



Nordic Terrors

Scandinavian Superstition in British Gothic Literature

By Robert William Rix

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Explores the extensive use of Nordic superstition in providing a vocabulary for Gothic texts as well as the cultural significance it had for writers attempting to understand Britain's northern roots.

In late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British literature, Scandinavia emerged as a place where Gothic terror took place. This book explores the extensive use of Nordic superstition in providing a vocabulary for Gothic texts as well as the cultural significance it had for writers attempting to understand Britain's northern roots. In Gothic publications, Nordic superstition sometimes parallels the representations of Catholicism, allowing writers to gloat at its phantasms and delusions. Thus, the casting of runes, runic spells and incantations, and necromantic communications (of which Norse tradition afforded many examples) could replace practices usually assigned to Catholic superstition. On terms of its cultural importance, however, Nordic lore did more than just fill in for hackneyed Gothic formulas. It is a key argument in the book that Nordic superstition presented less of an abject "Other." Nordic texts (primarily excerpts from the Edda and supernatural Scandinavian ballads) were seen as examples of the pre-Christian beliefs of what was known as the "Gothic" (i.e., Germanic) peoples, which included the Anglo-Saxons. The book will trace the development of what can be called "Gothic Gothicism" and situate this mode of writing in its wider literary, historical, political, and cultural contexts.

Contents

Introduction ; Chapter 1: Discovering Britain's "Gothic" Past; Chapter 2: Ballads across Borders: Terrors, Translations, Travesties; Chapter 3: Norse Pasts and British Presents; Conclusion

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Robert W. Rix is Director of Research at the University of Copenhagen. He is widely known for his prolific publication profile in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century studies.

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