

# Visions of Evil: Origins of Violence in the English Gothic Novel (European University Studies Series XIV, Anglo-Saxon Language and Literature)

Martin-Christoph Just



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In this thesis, which strives to re-focus the view on a seminal era of English literature, four major Gothic Novels are subjected to a thorough textual analysis. The central hypothesis is that the superior Gothic Novels are finely honed psychological studies which concentrate on the moral deterioration of individual characters. This deterioration leads to different forms of destructive social interaction: it causes psychotic behaviour patterns, violence directed against oneself, and sexual abuse of others. The Gothicists show persons who in an austere patriarchal society develop strategies to satisfy their personal, essentially anti-social needs. The major Gothic Novels unmask bourgeois society as a system which creates the frame conditions for indulgence of public and private violence, and thus fails to fulfil its original task of providing shelter for the individual.

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