. Other natural settings such as forests, deserted places and mountains are also very effective.

The writer of a Gothic romance makes an attempt to take the reader away from the ordinary world with which he is familiar to a world of unfamiliar. In a Gothic romance, the plot always contains a few of the following incidents such as
disappearance, concealment of parentage, unsolved crime or miscarriage of an inheritance. The mystery of the incident remains till the end of the story. The hero and the heroine face a number of troubles and their peace, safety and honor are always problematic. They encounter repeated threats from their enemies. The setting is an ancient, lonely ruined castle or abbey with dark corridors, forbidden chambers and spying servants. There are some other remarkable settings like howling gales, wild torrents, dense forests, desolate moors and yawning sepulchers. The heroine in a Gothic romance is portrayed as a beautiful and charming maiden who enjoys attention and importance. The plot includes a villain who is well received by the listeners for his moral lessons. In a Gothic novel normally the action takes place either at night or in a sunless environment. There are a number of motifs that are characteristic of Gothic fiction. Frequently used motifs are haunted castles, dungeons, caves, underground chambers, secret passages, hidden doors. In addition to the above common settings, one can find the Gothic stories involving the pursued maiden, rape, abduction, skulls, cemeteries, ghosts, revenge, family curse, torture, demonic, black magic, possession, madness and incest. The Gothic novel tries to link the various literary genres and traditions like folktales, medieval ballads, romances, epics and legends that may contain supernatural elements with them.

It is generally perceived in studies of literature that the Gothic has its origin in England. It was at its peak during the 1790’s but it met with so many rises and falls in subsequent centuries. Alok Bhalla in The Cartographers of Hell points out that the Gothic novel had a large and interested reading public during the late eighteenth
century and the whole nineteenth century (27). The publication of Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* in 1798 in America is evident for the fact that the prominence of Gothic spread to the US and Europe from England in the eighteenth century itself. American booksellers imported Gothic novels like Schiller’s *The Ghost Seer* (1795) and Cajetan Tschink’s *The Victim of Magical Delusion* from Great Britain and made the Americans read those novels. It is Horace Walpole who made the Gothic genre popular with the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. Since then, for two centuries, the basic elements of Gothic genre used in this novel were adapted by many writers. In order to create Gothic terror, Walpole had used such motifs like the castle, the cave, the subterranean labyrinth, and the extinguished lamp, and all these were imitated by his successors.

Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* is known for its excess use of supernaturalism. The novel displays many unbelievable objects and tries to make us believe that these objects are quite possible to exist. A few of such illustrations are a big helmet whose size is as big as a prison and a huge sword that cannot be lifted even by hundred men. Adding to the excitement is the presence of a bleeding statue and also the appearance of a ghost. Walpole has imitated the plot of the ancient romance where everything is viewed with imagination and improbability. William Patrick Day *In the Circles of Fear and Desire* analyses the nature of Gothic and states: “One of the commonplace analyses of the Gothic is that it reveals the dark side of human nature, a dark side whose existence has been analyzed and conceptualized in modern psychology, particularly in the theories of Freudian psychoanalysis” (165).
Another influencing Gothic novel is Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (1777), wherein the ghosts of Lord and Lady Lovel haunt their former castle to frighten the enemies of their son, Edmund (23). In Stephen Cullen’s *Haunted Priory* (1794), Alphonso, the young hero follows the ghost of a huge knight to an illuminated church which becomes a ruin the next morning. Once again Richard Warner’s *Netley Abbey* (1795) portrays a spectre in its narrative. Here, the ghost of old Sir Raymond appears three times to defeat the attempts of his murderer to kill his children.

An important theme introduced by Walpole in the Gothic novel is the restoration of order to a world in which a usurper seized the possessions of others. The legitimate heir is either lost or thought to be dead. In *The Castle of Otranto*, Theodore is not considered as the heir of Otranto because his grandfather Alfonso is believed to have died without any child. Edmund in the *Old English Baron* is thought to be a peasant’s son. In *The Haunted Priory*, Alphonso, the true grandson of the Baron de Rayo is believed to be the son of Baron’s friend. The true heir Sir Raymond in *Netley Abbey* is reported to have been killed in France. In all these novels, the apparitions expose the usurpation and restore the property to the actual heirs. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the apparition of Alfonso reveals the identity of Theodore and convinces everyone that Theodore is the rightful owner of the castle. Throughout the novel, the Divine Providence guides the characters towards the restoration of order. The restoration of ancestral property to the true heir is found in Charlotte Smith’s *The Old Manor House* (1793). A similar theme with some alteration is found in Ann Radcliffe’s *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), Francis Lathom’s *The
Midnight Bell (1798), Regina Maria Roche’s The Children of the Abbey (1796), Clermont (1798) and Eleanor Sleath’s The Orphan of the Rhine (1798).

Another important characteristic of Gothic novel is the occurrence of prophetic dreams in the Gothic fiction. A number of characters are disturbed by these dreams. However, most of their fears about death are groundless and are attributed to natural feelings of anxiety. In Ann Radcliff’s The Mysteries of Udolpho, St. Aubert gets a true presentiment of his wife’s approaching death (15) while in The Italian (1797), Vivaldi feels a presentiment of what the monk is going to do for him. Sometimes a truly prophetic incident too appears in their dreams. In The Old Manor House by Charlotte Smith, Orlando is tossed between the love for Monimia and his duty to his family. As a result of this confusion, he falls into a nightmare in which his father seems to have died and warns him to desert his lady love, Monimia and urges him to take care of his mother and sister (146-154). Though the dream can be seen as the logical result of Orlando’s fears, it actually announces his future troubles. In many Gothic novels, the heroines think or dream that their lovers are dead or that they would never see them again. In The Orphan of the Rhine, Laurette dreams that she will be taken into a wood to be murdered and that Enrico, her lover will follow her. Though this dream may also be considered as the outcome of her disturbed mind, the presentiments become true.

The writer who uses prophetic dreams skillfully and efficiently is Ann Radcliff. With the publication of The Romance of the Forest (1791) she has
established her reputation in England as a remarkable Gothic writer. Ann Radcliff provides a carefully designed psychological background for the prophetic dreams. In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline’s mind is so disturbed that she gets a series of related and terrifying dreams. She sees a dying chevalier in an ancient, desolate room and finally sees his bleeding corpse in the room where he dies. The next day she finds a dusty manuscript in a room that looks exactly like what she saw in her dream. She reads it in a frightened mentality and gets a glimpse of a quickly disappearing apparition. She believes that there is some supernatural power behind these events. The moment she discovers that the manuscript has been written by her father, she considers the entire event providential. In *The Italian*, the protagonist, Vivaldi is imprisoned in the chambers of the Inquisition. He thinks about the shadowy monk he has repeatedly seen. In his dream he sees the monk in his cell and when he wakes up, he finds the monk standing before him. Radcliff is able to maintain a rationalistic position by placing an emphasis on the psychological state of her characters.

A careful analysis of the characters of Ann Radcliff reveals to the readers that the reason for their terror is mainly due to their belief in superstition. They listen to the tales possessing supernaturalism told by the servants drowned in superstition and later on they get frightened even of ordinary occurrences. Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Madeline in *Clermont* are captivated with terror that they mistake natural events for supernatural occurrences. Emily is frightened by the opening of a door (9) and Madeline is terrified by the appearance of a man whom she later on recognizes as a friend. Characters like Emily feel the terror mostly because of faulty
perception. They either perceive what is not truly present or they misinterpret events of the everyday world as objects of terror. Ignorance is the main source of superstition for the people of lower classes. The minds of the maids and peasants since their childhood have been influenced by the tales of ghosts and specters that they never think of questioning the reality of the supposed apparitions. Monimia in *The Old Manor House* is thoroughly superstitious for she has been taught by her aunt to believe in ghosts. Monimia’s rational lover, Orlando attempts to bring her to the world of reality. She slowly understands that there is nothing to get frightened by supernatural events. She strongly believes in superstition that it is very difficult for her to come out of the world of terror. William Patrick Day’s *In the Circles of Fear and Desire*, discusses the terrors and fears found in Gothic novels: “The Gothic world had been an indescribable nothingness, given shape and form by our particular terrors and fears, but finally beyond our understanding” (189).

Like the people of lower classes, even some of the educated upper class people get superstitious fear and misinterpret the reality. Orlando in *The Old Manor House* wanders through the deserted rooms at dusk, fears a gust of wind and mistakes the portraits of his ancestors for beckoning spectres. Ferdinand in *A Sicilian Romance* is very rational. However, when he is imprisoned in a dungeon, he remembers the story of a haunting ghost and shivers with fear. Rosalie in Smith’s *Montalbert* (1795) gets a terrifying experience when she tries to escape from the castle where she is imprisoned. In order to open a door for her rescuers, she must go to the lower apartments where the ghost of a murdered knight is supposed to be walking. With all
her courage she goes down to open the door, but she mistakes the voices of her rescuers as that of the ghost and in terror she climbs back to her room (77). The situation of existence of these educated people and their physical and mental states cause their imaginations to lose their senses and enter a world with little reality. Fear, sorrow, passion, anxiety and fatigue can bring down the power of reason with the influence of light, shadow and sound. This is the reason for Adeline in The Romance of the Forest to think that she hears the word “Here” when she searches the chambers where the author of the manuscript suffered. While a few Gothic writers like Walpole, Reeve and their followers present supernatural phenomena as real elements; the rationalistic Gothic writers like Radcliff and Smith deliberately avoid the use of supernatural events. Instead they hold the uncontrolled imagination responsible for creating deceptive appearances or for mistaking reality.

William Godwin and Charles Robert Maturin have used Gothic effects in their novels. But it is very difficult to say whether these two writers are rationalistic or supernatural in their approach. Maturin’s Fatal Revenge (1807), Melmoth the-Wanderer (1820) and Godwin’s Mandeville (1817) and St. Leon (1799) are Gothic in nature. They create terror in their novels. Godwin’s most famous novel, Caleb Williams (1794) is not actually a Gothic novel though there are some Gothic happenings like the mystery of Falkland’s trunk, the robbers who live in haunted ruins and Miss Melville’s conjuring up of violence and terror.
Walter Scott has been influenced by Lewis’s *The Monk* and the German Romantic writers. He has translated Gottfried August Burger’s popular ballads “Der Wilde Jager” and “Lenore”. The Gothic influence is found in his poems “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” (1805) and “Marmion” (1808). When he switched over to fiction from poetry, he continued using Gothic devices in his historical romances. *In Woodstock* (1826) and *Anne of Geierstein* (1829) Scott handles the techniques that closely resemble those of the Germans. In *Woodstock*, two ghosts appear of which one is actually a living man thought dead by a person. The other is a man disguised as the apparition of a murdered man and believed so by the person who has killed him. He is not basically a Gothic writer but he uses the Gothic devices – both British and German supernaturalism as assisting elements in his historical fiction.

The nineteenth century Gothic writers like Mary Shelley and Charles Dickens have been influenced by the German Gothic romance. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) is the story of a scientist. The scientist creates an eight-foot tall monster and expresses his disgust at his creation. Later on he regrets when the monster kills his brother, friend and his wife. Charles Dickens has included many supernatural incidents in his novels. This has considerably encouraged his contemporaries like Wilkie Collins and Bulwer Lytton to write stories with Gothic fervour. Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) is about two children possessed by the evil spirits of dead servants.
Gothic element is not the purview of fiction alone. It has also been used successfully in poetry and plays. A good illustration can be given from the works of the Romantic writers. Coleridge’s ballad “Christabel” is a masterpiece of Gothic element with its haunted castle and moonlight gleaming through clouds. Other such illustrations are Wordsworth’s play *Borderers* and Byron’s Play *Manfred*. In the twentieth century, the Gothic tradition continues to be used by the modernists and the psychoanalysts. Sigmund Freud creates the science of fear by linking Gothic with the peculiar types of behavior that are characterized in the lives of people today.

The American gothic is not a creation done in vacuum. As recognized by many writers and scholars it has its origin in the English literature and is restructured in the American landscape. American gothic is a version of the Gothic mode applied by a few American writers in their writings. There are some interrelations that develop among these writers over a period of years. The family estate serves as the setting for an American gothic and it substitutes the traditional castle. There prevails an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. American gothic contains various levels of suspense. For exercising the suspense, sometimes even an imaginary world is created. Another characteristic of American gothic is creating supernatural effects. The monsters created for making supernatural effects are many times shown as highly visual manifestations. In order to create supernatural effects ghosts are used in the American gothic. The readers could find doors opening themselves and the characters could hear unexplainable sounds. Women characters are shown suffering unexplainable ailment. Sometimes the theme of American gothic may be romantic.
and it involves the death of a man or woman due to great passion or excessive grief. Quite often the story of an American gothic is about the horrible death or murder that takes place at the family estate. American gothic looks at evil as something which exists in our social and political institutions. Regarding the parameter of American Gothic, Donald A. Ringe mentions:

For the American Gothic, we must begin in England in the late eighteenth century, review the British and German gothic romances that Americans imported and read over the ensuing decades, and determine the role they played in the development of American Gothicism. (12)

For the study of American Gothic one needs to begin with the publication of Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* in 1798. Brockden has found the Gothic mode very convenient to express the themes that he wants to do. His novels have a psychological approach and there is a similarity between the works of Brockden Brown and those of Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. At the time of the publication of *Wieland* in America, many Gothic novels were imported from England and Germany. British and German romances occupied much space of the libraries and bookstalls of the United States for a number of years. Ann Radcliff’s contribution to this is quite remarkable. Her Gothic novels and tales have changed the reading taste of Americans to the extent that they read the Gothic tales and are afraid to sleep alone due to the terror created. Of all her books, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) has established her reputation in England.
Donald A. Ringe comes out with the fact that a number of German romances translated into English and published in Great Britain have also been imported by the American book sellers. Christian Naubert’s *Herman of Unna* (1794), Friedrick Von Schiller’s *The Ghost Seer* (1795) and Cajetan Tschink’s *The Victim of Magical Delusion* (1795) are all very popular Gothic novels read by the Americans. A few other less popular German novels have also been imported in America. Karl Kahlert’s *The Necromancer* (1794) and Karl Grosse’s *Horrid Mysteries* (1797) and *The Dagger* (1798) belong to this category. A mention can be made about a few Gothic fictions which have been read by the Americans towards the closing years of the eighteenth century but now they are almost forgotten. The list contains Stephen Cullen’s *The Haunted Priory* (1794), Richard Warner’s *Netley Abbey* (1795), Regina Maria Roche’s *The Children of Abbey* (1796), Eliza Parson’s *The Mysterious Warning* (1796), Francis Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell* (1798) and Eleanor Sleath’s *The Orphan of the Rhine* (1798).

America has not stopped with importing Gothic fiction from England. The popularity of Gothic fiction in America has improved with the American editions of a number of Gothic novels. Donald A. Ringe lists out the American editions and publications of the British Gothic novels. There are American editions and publications of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, Ann Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance, The Romance of the Forest, The Mysteries of Udolpho, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne and The Italian*, Schiller’s *The Ghost Seer*, Lewis’s *The Monk*, Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron*, Charlotte Smith’s *Montalbert*, and *The Old
Manor House, Regina Maria Roche’s The Children of the Abbey, Stephen Cullen’s The Haunted Priory, Count Roderic’s Castle, Ann Yearsley’s The Royal Captives and Richard Warner’s Netley Abbey. Charlotte Smith in the United States is as popular as Ann Radcliffe. Even Matthew Gregory Lewis’s notorious romance The Monk (1796) too has appeared in the catalogues of American libraries. It is not liked by many because of the lustful and blasphemous passages it contains. This is the situation when Charles Brockden Brown published his Wieland and he was quite aware of the literary taste of his contemporaries. For his Gothic mode, he did not take models from Walpole but he concentrated on the rationalistic German romances and Ann Radcliffe. So Charles Brockden Brown is considered a key man for the development of American fiction towards the end of eighteenth century.

The list of American gothic fiction includes Charles Brockden Brown’s Wieland, Arthur Mervyn, and Edgar Huntly, James Fenimore Cooper’s The Spy, George Lippard’s The Quaker City, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The House of Seven-Gables, Henry Clay Lewis’s Odd Leaves, Herman Melville’s Moby Dick, Louisa May Alcott’s Behind a Mask, Sarah Orne Jewett’s The Country of Pointed Fins, Charles W. Chesnutt’s The Conjure Woman, George Washington Cable’s Old Creole Days, Frank Norris’s Vandover and the Brute, Paul Laurence Dunbar’s The Sport of the Gods, Mark Twain’s The Mysterious Stranger and Edith Wharton’s Ethan Frome.

During the nineteenth century Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne made remarkable contribution to the American gothic. When Poe started publishing
his fiction in the early 1830’s, he was aware of the importance of Gothic mode for attracting a big audience. *Metzengerstein* (1832) is one of his earliest tales. It is an imitation of the German. In that tale, a demonic house, the reincarnation of his enemy carries Frederick of Metzengerstein to his death. *The Visionary* (1834) is Poe’s another tale in which he uses the darkness and gloom of the Italian setting to narrate the story of double suicide. *Berenice* (1835) is Poe’s most horrible story in which an obsessed protagonist pulls the teeth of buried Berenice while her body still lives. Poe reveals both in his critical essays and tales his wide knowledge of British, American and German Gothic writers. His interest in the Gothic is wide ranging and lasts throughout his life. Apart from Walpole and Radcliffe who have influenced him much, he admires the works of William Godwin. Poe has borrowed certain occurrences from Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* for his work, *The Pit and the Pendulum*. Similarly he is quite familiar with the Gothic romances of Walter Scott. He has borrowed considerable materials from Scott’s *The Antiquary: Anne of Geierstein* for writing *Berenice, The Pit and the Pendulum, The Raven* (1845) and *The Domain of Arnheim* (1847). Poe largely admires the works of Charles Brockden Brown. He has also borrowed material from Brown’s *Edgar Huntly* for *The Pit and the Pendulum* and *A Tale of the Ragged Mountain* (1844). Another great influence on Poe is the German Gothic writer, Hoffman. Poe to some extent is interested in mesmerism and because of this he has studied the works of Hoffman whose *Mesmerizer* is echoed in his *A Tale of the Ragged Mountains*. In many of his tales, the imitations of the British and German schools are found.
Poe has tried comic Gothic mode too but his tales of this type are not successful. *The Premature Burial and The Sphinx* (1846) are comic Gothic tales and they remain like other American comic Gothic tales as far as the psychological explanation Poe gives for the misperceptions of his protagonists. In *The Sphinx*, the narrator is obsessed with fear of death from cholera. There is a contagion of cholera in New York. Though he lives at Hudson which is far away from New York, every breeze from New York threatens him. He does not use his reason to divert his misconception but he develops his hidden superstition with reading books on omens. He sees a monstrous creature on a distant hill and takes it as a warning of death. However, it is neither a monster nor an omen but it is really an insect climbing a thread close to his eye. *The Premature Burial* records the frightening experience of the narrator who fears that he may be buried alive. He prepares himself for all possible ways to escape from the coffin in case he is buried alive. One day he screams in terror thinking that he has been buried alive but he is answered immediately by a group of workmen who are annoyed at the sudden confusion.

Poe uses a specific setting called rooms in order to easily demonstrate the symbolic development of theme. In “Ligeia” the room is considered the appropriate setting for the strange events that occur there. The room is designed to enhance the effect of the climax, the reincarnation of Ligeia in Rowena’s corpse. This type of symbolic room is found in a number of his other stories like “The Visionary”, “The Bargain Lost” and “The masque of the Red Death”. Poe has his own ideas for the manner in which a tale should present its theme. His Gothic tales never explicitly state
their themes but always suggest what he intends. The meanings are hidden beneath the surface of the action. The stories invite the readers to look behind the fantastic settings to their actual significance. His readers have to first understand his protagonists in order to perceive the theme developed in his Gothic fiction. Poe develops a relation between the Gothic setting and the disturbed minds of his characters.

Like Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s earliest stories are filled with Gothic devices. “The Hollow of the Three Hills” (1830) is a tale about witchcraft with a frightening conclusion. In “Howe’s Masquerade” (1838), there is a procession of ghosts of Royal Governors from the Province House in the night (236). In “Edward Randolph’s Portrait” (1838), Hawthorne employs the Gothic device of the mysterious painting. He seems to be influenced by the romances of Charlotte Smith and Ann Radcliffe in “The Prophetic Pictures” (1837). In this tale he combines the two Gothic elements – the mysterious painting and the prophetic warning.

Hawthorne’s romances contain many conventional Gothic elements like finding out a dusty manuscript, laying ancestral curse, restoration of property to the rightful owner, sinister monk etc. In “The Custom House” which is the introduction to The Scarlet Letter, the narrator locates a dusty manuscript. He goes through the manuscript, learns the story and then narrates it. In The House of the Seven Gables (1851), an ancestral curse is laid on the usurper, Colonel Pyncheon and then the property is restored to its proper owner. In The Marble Faun (1860) another
traditional Gothic element, the sinister monk appears and haunts the protagonist like a spectre.

Hawthorne has borrowed only a few elements or incidents from his predecessors but he makes use of them very carefully to drive home his main motive. The borrowed elements are the flickering light of candle or lamp, the pale glow of moonlight which transforms the normal surroundings into a completely different world. Hawthorne discloses the effect of uncertain light in the dark sitting room. Raising of friendly ghosts attracts him very much. Hawthorne does not insist on the reality of ghosts. Many times, apparitions are real men perceived by some as ghosts as seen in “The Gray Champion” (1835). The old regicide who opposes Sir Edmund Andros is actually a real man perceived by the latter as ghost (13-14). In The Scarlet Letter Arthur Dimmesdale at night sees the apparitions which appear close beside him in the faint light. They are not ghosts but they are only a delusion of the senses.

Hawthorne sometimes uses a familiar Gothic device – the house, room, cave or some other enclosure. He turns this kind of enclosed space into a symbol of mind. In the “Haunted Mind” (1835), Hawthorne creates the proper situation and setting for the expectation of spirits. At 2 o’clock in a winter morning, the hearth - fire flares up and becomes ruddier. This is the most sought after place by Hawthorne for making the ghosts appear in the dim light and shadow. The man in the bedroom awakes and expects some spirits and demons that do not appear during day time (296). The Gothic
world of Hawthorne’s fiction exists for thematic purpose. Gothic mode is a media for Hawthorne to make the Americans of his generation know the reality of the ghosts.

Stephen King is a very popular twentieth century American gothic writer. The critic Tony Magistrale analyzing the novels and tales of Stephen King says that they tell the readers something about the deterioration of culture among American society. King’s readers belong to the generation of movie goers. The American readers have seen frightening scenes in the films and this experience has provided them a vast knowledge of horror. Stephen King’s success as a writer of American gothic is due to his ability to create supernatural effects. He owes a lot to the book and film success of Ira Levin’s *Rosemary’s Baby* and William Blatly’s *The Exorcist*. These two books make us believe that the darkest evils are always found in our neighbourhood, in our children and in ourselves rather than in a distant place like desert or star. King’s monsters are always highly visual manifestations and they are found not in foreign locations but found elsewhere in American factories, schools and rectories. His frightening creations occupy positions of power and authority and they even control the fate of the nation by sitting in Washington.

Stephen King is quite aware of the pervasiveness of evil. He argues that evil exists in our social and political institutions and in everything human. It is this argument that links him to the literary tradition of American gothic. Poe’s haunted houses and Hawthorne’s symbolic forests find a place in Stephen King’s *The Shining* and *Pet Sematary*. Like Poe’s, King’s haunted houses serve as the proper setting and
they even reflect the protagonist’s psychological condition. The critic Tony Magistrale in *Landscape of Fear: Stephen King’s American Gothic* holds Stephen King’s ability to create supernatural effects as the reason for his elevated status (14). His novel *The Shining* and his short stories like “Salem’s Lot”, “Graveyard Shift”, “Strawberry Spring”, “The Boogeyman” and “The Raft” are the examples for his ability to create supernatural effects. In all these works of American gothic, the discovery of evil is the central theme.

A Gothic novel as revealed through the various illustrations explains to the readers a world filled with terror, horror, madness, mystery and unsolved crime. This chapter traced the origin of the American gothic novel. It attempted to examine the settings in various novels. The chapter, through a delineation of different writers elucidated the features of the Gothic.