



# The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic

*Edited by*  
Clive Bloom

palgrave  
macmillan

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Ilford, UK

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*He grappled with a hostile atmosphere that surrounded him with menaces. There came the echo of distant baying, growing louder, reverberating through the empty halls, filling his ears. Stricken with horror, he dashed out as fast as he could.*

—Guy Endore, *The Werewolf of Paris* (1934)

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# Introduction to the Gothic Handbook

## Series: Welcome to Hell



**Clive Bloom**

In 2019, London was host to an immersive zombie exhibition at the Truman Brewery, Brick Lane in East London attached to the television show *The Walking Dead*, a new play about Dracula was staged at the London Library and an art installation, sponsored by the Ben Oakley Gallery and called ‘Monster’ by Giles Walker, featuring headless clowns and other freakery, was set to be held in an empty warehouse near Greenwich later in the year if sufficient crowd funds could be raised. Exotic drinks and fried insects may be consumed at tables inlaid with skeletons at the Victor Wynd Museum and cocktail bar in Hackney and elsewhere in East London the enthusiast may visit the Jack the Ripper Museum in Cable Street or eat at the Serial Killer Café in Brick Lane, or even shop at a Romanian convenience store called ‘Dracula’ in the suburbs. In front of the prestigious Royal Academy, Cornelia Parker exhibited a scale model of the Bates Motel (called ‘PsychoBarn’), whilst *The Woman in Black*, Stephen Mallatratt’s adaptation of Susan Hill’s novel has been playing since 1987 and has been in the West End since 1989, the second longest running non-musical after Agatha’s Christie’s *The Mousetrap*. George A. Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* was yet another example of immersive theatre, playing during May of 2019. Last and most significant of all, is the Grand Guignol of The London Dungeon, a horror experience originally devised as a ‘wax museum’ now a horror venue currently with nineteen shows, twenty actors and two thrill rides. One may multiply examples from around the world, but in London alone the gothic experience seems alive and thriving.<sup>1</sup> With the appearance of Covid-19 in 2020, London became, for a moment, an empty space: a dead city of a gothic apocalypse.

Every new medium, from film to television to the Internet and social media, has remoulded gothic tropes for a new generation. At the same time older gothic tropes are constantly revisited and reworked in new contexts. The gothic sensibility saw the rise of science fiction through Mary Shelley, detective fiction through Edgar Allan Poe and dark romance through the likes of the Bronte sisters. Vampires, wolfmen and zombies fill our screens, video gaming platforms and social media.

---

C. Bloom (✉)  
London, UK

Frankenstein's monster make-up, as created by Frank Pierce for James Whale's film of the same name is perhaps the most important gothic image of the last century, influencing everything from films to toys, to Halloween costumes; and then there is *Dracula* (1897). Bram Stoker's tale has not only become the most influential Irish novel, but its protagonist is one of the most popular fictional characters, influencing literature and culture in ways thought most unlikely when the book made its first appearance. Such monsters are the nightmares of modernity.

It is a genre that may be deeply serious or simply entertainment of a most visceral kind. Moreover, the very nature of its often popular and pulp appeal is the fact that the very seriousness it avoids allows for serious issues to emerge as a latent set of subtexts, not necessarily fully understood by its author(s), nowhere more obviously than in the work of H. P. Lovecraft who now has a commanding place in gothic and steampunk culture with numerous novelistic homages to the Cthulhu mythos, as well as in pulp video games, artworks and tabletop gaming. Above all, the Gothic is both high culture and a low culture experience of mere pleasure (often at the same moment), destroying barriers of taste and refinement to allow for intellectual debate which incorporates both. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the packed lecture theatres of prestigious universities where the Gothic has become as important in literary, cultural, media, film, feminist and sociological studies as more traditional subjects.

Despite the fact that gothic entertainment had flourished in both literature and film from the start of the century to the early 1940s, a taste for atomic, alien and radiation monsters almost extinguished the genre. Now audiences had to 'watch the skies' (the last line from Christian Nyby's 1951 science fiction film, *The Thing from another Planet*) rather than watch their backs and horrors from outer space replaced terrestrial monsters. Horror and gothic filmmaking were out of favour, but films such as Alberto Cavalcanti's *Dead of Night* (1947), with its iconic ventriloquist's dummy, kept interest alive. The 1950s were also a lean time for gothic fans although later in the decade the taste revived, heralded by the new Hammer horrors and by Jacques Tourneur's *Night of the Demon* (1957) based upon M. R. James's *Castling the Runes* and rather sillier stuff such as the comedy thriller, *The Bat* (1959) directed by Crane Wilbur who adapted the story from a book from 1908. *The Bat* ran as a double bill in the United Kingdom with Terence Fisher's *The Mummy* (1959). By the late 1950s, Hammer Films had reinvented the gothic horror genre, going back to the Universal film classics and remaking them as Victorian melodramas, and in so doing recreated *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* for the 'modern' age. *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) was followed by *Dracula* (1958) and *The Mummy* (1959). The new terrors were themselves only able to exist because of the success of Hammer Horror's profitable adaptations of the science fiction television series *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1953). The series was first reworked as *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) directed by Val Guest and capitalised on the new X rate horror category. The Hammer horrors followed. Technicolour blood and gore, overt sexuality and psychopathic violence were key features of films whose modernity was a peculiar form of nostalgia for an attenuated Victorianism.

Nevertheless, a 'debased' and often plagiaristic form of the genre was also invented for children during the 1950s. The appearance of the subculture of gothic comics such as *Weird Science*, *Tales from the Crypt* and *The Haunt of Fear* brought writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and H. P. Lovecraft to the attention of younger readers (through highly plagiarised rewriting) who then were free to source the original stories. Despite the horror comic scare and legislation brought in by the British government in 1955 (partially initiated by the Gorbals Necropolis 'vampire' scare), gothic tales were back for a new generation.

Meanwhile Roger Corman went back to Edgar Allan Poe to produce a series of films whose gothic look influenced (quite unconsciously perhaps) the gothic fashion of the late 1980s. His colour-coded use of mise en scene and strange hallucinatory dream sequences remain part of a psychedelic age. In the 1970s the production company Amicus went back to *Weird Tales* for its anthologies of shudders, often borrowing Hammer stars like Peter Cushing or Christopher Lee to play in their portfolio stories. Occasionally they even borrowed directors too. As Corman created sensuous landscapes so William Castle created three dimensional gimmicks that have been reinterpreted in even more gothic terms and, of course, in the 1960s with the television reruns of the Universal series and renewed interest in Charles Addams, the supernatural and Gothic became central to children's television with series like *The Munsters* (1964–1966), *The Addams Family* (1964–1966) and *Scooby Doo* (original series, 1969), not to mention *Bewitched* (1964–1972) and *I Dream of Genie* (1965–1970), all being must-see programmes after school. Whilst for many years *The Simpsons* have produced amusing Halloween specials.

Before the growth of academic studies of the Gothic there were dedicated bibliophiles such as Montague Summers, collectors such as Michael Sadlier and enthusiasts such as August Derleth, whose cause was the author they loved or the rare volumes that they catalogued. The extraordinary growth of both the gothic industry and gothic studies is largely due to a combination and coincidence of factors. The academic study of gothic books had at least to wait until the revival of the weird, ghostly and horrific in the late 1960s and early 1970s when Pan, Panther and Corgi as well as other paperback imprints revived the likes of Arthur Machen, R. E. Howard and H. P. Lovecraft (without whom we would not have a gothic Batman whose nemesis lives in Arkham Asylum!). This led to the revival of writers like Denis Wheatley whose *The Devil Rides Out* (1934; film 1968) *To the Devil a Daughter* (1953; film 1976) and *The Haunting of Toby Jugg* (1948; film 2006) made both a literary and filmic comeback. Wheatley's lifelong interest in Satanism, the occult and black magic were later published in his non-fiction account *The Devil and All His Works* (1971), a book that influenced a generation of younger readers.

Ghost hunters such as Harry Price and his investigations at Borley Rectory in the 1940s were rediscovered in the 1960s and 1970s, his books reprinted and his life reassessed in books such as Paul Tabori's *Harry Price: Ghost-Hunter* (1974) published by Little Brown in the Denis Wheatley Library of the Occult. The incredible rise in the fortunes of the occultist Aleister Crowley were such that he ended up, alongside Edgar Allan Poe, on the cover of the Beatles 'Sergeant

Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band' (1968), not least because Wheatley referenced him in *The Devil Rides Out* and other novels. Crowley's own books were reprinted and his ideas widely circulated, whilst novels such as *Moonchild* (1917) and *Diary of a Drug Fiend* (1922) were reprinted in American paperbacks in 1970 and 1972. Cheap and lurid paperback covers lured teenagers and young adults to Edgar Allan Poe whilst an older counter culture embraced Poe, Crowley and Tolkien.

Because of YouTube it is possible to watch the melodramas of Tod Slaughter or the delights of the films of Val Lewton and fit them into the 'lost' history of British or American gothic film and popular entertainment. In the case of Tod Slaughter, a world of forgotten working-class melodramatic entertainment and values is again revealed (his version of Sweeney Todd was played by his company 'The Barnstormers' at the Independent Theatre Club, in Great Queen Street, London). In the same way it is possible to watch an Alexander Mc Queen gothic catwalk show or gothic animation. Gothic imagery flourishes in the new social media. Music videos are readily available on numerous platforms and such platforms allow for new gothic culture to emerge in the animations such as *Lenore the Cute Little Dead Girl* or the vlogs of entertainers and lifestyle gurus such as Aurelio Voltaire (The Lair of Voltaire) or the impassioned arguments of amateur horror film critics or television aficionados. The possibility of gothic renewal and of nostalgic revisiting now seem endless. Indeed, the very definition of the Gothic as the expression of an atmosphere filled with anticipation or dread cannot, any longer, properly be applied to gothic lifestyle, fashion or music as it might have been only a few years ago.

The term Gothic may have become broad and inclusive, but it must still retain its original features in order to be recognised even if the recognition proves false. Gothic clothing developed in the post punk atmosphere of do it yourself make and mend, defiantly defining its black clothing, tatty lace, jet black hair, white pancake make-up and kohl against mainstream fashion. It was a fashion of exclusion and alienation in keeping with the nihilism and economic depression of the late 1970s and early eighties rather than emulating the aesthetic nihilism of the late nineteenth century. The appropriation of gothic tropes for high fashion labels with its 'heroin' thin models and edgy horror subject matter intended to *épater le bourgeois* was itself a form of aggrandisement into the world of youth culture.

Horror, now always associated with the idea of the Gothic, on the other hand is a visceral consequence of anticipation and in that sense may or may not be Gothic at all. It is perfectly possible to have a gothic film which is without horror (*Rebecca* [1940]; *Dragonwyck* [1946]) and it is possible to have a horror film that has nothing of the Gothic (*28 Days Later* [2002]; *Witchfinder General* [1968]; *The Wicker Man* [1973]), yet gothic horror as a term has existed long enough to make clear distinctions difficult and pedantic. Edgar Allan Poe's gothic storytelling always leads to a horrific revelatory denouement and as such may claim to be the first set of tales that may be explicitly designated *gothic horror*. It is clear that definitions created by the original eighteenth-century writers have to be heavily qualified, stretched to breaking or abandoned in the face of the modern zombie which have no real origins beyond the 1930s and whose

reinvention is a result George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), a visualisation of events during the Civil Rights movement. Study of gothic culture is therefore both dynamic and chronological and has to take into account cross influences from diverse areas and be alive to the possibilities of homage, pastiche and irony.

The adolescent reading of future academics became a source of serious enquiry in the 1980s when horror and gothic pulp authors were revisited by post-modernist scholars and when psychological (especially Freudian ideas of uncanniness) and sociological readings (especially Marxist and post-modern readings of popular culture and literature) were in the ascendant. The writers of horror were the 'other' of F. R. Leavis's canonical authors and a breath of fresh air in a restricted academy. This alternative canon was then opened to cultural studies, psychoanalytic readings and research from feminist and later ethnic researchers. Gothic writers whose work had faded or been forgotten, now returned in new scholarly editions ready for dissection and there was a vogue for compilations of essays on the gothic and introductions to what was a fledgling subject, whilst Edgar Allan Poe was given the full attention of French post-modern theory in the journal *Yale French Studies*. The gothic tales of forgotten authors were republished and their place in literary history rethought; the silent gaps were finally being filled. In this way Ann Radcliffe and the writings of long-forgotten women gothic novelists were put back into the purview of academic research. New terms were mobilised: the uncanny, abjection, liminality, to be replaced by further theorising in the world of disability, gender stereotyping and ecological studies.

Yet study could not really begin until the appearance of both published reprints of classic or lost works and the reruns of Universal films on television. This led inevitably to nostalgic pastiches such as Mel Brook's and Gene Wilder's *Young Frankenstein* (1974) (an almost Yiddish pastiche with undertones of Marx Brothers slapstick and verbal wit) and Richard O'Brien's *Rocky Horror Show* (play 1973; film 1975), a mash-up of science fiction and gothic film elements mixed with a dose of gender confusion and glorious cross-dressing. The real turning point may be considered the appearance of video and Betamax, followed by the appearance of the televisual pause button, and the creation of YouTube uploads and other reproductive media which allowed multiple viewing. DVDs came with sub titles and commentary, and deleted scenes which could be evaluated and discussed by academics and enthusiasts alike. The rediscovery of Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1931) and the ability to re-run Hammer films allows for a serious re-evaluation of Jimmy Sangster's scriptwriting, Terence Fisher's directing and James Bernard's music and what makes their work 'classic'. Video and disc technology is central to the re-evaluation of films like Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1977) and Don Coscarelli's *Phantasm* (1979) and reworking their themes would be difficult without this technology. Even the return of Ed Wood's campy low budget films has much to do with new technology. Goth culture needed multiple stimuli that could be revisited and analysed. That having happened, real debate could take place and facts and concepts checked especially with regards to ephemeral or peripheral material.

We live now in an age of international gothic where the genre has crossed borders, as much alive in Brazil as London or New York and where discussion of zombies and vampires is both an intellectual holiday and a serious focus of attention. Nowadays there is no single overarching definition we can bring to bear on a culture that encompasses literature and club culture, television and fashion, video games and urban studies. The fruit of all these years of focus has been the creation of an academic gothic community and a huge range and diversity of opinion. Yet the Gothic is always meant to be entertaining as well as intellectually stimulating.

The Gothic as cultural phenomenon has now travelled beyond a limited selection of books or films. This makes it a very dynamic field with new books and new discoveries stimulating further discussion. Such discussion will inevitably change older definitions and invalidate previous boundaries, creating new areas of interest, informed by, but no longer held back by, older theories. The recent translation of an alternative version of *Dracula* 'written' by the Icelandic author Valdimar Assmundson and published in Iceland in 1901 under the title *Markt Markanna* or *Powers of Darkness* is an example of a 'lost' work providing new areas of discussion. This version, first fully translated into English by Hans Corneel de Roos and published with extensive notes, presents a quite new version of the Dracula tale, apparently, although contentiously, authorised by Bram Stoker himself and indeed, there is much discussion and controversy still regarding the origins of the Swedish and Icelandic versions. In architecture, the restoration of both the Houses of Parliament and Strawberry Hill suggests there will be more to be done in terms of research into neo-gothic buildings as well.

How might we define gothic culture, gothic art and gothic taste? On the one hand the Gothic is a sensibility, on the other the effect of having such sentiments. In this equation there is a moment in history when sentiment and cultural expression became one expression of cultural identity. In this equation there is no before and after, but a synchronicity that has gothic effects produced through a gothic way of thought, emotion and expression. Of course the Gothic may be defined by a particular era, as once it was in literary histories of popular reading. We can mark the period exactly from 1764 to 1820 or from Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* to Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Thus a beginning and an end, of sorts, is constructed. Nevertheless, it is clear that different gothics and different gothic sentiments pervade the neo-gothic arts dated around the Romantic and post-French Revolutionary period, which are connected to, but different from those feelings and sentiments that fill gothic melodramas in the mid-nineteenth century or which inform gothic fin de siècle dalliance with the occult.

Thus, there is a puzzle at the heart of gothic literature. Not only does it develop in a diametrically opposed way to gothic architecture and design, which stands for the most part for the revived medieval and Tudor, imperial aspirations and high Christian virtues, but it does so within that framework as its inherent opposite. Hence it may be argued that gothic literature and culture are both misnamed, through historical accident or is gothic literature the subversively repressed of the virtues listed as the features of the architectural revival?

If the gothic's origins are to be found in historical circumstance and artefacts, they are also a reminder that the sentiments expressed in such artefacts held within

them a fascination of a quite different sort. If that is accepted then there must be two gothics, one wholesome and the other unwholesome, one pure and one corrupt, expressing themselves as doppelganger mirror images. Thus the Gothic is both an epistemological conundrum and a history of artistic expression with a chronology that may be followed. It is, perhaps, either and both and this being so the circle cannot yet be closed, either on its historical trajectory or its meaning until the period of its formation and development finally fade into dead history.

For the contributors to this volume such problems are significant.<sup>2</sup> Giles Whiteley defines the genre with elegant simplicity, for him, the Gothic is a form of macabre writing, either terrific or horrific with supernatural themes and featuring narratives set in the middle ages. Valeria Iglesias-Plester sees ‘the main aspects as foreshadowing, the use of labyrinth-like structures’ including, ‘the haunted’ [which may be a house or a person or family], whilst Marta Vega sees space itself and setting as forming the tone of gothic feelings. Marius Crisan suggests the links is between the real and the imaginary, between man and divinity and between life and death. As such the gothic narrative is effectively one of childhood and adolescence, but as Agnieszka Kotwasinska points out it is also a world of decay and dust. Dust and decay are for Eric Parisot ‘about the artistic articulation of fear(s)—whether personal, social, cultural, political or historical. Some of these fears we may be aware of, but the best gothic art is able to tap into or articulate fears which we are not yet cognisant’ and therefore for James Rattue such fears represent ‘our repulsion from, and attraction to, the potential undoing of the human’.

Holly-Gale Millette reminds us of the origins and continuance of gothic themes ‘such as the sublime, the subliminal, the grotesque, the revenant, the uncanny in the aesthetic, political and social structures of sentient life forms – past, present and future’. Whilst Manuel Aguirre sees the early gothic as originating as ‘an aesthetic mode which later crystallized into a historical genre’. For Aguirre, the Gothic postulates a ‘second space’ beyond the limits of the rationalist enterprise and endlessly negotiates the threshold between the human reality and that of the numinous ‘Other’ where the terrors of power (and the power of terrors) act unchecked.

We can, of course define the Gothic by its monsters and its relationship with the importance of religion as does Aspasia Stephanou who suggests that, the genre ‘is characterised by the presence of supernatural phenomena, including vampires, ghosts, zombies and the occurrence and repetition of the past and the uncanny. The problem is defining the supernatural as that which comes from without and revolves around the idea of a theistic universe’. Looked at philosophically and from an historical viewpoint, Cleo Cameron comments that, ‘the gothic suffers from delusional dualism, when in actuality it is defined by radical monist materialism—experiencing the sublime gothic supernatural, the individual’s suffering mind, via symbiosis with the nervous system, which tortures and torments the body through its reactive imaginings when exposed to the metaphysical dualism implied by the apparently witnessed supernatural episode’.

In all its forms, Brian Jarvis remarks, the Gothic represents a ‘politics of excess’ and ‘delirium’, and Martina Barlett sees this emerging from the collision of ideologies which cannot be reconciled. In this way, encountering the other’s

foreign-ness in all its physicality may trigger the gothic impulse as a reflection of one's own culture as Carol A. Senf believes. As Emma Dallamora argues, 'the gothic is acutely about the unconscious and this argument agrees with Jessica Gildersleeve's, that such repressions are mainly unconscious. Sandra M. Casanova-Vizcaino believes the Gothic moves through the eras, reflecting the fears, the desires, the spaces, and the bodies that reflect the most salient (and perhaps most ingrained) aspects of society's deepest recesses. Nowadays those fears revolve around the body, technology and the non-human'.

Catherine Redford considers that, 'the gothic is characterised by an anxiety about otherness, and particularly a fear that this otherness'. Hence, 'this darkness, speaks to something familiar within us'. The Gothic is a mode of cultural production that pertains to the exploration of otherness and uncanny familiarity, and is therefore focussed on the construction and dissolution of boundaries, the obsession with death, violence and the grotesque. It is often set in claustrophobic spaces, either real or imaginary. One of its most prominent features is its ability to mutate and adapt to different times and spaces, becoming an effective reflection of societal fears.

The Gothic is above all a hybrid mode: it often appears in collaboration with other literary forms, modes and genres. Where fear is disguised so may other subject matter. Paulina Palmer points out that this leads to the possibility of a genre as an 'appropriate vehicle for the representation and analysis of queer sexualities and genders, especially the experiences of secrecy, loneliness, the hidden, liminality, and living on the margins between queer and heterosexual cultures that queer and LGBTI communities often experience' and the number of gothic novelists from marginalised groups certainly bears this out.

Such ideas are widened by Dara Downey who gives this explanation: 'One of the most useful definitions of the gothic is actually a line from *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) by Henry James who writes that 'an unknown man in a lonely place is a permitted object of fear to a young woman privately bred'. Downey thinks 'that this encapsulates many of the dynamics of class, gender, and knowledge that the genre repeats and rearranges in various ways and thus some of the terms can be moved around or substituted to account for different relations in terms of class, race, gender, and so on'. This being the case Julia Round returns the argument to the world of 'haunting' with its connotations of 'excess and contradiction' revealing 'the hidden meanings of fear and attraction', simultaneously giving us too much information (the supernatural) and also not enough (the spectral and unseen).

Antonio Alcalá González points out that, 'in the gothic [world], human beings find it impossible to escape from the past lurking behind them'. David Ibitson suggests it is genre that allows a 'willingness to look awry, or askew, at society, to reveal what others may want to hide or ignore; to reveal uncertainties about society that have been rendered monstrous by their being ignored...'. '[Or]... it is about the return of social and psychologically repressed neuroses'. Indeed 'in broad terms the Gothic is an undead past that disrupts the present...though such temporal discombobulations can haunt the present from the (possible) future as

well' suggests Simon Bacon. Thus, Mark Bernard finds racism at the very heart of the (American) gothic project. He argues that, 'the most compelling aspect of the gothic is how it depicts anxieties regarding the way the past will consume our present and preclude our future; in America, this past is haunted by Native American genocide, slavery, and other racial injustices, and American gothic tries to contend with the horrors from the past that infect our present'.

David Jones points out that the 'gothic is a hybrid and hybridising term, used [both] to characterise shifting layers of meaning involving expressions of dark, frightening and repressed urges as well as social, sexual and familial transgression and violence, and the perceived barbarism of wilder (sometimes primitive) styles of creativity'. This leads Marie Mulvey-Roberts to conclude that hybridity is central to the very nature of gothic productions. She considers that, 'the gothic seems to have been a process of moving from the margins to the mainstream and by doing so becoming increasingly difficult to define due to its capacity for absorption, hybridity and even appropriation', a point reiterated by Jarlath Killeen who notes that 'the term would have to be limited by the meanings circulating in the period, but given the way "Gothic" is promiscuously employed in popular culture now, ... it is important to be as open as possible'. Whilst it may be 'promiscuous', in a real sense, gothic is the literature of the traumatic, whether it be the physicality of the monstrous or the trauma of bodily disintegration or even the return of the dead, gothic caters for morbid fascination and serious critique. In the present century gothic pleasure may encompass music, fashion, lifestyle, social media, art installations and amusement park rides.

Coincident with these conceptual boundaries is the chronology of the Gothic itself. In its chronology is the genesis of gothic ideas, sentiments and tropes, but as might be inferred from its definitions the ideas themselves may belong to a more ahistorical perspective which is greater than the evolution of events. Thus terms such as liminality, abjection or the uncanny may have an interpretive base greater than one or more chronological occurrences. Nevertheless, there is a chronology which we can outline.

The first phase is, course, pre-gothic, lasting from the seventeenth century to the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, in 1764. The idea of the Gothic (as distinct mode of expression) originates with a reaction to neoclassicism in thought and ideas with a growing emphasis on indigenous non-Roman British history, such as that of the druids, burial mounds and Stonehenge investigated by clerical antiquarians from the seventeenth century onwards. The term 'goth' was adopted in architecture by patrons and architects looking for an 'authentic' Christian medieval (English) vernacular style, a style which finds expression in the work of John Vanbrugh and later in Strawberry Hill. This resulted, both by design and by accident, in an interest in revolutionary, unusual, bizarre and outre concepts in design, for which new words such as 'gloomth' and 'serendipity' were coined (by Walpole) to express the feelings evoked by the architecture.

Gothic literature however emerged from a fascination with death and *memento mori* as threatening rather than consoling, resulting in Walpole's own nightmare

induced *The Castle of Otranto* which combined the natural style of the contemporary novel with the superstitions, supernaturalism and intrigue of an imagined feudal past. Walpole's 'amusing' nightmare regarding his own house joined architectural Gothic to literary Gothic by the merest chance. Shakespearian plotting from *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *Macbeth* linked eighteenth-century sentiment to medieval imagery and imagined language.

The second phase lasted from the 1780s to the 1790s. This is really the height of the gothic revival in literature with over two hundred known examples of the genre produced in English alone. Gothic was expanded to create the theatre of spectacle where there was a split between those who believed gothicism was a metaphor for Godlessness and those who, influenced by De Sade were believers in a Godless universe where only appetite and power succeeded. The contradiction is best described by comparing Ann Radcliffe (whose idea of 'terror' leads to God) or Joanne Baillie whose plays suggest the Gothic is a place of lost composure with Matthew Lewis or Charlotte Dacre (who embrace both horror and perversion). The genre was now seen as either the triumph of virtue over evil (the evil usually being entirely human) or the triumph of Luciferian instincts over rationalism.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, we also witness the beginnings of German supernaturalism as originated in Gottfried August Burger's poem *Lenore* (1773), based on British border ballads and then reabsorbed into British literature itself and thereafter rewritten and quoted in other gothic novels such as *Dracula*. Such German influences suggested the Gothic was more attached to demonic disruption and damnation in a universe bereft of spiritual guidance or the hand of God.

Major themes also began to emerge such as the 'corpse bride' and the necromancer/who first makes an appearance in William Beckford's Arabian tale *Vathek* (1782 in French and 1786 in English) which itself introduces the other side of the gothic imagination—orientalism.

From 1800 to the 1840s there is the architectural triumph of medievalism as the principle of high Anglicanism and imperialism expressed by the building of the Houses of Parliament and the colonial administration buildings in colonial capitals, the general church building programme and the appearance of new gothic craft wares, silver and furniture, the new garden cemeteries such as Highgate and Kensal Green, the ideology of the 'Young England' movement, the later industrialised architecture of Tower Bridge and novels such as Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1818). Scott's own Scottish baronial style was reflected in the remodelling of Windsor Castle and Bavarian King Maximilian's building of Hochschwangau in Bavaria. Such reactionary and conservative ideas were the consequence of the threat of the French revolution and the collapse of social hierarchy, but this also led to radical ideologies of the existential self in a non-Christian Godless world exemplified by Mary Shelley's creature in *Frankenstein* (1818), John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) and Charles Maturin's fantasy about a Kafka-esque bureaucracy in *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820).

The ideological debates around the break-up of a recognised social order include the rise of the concept of an individualised (Romantic) imagination. This

created a new ontological perspective wherein the individual became the basis for the sense of reality. Personal reality soon became personal realities where heightened imagination was both liberating, but also a solipsistic trap leading to insanity. Those locked in their own heads would now be subject to doubts regarding the validity of the outside world. The major shift from external dangers to internal fears and the idea that the 'architecture' of the mind now became the real landscape of terror, led to the rise of psychologised stories and poems which were concerned with hallucination, perversion, murder and drug addiction. Thomas De Quincey, Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson and Edgar Allan Poe spent much of their literary careers investigating such strange states of mind.

By the 1840s, the original eighteenth-century sense of the Gothic had now long descended into popular culture. This older external gothic was now confined to popular journalism and cheap fiction serials like James Rymer and Thomas Pest's *Varney the Vampyre* (1845–1847) or serialised melodramas like Rymer or Thomas Prest's *The String of Pearls* (1846–1847) which introduced Sweeney Todd. Village magic lantern shows and penny gaffs made up the bulk of common gothic experience. The internal (and more intellectual) gothic and the popular sensational version influenced new genres such as the detective novel and the dark romances of the Bronte sisters. Gothic tropes were now used as ironic decoration or as comic setting by British writers such as Charles Dickens, but had also been taken up in the revolutionary atmosphere of Paris by French artists such as Victor Hugo and Charles Berlioz. By the 1840s, the Gothic has even entered the vocabulary of European revolutionaries such as Max Stirner and Karl Marx, who were fascinated with the resonance of the rhetoric of the spook.

The 1850s to the 1880s was the apex of gothic architecture and design. In Bavaria, Ludwig II began building Neuschwanstein as a shrine to Wagnerian values. On the stage and in literature old-style Gothic was eclipsed by middle-class social melodrama set in domestic, if (often) gothic, architectural space. Nevertheless, by the 1870s and 1880s, the Gothic revived with the work of Sheridan Le Fanu and Robert Louis Stevenson. This phase is accompanied by the absorption of the new wave of spiritualism coming from America which will influence the occult novels and short stories of the 1890s.

Between 1890 and 1918, the Gothic as occult literature made a remarkable revival. This was an amazingly productive period where old tropes were revived and rethought. Not only is there a revival of old defunct tropes such as the vampire, contemporary influences started to take on new gothic nuances. Paramount is, of course, Jack the Ripper in 1888 and the rise of violent anarchism in the 1890s. Spiritualism and séances, occult societies and eastern esoteric beliefs thrived and ghost stories dominated the popular magazines and anthologies. The era includes Richard Marsh and Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde and H. G. Wells, M. R. James and Arthur Machen, Ambrose Bierce and Hanns Ewers, M. P. Shiel, Vernon Lee, Algernon Blackwood and Robert Chambers, and the wonderfully named ghost writer, Oliver Onions.

In the 1920s and 1930s a remarkable weird literature that embraced magic, esotericism and the erotic came from the pen of Dion Fortune whose influence

on gothic occult writing has largely been ignored. Roughly between 1890 and the 1930s there occurred the golden age of weird fictions: tales that explored the rent in the veil of reality and the peculiarities which may lurk beyond, taking on occult and phantasmagoric imagery, hinting at bizarre perversities, Darwinian and scientific degeneracy, the peculiarities of modern psychology and spirituality and the ever present opiate paranoia of unseen ethnic conspiracies and apocalyptic horror (as in Lovecraft). Whilst the nineteenth-century version embraces the hidden, occult and the otherness of beyond the grave, the twentieth century has explored the blankness of space and of meaning. Both take on 'non-meaning' or that meaning beyond rational explanation on the margins of consciousness. In contrast and in concrete bricks and mortar, the Gothic had been increasingly industrialised (see Tower Bridge and Liverpool Anglican Cathedral) in ways that see its last full flourish. Oddly, both weird fiction and late gothic architecture embrace the fears and aspirations of a world on the brink of modernity.

Even more importantly, the first moving image reinterpretations of gothic sensibility were now being produced in films such as Thomas Edison's *Frankenstein* (1910). Numerous other short films were produced in the period up to 1919 referencing vampires, golems and other monsters, now all lost. Nevertheless, despite the crumbling of old film reels, from 1918 to the end of World War II, the dominance of cinema was paramount, with film above all, reinterpreting the nineteenth century's representations in literary and stage Gothic through the use of moving imagery and sound accompaniment. Nowhere is the impact of gothic ideas on modernity stronger than on the birth of surrealism in its relationship to film, where filmic technique was able, for the first time, to show complex patterns of psychological alienation and the distortions of surrounding space, explore the passing of time and of memory, visualise synchronicity, alchemy and psychoanalytic insight. These influences were a revelatory moment for Andre Breton who had just seen *Nosferatu* (1922) as well as to Luis Bunel and Maya Derren. If Salvador Dali went further back to illustrate Walpole and Dorothea Tanning concentrated on Ann Radcliffe, they still came to their subjects through film.

German Expressionist cinema led the way followed closely by Hollywood. American scripts were mostly, but not always rewritings of earlier plays which themselves reworked older novels or stage productions, thereby reusing themes for a visual medium which were previously seen as defunct. Set in imaginary versions of the past or an imagined Bavarian, Ruritanian or Transylvanian setting, films made the world of gothic imagery come alive. Meanwhile, horror literature embraced science fiction with H. P. Lovecraft, Robert Bloch and August Derleth in pulp fiction, and even 'Marxist' ideas appeared in Guy Endore's novel *The Werewolf of Paris* (1934). As these chapters show beyond the Cold War and through the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, the Gothic has continued to evolve and grow from film and literature to television and comics, to music, fashion and lifestyle, interactive games and now to environmental and identity politics.

The Gothic is without doubt the longest lasting popular genre in world literature, continuously reinvented throughout the history of modernity as part of modernity itself. This, perhaps extraordinary statement may be justified by

reference to its ubiquity in a whole range of media over the last 250 years. If we take gothic literature to have been first created in the middle of the Enlightenment by Horace Walpole, then we can map its various organic changes up to and beyond the twenty-first century. The gothic sensibility, which grew as a counter to the philosophy of the period soon adapted itself to the politics of the French Revolution and the new psychological sciences of the nineteenth century. It helped form movements from the picturesque to Romanticism and post-Romanticism, and moved through the nineteenth century picking up concepts of personal disturbance, occultism and domestic violence. By the twentieth century it was immediately adopted by film whose visual vocabulary was found perfect for exploring disturbed states of mind, hallucination, trauma and the spectral.

The term Gothic is a contradiction: on the one hand, it means a Christian, progressive architecture based on medieval principles, whilst on the other, this same architecture is the setting for suspense, supernaturalism, danger, derangement and horror. The Gothic provides a space to discuss issues otherwise banned or censored or so dangerous to societal norms as to appear revolutionary. It exists to allow cultural prohibitions to be disguised as art in order to create a space to explore themes as diverse as physical and mental alienation, borderline states of being, spirits, ghosts and demons and necromancy, incest, fetishism and necrophilia, drug-induced and hallucinatory disturbance, gender construction, sexuality and perversion, predatory violence, the dangers of the urban landscape and its anonymous crowds (think, for instance, of the importance of Jack the Ripper in German Expressionist films such as Paul Leni's *Waxworks* (1924) and G. W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box* (1929), or the many Ripper films made in the 1960s and 1970s, and even critiques of class, monstrosity, disability and trauma, which may all jostle in disguised form as literary entertainment.

German Expressionism, with its distortions of visual imagery, was well suited to represent the political, psychological and cultural trauma of the First World War. Horror and psychological disturbance, plague and monsters fill Expressionist Cinema from Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919/1920) to F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, and from Carl Boese and Paul Wegener's *The Golem* (1920) to Paul Leni's *The Man Who Laughs* (1928) and beyond into Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) with its scenes with the scientist Rotwang and the Cathedral clock's skeleton. German Expressionism converted literature into visual images. Although there had been plenty of nineteenth-century images of the Gothic in both print, lantern shows and theatre, it was the success of the German expressionists to find an exact analogue of gothic tropes in the visualisation of distortion, shadows, lighting and set design.

German films incorporated a new filmic sense of the Gothic which was only partially aligned to its literary forbears. Silence and dread were soon incorporated into Hollywood's vocabulary. Tod Browning's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925; 1929) and James Whales' *Frankenstein* (1931) both are cognisant of the influence of German visual tropes as is Alfred Hitchcock, then working in Britain and whose film version of Mrs. Henry Lowndes' *The Lodger* (book c.1914; film 1927) incorporates an expressionist palette as does his later *Blackmail* (1929) with

its vertiginous walk up to the villain's rooms. Such visual tropes went into the very language of film with tropes from *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* reprised in Merian C. Copper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's *King Kong* (1933) and Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), Hitchcock's entrance scene in *The Lodger* (1927) being revisited for Peter Blatty's film of *The Exorcist* (1973). It is Germanic renaissance medievalism as originally conceived in the middle to late nineteenth century that had its most lasting effect on the work of Walt Disney whose own interest in gothic folk tales and the Brothers Grimm is everywhere evident in his early works such as *The Three Little Pigs* (1932) and *Snow White* (1938) with its forest referencing the Klingsor's Garden decorations in the Singer's Hall in Ludwig's II grandiose hermitage, Neuschwanstein which influences the Disney logo and theme parks to this day. Thus twentieth- and twenty-first-century gothic filmic images now vie with, and often are more important than, linguistic tropes to provide another layer for gothic semiotics.

The importance of Hollywood even after the absorption of the German Expressionist film style as well as the emergence of American horror actors such as Lon Chaney and Vincent Price and directors such as Tod Browning, William Castle, Roger Corman, Wes Craven, Tobe Hooper, Eli Roth and numerous others meant that American Gothic looked inward. The phasing out of British directors and European actors in the 1940s meant that the United States could both absorb and replace European Gothic tropes with homegrown ideas. European Gothic slowly became peripheral to the modern American vampire for instance. In 1976, Ann Rice created the Vampire Lestat in *Interview with the Vampire*, its central characters finally destroying Dracula and European gothicism in an extraordinary act of cultural appropriation.

The slick young vampire kid of the small town schoolyard whose qualms about drinking blood sit alongside his immense wealth fit an American modernity far removed from the old-dark-house school of American Victorian horror which grew out of Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ambrose Bierce and the early twentieth-century pages of *Weird Tales*. What replaced the evil of vampirism was Satanism, covens and black magic conspiracies which were ushered in by Ira Levin in *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), Peter Blatty in *The Exorcist* (1971) and by Richard Donner in *The Omen* (1976). These were themselves pre-dated by Guy Endore's American-in-Paris wolfman horror, *The Werewolf of Paris* in which a werewolf tale is intertwined with the siege of Paris and the politics of the Communards. The book's peculiarly interest in violence, blood and sexual perversity was based on the equally perverse and decadent writings of Hanns Ewers. Nowhere is the occult and Satanic more revisited than in David Lynch whose visual terrors seem to be attached to a demonic parallel universe residing in subterranean 'lounges' and corridors decorated in the plush red décor of a 1950s cinema.

Demonic characters haunt every episode of *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991) and *Twin Peaks: The Return* (2017). We are presented, in episode eight, of the second series which aired in 2018, with the most gothic and surrealist episode in modern television. Lynch's tours de force of occult weirdness, however are often so convoluted and overlaid as to be 'meaningless', instead resonating as a purely visual and

hallucinatory or dreamlike experience with a confusion of shapeshifting, demonic possession, Lurch-like characters such as the ‘Giant’/‘Fireman’, portals to hellish ‘waiting rooms in Limbo, parasitic doubles, demons’ (‘Bob’; ‘Judy’; ‘the Arm’) and warped or distorted timelines, making the very ordinariness of American small-town life, with its ‘cherry pie’ and ‘damned fine coffee’ seem sinister and superficial, hiding the real hell beneath the surface. All of this is composed, at least in the original series, as a soap opera pastiche, a subject he has originally experimented with in his very black ‘situation comedy’ *Rabbits* (2002). As agent Dale Cooper reminds his colleagues in *Twin Peaks: The Return*, ‘we live inside a dream’ in which the Manichean forces of good and evil eternally battle for supremacy. Here, however, fear is produced from the duality of the known and unknown where evil cannot be explained or fully consciously understood. The images of *Twin Peaks* produce an America made into a demonic landscape, both uncanny and normal, because nebulous and indefinite, a horror of the inexplicable and irrevocably seen, of that which should not exist under the surface of that which does—American diners, 1950s and 1960s pop music, formica tabletops, wholesome American food and small-town neighbourhood communities.

American Gothic created its own vocabulary in the nineteenth and early twentieth century from its national characteristics and homegrown fears. Thus American Gothic is full of cursed or ‘haunted’ mansions (both in the eastern seaboard as well as southern states), lonely roads, dense forests, tumbledown shacks and degenerate bayous and swamps. The United States has created its own unique regional concept of the perverse in the southern gothic quagmires of Tennessee Williams and William Faulkner. H. P. Lovecraft created a whole mythic geography of New England degeneracy around Arkham, Miskatonic University, Red Hook and the dreaded ‘Necronomicon’. Grant Wood’s painting ‘American Gothic’ (1930) added another level of rural degeneracy, at first unrelated, except by coincidence, to the language of American gothic imagery, as did Hopper’s painting ‘House By the Railroad’ (1925). Hopper’s house, with its strange haunting solitude became The Bates Motel and later the home of the Munsters (still later the film set featured in the series *Desperate Housewives!*) whilst Wood’s iconography became part of the opening sequence of the movie version of *The Rocky Horror Show* in which Riff Raff and Magenta recreate in tableau the famous pose of the farmer and his wife. The contemporary American monstrous must incorporate such areas as consumerism, physical beauty and wealth (see for instance Brett Easton Ellis, *American Psycho* [1991]), must in a word, be an American businessman’s success story. As such the monstrous, per se, is denuded of horror or threat and instead becomes a metaphor for victimhood and exclusion. Victimhood is a focus of early films such as Browning’s *Freaks* (1932) and Whales’ *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935).

Hollywood land has its own inherent Gothic, the Gothic of faded Spanish architecture, best described in James Cain’s *Double Indemnity* (1943) the noir thriller where the trope may have been invented. This idea of the grotesque combined with a nostalgia for a lost golden age of West coast celebrity is reworked in Billy Wilder’s *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) as well as Robert Aldrich’s *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* (1962). Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*, played by