

# Exuviae

a fragmentary grammar  
of Gothic



James Rattue

Umbra Press



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*Published by the Umbra Press*

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The way doctors must sometimes use poisons,  
the power of Saturn is useful when cautiously taken.

Marsiglio Ficino, *The Book of Life*, 1483

The children of sickness and solitude shall thank him.

Coleridge's review of *The Monk*, *Critical Review* Feb. 1797

We shall open the last door in the castle even if it leads, perhaps because it leads, on to realities which are beyond the reach of human comprehension and control ... because opening doors is the tragic merit of our identity.

George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle*, 1971

Open the doors  
Of this polluted palace, fouled with blood!  
Let there be lamentation loud and full  
Throughout this Attic land ...

Seneca, *Phaedra*

*For the Bucks Goths*

*And the Ox Goths*

*and all those across the centuries  
born beneath cold Saturn and fell Algol.*

# PART ONE: THE ANATOMY OF GOTHIC

Whatever you think Gothic is, it includes the opposite as well.

'Patrick McGrath', ran the review of *Martha Peake* in *The Observer*, 'may be the greatest Gothic novelist ever'. It's not a form of approbation every writer of fiction would welcome - to be declared the modern master of an hysterical, stereotyped and adolescent genre which lacks even the identifiers that grant coherence, and a modicum of critical interest, to science fiction, or detective stories. Within the rigidities of their forms, these literary types can be recognised, bent, and made use of. Gothic literature was like that once, but much has happened since Charles Maturin dotted the last full stop on the final page of *Melmoth the Wanderer*: Gothic has become more a mood, a tendency, than a genre. How can you recognise that? How can you delineate and study it?

Dismissal is a much easier strategy. Early Gothic novelists may have been attacked for debauching with print the morals of young ladies, but Jane Austen dealt a far deadlier blow with ridicule. No mean consumer of Goth lit herself, the ribboned cynic of the Meon valley had her heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland, transformed from a sensible young girl into an hysterical fantasist through her reading of Gothic novels. Her seducer is a friend, whose offer of more books Catherine greets with the breathless inquiry 'Are they all horrid? Are you sure they are all horrid?' Austen's target was not so much Gothic melodrama as its readers, but if the genre's very market was, as she suggested, under-exercised young women hungry for imaginative thrills, it was difficult to maintain that discrimination.

It is true that literary theory has long since repaired the reputation of Gothic, to an extent. Serious studies of Gothic literature, most notably David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* (1980), have increasingly won the argument that it was more than a minor curio for bookworms, and that its very limitations, its naivety, provided the opportunity for greater historical or psychological insights than more artful novels. But there still lingers an air of disrepute about the whole business. This literature was trashy and ephemeral, and scholars have to wring the books to prove their value: this is why Gothic criticism concentrates on reading and re-reading such a tiny range of central texts.

Nonetheless, however respected Gothic may have become in the colleges, in wider culture it occupies a more ambiguous position: it's the word everyone uses and no one wants to own, a monstrous little squint-eyed orphan whose very name sounds awkward on the lips. Siouxsie Sioux, who bears more responsibility than anyone else for the Goth phenomenon, came to despise that 'lazy journalistic tag': composing the recent (2003) authorised biography of the band, Mark Paytress had to force Siouxsie and her Banshees to discuss the topic, only to receive round denials of any Goth identity (although their PA Billy Chainsaw suggested that they had been the only proper Goths). In 1992, UK pop duo Shakespeare's Sister had a chart hit with the single 'Stay', which was accompanied by a video in which the pair contended over a man's dead body in a moonlit morgue. There was, however, nothing Gothic about it, insisted Siobhan Fahey: instead, it was inspired more by 'the idea of a mad Victorian bride locked in an attic', which is rather like denying you work in a library on the grounds that in fact it's just a building with a lot of books in it. Inconveniently for all parties,

Gothic includes both the grandiose and properly disturbing, and the tawdry and cartoonish; to nail it to the latter is an effective way of dismissing the former. Name a thing as Gothic and it is comprehended, understood, and locked in a nice little box. Staked, to employ a vampiric idiom.

Yet we continually return to it. We reach for Gothic whenever extremity requires describing; and it's no surprise that Gothic scholars, consciously and unconsciously, frame their arguments in Gothic terms. Thus, according to Robert Mighall and Chris Baldick in Dr Punter's *A Companion to the Gothic* (2001), the accounts of Gothic in Gothic criticism themselves take the form of Gothic tales: there is 'the rescue of the persecuted maiden Gothica from the ogre [of literary realism]'; the idea of Gothic as 'the undomesticable Other of a petrified social order'; and finally 'the timeless melodrama' of feminist analysis in which Gothic literature either celebrates or punishes the female. It will be noticed how I, too, have rather failed to expunge all Gothic tropes from the present work.

We seem to be drawn to turn our lives into Gothic melodrama despite ourselves; this mesmeric magnetism means that new expressions of it continually emerge, endlessly and sometimes unconsciously re-linking into the tradition. Definition is therefore fraught with uncertainties. The academics debate whether *Frankenstein* is or isn't a properly Gothic novel; young Goths in internet chatrooms fall out over how to categorise Marilyn Manson. If we examine how the use of the G-word has proceeded through its five main phases we see how problematic the entire project appears.

*Firstly*: the original Goths were the Germanic tribes who made incursions into the declining Roman Empire during the fourth and fifth centuries AD. By the time the Gothic leader Alaric sacked Rome itself in 410 the Gothic peoples were broadly divided into Visigoths (living around the western half of the Empire) and Ostrogoths (in its eastern half). Like other barbarian peoples, the Goths became a byword for destruction and pillage, but eventually carved new kingdoms out of the ruins of the Empire, were converted to Christianity by St Ulfilas, who also devised a script for the Gothic language, and finally disappeared as distinct entities.

*Secondly*: the culture of the Middle Ages became called 'Gothic' as a result of the first great misappropriation of the term. In the preface to his book of biographical sketches of artists and architects of the time, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century art historian Giorgio Vasari attempted to provide a theoretical basis for the adoption of Classical styles of art and architecture in Europe, which had begun in Italy in the early 1400s and spread across the western half of the continent by 1600. He saw the pointed-arch style as having been introduced to Europe by the barbarian Goths (incorrectly), and the rediscovery of Classical forms as a revival of the rule of reason, enlightenment and harmony. Although Vasari called the pointed style 'German' rather than 'Gothic', within a couple of decades 'Gothic' became a figure for darkness, superstition, and disharmony. Vasari's characterisation was universally adopted and eventually extended to include the whole art and culture of the Middle Ages.

*Thirdly*: from the 1760s onwards a new form of horror literature made its appearance, first in England but from the 1780s spreading to mainland Europe and America. These novels, whose plots were punctuated with ghosts, murders, abductions, and all sorts of supernatural or disagreeable happenings, were commonly set in the abbeys and castles of medieval Europe, and this school of literature was consequently dubbed 'Gothic' because of its

backdrop. The first wave of the Gothic novel was over by the 1820s, but its themes periodically resurfaced.

*Fourthly:* the next stage was one of diffusion. The use of 'Gothic' to describe horror literature allowed it to be extended into a term to attach to anything horrific, unsettling, dark, or bizarre. Each new application within the core Gothic disciplines of fiction, poetry, art and, as time went on, film, skewed the direction of this development until it became acceptable to grant the word to any artistic expression of extremity and hysteria. When Jackson Pollock entitled a typically non-figurative painting *Gothic* in 1944, this was a sign that it had become capable of great, if not quite infinite, flexibility.

*Fifthly:* in 1978 and 1979 the punk movement in Britain began to develop offshoots of dark and pessimistic music which were described by a bemused music press as 'Gothic' in contrast with the general run of pop. The bands spearheading this shift, in their different ways, became the core of a subcultural style which used a range of eclectic influences from the past to signify melancholy, gloom and glamour. Despite fragmenting and subdividing endlessly, the Goth scene has persisted for over twenty years and is now one of the main mechanisms by which Gothic cultural elements are sorted and transmitted.

One usage of 'Gothic', however, turned out to be a linguistic cul-de-sac: its association with a particular political position. This had nothing to do with Vasari's artistic theories or the attitudes dependent on them: instead, English constitutional historians – Sir Edward Coke and others – turned to the Anglo-Saxons for justification in their attempt to develop a rationale for political resistance against an increasingly autocratic Stuart dynasty in the 1620s and 1630s. Sources such as the Roman historian Tacitus's account of the German races, the *Germania*, were used to argue that primitive representative institutions were injected into Britain by the Anglo-Saxons, only to be subverted by the Normans whose political successors now occupied the throne – the Stuarts, argued these theorists, were intent on removing the last vestiges of the ancient 'Gothic constitution' and replacing it with the full rigours of the 'Norman yoke'. Ideas of Gothic participative government provided one element in the mental landscape of the rebels who sparked off the English Civil War; but Puritan ideals furnished much more, and political Gothicism was a fading force as the 17<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close. It survived only in the feeling that Gothic architecture was peculiarly 'English', which influenced both Walpole and Pugin.

What can be seen here is a tradition which has developed as a result of a series of misapplications of the word Gothic, and yet, miraculously, which seems to exhibit a degree of unity, because each successive generation has proved so keen to absorb and re-interpret the signifiers used by the previous ones.

The association of 'Gothic' with its connotations of horror in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century is clearly the key moment in this tortuous process. Conditions were ideal for the emergence of self-conscious identity-building based around deliberate camp morbidity: a class of young aristocratic and middle-class poseurs with leisure and money; a fashion for antiquarianism provoked by the depredations of the Reformation and the Civil War on both the landscape and the collective memory; and a shyness about the supernatural or transcendental elements of Christianity, and hence a retreat from it as a serious means of forming character. This is the only point at which the Gothic instinct itself - as opposed to the modes in which it is expressed - has been really affected by historical change. Otherwise it exists apparently

independent of the levels of real horror in the world around it, and the 18th century gave it visibility, not birth. Once spoken, or printed, as the tag to the title page of *The Castle of Otranto*, the name Gothic was free to act with magnetic force on all around it that was morbid, melancholy, or depraved. But this force was not only exerted forward, on what came after *Otranto*, but also backward; crucially, because 'Gothic' already existed as a cultural term, in however shadowy or contested a form. 18th-century Gothic had an ancestry to explore, as dubious and debatable as the lineages of its literary villains, its Manfreds, or its Schedonis.

This meant that the Gothic was a reflexive genre right from the start. While other artistic movements aim to go beyond what has been done before, finding new ways of examining reality and often spurning past artistic efforts (or affecting to do so), Gothic generally looks backward. Gothic art endlessly recycles, rehashes, and delights in building layer after layer of self-reference; although its subject-matter may be defiant of convention and challenging of good taste (and arguably must be), formal experimentation is not normally on the agenda. This was as true in the 1990s as in the 1790s, as novelists such as Poppy Z Brite and Patrick McGrath eschewed the literary tricks so common among more applauded authors. Exceptions such as Jennie Gray's *The Psychopomp* (1994), an elegant little work with a kaleidoscopic approach to narrative, are usually careful at least to dress themselves in the costumes of genre conservatism. Even Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, which shakes out the bag of tricks as thoroughly as any experimental novel, is a ghost story – albeit without a phantom. (This lack of deliberate artifice probably explains why Gothic proves so interesting to scholars. Its producers, by and large, do not set out to make philosophical points, and when they do they are often quite willing to follow the fleeing prey of their own instincts into dark territory, into rocky wildernesses, the danger of the volcano's edge, or the excitements of the graveyard. Thus the unconscious is given rein to appear and exercise its own fascination).

How does this process operate? Engagement with the Gothic takes place on any of three levels. The production of horror narrative, whether in cinematic or literary form, continues at just as high a rate in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century as in the late 18<sup>th</sup>, and it's used in precisely the same way – a thrilling encounter with sources of human unease and worry, an exorcism and defusing of those fears. These *consumers* of Gothic are using it almost as an inoculation against the very forces it invokes. The *adherents* of Gothic, on the other hand, identify with those forces, and their engagement with them is more than just occasional; it is a matter of style. They seek out ways of expressing them, and are happy to dance with them. Finally there are users of the Gothic who come to understand it as a profound constituent of their identity, who absorb and meditate upon it, who take it to heart – or rather, who find it already resident in their hearts. *Sin-eaters*, let us say.

Once the initial eruption of the Gothic temper has occurred (and we will not yet trouble considering exactly why it arises) the subject believes themselves to be the first person to have had such thoughts. Fellow-sufferers and antecedents are thus delightfully greeted as emissaries from one's own true country. Today, at least, the Goth subculture provides a permanent embassy from the land of exile, even if its communications with the central administration are less than perfect; but in the past the individual had to construct their own ancestry from accidental contact with the right novels, the right poems or pictures, just as Walpole and the Graveyard Poets discovered Rosa, or Baudelaire discovered Poe. Like Roderick Usher, Des Esseintes, and Dorian Gray, they build up an assembly of morbid

remnants, a personal lexicon of the Gothic which, however idiosyncratic, will contain elements in common with everyone else's. One connection leads to another, and to an unlikely identification of an invisible republic opening over centuries, whose citizens have thought the same thoughts, savoured the same pleasures, and mourned the same bitter truths. Because the process of genre-definition is so open to individual taste, the 'tradition' cannot be restricted to that crucial 18th-century moment, although the International Gothic Association prefers to use the Gothic novel as the central paradigm of what Gothic is. There is no clear temporal limit to the references that can be drawn into the Gothic ambit, nor is there a lateral limit, if you like, to the range of locations where Gothic can be sought at any given historical moment. This is what lets us see the same spirit emerging in Greek drama, and what licenses so broad a range of cultural reference in Goth style, or the musical eclecticism of Diamanda Galás.

The revival of the antique cannot be pursued, if one is not entirely a fool, without an awareness of anachronism. To read the literature of the past, to wear clothes that allude to it, or to admire its art, is to enter into a relationship with an outmoded and generally despised order of thought and society. When Katherine Blake sits down to draw up the shortlist for the Mediaeval Baebes' next album, she cannot enter wholly into the age of faith that generated the *Gaudete*, nor resurrect it even if she wanted to. What she produces, whether sublime prayer or mediaeval bawdry, is hollowed-out, transformed into something like a pose. Each signifier Goths choose to mine for its Gothic value carries a weight of contradiction and impossibility, and often meanings which are undesirable. That delicate and lovely *Gaudete*, for instance, is an expression of a religion whose ideological buttresses included the rack and the stake. Horror and transcendence are engaged in an everlasting Danse Macabre. For the Goth, prone to both romanticism and scepticism, the possibility of transcendence is what makes the contemplation of horror bearable; while horror is the price a self-aware mind exacts from a soul tuned to transcendence.

The answer to this paradox is burlesque. The atrocious self-awareness of Gothic, the scepticism that arises from an acutely clear sight, sees no expression of intent as untainted, no value as unsullied with selfishness or horror; where nothing deserves unqualified commitment, the way out lies through theatrics and camp. Camp exaggerates its object almost to the point of overwhelming it, making it so overblown and monstrous that the onlooker cannot believe it is to be taken seriously; it trivialises the important, while treating the superficial as a matter of deep gravity.

And so it often is, because burlesque works as a mask in two important ways. Goths deny the Romantic notion of a constant, integrated personal identity which should be 'expressed', and instead construct one for themselves out of the morbid *bricolage* of the Gothic tradition; this can be primarily literary or artistic, but if your penchant is for physical rather than mental dressing-up, fripperous details of appearance assume high importance. A misplaced notion of integrity disappears in improvised performance, the adoption of a glamorous mask; even in moral terms, the most perspicacious commentators have always recognised that we become a thing by first pretending to be it. Secondly, burlesque masks the Goth's real intentions. The reflexive awareness that never relaxes, never drops its guard, is armoured in layers of baffling irony. You can never be sure how to take the callous remark about some natural disaster, especially when it is followed by an angry tirade denouncing the inappropriate wearing of a particular fabric. It may exaggerate the speaker's own feelings; it could also be acting as a subtle criticism of conventional morality that honours

ideals with its lips while denying them in practice. Another minute may bring denial and contradiction; truth lies behind the smokescreen, and can only be approached by ‘learning your rhetoric in Satan’s school’, as Baudelaire insists. This is a system of masks and mirrors, a Phantom’s domain beneath the Paris Opéra, a mist-shrouded Venice out of season.

Yet it would not work if there was nothing behind the masquerade, nor would the Gothic continuum have survived, fluctuating around its miraculously stable core. Trying to uncover the impulse behind this fascination with the dark places is not an easy task, and Gothic’s customary stance of ironic detachment hardly helps. Most commentators do not seriously attempt it, and content themselves with describing its glittering paraphernalia, producing an affective definition rather than an analytic one, and genuine explanations are rarely offered.

The flashiest and most obvious analyses of the Gothic have pointed to an underlying motif of sadomasochism. Mario Praz’s *The Romantic Agony* (1930) is originally to blame for this. By analysing with such gusto and learning what Praz admitted was only one element in the Romantic-Gothic-Decadent project, he made it appear as though that was the only story that really mattered, and an increasingly sexualised Western popular culture has tended to agree. The sadomasochistic motif can indeed be observed in many (to us) somewhat sick spiritual disciplines of the Middle Ages (such as the Cult of the Five Wounds), works including *Dracula* more strongly located in the genre, through to the novels of Poppy Z Brite or Siouxsie Sioux’s music. Years ago, Edward Lucie-Smith catalogued a chain of such images linked across the centuries, morbid and largely male fantasies of mutilation at the hands of Fatal Women such as Judith, Salome and Jael, and of similar mythical women having the tables (and knives) turned on them – Lucrezia or various interchangeable virgin martyrs. We know about all this. However, the very ubiquity of sexual imagery might lead us to be sceptical about accepting this analysis. Instead, other elements in the tradition, the thrill of horror or the contemplation of destruction, seem to express those same instincts that lie *behind* the sadomasochism rather than being merely passive reflections of it.

The same might also be said of politically-orientated analyses. The Marquis de Sade himself interpreted the outburst of horror fiction of which his own work formed part as a response to the bloody insurgency of the French Revolution. Arguing against their scholarly peers who want to claim Walpole, Radcliffe and Monk Lewis as subversives and radicals, Richard Mighall and Chris Baldick, in the article referred to above, point out how most of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century English Gothics instead asserted Whiggish, progressive, and very middle-class values against the Gothic superstition and tyranny of their imaginary Middle Ages, dark Teutonic forests, or contemporary Spain. Richard Davenport-Hines, on the other hand, sees Gothic as a rhetoric for examining relationships of power and powerlessness between human beings, or between humans and nature; it explores these through reversal, inversion and irony. Profoundly subversive, it finds comfort in submission and degradation, making the point that the apparently powerful are often as much enslaved by their own passions and instincts as their victims appear to be at their mercy. Political glosses of the Gothic, or political stances expressed through Gothic forms, are not hard to find, even if their final effect is usually one of paralysed conservatism wrapped in radical scepticism of all systems, creeds and authorities. Yet, like the sadomasochistic elements of Gothic, the excitement aroused by these forms seems to stem from somewhere else, somewhere less intellectual and less rational.

Modern Gothic criticism sets great store by a modernised species of Freudian theory as outlined by the feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva in her 1982 book *Powers of Horror*. Gothic art is said to represent ‘the return of the repressed’, which may be a sexual truth found too uncomfortable to face, or may not. In particular, Kristeva isolates a process she calls ‘abjection’, a ‘throwing-off’ of what is disturbing onto fictional incidents. What ‘disturbs’ most deeply is a blurring of the boundary distinguishing the proper from the improper or out-of-place, and, being a Freudian, she suggests that the original experience of the violation of boundaries comes in the infant’s developing an identity separate from its original pre-verbal relationship with its mother. In this process, all ‘female’ characteristics, principally those of mess and undifferentiation, become ‘abject’, a source of repulsion and horror in later life, while Daddy comes to stand for reason and order. All this probably helps us analysing particular Gothic texts, but does not help to explain why Goths should take such pleasure in them, and the analyses which take Kristeva as their starting-point end up accordingly confused. Anne Williams’s influential *Art of Darkness* (1995), for instance, describes separate ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ Gothic traditions, the first assuming an Oedipal conflict between individual soul and hostile nature (at once the law-giving ‘Father’ and abject ‘Mother’), and the second being a narrative of self-discovery culminating in a ‘happy ending’, a reconciliation between the world and the individual (and often a marriage) in the Radcliffe mould. It goes without saying that ‘Female Gothic’ need not be written only by women or ‘Male Gothic’ enjoyed solely by men, and when Williams tries to work out which mode *Dracula* embodies she has to engage in convolutions which are positively gymnastic. This being so, the appellations make sense only by referring to patriarchal clichés about gender identity; the two strands might as well be called ‘Red’ and ‘Green’ Gothic for all their coincidence with the feelings of real men and women. Most of the key Gothic texts are far more ambiguous and disruptive of gender expectations than the Kristevan account allows; and while understanding ‘morbidity’ is certainly crucial to comprehending Gothic, intuiting an unprovable psychological process to account for it seems very uneconomical. These analyses also show the dangers of concentrating so obsessively on that narrow moment in the Gothic tradition: Williams does mention the *Alien* films in an appendix, but only as a dependent illustration of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century paradigm.

I remain unconvinced by these explanations that suggest Gothic is ‘about’ any one particular thing. The pages of the International Gothic Association’s journal, *Gothic Studies*, abound with the speculations of scholars each of whom wants to use Gothic narratives to illustrate their own theories of how people tick. Each account requires ignoring narratives that don’t fit the chosen pattern, and all of them necessarily turn a deaf ear to the very obvious fact that, as Rose Macaulay pointed out long before there ever was such a thing as ‘Gothic Criticism’, the 18<sup>th</sup> century produced next to nothing that Shakespeare and his contemporaries had not anticipated, nor the medievals before them, nor the Greeks before them. The enjoyment of darkness is an abiding and eternal human itch; 18<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic was just an episode.

The first stage in medieval torture practice was for the victim to be ‘shown the instruments’ in the hope that the mere sight of the means of pain would encourage confession. The Gothic imagination, however, actively seeks out the instruments and signs of suffering, dissolution, and death, and finds in the contemplation of oblivion an excitement. This feeling arises not from romanticising death - a lazy phrase people often use when discussing Gothic - since Goths are well aware these things are unpleasant, but rather from a perverse exaltation that enjoys the prospect of the self degraded, debased and destroyed.

Where this in turn comes from is an even more obscure question, which only Dr Freud assists us in answering. After long pondering the meaning of self-destructive impulses, Freud posited the existence of an internalised mental system of rules and orders, which attempts to compel the individual towards 'right' behaviour, and which he called the Superego. The works expressing this idea, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1921) and *Ego and Superego* (1923), built it into his earlier theories of the sexual development of children which have now largely been abandoned (except, it seems, by a number of Gothic scholars), but the Superego theory itself need not be dropped as well. If the Doctor's final analysis is correct, the whole of Gothic's playful and not-so-playful dalliances with the machinery and images of oblivion amount to a theatrical working-out of internal moral conflict, the urge to transgress contending with the desire to see transgression punished. Like all Freudian theories, these assertions remain unverifiable; yet it is probably as far into the hall of mirrors as we can penetrate. If the Superego is not the Minotaur at the centre of the Gothic labyrinth, I resignedly invite other suggestions.

At its core, then, the Gothic aesthetic is a nervous business for all its burlesque qualities. Even the most mock-fastidious of its dress regulations, even the most ostentatious blasphemy or tasteless dismissal of the death of millions, is part and parcel of what the Doctor called 'the work of mourning'. The Gothic tradition, now as in the past, keeps watch over the indistinct boundaries of the Supernal and the Infernal, observes who passes from the one to the other and the means by which they travel, scrutinises the Devil's contracts and describes His methods of business.

## Goth & Gothic

While researching the state of academic Gothic Studies a couple of years ago, I asked my scholarly contactees what they felt were the links, if any, between the 'High Gothic' literary and artistic tradition and the Goth subculture. Professor Fred Botting was typical in discerning 'historical and distant' connections, and this position would probably also be taken by participants in the subculture itself. Accounts such as *Gothic* and *Goth Chic* (see below) have begun uniting both strands of Gothic within the one continuum, but this is still a very recent development which has yet to produce much awareness on either side.

The origins of the Goth movement, however, have very clear links with *Haute-Gothique*: Siouxsie of the Banshees and Peter Murphy of Bauhaus were obviously familiar with Gothic film and, to a lesser extent, literature, and there have always been Goths who have followed suit, whether that means superficially recycling the imagery of spooky movies and antique fashions, or engaging with the written and visual Gothic tradition on a deeper level. However, when Sioux and Murphy adopted the styles which developed into Goth, they had no option but to look to the existing Gothic tradition for signifiers of transgression and glamour, finding them respectively in Theda Bara and Conrad Veidt - contemporary equivalents were not available. Their very achievement, however, has permitted a paradoxical narrowing of the Gothic mind. The first generation of Goths had to find their clothes and jewellery in second-hand shops, and their musical influences from glam and punk; twenty years after the Batcave, there are specialist Goth retailers, events, clubs, bands in enormous profusion, and a Gothically-minded young person need look no further than the produce of the movement itself for her cultural referents. All she needs is an Alchemy

Gothic catalogue and she's off. The fact that Goth style can be bought off-the-peg in Camden, Brighton or Leeds indicates the movement's self-enclosure, engaged neither with the Gothic tradition nor with mainstream culture in the subversive manner with which it started out, except by merely looking 'different'.

In fact, Goths generally show a deep reluctance to think too closely through the significance of what they are about. This reluctance can manifest itself as outright hostility. In an article for *Gothic Studies* in 2002, 'Gothic Scholars Don't Wear Black', Sarah Martin cites one cultural-anthropological study - carried out by a Goth - which provoked angry comments from its intended subjects who felt treated like 'freaks and wierdos'. Researching his PhD thesis on the Goth subculture (published as *Goth* by Berg in 2002), Paul Hodkinson found particularly strong objection to any suggestion that Goth styles of dress and music implied anything about their adherents' outlook or attitude. The Goth style, his respondents by-and-large insisted, was of only aesthetic importance, serving as a badge to distinguish a group of people who perceived themselves as unusually creative and individualistic from the despised mainstream. Hodkinson decided that no conclusions could be drawn from Goth style, that its signifiers did not mean what they appeared to mean, and that its characteristic accoutrements of extremity and morbidity were no such thing, but were in fact tribal identifiers and nothing more.

On the one hand, this resistance is understandable, reflecting a refusal to be defined by the rest of society. The straight world's self-comforting definition of Goths describes them as terminally adolescent, death-obsessed drama queens whose vaunted individuality is a sham, part instead of a relentless, humourless conformity enforced by rigid style codes. 'Sullen, suburban and witlessly morbid, goths have lingered like the living dead while other youth cultures have come and gone', ranted one exceedingly vindictive piece in the *Guardian* in September 2002, accusing them of 'infantile notions', 'middle-brow suburban myopia', and 'paucity of imagination'. That, it should be said, is the intellectual version. There is a nastier, more atavistic attitude which sees all Goth chaps as queers and girls as whores and, in its United States incarnation, the entire movement as a threat to the social order. This is what makes Goths perceive Goth clubs and events as 'safe' places, where men and women can toy theatrically with stereotypes and identities without being criticised or attacked - provided they immediately signal, by dress and behaviour, their willingness to join in the game ('straights' who wander in from the pub just to gawp are not liable to be welcomed). So long as Goths are abused on the streets and ridiculed in the media, we should not be surprised that they are prickly at being defined, a process which is inevitably about narrowing and constraining, awkward for a style where ambiguity (moral, sexual, ideological) is central.

But the protestations are not to be taken completely seriously. If the Goth style was merely an arbitrary collection of consumer accessories which, in Hodkinson's words, 'served to make Goths feel collectively distinctive', then anything could fulfil the role just as well. The entire Goth movement could start wearing variant styles of nautical costume and singing sea shanties, and it would be of no consequence. If this were true, the 'cybergoth' style, with its bright colours, cartoon fashions and upbeat music, would not have so controversial a place in the subculture. Goth creativity is not completely free-floating, despite what Goths tell researchers. It is exercised within a set of parameters which are certainly felt to exist even if their whereabouts are hazy, and Goths themselves are very well aware of the paradox in the

subculture's 'conformist individuality'. Those parameters show that the style could never be allowed to be just a rootless eclecticism of promiscuous bits and pieces.

Instead, the Goth movement's mechanisms of ambiguity, camp, self-mockery and the symbolic inversion of norms rather precisely resemble the *Haute-Gothique* tradition of which it is historically a dependent aspect. Hodkinson is right to suggest that Goths have widely variant life-experiences, psychological states and religious or political opinions, and that no monolithic account of the movement can therefore be made. Nevertheless, at the very least this can be said: the Goth subculture, in its consumption habits and its products, shows consistent interest in perversely conflicting symbolism which, taken as a whole, denotes the ambiguities of human life, identity, and structures, with radical scepticism and unwillingness to be defined as corollaries. Music and fashion are means for processing these ambiguities, even if their participants are not aware that's what they're up to (and it might not work as well if they were). Goth is doing what Gothic has always done.

It is also continuing to exploit and extend the tradition. One of the weaknesses in modern Gothic scholarship is the relative lack of attention it pays to the ways Goth lit was consumed during that axial 18<sup>th</sup>-century episode, preferring to tease 'meanings' from the canonical texts. This obscures the fact that most of it was trash: occasionally a Lewis or a Maturin produced a worthwhile genre piece, and very rarely a Mary Shelley would transcend genre and rise to high literature, but mostly it was disposable rubbish intended for the cheap thrill and destined for the bin. The use made of the material is more interesting than the stuff itself.

Now, Gothic survives, as its academic partisans point out. In fact, it thrives along the stretching shelves of cheap horror, supernatural or crime fiction at the bookstore, and in para-literary narrative forms such as film and TV. These are, surely, being consumed for the same reasons as their 18<sup>th</sup>-century ancestors. But the Goth movement goes a step further in interacting with Gothic material, when it does, out of the scope of the 'consumer' and into that of the 'adherent': it transforms the Gothic past into a set of ready-made signifiers of extremity, representing a fantasised version of the self to an imagined 'straight' audience. Looking back at the self-presentations and fantasy lives of figures such as Rosa, Walpole and Byron, we discern distinct resonances with this: Goth, perhaps, shows us why Gothic discourses developed in the first place.

## How Gothic Works

I do not intend defining Gothic here. Yes, the question will insist on entering the hall and sitting, a terminological spectre at the phenomenological feast, but I would rather an answer emerged not in a concise statement but *arose* from the material in this book, as the remnants of the dead resolve themselves into their constituent and gaseous elements. But there are some entries below which touch most closely on the question – ambiguity, horror, hysteria, and the uncanny – and here I want to see how Gothic works by using these modes.

Film strikes me as the best medium for discovering these relationships, and two Gothic films have been remade and changed in ways which very helpfully illustrate them. *The Haunting*, directed by Robert Wise in 1963, and Hideo Nakata's *Ring* (1998) were both based on

novels which they themselves altered and simplified, and were remade in 1999 and 2002 respectively. In the first, a psychologist gathers a disparate set of subjects in a reputedly haunted house to observe the effects of group behaviour, until one proves particularly susceptible to the building's influence. The second movie concerns an investigation into mysterious deaths among Japanese teenagers. They have all seen an enigmatic, much-copied video. A week later, they die.

Both movies spend most of their time in the uncanny mode. By and large, nothing happens: in *The Haunting*, Gothic haunted house trappings hint at horrible events which do not take place, however much the audience expects them; while *Ring*'s deadly video is chilling in its sheer unspecificity, an eerie landscape of madness which threatens to break out into the daylight world – the Sleep of Reason, in fact. However, neither narrative contains the uncanny alone. *The Haunting* starts with a death, in the sense that the history of the house is defined by one, and culminates in another; at the end of *Ring* – although little horrific is ever seen – horror also becomes unavoidably concrete (This film in fact bears close resemblance to the stories of MR James: its 'monster' is an implacable force of evil; it operates through very quotidian mechanisms; and at the end of the story it remains active, unsatisfied, and unstoppable). Hysteria is present in *The Haunting* through the central character who, rapidly unhinged by the house, perceives the horrific truth behind appearances; *Ring* begins with death, and so hysteria is pervasive without needing to be articulated through the perceptions of a character, although it is heightened when the heroine realises that she, too, only has a week to live.

The remakes jettison the subtleties of both originals (though I have of course met people who prefer one or the other). The 1999 *Haunting* is directed by action specialist Jan de Bont, and characterisation and suggestion are replaced by design and effects. The house is no longer a standard if run-down Victorian mansion, but now looks like an outpost of Gormenghast designed by Pugin on a laudanum trip: its malevolence is physically manifest, not merely perceived by one unbalanced character, and it does not evade this obvious destiny. Admiring the ingenuity of the designers is about the only pleasure left as Gothic is tipped into a technicolour puddle of not-very-horrific horror.

The original *Ring* was the most frightening film I have ever seen; although still a superior sort of horror by Hollywood standards, the remake acts to undermine its own infernal power in several ways. The change of title to *The Ring* and a spoon-feeding explanation of what it means is only symptomatic of a rejection of ambiguity in favour of explicitness – without the definite article, it could mean nothing at all and is all the more *unheimlich* for it. The murderous video now looks as though it was shot by a Hollywood camera operator and *made* grainy and indistinct. The original confined its special effects – almost its only special effect, in fact – to the final revelation of the monstrosity, while the remake scatters them throughout; and in 2003 that revelation actually appears in the UK TV trailer. Suspense? Who needs it?

Together these four movies demonstrate the workings (and unworkings) of Gothic. It uses the uncanny to point towards, to threaten, horror. It straddles both, and requires both; neither is Gothic without the other, at least in narrative forms. The sign and generator of uncanny feelings is ambiguity, hinting at chaos and death, the unmaking of the normal. Hysteria is the underlying sense of what is about to happen. These linked four, then, are the tools and mechanisms of Gothic.

Four? There is a fifth element whose existence I would like to suggest, though it is sufficiently eccentric not to warrant a catalogue entry on its own account. Its presence has not been detected by anyone else in so many words, but I find it leaves traces of itself, just as irregularities in the orbit of Neptune hinted at the existence of worlds beyond it. I struggle over what to call this fifth operation, but for a long time have thought of it as *piety*. It has something to do with the intense examination of tiny things in search of occult realities. On the last page of *Le Pur et L'Impur*, Collette lyricises about the sound of the French word 'pur' and what it suggests to her: as the Penguin translation puts it, 'the imaginary latitudes entrenched at the centre of a deep crystal'. Then again, insects occur more often than they should in Gothic: there is Poe's story in which a monster seen crawling down a hill, described in vivid and repellent detail, turns out to be a bug on a window pane; there is Lafcadio Hearn's analysis of arthropod arrangements which is enough to make you scream; there is David Lynch's concentration on insects in *Blue Velvet*. Get up close to a wasp and observe its delicacy and precision, what a beautiful and yet hideous instrument it is. Edmund Burke saw 'small things' as a potential source of the Sublime just as much as crags, caverns and moors were: both suggested scales of values which differed from the everyday human ones, and worked to undermine them. Clearly this *piety* can be intensely horrid, or intensely beautiful by turns, and has some connection with the Gothic concept of hysteria, in that it, too, suggests a reality behind appearance.

## The Uses of Gothic

What of all this? Is Gothic a needful thing? Or a shameful compulsion we should learn to live without?

It is, let us concede, a bad business. These are the halls of horror we are entering; Gothic uncovers the world's nakedness, unveils its bloody idols, hidden in the walled-up temples it prefers to forget. Isn't it awful? How can you take any delight in such things? What kind of sicko are you?

You could answer that nightmare is the truth. That the sanguinary enthusiasms of the Gothic do no more than call reality out of the shadows, name it by its proper name. That Gothic artists speak, sometimes with wicked humour, sometimes with lascivious delectation, the things that no one else will. The role of modern Goths, at least, claims *Crow* co-writer John Shirley, is 'to amplify and relay mourning for the collective mind ... Someone has to play the dirge'.

Mourning? Is this really what it is about? Where the Gothic temper achieves its highest ethical expressions, it seems at that moment to vanish into simple pity. Goya's *Disastres* and Kollwitz's etchings try to mobilise our sympathies – but where are the meteorological phenomena of Gothic, its fireworks and sparks, its thunderbolts? These works are, well, photojournalism. There is sorrow and rage in them, but no *desire* – and Gothic always includes desire. 'You *want* it to come and get you'. Mourning? Is Gothic attending a requiem for the world's pain or throwing a party to celebrate it?

Darkness and the things that live in it have a monstrous power: they reach from behind the mirror to draw us in. Oscar may well trot out his line about books being neither moral nor immoral, only well or badly written, but the Venerable Jorge snorts contempt. 'The man who depicts monsters to reveal the things of God', he insists from the blind depths of his cowl, 'no longer sees except through them'. And Steiner was right, too, that the dark places flatter the attention. Ever since Milton refused to praise 'a cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed', those in love with horrors have found their preference virtuous: See what I can *look* at, see how far I can go. I am more courageous, more fiercely honest, than you. No, be truthful. Nobody ever signed up to Gothic because it provided a discourse for making certain existential propositions. Nobody ever went to that black and brackish well for their own good, or the world's. Instead, we try to get some benefit out of our compulsion to look on horrors; we try to make a virtue from necessity. Then we try to have a laugh, if we can.

The last thing Gothic is, is realist. Just as Goth fashions present absurdly glamorised, theatrical fantasy selves which must nevertheless exaggerate what their wearers really feel, or want to feel, so Gothic art takes the expressionist route to truth through distortion and extremity. Yet realism and fantasy chase each other through the Gothic – as so often, Gothic not merely exhibits but *relies* on the paradoxical interaction of opposites.

In 2002 I went to Gunther von Hagens's anatomical exhibition, 'Body Worlds', playfully displayed a few Whitechapel streets away from where Saucy Jack had eviscerated his cockney sparrers 114 years before. Now I say nothing about the intent of the learned professor, but this is Gothic stuff all right. It's easy to forget that the posed 'plastinations' – the chess player, the swimmer – were real people once, until you catch a glimpse of tattoo or stray hair on a strip of skin. This is deeply disrespectful, high-camp, macabre, spectacular and wicked. The most mischievous is the figure intended to pre-empt Christian objections to the show, a kneeling corpse offering its heart before a cross and praying for the donors of the bodies, with a caption thanking the Church for its role in fostering the science of anatomy. Ho ho, very satirical.

Then there are more reticent specimens. The slices of diseased tissue (what awaits you and me?). The section through an artificial knee (my mum has two). And – God help us – the birth defects. What am I supposed to think? What can I do? What I want to do is cry. That nature can do such things. That the fragile mess of a human body – meat, offal, gear – can generate out of it this broken and noble world. And that it all ends; this is the counterpoint to the grand, cynical gestures in the main gallery. I leave a little more sad, a little more angry, a little more inclined to the pacifistic.

Truth? Well, to a point. We cannot take too much truth. Imagine if we all knew all the truth, all the time, if we carried it in the front of our remembrance; our condition would be paralysis. No sooner would we take any source of simple joy in our hands than it would be tainted, spoiled, with foreknowledge. There would be no pleasure unhaunted, no word of love not shouted down by the clamour of reality, of pain and loss. We would not sing or go for walks; cook, or read; we would not dance; we would not make love. We have to forget. Only God sees all, knows all, remembers all; only God never forgets, and He is welcome to it. How terrible to have to remember everything. How terrible to be God.

No, we have to forget, and everybody has their own little tricks. Perilously, Gothic remembers more than normal; but it has its inoculations, too. Welcome, then, to the ball on

the eve of Waterloo, the last grand masque as Venice slides beneath the waters, the final dance as the trumpets of the Judgement sound.

## What is Written

The rise of Gothic Studies over the last twenty years has resulted in numerous guides and handbooks to Gothic literature, and there have been a couple of popular or journalistic examinations of the Goth subculture to match. But thoroughgoing attempts to marry up the two and also to take proper account of the visual element within the Gothic tradition are far fewer. In fact there have been only two.

Richard Davenport-Hines's *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin* (1998) is mainly, though not exclusively, a literary analysis. Davenport-Hines traces the origin of the Gothic aesthetic to the tremendous demonstration of the powerlessness of human beings made by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1631. Europe's only active volcano and its surrounding landscape became a visual foretaste of Hell - yet people discovered that they found this rather exciting. Soon the swashbuckling Neapolitan artist Salvator Rosa was producing a marketable version of this vision. From there through 18th-century English landscape gardeners, the early Gothic novelists and the Marquis de Sade, paintings by Fuseli and Goya, Gothic film and Goth music, Davenport-Hines discerns a persistent if inconsistent tendency, a Gothic continuum that challenges the tastes, morality and power relationships of 'straight' society through mockery, inversion, and a fondness for the macabre. He identifies artists such as the Chapman brothers as the modern epitome of the Gothic instinct.

A lot of this is rather questionable. It is understandable that Davenport-Hines dismisses medieval Gothic from consideration, because that is what everyone does, but his ignoring the art of Melancholy through the 1500s and 1600s, and apparently not noticing that a particularly English fondness for ruins and gloom dated back at least to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, is less forgivable. He also spends a very, very long time talking about theatre design and landscape gardening, and sometimes makes bold connections that do not seem as apparent as he wants them to be. There are also peculiar omissions. Why no Baudelaire? why no Munch's *Scream*?

In terms of its writing, *Gothic* is a brilliant polemic: the author is a journalist, but he has the learning, the passion, and the hard vigour of a 19th-century stylist, a Leigh Hunt, for instance, rather than a 1990s hack. The analysis of individual Gothic works never fails to be insightful, combined with bold generalisations about the Gothic temper which mark a real advance in understanding it. Nobody before Davenport-Hines had even attempted to trace the relationships between visual and literary art, and the leap back from Walpole to Rosa is inspired. The book also scores over academic treatments in refusing to see the Gothic tradition as univocal; and it puts proper emphasis on its contradictions and ambiguities. 'Subversive' Gothic may be, but that subversion never operates in a single direction; instead, taken as a whole, it undermines absolutely everything.

Where *Gothic* fails somewhat is in the cursory attention it pays to modern popular culture and the Goth movement in particular. The second general analysis of the Gothic, Gavin

Baddeley's *Goth Chic* (2002) deliberately set out to correct the imbalance. Baddeley is also a journalist, and not an unintelligent one, but does not match the deeply thought-out analysis of Davenport-Hines. He mentions most of the right figures in the Gothic literary pantheon, though curiously missing out the visual arts entirely until cinema comes along, and retreats from *Gothic's* position, beginning the story with Walpole and *Otranto*. *Goth Chic* is more a catalogue than a narrative and, given that, it is a very comprehensive and worthwhile one, taking in all the manifestations of popular culture that *Gothic* disdains, from television to comics. The last few chapters examine the modern Goth subculture in terms of music and fashion, and again do so by examining bands and phenomena in turn rather than building them into a story. Much of this material had never been gathered together in one place before. Because Baddeley has little real curiosity about what Gothic means, however, regarding it as self-evident, the effect is interesting but not impressive. More of an effort to detach himself from his triplet enthusiasms for Satanism, heavy metal and girls in fetish gear, too, would have helped.

So why bother with this current work? It has seemed to me that there is a need not for a history of the Gothic temper, nor an encyclopaedia. I have not supplied one. Rather, this is an extended and oblique meditation on what Gothic is and where that temper comes from. If this is not enough to justify me, I suggest that both *Gothic* and *Goth Chic* are inadequate: not written from the point of view of the Gothic *sin-eater*, they may cover wider ground than traditional literary surveys, but still seem bound into the narrative that begins with *Otranto* and ends somewhere around *House of Leaves*. Literature, for them, is still the presiding godlet of the Gothic haunted house. Conversely, I want to concentrate on *the things that Goths have delighted in*, confident that the instinct itself, whatever its origins, remains constant across the centuries.

Yet, even after the main text of *Exuviae* was finished, I found a precursor. In 1965 John Hadfield produced a book entitled *Chamber of Horrors*, a delicious compendium of the macabre in art and literature. All the great names are invited to this black banquet, from Monk Lewis to Thomas Hardy, from Matthias Grunewald to the Surrealists, who put in a remarkably strong showing; even Andrea Vesalius makes an appearance. The two initial images, back to back, are Caravaggio's *Medusa* and Munch's *Scream*. When I found *Chamber of Horrors* buried at the back of a stack in the Cottage Bookshop, Penn, near High Wycombe – heaven knows how long it had languished there, as there are places in the shop where items are still priced in l.s.d. – it was entirely new to me despite years spent wasting my time in secondhand book emporia. I had never heard of John Hadfield (the unassuming author of the comedy romance novel *Love on a Branch Line*, incongruously enough), nor seen this work referred to in any other. Yet it comes closer to my own purpose than anything else I have yet encountered.

## PART TWO: EXUVIAE

The question arises of what to throw in a small rattle-bag such as this. I would never have dreamed of a scheme of total inclusion – you, reader, would have found it tedious enough, but I would have been bored long before you. Particularly where Gothic develops popular expressions, the Gothic novels or Goth music, for instance, a few examples can very happily stand for the repetitious many: Gothic is like Gormenghast castle, with vast ramifications left to moulder in obscurity for the good reason that they are not worth visiting.

Here the reflexiveness of Gothic comes to our rescue. Goths do love to quote and allude, thus calling attention to works or themes that can be said as a result to be canonical: the tradition is laid out for us, albeit in fragments. I have therefore been able to concentrate mainly on the alluded and the quoted Gothic, on those elements of the tradition which have affected its development – its recurrent bad dreams. Sometimes I have had to decide whether an individual is prominent more or less than, or equally with, the Gothic work for which they may be known; and sometimes I have given weight to my own little favourites. Nonetheless these sketches, I hope, will ink in the outlines of the present landscape of Gothic.

### **Addams, Charles** (1912-88)

American cartoonist. Addams made his first graphic contribution to the *New Yorker* magazine in 1932 and continued to within a few years of his death. Typically wordless or at least extremely reticent, Addams cartoons introduce an unexpected element into an everyday situation which opens a vista into a queasy and surreal world, and it commonly takes time for the full disagreeable implications of the joke to dawn. In 1938 Addams created the grotesque characters of the Addams Family as his means of mocking and subverting the pro-family ideology of contemporary **America**. Gomez and Morticia are a passionate and romantic couple of sadomasochists; their children Wednesday and Pugsley, gleeful child torturers; and they are all shielded from the disapproval of the community around by fantastic wealth and vague east-European origins. The characters gave rise to numerous adaptations in TV, animation, novels and most notably Barry Sonnenfeld's films in the 1990s, two incoherent but glorious soft-Goth comedies whose punch comes from the cheerfully sociopathic Addamses being more admirable than the straight world around them. Addams's own attitudes were similar. While most Gothic artists shun typecasting, he revelled in it, and put about the story that he went mad every few years and spent his spare time poking around cemeteries, despite looking just like everyone's favourite uncle.

### **All About Eve**

British pop group. Formed in 1984 and named a year later, the band's early output was straightforward soft Goth-rock, but later changed to a folk-influenced style, pushing singer Julianne Regan's voice to the forefront. They thus formed a bridge between Gothic pop and folk, helping to define the notion of 'ethereal' Goth; their most chilling recording was in fact a treatment of the traditional supernatural ballad 'She Moves Through the Fair' (the lover's return as a ghost providing a precise illustration of **Freud's** view of the **uncanny** and

echoing **Brontë's** *Wuthering Heights*). Another shift in direction precipitated the band's break-up in 1993, though they reformed eight years later.

### **ambiguity**

Gothic works through the paradoxical appeal of contradictory impulses; ambiguity has become one of its key distinguishing features. At its simplest, ambiguity can be expressed in a suspicion that 'things are not what they seem', evident in narratives ranging from Ann **Radcliffe's Gothic novels** to the paranoid suspicions of the **X-Files**. A more sophisticated manifestation makes characters in these narratives morally ambiguous, as pure Gothic resists locating virtue in any easily identifiable place, insisting rather that, while good and evil may remain absolutes, neither is to be found unmingled with the other in the human soul. This is normally achieved not by providing easy explanations for evil, but by questioning the motives and drives of ostensibly good characters. Finally, at its least comforting level Gothic ambiguity implicates its consumers: 'Hypocrite lecteur – mon semblable – mon frere!' insists **Baudelaire** at the outset of *Les Fleurs de Mal*. Profoundly knowing, Gothic plays with the multiple signifiers of its imagery, refusing to make open statements, and undermining its audience's sense of security and moral boundaries. This indefinite sense, of course, is partly what makes the classic works of the Goth canon so open to intense academic analysis.

In its early manifestations, Gothic ambiguity was present but unacknowledged. Even in **medieval Gothic architecture** a tension was implicit between terror and transcendence, which **Worringer** saw as equally exciting. The first signs of awareness of ambiguity came with the speculations on the nature of **melancholy** in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such as Burton's *Anatomy*; the theories of the **sublime** developed by Edmund Burke and others in the mid-1700s, contemporary with the genesis of the Gothic novel, discussed how these elements could have contradictory yet simultaneous appeal. Ambiguity has been impossible to disavow since the Marquis de **Sade** insisted so vividly on the contradictory dynamics of sexual desire, and the researches of **Freud** revealed to the world of science a realm of unconscious drives which Gothic had always known existed. Some standard elements of Gothic narrative, such as doubles, twins, mistaken identity, and buried secrets provide ways of embodying ambiguity. Such masks and contradictions are the heart and soul of Gothic: they pull the carpet from beneath any attempt to force Gothic narratives through the mincer of a preconceived single 'meaning'.

### **America, Gothic in**

The first nameable emergence of Gothic in America came with Charles Brockden **Brown's** novel *Wieland* (1798) whose great contribution was to adapt the conventions and tone of European Gothic and shear it of its supernatural trappings, locating horror within the family and the mind. Under the impact of **Puritanism**, American Goths turned inward: Puritanism bequeathed both **hysteria** and introspection to the national culture and literature, and a concern with tainted heredity and a sort of quivering hypersensitivity emerges again and again in the works of **Poe, Hawthorne** and **Faulkner**. One of the most lurid and yet piteous modern examples was a product not of the States at all, but musician Nick Cave's *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (1988), a novel written in Berlin by an Australian whose experience of the American South amounted to a single train journey uninterrupted by actually getting out. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States provided an arena for the development of Gothic cinematic conventions, and individuals continued to make contributions to Gothic **music** and letters, but none can easily be classified as specifically American. However, one critic, Mark Edmundson (in *Nightmare on Main Street* (1997)), has argued that American culture

has itself become Gothicised, with ordinary people internalising Gothic narratives to make sense of their own lives. Still conditioned by the guilt-centred introspection of Puritanism, Americans are prone to define themselves unselfconsciously as Gothic victims ‘in thrall to the past’, and equally prone to seek resolution in what Edmundson calls ‘facile redemption’, the simplistic self-help ideology involving the transferral of guilt to others. The talk show, he suggests, where guests recriminate each other for personal problems and receive partisan advice from the audience, is the forum where both are concentrated. This is of course most debatable.

### ‘American Gothic’ (1930)

Painting by the US artist Grant Wood (1892-1942). The painting shows a Midwestern farmer-preacher and his daughter, backed by a barn (the models were Wood’s sister and dentist!) and hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago. Several points make this genuinely an important Gothic image. It combines a meticulous realism with stylisation – the upward-pointing arch of the barn window is echoed and inverted by the pitchfork prongs. The tribute to the hard-working American **Puritan** is given a threatening edge by the couple’s dourness, the gaze of the barn window, and the proffered pitchfork. Finally, there is a direct link with German and Flemish Gothic **art** of the 1500s, which inspired Wood while on a visit to Germany to study stained glass techniques. The title has become so familiar that it was used in 1995 for a US TV series set in a South Carolina town dominated by its sheriff who may, or may not, be the Devil. Its interest lay in the fact that the powers of darkness were did not indulge in supernatural claptrap but exploited human desire, jealousy and vindictiveness to achieve their ends.

### **anatomy**

The late-**medieval** drive to depict the human body more and more accurately coincided with the developing ambitions of surgeons and doctors in dissection and anatomy: Michelangelo and da Vinci both cut bodies up in their spare time. From the mid-1500s, books of beautiful, meticulous anatomical engravings appeared, such as Andrea Vesalius’s *De Humanis Corporis Fabricae* (1543). Unlike their matter-of-fact medieval forebears, these images depicted corpses in attitudes of life – seated on chairs holding their skin, or helpfully lifting tissues apart for the viewer’s benefit. One of the most extreme examples was Cornelius Huybert’s frontispiece for Frederick **Ruysch**’s *Thesaurus Anatomicus* of 1702, showing a pile of (annotated) human viscera flanked by three foetal skeletons in poses of distress – one wipes its eye sockets with a handkerchief of venous membrane – echoing the weird compositions of Ruysch himself. Through the 1700s, too, the Grand Dukes of Tuscany gathered a vast collection of medical models in wax, still viewable at the Museo de Speculo in Florence. The partibility of the human body, and issues of identity and mortality, are clearly Gothic themes, and these images cater for other instincts than scientific curiosity.

The **ambiguities** of anatomy were again raised by Gunther von Hagens’s exhibition of preserved corpses, ‘Body Worlds’, which toured northern Europe in 2001-2 and deliberately copied the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>-century anatomical textbooks. Von Hagens not only displayed a grisly sense of humour by posing his deceased subjects as chess players or swimmers, but played up to his sinister public image in a thoroughly Gothic manner.

### *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621)

Seminal English analysis of **melancholy** (and virtually everything else) by theologian Robert Burton (1577-1640) writing as ‘Democritus Junior’ and expanding on the ground covered by Marsiglio Ficino in *La Vita Triplice*. Burton aimed to analyse the causes for the

melancholic state and its different expressions, as scholarly melancholy, religious melancholy, and lovesickness. Burton spent his professional career as librarian of Christ Church, Oxford, and the *Anatomy* is a bookworm's book, built around an analytical system of maze-like complexity and including endless digressions. It defined melancholy as 'a cold and dark, thick, black, and sour humour, purged from the spleen', went through six editions in 30 years, and had a considerable influence on post-Renaissance attitudes, as well as being rather funny. A new edition was published in 2001.

### **architecture, Gothic**

Gothic architecture is based on the pointed arch. Its first western European use was in the rebuilding of the Abbey of St Denis in Paris about 1140. Within about 50 years it had completely supplanted 'Romanesque' architecture based on the round arch, and continued as the dominant European style until the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and, in many places, beyond. The name 'Gothic' was applied by 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century critics (inspired by Giorgio Vasari) who believed the pointed arch had been introduced to Europe by the barbarous Gothic tribes which overran the Roman Empire in the 400s and 500s, and who argued for the superiority of **Classical** Roman and Grecian forms. In Britain the challenge was dramatised by the violence of the Reformation in which abbeys and monasteries were destroyed, although Gothic styles never completely died out. The **Gothic Revival** began in the mid-1700s and culminated a century later, first as a tongue-in-cheek fashion and then as a form of Christian **romanticism**, harking back to a lost medieval age of faith. Since the 1930s Gothic has been almost completely in eclipse, but some other modern architectural forms display elements of a truly Gothic temper, such as Antoni Gaudi's interpretation of **Art Nouveau**. Even Classical forms can, in the right hands, be used to envision threat and monstrosity: many people have felt these embodied in Nicholas Hawksmoor's 18<sup>th</sup>-century churches in East London, leading to stories of Hawksmoor being a secret **occultist** whose buildings encode Satanic messages for the future.

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century **Gothic novels** gained that title through association with the architectural style of their settings – the castles and abbeys of the **Middle Ages**, the **ruins** of which scattered the English landscape. By this time, some decades of poetry and art had connected the pointed arch inextricably with gloom, death and menace, although obviously its original effect was different if not entirely opposite. Compared with the ponderous, almost authoritarian weight of Romanesque, Gothic could mean light, transcendence, a movement upward to Heaven – a soaring, aspirational architecture. This was certainly the effect the serious Victorian Gothic Revivalists, such as **Pugin**, intended, and which Victor Hugo theorised in *Nôtre Dame de Paris*. Nonetheless Wilhelm **Worringer** insisted that the pointed arch embodied an existential tension in its very form.

### **Art, Gothic**

Properly speaking, Gothic art is the art of the high **Middle Ages**, closely associated with its **architecture**. Its main characteristics are the use of line as the basic graphic element – that is, figures are stylised to the point of being composed by outline – and flat perspectiveless plains. This creates an iconic visual universe entirely unlike our own, without reference points to the contemporary; and, since most medieval art was intended to illustrate Christian theology, it was wholly appropriate.

The chief movement in European art was towards ever-greater realism. As early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Italian artists such as Giotto were looking to **Classical** models to achieve this, and eventually abandoned the traditional Gothic device of framing pictures within architectural plains and copied the idealised muscular fleshiness of Greek and Roman statuary. In

northern Europe, by contrast, Gothic concerns of line, stylisation, symmetry and exaggeration remained dominant; but paradoxically northern artists also began to abandon ideal forms and depict, not copies of the heroes of antiquity, but the frail human beings they saw around them with almost photographic accuracy. The division was, as ever, not absolute: in the south, artists such as **Boticelli** and Cossa continued using essentially Gothic forms disguised in Classical costume, while some northern artists, notably **Dürer** and Lucas Cranach, combined both models somewhat uneasily (Cranach's most Gothic productions are his sly girls shown luminous against dark backgrounds, chilly and hinting at acts of violence – Judiths and Lucrezias). The last wave of Gothic artists, including Hans **Holbein** and Matthaias Grunewald, achieved a degree of realism terrible yet compassionate in its intensity, before Gothic's final collapse to the ideals of the Renaissance.

Gothic art after the Renaissance is a problematic matter. Most good artists (and not only in the visual arts) 'wrote in Gothic' at some point, making it possible to isolate many moments but few personalities. Only the passionate, glittering realism of the early **Pre-Raphaelites** and the abstraction of **Expressionism** would apply a properly **hysteric** Gothic spirit across the board. The stormy carnality of Caravaggio, the ecstatic distortions of Kyriakos 'el Greco' Theotokopoulos – in which human bodies ripple like flame or folds of cloth – and the corpses and lunatics of the **Romantic** Gericault are especially likely to appeal to Gothic sensibilities.

At times, art reaches for the Gothic mode when anything less is inadequate: the aftermath of World War One was one such moment. Artists including Kathe Kollwitz, Otto Dix and Max Beckmann all used the Gothic tradition to find ways of expressing **horror** and loss. Kollwitz fails to qualify as a 'Gothic artist' only because (unlike her obvious forebear **Goya**) no part of her seems to relish the nightmare: she aimed at purist reportage in her pre-war depictions of the Berlin poor, but by 1918 was finding that only exaggeration and abstraction could make realism seem real again. Dix made prints modelled on Goya's *Los Disastres de la Guerra* and in his painting 'War' (1932) produced a bitter secular parody of the **Isenheim** triptych.

Critics like to grace modern conceptual art with the word Gothic, and indeed Richard Davenport-Hines makes contemporary artists his foremost standard-bearers of the tradition. The fondness of the **Surrealists** for uncanny juxtapositions and the oppositional ideology of the art academies has indeed produced something like an artistic consensus in favour of the morbid and painful, although Davenport-Hines's selection of the Chapman brothers as his champions fails to impress this commentator. I would instead offer Rachel Whiteread's discovery of a **melancholy** mirror-world inside and around the visible one, expressed through her castings.

### **Art Nouveau**

Western artistic trend which peaked between 1890 and 1910. It seems to have developed through exaggerating stylistic tendencies in high Victorian art, particularly a concentration on flowing lines and natural forms, plus an injection of non-European artistic traditions, most notably Arabic and **Japanese**. There is little Gothic in Art Nouveau, but it did coincide with a parallel literary movement towards imagination and 'decorativeness' and was seen by critics as embodying a **decadent** spirit common to both. The use particularly of vegetable forms to decorate functional objects blurs the distinction between the natural and the artificial in ways that can be oddly disturbing. The metalwork of Victor Horta in Brussels, and the staircase designed for the Palais Rubeshinsky in Moscow by Fyodor Schechtel, now in the Gorky Museum, are good examples, resembling trailing tendrils and congealing, decaying fruit (there are curious echoes in the work of HR **Giger**). In **Spain**, the architect

Antoni Gaudí produced eclectic Art Nouveau buildings with essentially Gothic frameworks. Towards the latter stages of Art Nouveau, abstraction and repetitious patterning became more prominent, emerging in the swirling fantasy paintings of Jan **Toorop** and the artists belonging to the Mackintosh circle in Scotland: the drama and extremity of abstraction has its own appeal to the Gothic imagination. The **Symbolist** movement merged with the style in the late 1800s.

### **Bacon, Francis** (1909-92)

Irish/British artist. Bacon worked as an interior decorator in London before his first exhibition in 1945 was acclaimed for 'Three Figures at a Crucifixion'. His totally individual, though heavily referential, art concentrated on people in states of **horror**, pain and degradation; distortions of the human form; and a visceral meatiness which transformed his subjects into living sides of pork. A recurring motif was the screaming mouth lifted from a single shot in Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin*, which received its most striking treatment in 'Three Screaming Popes'.

### **Batcave**

London club. The Batcave opened at the Gargoyle, Dean Street, in July 1982, organised by members of Specimen who naturally became its house band. Not at first explicitly Gothic at all, the Wednesday night event became a focus for various marginalised elements in London **fashion, music** and youth society, among which the Gothic eventually predominated. The club moved to different venues, went 'on tour' round the country, and played an important role in coalescing the Goth style in the early 1980s.

### **Baudelaire, Charles** (1821-67)

French poet, art critic, and essayist. If **Byron** became the model of the poet as rakish but haunted adventurer, Baudelaire set the standard for the Bohemian counterpart, starving in a garret and necking absinthe. An intense relationship with his mother and a stormy one with his stepfather resulted in a tormented emotional life and a body of particularly suspect and polluted poetry. He embodied violent contradictions: a sadomasochist who affected a monastic chastity; the bohemian who could also play the fop; the blasphemer who remained a convinced **Catholic**. This duality emerged in his masterwork, *Les Fleurs de Mal*, destined to become one of the most famous of all collections of poetry, characterised by a variety of conflicting voices, and a striking combination of compassion with a revelling in filth and degradation. Baudelaire was the first European champion of Edgar Allan **Poe**, and translated his stories into French. He probably died from the long-term effects of syphilis.

In many ways Baudelaire is such an extreme figure that his emulators have been few. His genuinely medieval outlook on life, his dogged emphasis on sin and evil – the Devil is a leading personality in *Les Fleurs de Mal* – isolated him within his circle of poetic contemporaries, and appears even less relevant in a secular age. Nonetheless, like **Dante's**, his work remains a touchstone in the Gothic tradition, namechecked by artists as diverse as TS **Eliot** and Diamanda **Galás**.

### **Bauhaus**

British pop group. Arguably the first band that could be labelled as 'Gothic' rather than anything else, Bauhaus formed in 1979 and developed a spare, pared aesthetic combined with theatricality of mood ranging from shrieking rage to lip-licking menace, helped along by singer Peter Murphy's dark, flexible voice and a fondness for dischords. Although their tone softened towards the end, tunes still generally evaded them, and their compositions,

while always impressively driven by violence, had a tendency to sprawl; the lyrical keynote was a sick **Baudelairean** lushness. Murphy had a major influence on developing early-80s Goth fashion by combining punk's fondness for black leather with glam's for eyeliner. Bauhaus were self-consciously literate: not only was the name lifted from the school of avant-garde artists founded at Weimar in 1924, but songs mentioned models as disparate as Theseus and the Minotaur ('Great Fields') and French playwright Antonin Artaud (1898-1948), whose life and work were certainly Gothic-tinged; while the anthemic 'Bela Lugosi's Dead' lovingly ripped off the paraphernalia of the **Universal Horrors**. Poppy Z **Brite** used one Bauhaus title for her novel *Exquisite Corpse*, a phrase itself borrowed from the **Surrealists**.

### **Beardsley, Aubrey** (1872-1898)

British artist. Beardsley left a job as a clerk with an insurance company to illustrate Sir Thomas Mallory's *La Morte D'Arthur*, and moved swiftly through styles, from the **Classical-Gothic** hybrid of Mantegna, the late **Pre-Raphaelitism** of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, a 'Japonesque' style based on the prints of Hokusai and Utamaro, and finally a florid, fantastically detailed pseudo-Georgian compound of all the foregoing. Beardsley produced work for literary magazines (most famously *The Yellow Book* of 1894) and illustrations for works as diverse as Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, Oscar **Wilde's** *Salome*, and Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*, distinct from the pictures of any other 1890s artist. They typically combined the flowing line of **Art Nouveau** with a bold, stylised handling of black. The irredeemably camp Beardsley ('I caught cold by going out without the tassel on my walking-stick', he once remarked) delighted in riddling his pictures with encoded eroticism and sickness, and even when he did not, critics were convinced that what they were looking at was indefinably indecent; the hostile considered him virtually a candle-carrying acolyte of Wilde, the high priest of *fin-de-siècle* **Decadence**, though he was happier to depict a corrupt fantasy of the past than take part in any modern equivalent. Beardsley was moving towards yet another new style, with tones and shading, when he died of tuberculosis in a small French resort. It was not until an exhibition of his prints at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1966 that he established a presence in the public's visual imagination. There is little explicitly Gothic content in Beardsley's pictures, but an underlying strain of extremity, cruelty and morbidity emerges repeatedly and colours his whole output. The famous *Salome* illustration 'J'ai Baisé ta Bouche, Jokanaan', where Salome kisses the severed head of John the Baptist, is a good example.

### **Beckford, William** (1760-1844)

British novelist and builder. Inheritor of a colossal fortune derived from West Indian slave plantations, Beckford had abundant resources to indulge an imagination debauched by **orientalism**, the Grand Tour, and the images of the artist he called 'Hellfire **Brueghel**'. Basically a homosexual but prepared to stretch a point, Beckford's life was shattered by the death of his deeply-loved wife and a scandalous affair with a Viscount's teenage son. For twelve years he fled to Europe, and although undetachable from his wealth or his seat in Parliament, he was henceforth a social outcast, and consoled himself with writing (the fervid, amoral oriental fantasy *Vathek* (1797)) and building. He gained an infamous place in the history of the **Gothic Revival** for Fonthill Abbey, a folly on a monstrous scale, begun in 1799 and added to until the money ran out. It was the size of a cathedral perched on the Wiltshire downs, and topped by a 300-foot octagonal tower which had to be rebuilt after one collapse and whose second fall caused the ruin of the whole house. Its **hysterical** grandeur caused as much shock as admiration and made all other new Gothic buildings look half-

hearted. Beckford filled its echoing halls with art and catamites before selling up in 1822. He had an unending rivalry with that other master of camp Gothic, Horace **Walpole**.

### **Beddoes, Thomas Lovell** (1803-49)

British poet. Most of Beddoes's verse was produced in his late teens and early twenties and, apart from 'The Improvisatore' and 'The Bride's Tragedy', all had to wait until he was dead for its publication. His most mature collection was *Death's Jest-Book*, which he called 'a very Gothic-styled tragedy' and which, at its best moments, showed a hard, exceedingly black sensibility, stressing the meaty and the **anatomical** and recalling the **Jacobean dramatists** who were Beddoes's models. In 1826 he moved to Germany to study and then practice medicine. His work was published again in 1907 and a selection made by the **Gothic Society**, *Resurrection Songs*, appeared in 1992. His influence has been negligible, and he remains defiantly obscure.

### '**Black Angels**' ((largely) 1970)

Avant-garde string sequence by American composer George Crumb (b.1929). This modernist suite, subtitled '13 Images from the Dark Land', drew its inspiration from the Vietnam War and represents the soul's passage from fall to redemption. Quoting along the way the **Danse Macabre**, the **Dies Irae**, and Tartini's 'The Devil's Trill', the sequence builds up an icy soundscape of bones, bells and aerial manifestations. Despite an ostensibly optimistic theme, the final effect is unsettling and inconclusive. The most familiar treatment is by the **Kronos Quartet**.

### **Blake, William** (1757-1827)

British artist, poet and mystic. Blake claims a place in the Gothic pantheon, but it is not clear what. Although his aesthetic at first glance seems derived from **Classical** models, his early work as an engraver's apprentice making pictures of the monuments in Westminster Abbey gave him an unfashionable love of Gothic **art** that affected everything that followed – its legacies being a concentration on line, stylisation and basic architectural patterning. Perhaps his illustrations of the **Divine Comedy** show this best. It is less clear that Blake possessed much Gothic *spirit*. Certainly he illustrated **Milton**, **Dante** and the Old Testament, but he bent them all into an idiosyncratic personal theology according to which the world was simultaneously the creation of a cruel and selfish 'God' and yet also beautiful and innocent.

### **Bosch, Heironymus** (c.1450-1516)

Dutch artist. The Gothic culture of the late **Middle Ages** arguably reached its gloomy and **hysterical** culmination in the work of Bosch. Now most familiar for his grotesque demons and violent images of Hell as depicted in 'The Last Judgement', 'The Haywain', '**The Temptation of St Antony**', and, in one of the most demented works in paint, '**The Garden of Earthly Delights**', Bosch's pictures represent the polar opposite of the humanist spirit of the Renaissance. For Bosch, the human world is weighed down with sin and folly, and fretful with **horror**. The hideous sight of Hell is really the human world with the veneer of decency ripped away: monstrosity, he implies, is the truth of our situation. Gentleness and calm are confined to Heaven and Eden, the world as God intended it. Bosch's grotesqueries were widely and inadequately imitated: **Brueghel** comes closest to him. Today his more disturbed work is commonly reproduced, but more likely to be seen as a source of humour than horror.

**Botticelli, Alessandro** (1445-1510)

Italian artist. Along with most other Renaissance artists in southern Europe, Botticelli's paintings were expressed in **Classical** forms; but the most personal remain unshakably Gothic in their blank, bright light and colours, stylisation, and emphasis on line. This is true even of impeccably Classical subjects such as 'The Birth of Venus' (c.1486), while 'The Adoration of the Magi' (1475) even uses traditional Gothic architectural framing. Beneath this, Botticelli's work shows a strain of sensuality and sadism which sets him apart from anaemic contemporaries. When one of his patrons, Giuliano de' Medici, was murdered in a chapel, Botticelli painted the hanging of his killers on the church door, while the sequence 'Nastagio degli Onesti' (c.1483) shows a young woman pursued through a wood by a mounted knight, and torn apart by his dogs in front of a wedding feast. It was not perhaps a surprise that this high-Renaissance Goth became obsessed with illustrating **Dante's *Divine Comedy***, then a follower of the unbalanced Florentine friar Savonarola, and finally gave up painting and died in poverty.

**Brite, Poppy Z** (b.1967)

American novelist. With three 1990s novels, *Lost Souls*, *Drawing Blood* and *Exquisite Corpse*, she established a reputation as one of the foremost Gothic figures in modern letters. Virtually the only critically-accepted writer consciously to depict the Goth subculture, she has covered themes of **vampirism** and murder, and ropes in Gothic imagery in forms as varied as a fervid, swamp-ridden and semi-mythical Deep South and the rot of urban Calcutta. Her work is characterised by the lush and very precise description of decay and illness; the atmospheric keynotes are a relish of **horror** and a bitter, but not humourless fatalism. 1998's *The Lazarus Heart* added to **The Crow** sequence.

**Brontë, Charlotte** (1816-55), **Emily** (1818-48) & **Anne** (1820-49)

British novelists and poets. The Yorkshire parson's daughters have become so famous and discussed as to constitute an industrial product in themselves. The stereotypical Brontë novel centres on a heroine who exercises great passions beneath a repressed exterior (resulting in equally stereotyped film and TV adaptations featuring black-clad women in peak bonnets wandering featureless moors). The sisters defined their own work against the witty social comedies of the anti-Gothic Jane Austen, written thirty years before it. The theme of repressed emotion couples with others, such as a persistent rebellious tendency to associate physical beauty with moral corruption, and there are occasional glimpses of more obviously Gothic elements such as the much-criticised supernatural passages in Charlotte's *Villette*. The sisters' most clearly Gothic work is Emily's violent and godless *Wuthering Heights* (1842), a tale of obsessive love and cruelty set against an equally extreme landscape. Contemporary critics generally acknowledged its narrative and descriptive power but attacked its lack of an apparent moral. DG Rossetti memorably commented that it was 'a fiend of a book – an incredible monster ... the action is laid in hell', and Kate **Bush** made her name with a haunting musical evocation in 1978.

**Brooks, Louise** (1906-85)

American actress, dancer, and essayist. Brooks moved out of the world of dance to star in a series of light comedy and drama movies in the late 1920s, before being cast by German director GW Pabst as the demonic Lulu in *Pandora's Box* (1929), the innocent libertine who is the ruin of all the self-seeking men who attempt to possess her and who is herself eventually killed by **Jack the Ripper**. Brooks's career perished after the arrival of sound, but she and her 'natural' (or, to be more critical, barely conscious) style of acting were

rediscovered from the early 1960s and she came to enjoy a cult status. A sort of elision occurred which allowed the high-art sadomasochism of Lulu to merge with the self-destructive history of Brooks herself, encapsulated in her stunning visual image – pale skin, dark elemental eyes, black bobbed hair. The image has itself become part of Gothic visual rhetoric, and was consciously adopted by **Siouxsie Sioux** in 1988 for the ‘Lulu in London’ stage of the ‘Peepshow’ album tour. Janet Munsil’s 1997 play *Smoking with Lulu* is a sustained attempt to examine the relationship between Brooks and the Lulu figure, and the meanings of the latter, coupled with sensual self-destruction through the use of nicotine.

**Brown, Charles Brockden** (1771-1810)

American novelist. His *Wieland* (1798) set the tone for the **American** Gothic novel; rationalistic Quaker’s son Wieland sees his **Puritan** father killed – possibly by divine wrath – and slowly collapses into dementia until he believes the voice of God is prompting him to **murder**, a telling precursor of Hogg’s *Private Memoirs & Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Total pessimism, the theme of tainted inheritance, and at the same time an avoiding of the supernatural paraphernalia of European Gothic, characterised the rest of Brown’s work, and that of later American Goths.

**Browning, Tod** (1880-1962)

American film director. Although *Dracula* (1931) effectively created the **horror** movie genre and launched the series of **Universal Horrors** it was an afterthought to Browning’s great sequence of late-twenties collaborations with Lon **Chaney**. Beginning with *The Unholy Three* (1925), in which Chaney played a drag-acting ventriloquist who plans a robbery with a circus strong man and a midget posing as a baby, the films were marked by themes of obsessive love, cruelty, mimicry, and physical mutilation; another persistent *leitmotif* was the circus background from which Browning had removed to Hollywood. They included *London After Midnight* (1928), which is lost but whose surviving stills show Chaney as a dapper **vampire**. The purest expression of this Gothic imagination of monstrosity and reversal was 1932’s *Freaks*. Told by MGM to make a movie that would ‘out-horror *Frankenstein*’, Browning recruited a cast of genuine circus freaks, and in the film had them exact revenge on the trapeze artist who marries a midget and murders him for his money by mutilating *her* into a freak. The film was disowned by the studio and banned in Britain for thirty years. Browning produced a couple of subsequent horrors including *Mark of the Vampire* (1935), a remake of *London After Midnight* with Bela Lugosi in the Chaney role.

**Brueghel, Pieter** (1525-69)

Dutch artist. Brueghel became the best imitator of the nightmarish visions of Hieronymus **Bosch** in his own depictions of the ‘Seven Deadly Sins’ and paintings such as ‘The Fall of the Rebel Angels’. In general, however, his style was less obscure, symbolic and **hysterical** than his forebear’s. In ‘The Triumph of Death’, for instance, the weird monsters of Bosch are replaced by an army of identical skeletons destroying all before them in a **ruined** landscape. Brueghel was an obsessively close observer of the commonplace details of human life, meticulously delineating foolishness and sin, as in ‘The Battle Between Carnival and Lent’ and ‘Children’s Games’. In a savage depiction of the Epiphany, the child Jesus recoils from the gift of myrrh, the unguent for the dead, while the three kings eye each other jealously; outside the stable, soldiers crowd round with smeared, brutal faces. Brueghel’s ‘The Massacre of the Innocents’ was so horrific that the version we have today has been overpainted to remove the dead and dying children and now appears regularly in the role of

a cheerful medieval winter scene. He stood at the end of the tradition of **medieval Gothic art** – his son, also Pieter and another painter, adopted a **Classical** style.

**Burton, Tim** (b.1960)

American film director. Hollywood's most commercially-successful Goth (to the point at which he is allowed to make 'straight' fantasy such as 2001's *Planet of the Apes*) managed to persuade his sceptical employers at Disney to finance his short films *Vincent* (1982) and *Frankenweenie* (1984): these set the tone for the rest of his output with their hallmark blend of the cute and the macabre. Arguably Burton's finest moment to date was co-ordinating the animated *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), a frantic musical shot through with **melancholy** which is finally reassuring as central character Jack Skellington ('Pumpkin King of **Halloween Town**') comes to accept his proper place in the scheme of things. All Burton's work is heavily referenced to the pop-Gothic tradition, providing reverent cameos for Vincent Price in *Edward Scissorhands* and Christopher Lee in *Sleepy Hollow*, which also boasts a climax lifted from *Frankenstein*. In fact he can be said to have successfully marketed Goth conventions to a wide audience, despite touches of a genuinely sick sense of humour and real compassion which both poke through at times.

**Bush, Kate** (b.1957)

British singer-songwriter. Bush emerged in 1978 with 'Wuthering Heights', a haunting musicalisation of the supernatural love theme of Emily **Brontë's** novel (which she admitted never having read), and over the next few years released a series of albums whose beginnings reached back into her early teens. For fifteen years she produced music in a chameleon variety of styles before falling silent; it often dealt with perverse themes – incest, paedophilia and waste – yet these were commonly overlooked beneath their tender, sophisticated **romanticism**, which occasionally lapsed into sentimentality. Her relationship to Gothic culture is oblique but definite.

**Byron, Lord George Gordon** (1788-1824)

British poet. Rather like Oscar **Wilde**, Byron may have put his talent into his work, but his genius into his life. An accidental heir whose psychology was blighted by hell-obsessed Calvinism and his body by a club foot, Byron played the **romantic** poseur yet at heart was genuinely haunted. His importance for the Gothic tradition lies firstly in his creation of the image of the poet as doomed adventurer, through *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), and his death while assisting the insurgent Greeks; and secondly in his presence at the Villa Deodati in 1816, on the holiday with the **Shelleys** that generated the great **horror** narratives of **Frankenstein** and the **Vampire**. Byron was able to convince his contemporaries that he really was Childe Harold, or Manfred or Don Juan, the heartless voluptuary wearied by excess and yet burdened by an awareness of sin, because there was just enough truth in it to carry off the pose, itself modelled on the Gothic villains of Ann **Radcliffe's** novels. Today, Byron's serious poetry reads as dull, false, and in some places clumsy, and his most enduring work is *Don Juan*, a smooth satire on life and authority which still sounds polished and amusingly cynical. His most properly Gothic piece is not a poetic epic but the verse drama *Cain* (1820), in which the Biblical **murderer** and Lucifer debate predestination, evil and fate in the absence of God. It was a strong statement of a rebellious rationalism, although it could only have taken place in the context of **religion**: a conflict typical of the author himself.

### *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919)

German film. *Caligari* became famous as the film which introduced **expressionist** elements into the cinema, and thereby affected the whole development of **horror** motifs in movie-making, although its style was something of an arbitrary experiment on the designer's and the author's part, which the director Robert Wiene endorsed because it would save money! The story concerns the mysterious, demonic Dr Caligari who exhibits a zombie-like 'sommnambulist' named Cesare at a circus sideshow and then uses him for murderous purposes. The sets, mainly painted on canvas, are abstracted and distorted – there is barely a right angle in the whole production, a crazy environment that sets out to evoke disorientation and terror. The **hysteria** of the style and the hallucinatory plot make *Caligari* the starting-point of Gothic cinema, and via Peter Murphy of **Bauhaus**, Conrad Veidt's interpretation of Cesare has greatly affected Goth **fashion**.

### *Carceri* (1745)

Series of 14 etchings published by a young Venetian-born architect, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, in Rome, whose full title was *De Invenzione Caprici di Carceri*, 'Capricious Inventions of Prisons'. Piranesi based his etchings on a previous series of designs, altered to suit his own fantasies. His 'prisons' are colossal enclosed spaces, endless and without escape, landscapes of gantries, arches, huge capstans, staircases, scattered with tiny wandering figures; they are visions of Hell as real, and as influential, as those of **Bosch**. The etchings were to become a constant reference-point for generations of Goths in formulating their own ideas of **horror** and hopelessness. However, Piranesi saw *Carceri* as a sideline to his main project of encouraging the restoration of the monuments of ancient Rome, to which end he produced etchings of Roman antiquities and **ruins** which again dwarfed the human present in favour of the colossal past. He discovered in this departed grandeur a sense of the **sublime** which combined the **classical** with **romantic** urgings.

The BBC chose to illustrate the cover of their 1990s commercial release of readings from *Gormenghast* with paintings based on the images of *Carceri*.

### **Casati, Luisa** (1881-1957)

Italian aristocrat and socialite, and originator of much of the Gothic uniform. Heir to a Milanese cotton fortune and married to a marquis who left her to her own devices, La Casati had lavish resources to devote to enjoying herself, and to making real her peculiar fantasies. Not lavish enough, however: so heroic was her overspending that by 1932 she was \$25million in debt and exiled herself in London. From about 1900 she displayed her macabre eccentricities round the fashionable party circuit; her features were depicted by dozens of artists and she became the occasional mistress of the **decadent** poet Gabriele D'Annunzio. She promenaded the Piazza San Marco in **Venice** wearing only a fur coat and leading cheetahs on jewelled leashes, commissioned wax statues of herself which became part of her travelling equipment, attempted a little light necromancy, and left black *cartes-de-visite* decorated with pink skeletons. One 1920s artist perceptively depicted her as Salome in a pseudo-**Beardsley** manner.

But it was Casati's dress sense that earned her a place in the Gothic pantheon. She adopted exaggerated **Egyptienne** makeup and hairstyles, rounding her eyes with heavy kohl, painting her face white and her lips black, and managed to combine the feral with the funereal; fashionable women of pre-War Europe followed suit, albeit in watered-down forms. When in 1915 Fox Studios were selecting an eye-catching look for their proto-**vamp** star, Theda Bara, that mingled predation with a fatal allure, it was Casati's makeup bag they

reached for, and other vamps looked to the same model. Via Bara and Siouxsie **Sioux**, Casati thus emerged as the (unacknowledged) ancestress of Goth **fashion**.

### *The Castle of Otranto* (1765)

The ‘first **Gothic novel**’, the work of the frivolous **Gothic Revivalist** Horace **Walpole**. *Otranto* takes pre-existing elements of fiction, especially from the theatre, flings them in a pan and turns the heat up to create a frothing, camp entertainment – the seriousness with which it was received apparently surprised and amused its author. Set in a brooding Italian castle, it tells of supernatural vengeance wreaked upon the usurping and would-be incestuous Duke Manfred, and is written in so overwrought a manner it is difficult to read at all today, but uses a number of themes and devices which would be taken up with increasingly serious intent in the 1780s and 1790s.

### **Catholicism**

Of all the forms of **religion** patient of Gothic identities, Catholic Christianity shows the closest affinity, its bloody and violent imagery most often exploited in Gothic art and, as an institution, most often turned to by Goths in search of spiritual expression. The four main Gothic notes of Catholicism are as follows:

1. The Catholic culture of the late **Middle Ages** in Europe provides history’s most thoroughgoing Gothic society, psychologically strained between the opposing poles of **horror** and transcendence. It bequeathed characteristically Gothic works of art and motifs such as the *Divine Comedy*, the **Dies Irae** and the **Danse Macabre**; in England it left a physical landscape of **ruins** that affected the whole imagination of the **Gothic Revival**.
2. In post-Reformation England, Catholicism became the focus of extreme contradictory impulses. At first it was seen as foreign, superstitious and allied to political tyranny, an impression reinforced by Catholic plots and the autocratic behaviour of the Stuart dynasty. Then from the mid-1700s the slow rise of **romanticism** took the exotic other-ness of Catholicism and made it alluring as well as threatening. The **Gothic novels** regularly exploited the lush extremism of Catholic settings – Lewis’s *The Monk* (1798), set in the mysterious Capuchin priory of Madrid, is a good example. Except in **America** and Scotland, the ‘church’ by whose authority Goths were alternately attracted and repelled was not the watery Protestant version but the bloody theatrics of Catholicism, which until the Victorian High Church revival was available only from Rome. Even among English Goth sceptics such as **Byron**, Rome and not the native church was the paradigm of Christianity. This dichotomy continues into modern Gothic, particularly in **music** and **fashion** which use Catholic Christian imagery to signal moral and emotional extremity while maintaining an ironic or ambiguous attitude to the religion itself.
3. More seriously, the High Church revival from the 1830s onwards exerted a powerful ideological pull on Goths mentally attuned to extremity and theatre; and the **hysterical** psychology of Catholicism was given flesh by architects such as **Pugin** in both the Roman and Anglican Churches. The result was a succession of Goth conversions – especially deathbed ones as in the cases of Aubrey **Beardsley** and Oscar **Wilde**.
4. In Gothic and horror fiction, Catholic Christianity represents a last resort when the processes of reason fail. This notion begins with *Dracula* if not before, where the scientific outlook proves roundly inadequate to combat the forces of darkness, and continued through supernatural horror from the novels of Dennis Wheatley to *The Exorcist*.

### **Chaney, Lon** (1883-1930)

American actor. The son of deaf-mute parents, Chaney acquired an instinctive sympathy with the outcast, the mutilated and the disabled, which eventually emerged through his films, although it took a while – between 1913 and 1919 he appeared in over a hundred films of all genres. His role of Frog (a bogus cripple who cheats a blind faith-healer) in *The Miracle Man* (1919) was the first to exhibit his characteristic mix of pretence, disguise, and mutilation. It was followed by *The Hunchback of Nôtre Dame* (1923) and *Phantom of the Opera* (1925), films that brought him the sobriquet of ‘Man of a Thousand Faces’ and a reputation for being willing to subject himself to great indignities for the sake of his roles. He found a kindred spirit in director Tod **Browning** and collaborated with him in a series of films including *The Unholy Three* and *The Unknown* which brought the cinema an abiding vision of monstrosity and pity.

### **Christian Death**

American band. The history of the first major Stateside Goth group is interpreted in very different ways by the various partisans of its leading lights Rozz Williams and Valor Kand, a conflict intensified by both maintaining rival versions of the band from 1989 until Williams’s suicide in 1998. The name was first used by Williams in 1981 for a group which released *The Only Theatre of Pain* the following year in a punk vein, then for a merger of his own and Kand’s projects in 1984. Following Williams’s departure a couple of years later, the ‘continuing’ Christian Death has been marked by Kand’s increasingly odd opinions. The band’s sound has characteristically had a chilly quality to it, but has also formed a link with heavier, metal-orientated styles of music; the imagery used for its prolific output of albums has usually been deliberately extreme and shocking (the use of the **Doré** illustrations of the **Divine Comedy** for 1996’s *Path of Sorrows*, one of Williams’s albums, was unusually restrained); and lyrics typically analyse critically the uses of Christianity through the ages. Musically Christian Death has contained more of interest than most of its peers (Gitane Demone left to pursue a solo interest in jazz, for instance).

### **Classicism**

The opposite of Gothic. The beginnings of a preference for **art**, sculpture and **architecture** based on the forms of the Classical Greek and Roman past can be seen in Italy in the early 1300s as artists such as Giotto began to turn aside from the Gothic conventions of line, abstraction and architectural framing. By the mid-1400s, Classicism was becoming the dominant mode in Italian art. Thereafter it spread, and acquired an ideology: Giorgio Vasari contrasted the barbarous irregularities of Gothic art with the harmonious proportions he discovered in Classical models, and Classicism slowly came to epitomise a psychology as well as an artistic style, expressed in restraint, order, optimism, and harmony – in fact, a mirror-image of Gothic. In the Classical outlook, the **natural** world is beneficent, society progresses, and problems can be solved through reason. In the Gothic, reason is suspect, nature hostile, sins perpetrated in the past are not easily escaped, and elation is found in images of unease. Semantically, the issue is confused by the way **Romanticism** can be expressed through both Gothic and Classical architectural and artistic forms: in a temperamental sense, Classical is the opposite of both Gothic and Romantic, although Romantic and Gothic are not the same thing!

### **colour**

‘Black is the badge of hell, the hue of dungeons and the school of night’ wrote Shakespeare in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. Black is the obvious Gothic colour; although it carries varying

associations in different cultures (fertility in ancient **Egypt**, for instance), black retains a link with night, and therefore with threat and death, in all societies. In Europe, because of its use by the oldest Christian monastic orders, it is also the colour of emotional repression, asceticism, and austerity. Edmund Burke argued in his 1756 essay on the **sublime** that human responses to black were not learned but natural. We recoil from dark or black objects simply because they make our eyes work harder – they force the pupils to expand: ‘the bodily organs suffer first, and the mind through the organs’. It was one of his more individual suggestions.

White, at least in the West, is loaded with similar associations to black. The pallor of illness and the dead make white a graveyard colour, and its further links with purity make it a favourite for floaty dresses worn by Goth girls ironically posing as virgin princesses. Melville includes a helpful chapter on white’s hideous qualities in *Moby Dick*.

Purple is often exploited in Goth **fashion**; used by Roman high officials and originally very expensive to produce, the colour came to denote luxury and sensuality. Conversely, purple was also used by the Christian Church during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, and its symbolic meanings are thus contradictory.

Finally, red stands for the violent emotions of rage and lust. The colour of blood, it represents what lies beneath the repressive surface of black; the **vampire’s** cloak is black and lined with red, prostitutes stereotypically wear red, while in the Church red is used on the feasts of martyrs, on Pentecost and on Good Friday.

These four colours together comprise a visual lexicon which is used through the whole of post-medieval Gothic art. Printmakers and artists working in pen-and-ink from **Goya** to **Beardsley** to various of the **expressionists** make full use of the necessary blacks and whites of their medium to express extremity and hinted violence, while the addition of red reveals that violence in forms ranging from Edward **Gorey’s** production of *Dracula* to the fleeting glimpses in *Don’t Look Now*. Purple makes less regular appearances, outside clothing and website design. The **Cybergoth** subgenre has attempted to spurn this traditional and long-established palette, but its lasting success in doing so is debatable.

### **Corman, Roger** (b.1926)

American film director. Corman called his 1990 autobiography *How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime*, and he indeed became a shamelessly commercial low-budget film maker who produced work in all genres. Sometimes cheerfully awful, sometimes exhibiting real imaginative flair, Corman’s films often included **horror** (when money could be made from it) but his importance for the Gothic tradition comes from his series of Edgar Allan **Poe** interpretations in the 1960s. Beginning with *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1960), every one of the six starred Vincent Price except *The Pit & The Pendulum* (1961), and most were, to say the least, loose adaptations, generally borrowing a striking image from the original story and surrounding it with wild Gothic atmospherics, lurid incident, and garish colour. The sequence worked up to a fine visual and imaginative climax in *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1965). Corman’s abuse of the Poe prototypes actually allowed the addition of a new element to the tradition.

### **Cronenberg, David** (b.1943)

Canadian film director. Early student experience in biochemistry seems reflected in Cronenberg’s films, which concern themselves with themes of disease, the invasion of the body, and the disintegration of identity. *Shivers* (1976) and *Rabid* (1977) both depict the spread of parasitic entities which cause social breakdown, and, while tattily made, are claustrophobic and worrisome. In *Videodrome* (1985) and *EXistenZ* (1999) reality and

hallucination, and human being and mechanism, merge to announce the triumph of moral and existential chaos in a world devoted to television and computer games. Although Cronenberg's 1997 treatment of JG Ballard's novel *Crash* (used years before by Siouxsie **Sioux** as the inspiration for 'Miss the Girl') caused outrage, it links into the rest of his opus through its concern with disability and the relationship between human beings and machines. Even his black comedy commercial success *The Fly* (1986) still reflected his interest in the undoing of the human. In 2002 Cronenberg produced an adaptation of Patrick **McGrath's** novel *Spider*.

### *The Crow* (1992)

*The Crow* seems to have been adopted by the modern Goth subculture as its own fairytale: there are finer and more unsettling Gothic films, but none which combines flashy visuals with essential soft-heartedness to make sappy Goths feel quite so good about themselves. Directed by Alex Proyas, it stars Brandon Lee (son of martial arts legend Bruce) as a Gothed-up angel of death brought back from the hereafter to avenge his own and his fiancée's murder at the hands of a set of vaguely Satanic gangsters. The fairly obvious comic-book story (the film was based on a graphic novel) is heightened by great visual style evoking the rain-soaked cityscape so beloved of **film noir**, and the atmosphere is intensified by the knowledge that Lee died in an accident during the shooting of the film. Subsequent sequels are, generally, tawdry nonsense compared to the first film, and Proyas himself went on to direct an equally stylish and considerably more inventive, though flawed movie in a similar vein, *Dark City* (1995).

### **Crowley, Aleister** (1875-1947)

British **occultist**. Crowley inherited, and quickly spent, an alehouse fortune; joined the Order of the **Golden Dawn** in 1898 and the Order of the Oriental Templars in 1911; developed his own system of ethics and magic ritual, the Thelema, under the tenet 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law' and adumbrated in his 1903 masterwork, the *Liber Legis*; and became a minor figure in the *fin-de-siècle* literary world until involvement in a libel case brought him instant notoriety and the sobriquet of 'the wickedest man in England' from the popular press. Crowley was a bad poet, a bad artist, bald and podgy, yet this outrageous would-be messiah possessed enough personal charisma to fascinate many and find his way into a variety of Gothic art as the archetype of the evil magician, most particularly in Dennis Wheatley's novel *The Devil Rides Out* (1926), filmed by **Hammer**.

### **cybergoth**

A highly-contested term within the Goth subculture, cybergoth emerged in the late 1990s as a reaction against depressive rock-orientated **music**, adopting upbeat rhythms from the contemporary dance and club scene, and futuristic references drawn from the 'Cyberpunk' literary style of a few years before. Sartorially it draws on **Japanese** Manga cartoons, and abandons the traditional Gothic rhetoric of **colour** and studied archaism in favour of bright colours, techno accessories, big ray guns, camouflage gear, and space boots; attitudinally it also has a cartoonish streak, and has proved capable of taking camp to undreamt depths. Roundly denounced by traditionalists as 'candyfloss', in its more contemplative moments cybergoth addresses a highly contemporary debate about the future development of technology which may, though it irks some of us to say so, prove to have been the most interesting tendency of the Gothic aesthetic fifty years from now.

## Danse Macabre

One of a number of moralistic representations of the inescapable reality of death popular in the late **Middle Ages**. Although it may actually have been performed at one time, the Danse Macabre possibly originated in a famous depiction in the cemetery of the Holy Innocents, Paris, and spread through the 1400s, reaching a peak in the early 16th century: in English churches the Danse was often painted onto canvas and displayed at the end of Lent. There are two main forms. In the first, representative figures from human society are met by their dead selves and led towards the grave; in the most familiar, however, the grisly version in the 1493 Nuremberg Chronicle drawn by Albrecht **Dürer's** first tutor Michael Wolgemut, the skeletons dance alone to the sound of a flute. The Danse was turned into a well-known haunting waltz by Saint-Saens in 1875, but there are other musical renditions such as Crumb's segment in '**Black Angels**'.

## Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)

Italian poet and philosopher. Dante has become arguably the most charismatic figure in the whole of literature, author of a number of philosophical treatises but whose masterwork is the great tripartite epic of sin and redemption, the *Divine Comedy*.

As the Comedy has haunted the western imagination, so has Dante himself. The case for considering him the first identifiable Gothic figure rests first on his life as an artist - as a political exile from his native Florence; as a **melancholic** intellectual; and for his unrequited love for Beatrice, the woman to whom the Comedy is dedicated and who becomes his guide through the circles of Heaven. Secondly, it lies in the horrible and beautiful images of the Comedy itself, and the idea, which originated with him, that it is the privilege of the poet to pass between Heaven and Hell and to see unseeable things.

The visual image of Dante, dressed in severe robe, white coif, cap and poet's laurels, was already ineradicably established when **Botticelli** drew his illustrations to the Comedy in the 1480s. It was loyally copied by **Blake, Delacroix, Doré, Beardsley** and virtually every artist who has succumbed to the temptation to translate the epic into graphic form. The **Pre-Raphaelite** Dante Gabriel Rossetti became fascinated with his namesake and for the first time paid more attention to the man than to the work. Rossetti's Dante, in pictures of the 1850s and 1860s such as 'Dante Drawing an Angel on the Anniversary of Beatrice's Death', 'Giotto Painting Dante's Portrait' and 'Beata Beatrix', is a brooding, melancholy, taciturn ascetic, rapt in a love gone into the grave and the things he has seen: which is still how he is regarded today.

## Daria (1997-2001)

American cartoon TV series. The character Daria Morgendorffer originated as a foil to MTV's 'music critics' Beavis and Butt-head, and (ironically) proved so popular she acquired her own series. The literary teenager and her artistic (and only) friend Jane provide a cynical commentary on their families, their horribly suburban high school, and a sick and shallow world in which they find themselves passive and sardonic outcasts (as time goes on, Daria does achieve a measure of reconciliation with her surroundings - but only a measure). Partly wish-fulfilment for adults who were once speccy intellectual kids, the series also provides an object-lesson in pure Goth attitudes without distractions. The one 'uniformed' Goth character, Andrea, is as alienated as Daria and Jane but hasn't the intellect (or sense of restraint) to construct a similar carapace of sarcasm. Jane keeps books on **Goya** and **Escher** in her locker, while Daria's sports a photograph of the R101 crashing; Daria insists on her bedroom keeping the padded walls installed for a previous occupant, and was allocated 'mortician' as her ideal career in a psychological profile. And all without a hint of eyeliner.

## Dead Can Dance

Anglo-Irish band. Their importance lies in their remarkable depth and musical eclecticism. Brendan Perry and Lisa Gerrard formed a creative partnership in 1982; at first, the group was a straightforward guitar-bass-drums unit, albeit with intellectual pretensions, using their first, eponymous LP as a meditation on transformations from life to death and vice versa. A 1984 EP, *The Garden of Arcane Delights*, echoed the masterwork of **Bosch** and was explained by the pair in **Blakean** terms, while the 1985 album *Spleen and the Ideal* quoted **Baudelaire**. Dissatisfied with the range of the traditional rock band, Dead Can Dance then transformed into a classical setup, making use of modern technology to compose film and theatre scores. In 1990 the extraordinary *Aion* was released, comprising a mixture of genuine **medieval** music (bizarrely, played on synthesisers) and compositions in a medieval idiom.

## decadence

A term of abuse directed first at the literary and artistic movements of the 1890s and, by extension, to earlier and later work thought to resemble them. The defining note of decadence is passivity: a retreat from active virtues and reason into fantasy, hedonism, sexual perversion and foppishness. Its relationship to the Gothic is not necessary, but natural in view of these common interests. The term clearly supposes a reaction against a morally and aesthetically conservative climate, with which Goths are likely to identify; and the Gothic sense of humour which acknowledges and defies **horror** by joking about untoward subjects fits admirably with the ostentatious deviance of the decadent.

Decadence can be seen as the exaggeration of tendencies within **Romanticism**. Where Romanticism believed that an individual's feelings were redemptive and healthy, the Decadents did not believe in redemption or progress and had no interest in health. In fact, disease was a constant theme in Decadent art and literature, along with a deliberate rejection of **nature** in favour of artifice. A sado-masochistic aesthetic also gathered pace as the 19<sup>th</sup> century wore on; the English poet Algernon Swinburne provided a good example while Mario Praz produced the crucial analysis of this phenomenon in *The Romantic Agony*. The decadent's conviction of damnation led to an interest in **occultism**, and the rise of secret societies such as the Order of the **Golden Dawn**.

Decadence was primarily a literary movement but there were ramifications in the visual arts. In Britain, Aubrey **Beardsley** was seen as especially suspect, and across the world **Art Nouveau** was often felt to be expressing the same feelings. Just as Paris was the centre of literary decadence, so it was the fulcrum for the **Symbolists**, a movement of deliberate decorative artifice and fantasy which explored many of the same themes.

For many critics and partisans alike, the spirit and theory of decadence was epitomised in *À Rebours* (1884), a remarkably funny novel by JK Huysmans who would go on to summarise occultist paranoia in *Là-Bas*. Its protagonist, Des Esseintes, is a wealthy neurotic who, wearied by the emptiness and democratisation of the modern world, aims to escape his own paralysing *ennui* through the imagination. Normal pleasures are perverted and skewed until they acquire new and dark meanings; Des Esseintes finds particular delight in **ruins**, dying flowers (we think of **Baudelaire**), the art of Odilon Rédon or the writings of **Poe**. Eventually he is forced to return to banal normality, and Huysmans never portrays his quest as entirely admirable: but it is made sympathetic, and given a logic. As well as inspiring decadents, the morbid *bricolage* assembled by Des Esseintes precisely describes the manner in which Goths approach their culture.

In Britain Oscar **Wilde** was widely viewed as representing the decadent temper, and his disgrace in 1895 heralded a more concerted mood of opposition to it. When the last notable

writer the movement produced, Gabriele D'Annunzio, joined the Italian forces in World War One and thereafter set up his own proto-fascist dictatorship in Fiume, it signalled that the effeminate passivity that characterised *la Décadence* had been abandoned.

### **Delacroix , Eugene** (1798-1863)

French artist. A man of rigid privacy, self-control and disengagement, Delacroix's real emotions and opinions are a mystery. Most of his art - usually regarded as **romantic**, a label he scorned - is not so much polite as simply unconcerned. Even the figures in his stormy 'Dante and Virgil in Hell' (1822) look like play-actors. The exceptions are 'The Massacre of Chios' (1824), a topical painting of an incident in the Greek wars showing the defeated Greeks passively awaiting death or enslavement, which was criticised for its negativity and which **Baudelaire** called 'a terrifying hymn in honour of doom'; and the outrageous 'Death of Sardanapalus' (1827), an astonishing, lurid riot of sadism in which an Eastern potentate blandly watches his concubines being slaughtered and his possessions destroyed as a prelude to his own suicide. The protest against the public display of this painting convinced Delacroix never to depict such a subject again. Whether these two works really hint at the Gothic soul Baudelaire perceived beneath the impassive exterior is uncertain.

### **El Dia de los Muertos**

Religious festival ('The Day of the Dead'). The Spanish missionaries who arrived in Mexico in the wake of the Conquistadores in the 1500s discovered the native peoples celebrated a lengthy festival in July and August honouring the 'Lady of the Dead', Mictecacihuatl, who paradoxically was also controller of the harvest. Recognising clear parallels with the **Catholic** feasts of All Saints and All Souls, as part of the conversion of Mexico the priests moved the existing native observances to November, the time of the European All-Hallowtide. The central belief is that the dead members of the family return at this time and are welcomed with altars bearing flowers, candles and personal belongings constructed at the cemetery or in the home, picnics in graveyards, and the making of sugar skeletons and skulls. Skeletons are often depicted in the attitudes of life, and the *calatрева* (printed handbills) of José Guadalupe Posada are perennially popular – the gleefully macabre images often find their way into Gothic paraphernalia.

The festival is also celebrated in the Hispanic areas of the US, and has even penetrated the Northern states: in 2001 the commemorations were often used to mourn the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>. It has spread also to New Orleans for no better reason than its being the US's most thoroughly Gothic city. Although El Dia de los Muertos is essentially a joyous community occasion it is no surprise that its funereal imagery should have been adapted to fit evocations of the morbid which are less closely linked to the death of loved ones. A Day of the Dead parade appears in the execrable sequel to *The Crow*, while **Siouxsie and the Banshees** produced a mischievously menacing musical evocation in 1988; Malcolm Lowry's haunting, phantasmagoric tale of a doomed soul, *Under the Volcano* (1947), is set in a small Mexican town on El Dia de los Muertos.

### **Dickinson, Emily** (1831-86)

American poet, a writer of unrivalled originality whose work went unpublished in her own lifetime and which reads like that of no other poet of her day. Technically, Dickinson's poetry displays a precise and wide vocabulary and a willingness to break the rules of grammar and metre; thematically, it treats of beauty, death, the indifference of God, and the isolation of the individual. In its strict economy, it shows a sensibility both tender and hard -

a sequence of tiny fires. No other English verse was as born of reclusiveness as this, nor as daring.

Despite her lack of shock value, Dickinson has become a favourite Goth poet, partly because of that hard clarity of expression, and partly because her surviving portraits show her as a Victorian Goth, clad in severe black and white and with a level, sardonic gaze. She haunts (for instance) the 1993 Gothic romance film *The Piano*: star actress Holly Hunter is dressed to resemble her, while composer Michael Nyman quoted her in the hit theme tune, 'The Heart Asks Pleasure First'.

### **Dies Irae**

In English, 'Day of Wrath', the first words of the Sequence in the Mass for the Dead. Probably a non-liturgical poem composed in the 13th century, over the next 200 years it found its way into the text of the Mass, and consequently appears in all **musical** settings of the Requiem, perhaps most familiarly Mozart's and Verdi's.

### **Divine Comedy** (c.1310)

The familiar name for **Dante's** epic poem, whose influence on Western art and literature is perhaps rivalled only by the Bible. In Easter Week 1300 Dante, hounded by the sins of lust, pride and covetousness in the form of three beasts, is taken on a journey through Hell by the Roman poet Virgil, meets many of his political and religious enemies punished with the damned, and climbs past the anguished and imprisoned figure of Satan out onto the mountain of Purgatory where lesser sins are expiated. From the gates of Heaven, his beloved Beatrice takes the poet up through the spheres of the planets before handing him over to St Bernard for an encounter with the Virgin Mary, and a glimpse of the presence of God.

The 'Inferno' section has captured most imagination, and the pleasure Dante obviously takes in consigning wicked popes to the torments of Hell has been a great inspiration to artists: the 'Paradiso' section describing an ecstatic but static Heaven has proven more difficult to visualise. The first cycle of illustrations was by **Botticelli**; **Blake** and Rossetti also tried to depict certain incidents, although typically the **Pre-Raphaelites** chose to romanticise the damned lovers Paolo and Francesca into virtually heroic figures. It is Gustave **Doré's** version of the 1860s which has become the dominant one, although the recent 'rediscovery' and exhibition of the Botticelli cartoons may move Doré into the background.

### **Doré, Gustave** (1832-1883)

French artist. Doré made his first lithograph at twelve and from his teens maintained a remarkable rate of production, beginning with strip cartoons and finally illustrating a great variety of books, from *Don Quixote* to Perrault's fairy tales. This range means that only a small proportion of his work can be called Gothic, and the situation is further complicated by the fact that he did not engrave his own pictures. Nonetheless, a strain of the macabre and a curious quality of despair runs through much of Doré's art. When making illustrations for Milhouse's *History of the Crusades* (1877), he chose not realism but fantasies of billowy sailing ships, livid skies and shoals of angels. The massings of black in the background commonly add a quality of **horror** while his pictures for the *Divine Comedy* stand as a gloomy monochrome counterpoint to **Botticelli's** lively sadism. His Gothic temper is perhaps best illustrated by his plates for Jerrold's *London – a Pilgrimage* (1870), which contain, among the complacent racegoers and partyers, landscapes of nightmare straight out of the *Carceri* with hints of Gericault's hollow-eyed lunatics and *Nôtre-Dame* style Gothic **romanticism** in the abbeys and distant roofscapes.

### **Dracula** (1897)

Bram Stoker's novel is the first and last masterpiece of **vampire** fiction. It combines the genre's pre-existing elements - the Christian-and-pagan supernaturalism from East European folklore, the association of vampirism and aristocracy from **Byron** as disguised in Polidori's *The Vampyre*, and the erotic ambivalence from **Le Fanu's Carmilla** - in a sustained effort of multi-layering which gives Gothic fiction a good name, backed up with meticulous research into the practicalities of train timetables. Stoker poured into the novel enough malice and frustration, enough variegated themes from politics to personal point-scoring, to keep academics in work as long as we can envisage. Despite later adaptations, this is not a love story but an encounter with evil, power, depravity and infection; what that evil means and includes is open to debate. *Dracula* summarises and transcends its precursors, and renders its successors mere fatuities.

However, the themes and imagery of the story have not been transmitted mainly through the book itself, but through the cinema. The first film adaptation was FW Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), which changed all the circumstantial details for copyright reasons, and its repulsive incarnation of the vampire in Count Orlok has not been widely copied. Instead the seductive Byronic aristocrat has been the dominant image. In 1924 a version was written for the London stage which dressed its Count in an opera cloak, blurring the distinctions between the vampire, **Jekyll and Hyde** and **Jack the Ripper** in the process, and three years later it transferred to Broadway with one Bela Lugosi as its star. Tod **Browning** naturally chose Lugosi as Lon **Chaney's** replacement for the stilted and unsatisfactory **Universal** version of 1931 which, deficient though it may have been, fixed the vampire in the popular imagination as a suave noble with an odd accent, an impression only reinforced by the efficient **Hammer** account of 1958 with Christopher Lee as a technicolour bloodsucker. Francis Ford Coppola attempted to redefine *Dracula* as a lovelorn romantic in his 1992 effort *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, a good-looking but clotted travesty which was far from Stoker's vision of creeping evil. The narrative has yet to be effectively updated.

### **Dreyer, Carl** (1889-1968)

Danish film director. Thanks to uncompromising artiness, Dreyer produced a tiny number of films some of which represent the cinematic apogee of Northern **expressionism**. Whereas most Gothic art is framed in darkness, Dreyer's three spiritual masterpieces, *La Passion de Jeanne D'Arc* (1928), *Vampyr* (1932) and *Vredens Dag* ('Day of Wrath', 1943), are symphonies in white, forcing attention on the individuals and their interior experiences. They are not intended to be comfortable; their beauty is always terrible; their compassion always mercilessly clear-sighted.

### **Dürer, Albrecht** (1471-1528)

German artist. **Worringer** characterised him as 'an absolute martyr' to the clash between Gothic and **classical** aesthetics. Dürer was originally intended for his father's goldsmithing business, but was apprenticed instead to Nuremberg's master painter Wolgemut (whose version of the **Danse Macabre** illustrates the mental environment Dürer was working in). Like other late Gothic **artists** such as **Holbein**, Dürer aimed at an ever more accurate depiction of the physical world, throughout his life drawing with unflinching clarity people, animals, buildings, costume, and, remarkably for the time, himself - from boy to swaggering young man to the decline of middle age. To the **medieval** obsession with decay and death he added a modern conception of the mission of the artist. So far, so Gothic; but from his mid-twenties Dürer began to copy Classical models of ideal proportion, generating a never-to-be-resolved tension in his work. His most important Gothic images are the 'Four Horsemen of

the Apocalypse' (1498), 'The Knight, Death and the Devil' (1513), and 'Melancholia I' (1514), first in a series that never materialised; the first two of these delineate **horror**, and the last **melancholy**, with relish.

### **Egypt**

As well as providing **horror** narratives of mummies coming to life, mysterious curses, and reincarnated princesses, the world's most ancient known literate civilisation has made a notable contribution to Gothic aesthetics. As a touchstone of **occult** mystery and lost knowledge, Egypt can hardly be trumped, and so finds its way into Gothic fiction and art; **Lovecraft's** Chthulhu pantheon, for instance, has more than a touch of the Egyptian gods, **Crowley** pillaged its magical traditions (or what he thought were its magical traditions) for his own, and Anne **Rice** gave her **vampires** a mythological origin in the form of an imaginary pharaonic queen. In fact, the fantasy worlds of many Goth writers (Storm Constantine is a recent instance) seem to arise from the Nile waters. The heavy makeup of female figures in Egyptian art was influential in early twentieth-century Europe, and had an abiding impact on Goth **fashion**, introduced, it would seem, by the Marquesa **Casati**.

### **Eliot, Thomas Stearns** (1888-1965)

British poet, playwright, and critic. To describe the single greatest figure in English letters of the first half of the 20th century as a Gothic writer would be ridiculously reductive, but his is unmistakably the work of a writer with a Gothic turn of mind. Extending even into the apparent Christian calm of the 'Four Quartets', his poetry shows a violence of imagery and a delight in degradation which puts Eliot in the same bracket as the Goth forebears he is fond of quoting, **Dante**, **Baudelaire**, and Webster. Beginning with 'The Waste Land' and the 'Sweeney' poems, Eliot was the first major poet to take simple, everyday human shabbiness and to glaze it with the grandeur of **horror**. He believes people really are 'Bestial as always before, carnal, self-seeking as always before', and that's how he wants them to be. He revels in the drab, paltry sinfulness he pitilessly describes, and so loftily condemns.

### **Ensor, James** (1860-1949)

Belgian artist. A founder member, with Felicien **Rops**, of the group of Belgian modernists called Les Vingt, Ensor hardly ever left his native Ostend and was marked for life by the bizarre environment in which he grew up, the trinket shop owned by his parents. Beginning as an Impressionist, he later became categorised as an **expressionist**, but is perhaps more correctly seen as a throwback to a kind of **Boschian** approach, using fantasy to expose a grotesque and horrific vein in the everyday world. In Ensor's bright and hyper-real paintings, Christ enters Brussels amid a crowd of Victorian ladies and gentlemen, skeletons fight over a piece of fish, and everywhere you look there are *masks* - enigmatic emblems of pretence and hidden meanings.

### **Escher, Mauritz Cornelius** (1898-1972)

Dutch artist. Escher's elegant, meticulous graphic experiments in the representation of space are eminently translatable into poster or postcard form, and some images of impossible staircases and buildings have been used in this way so often that their teeth have been drawn: consequently, we tend to overlook how odd they truly are. In Escher's often beautiful, and usually very peculiar, world, objects and forms morph into one another, realities interpenetrate, and even deeply misleading 'still lives' present exercises in bent perception. This universe of impossibilities delineated with photographic realism is utterly and subtly **uncanny**; anything can happen there.

## expressionism

19th and 20th-century artistic movement, one of history's periodic eruptions of the Gothic sensibility. Groups of German artists such as Die Brücke ('The Bridge'), formed in 1905, and Blaue Reiter ('Blue Riders') of 1911, began to develop a theory of art, and made work deriving from it, in reaction to prevailing Impressionist forms, which stated that artists should attempt to depict the impression made on the senses by real objects as experienced in light. There were two main influences on early expressionism - the discovery of **Munch** and the writings of Wilhelm **Worringer** on Gothic art. The expressionists put the emphasis not on reality as experienced but on the artistic responsibility to penetrate the mere appearance of objects and express their inner significance; it was an ideology adopted by many subsequent artistic movements, with increasing abstraction until the object virtually disappeared within the experience. Human beings *have* to cultivate some positive feeling about their lives, so the 'hidden significance' the expressionists uncovered was generally a negative, jagged and violent one, and the forms they used were bright, extreme, distorted and tense. Like most fledgling artistic parties, the expressionists looked back for forebears and found them in figures such as James **Ensor** as well as Munch. Expressionism approached truth through exaggeration: it was **hysterical**, neither realist nor escapist but trying to reveal unexpected aspects of reality by turning up the dial. Gothic had no such high-minded purpose, but unconsciously acted in a similar way. The strong if gloomy **religious** outlook among early expressionists (for instance, Oskar Kokoscha, Emil Nolde and Ernst Barlach) also helped foster an identification with the Gothic forms of the past.

The close links between expressionism and the Gothic tradition were to emerge most clearly as the latter moved into the cinema. An established visual and literary vocabulary of the **uncanny** was already to hand in Germany thanks to the work of **Hoffmann** and **Friedrich** among others, and this, pushed through the expressionists' distorting lens, gave birth to the 'haunted screen' of early Teutonic film. The key influence here was Berlin theatre director Max Reinhardt whose experiments with light and staging were seen as embodying an expressionist aesthetic although he had nothing to do with the movement formally: many notable actors, directors and designers in the early German cinema worked with him or otherwise absorbed his ideas. The first fully expressionist film, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919) established what was to become the **horror** house style of contrast between light and dark, exaggerated gestures and sets, and a repertoire of imagery such as mirrors and staircases. In 1927 Paul Leni went to Hollywood to direct 'archetypal spooky house comedy horror' *The Cat & The Canary* for **Universal**, and was followed by photographer Karl Freund who had shot *The Golem* (1920) and *Metropolis* (1927) for Fritz Lang and was to shoot *Dracula* (1931) for Universal and *Mad Love* (1935) for MGM, and direct *The Mummy* (1932). The German influence affected James **Whale**, Alfred **Hitchcock**, and the development of **film noir**. Today, if a film-maker's subject is supernatural, or deals with extremity in behaviour or psychology; if it looks to a reality *within* the everyday world, then he will almost inevitably reach for the expressionist rhetoric of exaggeration the cinema established in 1920s Germany.

There were also **musical** reflections of expressionism. Key among these was the groundbreaking modernist ballet of sacrificial rituals in pagan Russia, *The Rite of Spring* (1912). Stravinsky's score, choreographed for the Ballets Russes by Nijinsky, attempted to capture the violence of the Russian spring in music unrestrained by anything beyond its composer's purpose. **Siouxsie and the Banshees** used the sequence 'The Chosen One' as the introit to the Nocturne concerts in 1983.

## **fashion**

Apart from **Pugin** dressing in a monk's habit and the dress affected by **romantic** poets and **decadent** fin-de-siecle fops, Goths adopted no particular sartorial style until the early 1980s, but when they did emerge, these fashions showed the usual tendency to treat the past as a colossal dressing-up box. The female Goth look as defined by Siouxsie **Sioux** had its origins in the heavy black lipstick and eye makeup adopted by early **vamp** actresses, which derived in their turn from the vogue created in European fashion by images from the newly-popularised archaeology of Crete and **Egypt**. A sleeker and cooler variant developed from this via the early female screen **vampires**, themselves heavily influenced by Charles **Addams's** cartoon character Morticia, although this swiftly showed a tendency to self-parody and camp. As far as men were concerned, Peter Murphy of the band **Bauhaus** combined the leather and chains of the punk style with the edgy, angular pastiness of Conrad Veidt's somnambulist Cesare in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* - Bauhaus exhibited a persistent fondness for **expressionist** and early **horror** cinema. Not that this gender coding is particularly strict, male effeminacy being a valued Goth affectation. Images of Sioux and Murphy appeared regularly in the music and mainstream press and had a great impact on the dress of the teenagers who heard their **music**. Sioux, especially, proved remarkably adept at discovering the Gothic implications in styles as variant as **Japonesque** and Weimar **decadence**, and her eclecticism became characteristic of the movement as a whole. However, although Goth fashion had more affinities with the equally eclectic 'New Romanticism' which developed at the same time than either party would like to admit, it sought out imagery that alluded to danger, disturbance, **ambiguity** and **melancholy** rather than merely superficial glamour; the original Egyptienne fashion of the 1910s, indeed, had also exploited its associations with mystery, eroticism, and death. Gothic fashion has carried on drawing in other elements, such as the fetish repertoire, to the point where its diversity is overwhelming, but the keynote is still the drive to discover new signifiers of transgression.

## **Faulkner, William** (1897-1961)

American novelist. His early novels (*Sanctuary*, 1931; *Absalom! Absalom!* 1936) are firmly within the **American** Gothic tradition though he later moved away from it. These books depict a haunted, fervid South that boils with corruption and sin: where **Poe** had looked back to an aristocratic antebellum never-never land, Faulkner turned the South into the anteroom of Hell, an environment which is itself mad, as well as individual characters within it. *Absalom! Absalom!* in particular drew from critics explicit comparisons to the **Gothic novel**, and features an archetypal doomed plantation family marked and destroyed by cruelty, murder, rape and incest, overseen by a brooding and malevolent house.

## **film noir**

A style of movie that developed from French originals, notably 1938's *Quai des Brumes*, and which in Hollywood became a means of exploring pessimism, cynicism, amorality and urban bleakness. The archetypal *noir* featured a labyrinthine plot, criminality, flawed heroes (if any), and a visual repertoire which borrowed elements from the 1930s **horrors** and the **expressionist** cinema of 1920s Germany. Many of the film makers themselves showed this continuity, such as James **Whale's** usual cinematographer Arthur Edson who shot both *The Maltese Falcon* and *Casablanca*, two very lighthearted examples. The style was petering out by the 1950s, but revivals take place periodically, notably Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974) and John Dahl's *The Last Seduction* (1994). Not all these films are Gothic in any way, although David Fincher's *Se7en* (1995), a violently misanthropic detective story involving a suite of grisly murders organised around the Seven Deadly Sins, can fit within

both definitions. However, much *film noir* imagery has definite Gothic tints, in particular the picture of the implacable, pitiless, and rain-lashed city, through which the characters move dwarfed physically and existentially by their resolutely hostile and corrupt environment. Every time this image recurs, whether in *Se7en*, *The Crow* or even the **Burton Batman**, it has *film noir* behind it; and beyond that, the lingering ghosts of *Metropolis* and *M*.

### *Les Fleurs de Mal* (1857)

'The Flowers of Evil', a collection of poetry by Charles **Baudelaire**, composed from the early 1840s and added to for a decade after its original publication. The collection is enormously complex because it deliberately uses multitudinous, conflicting voices, irony and jerking contrasts of tone, but its overall theme might be characterised as the half-willed love for the repulsive, the urge towards degradation. It is a primer of Gothic psychology. *Fleurs de Mal* was soon prosecuted for 'offence to public decency' and six poems were banned (although they did appear in print in 1866). The ruling on two pieces with a lesbian theme was understandable given the times, but this was not the most unsettlingly objectionable element; nor was the repertoire of Gothic imagery, the ghouls, the **vampires**, the moons and graveyards, nor even the relentless dibbling about in the nastier gutters of the modern city. What *Fleurs de Mal* held up for condemnation was sadism of a sort not anticipated in the pantomime theatrics of **de Sade**, both in statement and implication. It came out most clearly in poems such as 'The Carcass', which discusses the sexual charms of a corpse, and 'To one who was too cheerful', hinting at an act it would be difficult to describe openly even today.

Baudelaire combined this embrace of filth with an equally passionate, albeit gloomy, commitment to **Catholic** Christianity. Where earlier Goths had toyed with **horror** for fun, or romanticised sin, Baudelaire dared to acknowledge its authority with bitterness and irony. The pervasive sense of rot in the collection has been a model for **decadent**, and less decadent, Gothic art ever since, taken up by the **Symbolists** and name-checked by figures as diverse as TS **Eliot** and Diamanda **Galás**.

### *Frankenstein* (1818)

Mary **Shelley's** novel, conceived during the famous holiday in the Rhine Valley with the **Byron** entourage, marks the virtual end-point, and the artistic culmination, of the first wave of Gothic literature. The story of the young scientist who creates an artificial man and is then hunted halfway across the globe by the monster, which turns the great achievements of western culture into a critical commentary on human society, and the final dénouement in the wasted landscape of the Arctic, is open to perpetual re-presentation and reinterpretation. It has been seen as an anti-**religious** tract and as an anti-scientific one, for instance; it can be read in a radical way as a fable of an individual's rebellion against an unjust arrangement of things, and conversely in a conservative way as a metaphor for concerns about change running out of control. Like all the greatest Gothic narratives, it produces uncomfortable thoughts. Such contrary reactions underline that this is a layered, complex work, head-and-shoulders above every other **Gothic novel** before it, and an astonishing achievement for a girl not long past twenty, even a well-read one.

Like its genre companion *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* is today most familiar through the cinematic visualisations produced by **Universal Studios**, and directed in this case by James **Whale**, in the 1930s. Glorious though *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein* are in their own right, the monster, as acted by Boris Karloff and made up by Jack Pearce (from motifs drawn from **Goya** and earlier depictions of the **Golem**), becomes in these films not the

articulate blasphemer of the book, but a murderous, if innocent, brute, setting the pattern for subsequent adaptations.

### **Freud, Sigmund (1856-1939)**

Austrian psychotherapist, an unlikely but definite Gothic figure who devoted himself to unearthing the truth behind human behaviour and filled his consulting room with the cult objects of ancient civilisations (especially **Egypt**). Freud studied hysterical patients under Jean-Martin Charcot, and began to speculate that there might be a meaning behind their fantasies. From this single insight he developed the idea of the unconscious, a deep and inarticulate area of the mind where unwanted memories and thoughts are buried; this concept reached its crystallisation in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). The duality between appearance and reality was a longstanding Gothic theme, but Freud contended that this duality went far deeper, and that memories of traumatic events were actively encoded in behaviour. Dreams, phobias, jokes, and feelings of **horror** (analysed in his 1919 paper *Das Unheimliche*, ‘The **Uncanny**’) could all reveal these embedded patterns. In many cases he located original traumas in theories of the development of sexual responses in children. Although most of Freud’s work has been challenged in its detail, the basic discovery of the unconscious remains one of the central concepts of modernity.

Dour and pessimistic (an atheist Jew), Freud was no apostle of liberation as some of his disciples became, but with truly Goth perversity saw psychological repression as wholly necessary to human society. Psychiatrists could provide therapy for individuals, but people would continue inevitably to grow up tyrannised by internal demons, and society would just as inevitably reflect that mechanism. Freud’s central achievement was to convince us of a sort of scientific revision of the Gothic insistence that the dead past can rise again to revenge itself on the present, and that the human soul is terminally divided and radically beyond final redemption; it was the Gothicising of the entire modern world.

### **Friedrich, Caspar David (1774-1840)**

German artist. Friedrich’s artistic credo – ‘if you want to be an artist, watch the voice of your soul, because it is art within yourself’ – marks him out as a thorough **Romantic**. Brought up in the flat landscapes of the Baltic coast, he was rescued from drowning by his brother who, however, perished in the attempt – both experiences seem to mark his art with **melancholy**. Friedrich typically depicted wide, empty landscapes with humanity present in the shape of tiny, brooding figures, making the very Gothic point of subjecting the individual to vast, impersonal forces. In many, however, the keynote is tranquility rather than unease; even dead, snowbound landscapes were in his hands meditations on Christian hope, and in spirit he was close to the Christian **Gothic revivalism** of the **Nazarenes**. His **ruin** pictures (‘The Abbey in the Oakwood’) and other works such as ‘Two Men Looking at the Moon’, had a profound impact on the German visual imagination; they took Salvator **Rosa**’s repertoire of twisted trees and rocks and draped it in mist, and affected first theatre design and then, through that, the **horror** film – a result Friedrich would hardly have intended.

### **‘Funeral March of a Marionette’ (1872)**

Suite by French composer Charles Gounod (1818-93). Gounod was a conventional composer, yet the lugubrious, staccato melody of this single piece, combined with its creepy subject, gives it some Gothic interest. It occurs most familiarly as the theme for Alfred **Hitchcock**’s 1960s TV series.

**Fuseli, Henry** (1741-1825)

Swiss artist. After his death it was said that this former Church minister, tutor and writer had 'made real and visible ... the vague and insubstantial phantoms which haunt like dim dreams the oppressed imagination'. His approach to the **Classical** past (he travelled in Italy from the late 1760s) was like Piranesi's in *Carceri* - it became material for violent fantasies of **ruin** and desolation in a series of depictions of sites, and illustrations for books. Dramatic incidents from Shakespeare (*Macbeth's* witches, spectres, murders) and classical myths were also staples on his work. Fuseli became a professor at the Royal Academy in London in 1799 and its Keeper in 1804, from which position he delivered a series of combative and pugnacious lectures analysing the mechanics of **horror** and superstition. In '**The Nightmare**' (1781) he created one of the most crucial and abiding images of the Gothic tradition.

**Gaiman, Neil** (b.1960)

British writer. Gaiman's prolific output includes radio plays, TV series, journalism, short fiction, and editing a collection of nasty poetry for children (*Now We Are Sick*, 1991), but he is mainly noted for the graphic novels he has produced since the mid-1980s, often in association with artist Dave McKean, and for which he has won numerous awards in various countries. The most famous of these, *Sandman*, and its various off-shoots and sequels, has been especially taken to the bosom of modern Gothdom, not because its themes and concerns exhibit classic Gothic **ambiguity** and contradiction, but because (rather like the work of Poppy Z **Brite**) it is one of the rare pieces of critically-approved art to feature obviously Goth characters. Gaiman and McKean continue to collaborate on Goth children's books including *Coraline* (2002) and *The Wolves in the Walls* (2003).

**Galás, Diamanda** (b.1955)

Greek-American singer. Enormously important although never imitated, this scientifically-qualified, operatically-trained vocal athlete has gathered a reputation as a musical artist of unmatched extremity. In the late 1970s she lent her extraordinary voice to avant-garde composers in a variety of now-lost performances, then turned to her own compositions, articulating madness, disease, and moral outrage at the persecution of the oppressed, whether deviant, sick, or massacred Turkish Armenians. To do this she set to music texts by **Baudelaire** and Gérard de Nerval among others. The keystone of Galás's work is the 1989 *Plague Mass*, a scarifying 'exorcismatory ritual' intended to mourn, celebrate, and encourage dead and living sufferers from AIDS. In recent years her role as a musical interpreter has come more to the fore as she has transformed everything from rock-and-roll to eastern Mediterranean laments into passionate, and sometimes blackly humorous, utterances from fractured souls, including a definitive revision of **Gloomy Sunday**. Galás's work is powered by a conviction that the recitation of words has a palpable and almost magical effect on the real world. Despite having adopted the look of Morticia **Addams** since her mid-teens (and thus a good dozen years before anyone else), she has an appropriately ambiguous relationship with the Goth contingent that forms a significant part of her audience.

**'Garden of Earthly Delights'** (c.1490-1510)

The name given to the most familiar work of Heironymus **Bosch**. The outer leaves of this triptych show God creating the world, a misty, beautiful globe of green fields and rain. Inside the composition opens with the Garden of Eden on the left, in whose verdant paradise God presents Eve to Adam. In the central panel, young and beautiful men and women enjoy

the myriad pleasures of a sensual landscape - playing and lovemaking in pools and streams, and feasting on huge, succulent fruits. Finally the right-hand section presents what is possibly art's most violent depiction of Hell, in the centre of which Bosch places an enigmatic figure which may represent himself.

Aside from its obviously **puritanical** message - that to turn aside from God's ordinances and devote oneself to sensual delusions is to exchange paradise for damnation - this painting is riddled with symbolic meanings the exegesis of which can and has occupied whole books. It is not only its deranged violence that makes it a great and abiding Gothic image, but also its **ambiguity**. Death and evil are already present in Eden, in the shape of animals feeding on one another (which most **medieval** theologians insisted was a consequence of the Fall of Man), and Bosch seems to take an equal delight in depicting both sin and its punishments. If the 'Tree-Man' figure does represent the painter, his willingness to locate himself in Hell underlines the point that the man who so condemned earthly delights also felt them just as strongly - a self divided.

### **Giger, Hans Reudi** (b.1940)

Swiss artist. One may well presume Mr Giger not to be entirely a well man. Not usually conceived of as a Gothic artist, his development shows readily how a morbid imagination can collect a heterogeneous range of reference points and bend them to a distressing purpose. Those references originally included **surrealism**, **Catholicism** and **horror** film, although they were literary as much as visual. Giger's mature work (before late 1980s experiments with different forms) depicts a phantasmagoric and nightmarish landscape, a baleful sexual maelstrom in which bodies, machinery, weapons, and structures mingle and interpenetrate. He is most familiar to the general public through his designs for the 1979 horror sci-fi movie *Alien*.

### **'Gloomy Sunday'** (1936)

'The sensational Hungarian suicide song', as it was marketed in English, was composed by Rezső Seress, a club singer and pianist in Budapest, with lyrics by László Javor. Unapologetically, 'Gloomy Sunday' revels in morbid imagery and self-pity, and promotes suicide as a congenial solution to paralysing **melancholy**. It provoked a wave of self-slaughter on its original release as a record, and was banned under the Communists in Hungary and from American radio, although a bowdlerised version was recorded by Billie Holiday. The song has been revised and redefined by Gitane Demone, late of **Christian Death**, US Goth goddess Lydia Lunch, and Diamanda **Galás**.

### **Golem**

In the Bible (as in Psalm 139) and Hebraic literature, *golem* means 'incomplete thing'; in the **Middle Ages** it entered Jewish folklore as an animable clay figure, brought to life by a magician or rabbi by means of the Name of God written on a paper or tablet and placed in the statue's mouth or on its forehead. The most famous story of this kind involved Rabbi Judah ben Loewe who animated a Golem to protect the Jews of 16th-century Prague. This tale was novelised by Gustav Meyrink in 1915 and filmed in 1914 and 1920. The monster as shown in the latter version was a strong influence behind **Universal's Frankenstein**.

### **Golden Dawn**

This **occultist** group is not strictly part of the Gothic tradition but must be mentioned owing to the influence of its members on it. 'The Isis-Urania Temple of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn' was established in London in 1888 by two occultists, SL 'Macgregor'

Mathers and Wynn Westcott, and was at first essentially a combination of a secret club like many others and a network for studying magical traditions. The Order combined the magical ideas of Eliphas Lévi (1810-75) with Rosicrucian and Masonic elements, occult systems trawled from obscure writings, and gleanings from seances and clairvoyance sessions, and turned to practical magic in the 1890s. Its membership included writers such as WB Yeats and Arthur Machen, and Aleister **Crowley** derived many of his magical views from his time in it. The Order had disintegrated in factions by 1903.

### **Gorey, Edward** (1925-2000)

American author and cartoonist. Like his compatriot Charles **Addams**, Gorey works through understatement. His vaguely Edwardian never-never land of heavy curtains, neglected children, undesirable villas, and failed writers in bath chairs, is an eccentric mask for a black and perverse world whose horrors somehow go unnoticed by its mournful, emotionally-deadened inhabitants. The hilarious and deft parody of a never-quite-real reality sometimes becomes so understated that the humour disappears entirely ('The people at the grey hotel/ Are either aged or unwell'); the delicate illustrations form a perfect unity with the subject matter, and contain morbidities hidden carefully at edges and among dense cross-hatching. Then, into this campery, Gorey lays occasional landmines of true nastiness, usually involving the death of a child and making the perusal of his work a somewhat guilty pleasure. This tendency is clearest in *The Gashlycrumb Tinies* (1963), a morbid alphabet in rhyming couplets in which one child is despatched for each letter ('A is for Amy who fell down the stairs'), culminating in a meticulous drawing of twenty-six little gravestones. Gorey naturally hated being pigeonholed as a 'Gothic' artist, yet stated that his main purpose was 'to make people uneasy' on the very Gothic grounds that 'we should all be more uneasy ... because we are all, in a sense, living on the edge'. His quest not to be thought a Goth was hardly assisted by agreeing to design the sets for a stage production of *Dracula* in his local Cape Cod theatre, which were entirely black and white save for one red detail in each scene.

### **Gormenghast**

Trilogy of novels by British writer and artist Mervyn **Peake**, comprising *Titus Groan* (1946), *Gormenghast* (1950) and *Titus Alone* (1956). Written in heightened but controlled language, the sequence revels in obsessive yet never quite irrelevant detail. *Gormenghast* is a mile-long, decaying castle in which every position, down to the men who scrub the kitchens, is hereditary, and the core of its life is the performance of intricate, meaningless rituals. Through this world of tatty, mummified grandeur rise Titus, the heir to the Earldom of Groan, and Steerpike, the calculating social climber. The third novel concerns Titus's escape to the outside world; illness prevented Peake reworking it and it remains a draft in a very different tone from the others, and the BBC's recent adaptation of the sequence (2000) omitted it entirely.

An extraordinary work which divides its readers, *Gormenghast* is fantastical yet its fancies never stray beyond the bounds of possibility; as a result the over-writing achieves an hallucinatory hyper-realism in which colours are brighter, beauty is more melancholy, and violence more shocking than in the real world. Critics commonly complain that the characters have no depth and are mere marionettes animated by moral forces outside them; yet the sheer weight of the vision and the language, chiefly invested in the castle itself, tether them to the narrative and prevent it ever lifting off into sheer whimsy. For all its apparent eccentricities, *Gormenghast* is a dark landscape, a misanthropic horror shot through with shafts of compassion and hope.

## Gothic novels

Horace **Walpole's** *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) has always been taken as the first 'Gothic novel', and this position has not yet been challenged, although antecedents in the field of 'supernatural fiction' have recently been brought to the fore. The word was applied to *Otranto* and later its imitators because of the exotic and antique settings of these works - the castles and abbeys of the Catholic and medieval past. There were in fact few 'Gothic novels' proper until the mid-1780s; instead there were historical romances incorporating Gothic elements, taking their models from 16<sup>th</sup>-century chivalric epics by Torquato Tasso, or Edmund Spenser's *The Fairie Queen*, and of course Shakespeare. However, the pace quickened as Edward Burke's 1757 essay on the **Sublime** and similar theoretical analyses of fear and terror justified fiction writers in feeling more and more free to present horrid incidents and imagery as the 18th century wore on, taking a lead from *Otranto* but soon replacing its fey campiness with objects of violence and decay. The English original Gothics, whether the polite mystery thrillers of Ann **Radcliffe** or the meatier and more lush delights of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1798) were themselves outpaced in **horror** paraphernalia by the *frénétique* school of France and the *shauerromantik* style of Germany. In **America**, conversely, early Gothic novelists excised the supernatural elements fashionable in Europe and located terror in the mind and the family instead.

By the 1810s the Gothic novel, its conventions repeated in thousands of pulp works churned out by chapbook authors, was so coarsened and stereotyped that Jane Austen was able to satirise it in *Northanger Abbey*. Taste was about to turn against its excesses, and in Mary **Shelley's** *Frankenstein* (1818) it reached an artistic and chronological climax. Yet, although the first wave of Gothic fiction was past, it had made possible a self-conscious indulgence in horror, and had legitimised the thrilling shudder at the prospect of death or harm. Its conventions had worked so far into popular culture that future works of pessimistic and horrific fiction could be called 'Gothic' with some degree of legitimacy, although not forming any part of the original continuum. Modern writers who have worked fairly closely within the traditional confines of Gothic include Patrick **McGrath** and Angela Carter.

## Gothic Revival

Traditional Gothic **architectural** styles fell into disuse across Europe from the mid-16th century, to be replaced by those derived from the **Classical** past. In England the transition was dramatised by the process of the Reformation, which left the country scattered with the **ruins** of the dissolved monasteries and abbeys; Gothic survived in vernacular building, and the rare Gothic church was still constructed into the 1650s, but in general the style was already being associated with **melancholy** and antiquity when Shakespeare mentioned the 'bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang' in the 73rd Sonnet. The phrase 'Gothic Revival' was coined later to refer to the resurgence of the style from the mid-1700s onwards.

At first this was fairly frivolous in nature. Gothic was only one of a number of architectural styles adopted for the follies and eye-catchers erected in aristocratic gardens (the earliest may have been Vanburgh's sham castle built at Castle Howard in 1719), but it slowly became obligatory for gloomy fake ruins as **romanticism** took hold and Gothic became inextricably linked with the contemplation of human frailty and mutability via literary precedents such as the work of the **graveyard poets**. The next step was for Gothic to move back into domestic architecture through the examples of grand houses such as **Walpole's** Strawberry Hill (1740s) and **Beckford's** Fonthill Abbey (from 1799), as it acquired moods ranging from the tyrannous to the camp.

The revival turned serious from the 1830s. Thanks to the eccentric brilliance of **Pugin** and the researches of the Cambridge Camden Society - the Ecclesiologists - Gothic began to displace all other styles as the only correct and proper mode for building churches, and its dominance in England and the British Empire was not broken until the 1930s. Its triumph was fuelled by the High Church revival which looked back to the **Middle Ages** for spiritual inspiration. From churches, Gothic quickly began to express itself in the form of public buildings from town halls to railway stations. It was a particularly Anglophone phenomenon, although there were Gothic practitioners elsewhere, such as Eugene Viollet-le-Duc in France. Today, Gothic has once again gone into complete architectural eclipse. It is considered so tainted by cliché that when the BBC came to adapt Mervyn **Peake's** *Gormenghast* books the designers deliberately ensured there wasn't a single pointed arch in the entire set.

### **Gothic Society**

Begun as the personal project of British author Jennie Gray in 1990, the Gothic Society was organised round *The Goth*, which Gray admitted was 'a cobbled-up masquerade of a magazine'. At first affected and arch beyond belief (the first issue invented a fictitious history for itself involving a manuscript which had passed through the hands of Richard III, Horace **Walpole**, Mary **Shelley** and Oscar **Wilde**), the journal soon attracted an international membership of some academic weight. The Society provided a more informal means of discussing Goth culture than the **International Gothic Association** which was started soon after it, and added to a basically literary Gothicism associated themes of folklore, history, art, medicine and (as Gray put it) 'anything scented by the rising effluvia of the tomb'. By 1998 the magazine (now renamed *Udolpho*) was closed by its founder to concentrate on publishing. The Society's associated press, the Gargoyle's Head, published works including a selection of poetry by **Beddoes**, *Resurrection Songs*.

### **Goya [y Lucientes], Francisco de (1746-1828)**

Spanish artist. No one would have given Goya a place in the history of the Gothic imagination on the basis of his early work - the standard, albeit competent, religious art; the luminous and gay depictions of Spanish life; or the elegant court portraits. Whatever Gothic tendencies he had were brought out by events. Goya was in the uncomfortable position of a liberal who, as painter to the Spanish royal household, was at the heart of one of Europe's more backward and repressive regimes. Detesting equally the conservatism of the Spanish state and the excesses of democratic action demonstrated by the French Revolution, he turned to art to express these disconcerting tensions. Seeing no way out of his contradictions, Goya's work began to exhibit bleakness and pessimism. Going deaf in 1792 only increased his sense of isolation.

In 1799 Goya published 80 etchings entitled *Caprices*, and took out a newspaper advert to announce his satirical intentions. The pictures denounced human stupidity and vice, often through animal figures, hobgoblins, and witches, in a tone which varies between anger and mockery. Most famously, no.50 depicts noblemen reduced to paralysed imbecility with ears padlocked against the truth of reason, an image which affected **Universal's** portrayal of *Frankenstein*; while no.43 **ambiguously** warns '**The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters**'.

*The Disasters of War*, composed in 1810-12 (with a set of anti-Church satires later appended), was never intended for publication. As a private reaction to the brutality unleashed by the Peninsular War, the prints and their short, despairing titles give the horrors a universal significance ('It's always happening', no.8; 'For this you were born', no.12).

Where the *Caprices* offered progressive satire with a certain swagger, *Disasters* is instead the anguished vision of a liberal who can see only universal suffering and who can locate virtue nowhere except in individual acts of courage and mercy ('It is not possible to look', no.26; 'No one can help them', no.60). This truly Gothic ambiguity and strain dispenses with decorative grotesqueries and leaves only the rawness of human suffering.

After a severe illness in 1819 Goya retired to his house outside Madrid and 'decorated' it with the 'Black Paintings', a collection of despairing murals which plumbed the well of his fear, hatred and horror of stupidity and cruelty. Criticisms of superstition are pretty obvious - the pilgrims at San Isidore's shrine and the Devil's eager congregation are crowds of smeared, mingled faces which all resemble chance conjunctions of whites and browns on an artist's palette - but others are utterly enigmatic. The most horrible of all has been called 'Saturn Devouring one of his Children' in reference to **Classical** myth, but the mad, desperate figure gnawing the small corpse had no title and the image remains one of meaningless horror.

For many years, ironically, Goya was known more for these private visions than his public work (which, despite his political beliefs, he continued throughout the Bourbon monarchy, the Bonaparte regime and the return of the Bourbons), and was celebrated by Goths as a result. **Baudelaire** called his work 'a nightmare full of things unknown - of human embryos cooked in the midst of witches' sabbats' although no such scene occurs anywhere in Goya's *oeuvre*. Huysmans likened his images to the stories of **Poe**. What endures, however, is the comfortless prospect of pain - one of the highest expressions of the Gothic temper.

### Grand-Guignol

French theatre. From 1897 to 1962 the little establishment at the end of the Rue Chaptal in Paris developed a dramatic style of bloody spectacle and secured an important place in the development of the Gothic tradition. The earlier Gothic drama of the **Jacobean** or **Gothic novelists** such as '**Monk**' Lewis incorporated supernatural events as a matter of course, but the Grand-Guignol preferred realism - the nightmare of human extremity, cruelty and desire, and it is to this, rather than spooks and cobwebs, that it has lent its name. It provided a means for popularising elements of the literary Gothic canon, including stories by **Poe** and Octave Mirbeau's *Le Jardin des Supplices*, and its short plays (sometimes performed three an evening, interspersed with comedies) borrowed Gothic themes as varied as premature burial and mutilation. In turn, Grand-Guignol plays were transferred to film and its melodramatic house style was influential at the bloodier end of **expressionist** cinema; in fact, it made **horror** cinema possible by extending the dramatic vocabulary of violence, as well as pioneering the special effects demanded by such horrid acts (*Mad Love* - the 1935 version of *The Hands of Orlac* story - features a horror theatre clearly based on the Grand-Guignol, complete with an in-house nurse just as its real-life model kept a doctor on standby to assist the audience). The theatre's influence continued through short-lived satellite houses in Rome, New York, and London.

The Grand-Guignol was widely criticised for its unapologetic mingling of the sexual and the violent, and if Gothic involves witnessing 'the undoing of the human', such unsettling has seldom been made as graphic as on its stage. The **ambiguity** was only intensified by the fact that the theatre was housed in a converted chapel, retaining a scent of incense and candlewax - 'like plunging into a tomb', as patrons recalled.

### Graveyard Poets

18th-century British poetic school. The chief characteristic of so-called 'graveyard poetry' was the use of Gothic imagery to meditate on themes of human vanity, time and eternity. As

such it continued a tradition of **melancholic** verse with a noticeably richer mixture of that imagery. Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1751) ('from yonder ivy-mantled Tow'r/The moeping Owl does to the Moon complain') made the graveside the fashionable place to write poetry, and the work of this friend of Horace **Walpole** has tended to overshadow such pieces as Robert Blair's 'The Grave' (1743) and Edward Young's 'Night Thoughts' (1742-5). 'Night Thoughts', a vast collection of disparate meditations on various gloomy subjects, was possibly the most influential poem of its time; it is now somewhat indigestible in its length, but contains numerous impeccably Gothic moments, such as the horrible vision of 'The World a Grave', which echoes **Poe's** 'Premature Burial'. For the most part, the Graveyard School was putting Gothic to the service of a rather commonplace and unremarkable Christianity (although there are points of strain in 'Night Thoughts'). By the end of the 1700s 'The Grave', the 'Elegy' and 'Night Thoughts' could all be found in anthologies of 'improving' verse (**Blake** was commissioned to illustrate both Blair and Young) and a taste for the macabre was *de rigueur* even for such forgotten poets as Bishop Beilby Porteous ('Through cloysters drear/And charnels pale ...With silent glance, I seek the shadowy vale/Of death') and Miss Carter ('This yon dark grove of mournful yews/With solitary steps I muse/By thy direction led:/Here, cold to pleasure's tempting forms/Consociate with my sister worms/And mingle with the dead').

### **Hallowe'en**

**Religious** festival. Celebrations in a variety of northern-hemisphere cultures around the time of the Autumnal Equinox have their origins in the idea of marking the start of winter, a threatening season of dearth and darkness. Hence the time was associated with customs involving fire and light, and the consumption of certain sorts of food; given that winter is the season when the earth itself appears to die, it was also natural that the dead should be thought to return as it begins. This original pagan festival, as with so many calendar customs, was given a theological gloss by the early Christian Church, and came to be understood as the time when dead loved ones should especially be prayed for. Instituted in the early 800s, the feast of All Saints commemorated the dead in heaven, while All Souls Day following it included a Requiem Mass for those whose fate was less certain. The old pagan customs, with or without their Christian rationale, were shunted to the day before these solemn observances, All Hallows Eve. **Catholic** countries have tended to maintain the linkage, Mexico's **Dia de los Muertos** being a particularly exuberant instance, but in Protestant ones the Church's embarrassment at its old habit of enrolling pagan beliefs and customs in its own service has led to a re-paganising of Hallowe'en. The Christian Church now seems positively terrified by the spooky paraphernalia of the festival, and since 1955 even the use of black vestments for the All Souls Mass has been increasingly replaced by the more upbeat white. All this naturally makes Hallowe'en the pivot of the Gothic year, the occasion when the forces of darkness, human and supernatural, are simultaneously celebrated, mocked, and defeated. **Dracula** was slain on Hallowe'en, Diamanda **Galás** always holds a concert on that evening in the belief that the veil between the living and the dead she mourns is lowered, and the Goth festival at **Whitby** includes it. We could multiply these instances, if we chose.

### **Hammer**

British film production company. Hammer was founded in 1947 and, until beginning a series of films based on the BBC *Quatermass* serials in 1955, made movies across a variety of genres; it continued to do so to some degree, even after its name became synonymous with period **horror**. The first of these, *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) brought together

the actors who would become Hammer's star double-act, Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee; they met again in the following year's *Dracula*. Over the next 18 years Hammer reinterpreted many great Gothic narratives, in films often directed by the prolific Terence Fisher, among others - *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Mummy* (1959), *Curse of the Werewolf* and *The Two Faces of Dr Jekyll* (1960) - adapted Dennis Wheatley's *The Devil Rides Out* (1968), and even dared to rehash James **Whale's** *The Old Dark House* (1966). By the early 1970s Hammer's trademark of elegant and bloody eroticism had affected the cinema to the extent that it was outflanked both by cheaper rivals who were prepared to be more explicit, and mainstream ones who could afford higher production values; its last film was made in 1976.

Hammer's output was more straight horror than Gothic as such (it is worth a comparison with Roger **Corman's** mid-1960s adaptations of Edgar Allan **Poe**): what it achieved was to translate the idioms of the 1930s **Universal horrors** to the taste of modern audiences, especially by making the sexual tones of the great narratives more obvious. The presentation of *Dracula* in the form of Lee was made doubly seductive by the lush and opulent atmosphere, and was perhaps Hammer's most successful redefinition.

### *Hands of Orlac* (1920)

Gothic narrative, originating in a novel *Les Mains d'Orlac* by Maurice Renard. The story concerns a pianist whose hands are replaced after an accident by those of a murderer; the hands prove to retain the spirit of their original owner. It marks the transfer of the old idea of spiritual possession of the soul, already rendered in physical terms by Stevenson in *Jekyll & Hyde*, to an entirely materialistic form. The notion of character traits being transmitted through body parts draws on very primitive notions of the personality residing in the heart or brain, but adds a further Gothic element by giving the transplanted appendages a life independent of their new host. The unsettling possibilities of the narrative were soon perceived and in 1925 the director of *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, Robert Wiene, produced a similarly **expressionist** film version featuring the same star actor, Conrad Veidt. A 1935 Hollywood treatment, directed by Karl Freund, shifted attention to the demented surgeon, played in unhealthy fashion by Peter Lorre. As well as further remakes, 'The Hands of Orlac' has become the ancestor of numerous related tales in which bodies are unnaturally invaded by the demonic.

### **Hardy, Thomas** (1840-1928)

British novelist and poet. A Dorset village stonemason's son who was more bright than was good for him, Hardy began a career as an architect's assistant, a trade allowing him to develop a deep sympathy for Gothic **architecture** which materialised and exacerbated an already gloomy temperament. The suicide of a mentor, loss of faith, and later a barely endurable marriage all increased Hardy's scepticism, pessimism, and weary resignation in the face of the implacable operations of fate. Those operations loomed large in his novels, where the destinies of the characters often rested on minor chance events which none of them could control; his poetry exhibited a general grey miserableness, often musing on mortality and loss with a hard, realistic understatement distinguishing it from (for instance) the hyperbolic enthusiasm of the **graveyard** school.

As his fame grew, Hardy became more daring. 1891 saw the publication of the collection of short stories, *A Group of Noble Dames*, including 'Barbara of the House of Grebe', a sadistic tale which fell well within Gothic conventions and was later denounced by TS **Eliot** as 'a work of pure evil'. Later that year, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* provoked a storm of criticism for its insistence on the unquenchable virtue of a woman who bears an illegitimate

child and commits murder, ending with its heroine on a gallows and the vicious phrase ‘the President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess’. This was as nothing, however, to the outrage which greeted Hardy’s masterpiece of Gothic realism, *Jude the Obscure*, in 1895: the Bishop of Wakefield threw his copy in the fire. Not even the polite circumlocutions of Victorian fiction could veil the horrific persecution visited upon the autodidact stonemason Jude in his deluded quest to join Oxford academia: he is hounded through romantic disappointment, penury, and the suicide of children, to his own death mocked by the rejoicing of the city which has rejected him. The reaction to the book was so violent that Hardy resolved never to write prose again, although by 1910 the Establishment had rehabilitated him enough to award him the Order of Merit.

### **Hawthorne, Nathaniel** (1804-64)

American novelist. In his occasional relationship to the Gothic tradition, he was something of a New England counterpart of **Faulkner**; where the later author explored the fervid heat of the South, Hawthorne assimilated the **Puritan** history of the early colonies. *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) is a study of Puritan hypocrisy: whereas Hester Prynne bears the red A of the adulterer openly on her breast and suffers for it, her partner in sin, the Rev Dimmesdale, conceals the mark mysteriously burned into his flesh, is praised and flattered, but ends consumed by guilt. More obviously Gothic, Hawthorne’s second novel, *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) presents a typical cursed family, the Pyncheons, blighted by the possession of their rotting mansion which is built on land stolen from its rightful owners in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The classic themes of **American Gothic** are already present here, and the novel looks back to those of Charles Brockden **Brown**, and forward to Faulkner’s *Absalom! Absalom!*

### **Hitchcock, Alfred** (1899-1980)

British-born film director. It would be, and for some writers has been, tempting to overplay the Gothic elements in Hitchcock’s psyche and ascribe them to his solitary **Catholic** boyhood, especially as he enjoyed playing the twisted cinematic monster and allowing stories to spread to that effect. His famous characterisation of actors as ‘cattle’ has enabled him to be portrayed as a dictatorial sadist, but most of the time he was a mixture of craftsman and showman. Certainly he treated thrillers, comedies, romances and dramas with the same care he devoted to what has become thought of as his more characteristic work. Still, that technical proficiency itself owed much to the Gothic tradition; his 1925 visit to Germany exposed him to the pioneers of the **expressionist** school of film-making which was to colour his output ever after. More importantly, his chosen projects showed a consistent interest in menace and morbidity. The first film which he claimed to have made entirely his own, *The Lodger* (1926), was a serial-killer narrative subtitled ‘A Story of the London Fog’; its theme of a man falsely accused of a crime, and its atmosphere of shrieking paranoia re-emerges in later films. By the late 1940s Hitchcock was successful enough to pursue his own enthusiasms without interference, and these more personal films are now regarded as his most characteristic. *Rope* (1948), a famous experiment with the ten-minute take, was based on the Leopold-Loeb murder case; the action takes place around a chest containing a corpse. *Rear Window* (1953) examined the paranoia of a crippled man convinced he is observing a killing in the planning. *Psycho* (1960) has been described as ‘the ultimate German expressionist film’ and used Gothic conventions in a tricky and mischievous manner. The two finest films in this sequence are the least obvious. *Vertigo* (1957) presented a leading character embroiled in sexual obsession and power struggles, moving through an expressionist *chiaroscuro* landscape which seems to embody an

oppressive, unavoidable fate. The queasiness of nightmare soaks the whole movie, particularly as an initially sympathetic, if flawed, hero starts to behave as a sadistic Pygmalion. Finally, *The Birds* (1962) deftly laid out an apocalyptic vision in which appalling violence erupts into the everyday world with the most familiar and innocent creatures as its agents, and leaves its audience unable to view their surroundings in quite the same complacent way again. Despite some critics finding a sociological meaning in the film, on the surface there is no explanation, there is no point: this is the most pared and disturbing manifestation of the Gothic, shorn of all the comforting, camp paraphernalia whose appearance we can cheerfully laugh at. *The Birds*, additionally, laid the cornerstone of the Hitchcock legend, as he made his leading actress Tippi Hedren pose for publicity shots with the birds she loathed, and visited cinematic suffering on her, and on children, at every opportunity.

From 1954 to 1965 Hitchcock fronted a series of unsettling tales for American TV, entitled *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. In a way these summed up the spirit of the man more succinctly than anything else. Although he rarely had anything to do with the stories themselves, he selected Gounod's lugubriously jaunty '**Funeral March of a Marionette**' as the theme tune, having remembered it being played to accompany FW Murnau's *Sunrise* in silent film days, and arranged little introductory vignettes that exhibited a lipsmacking morbidity and sense of mischief which was entirely typical. In one, the insouciant Hitchcock introduces the story tied to a railway track as a train toots in the distance; in another, he prepares to be sawn in half by a magician; and in a third he explains the co-operative, friendly atmosphere he encourages while film-making, getting up from his director's chair a split second before a sound boom crashes into it. It is worth recalling that he described *Psycho* as a comedy.

### **Hoffmann, Ernst Theodor Amadeus (1776-1822)**

German writer and composer. Apart from an interlude as a theatrical music director, most of Hoffmann's career was spent in the legal profession; he wrote in his spare time. His outright Gothic works were few. *The Devil's Elixir* (1815-16) is a more fantastical counterpart of Lewis's *The Monk*; in it, the monk Medardus is inveigled into drinking the potion of the title, which is apparently left over from the **Temptation of St Anthony**, and its taint launches him into a life of crime and evil. The novel abounds in murders, revivifications, and mysterious doubles. 'The Sandman' (1816), published in the story-collection *Night Fragments*, tells the tale of the haunted Nathanael, driven to madness and death by ingrained fears. The rest of Hoffmann's output, imaginative, intricate stories of fantasy, provided German art, literature, music and film with a repertoire of **uncanny** imagery to which they continually returned. Eventually, any somewhat dark whimsy could be described as 'Hoffmannesque' before 'Gothic' displaced the word. Perhaps most familiarly, Tchaikovsky used a story from *The Serapion Brethren* (1819) as the basis of the *Nutcracker* suite (1892).

### **Holbein, Hans (1497/8-1543)**

German artist. Holbein's father, uncle and brother were all artists in a traditional **medieval** Gothic mode, but he moved away from its forms, translating them into an obsessive hyper-realism which was already well developed early in his career. His first notable work was a 'Dead Christ' (1517), but contact with humanist circles encouraged his interest in portraiture (Erasmus was a favourite sitter) rather than religious subjects, which he later abandoned entirely. A recapitulation of the Dead Christ, painted in 1521, is so bleakly hopeless that the sight of it 'almost' destroyed the faith of Prince Mishkin, in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. Coupled with Holbein's concern for photographic detail was a grim sensibility, revealed in

the *trompe l'oeil* skull in 'The Ambassadors' (1533), and his treatment of the **Danse Macabre** (published 1538). This urge to face and depict uncomfortable human reality distinguished the final flowering of late Gothic **art** from **Classical** idealism. From 1537 Holbein was court painter to Henry VIII.

### **horror**

The early theorists of Gothic writing at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century made a distinction between 'horror' and 'terror', seeing in the latter a relationship to Edmund Burke's notion of the **sublime**. Burke had alleged that the Sublime relied for its effects on 'some measure of obscurity'. In an essay published posthumously in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1826, Ann **Radcliffe** speculated that horror was the feeling consequent on the perusal of known evils, while terror depended on the apprehension of the unknown; 'where lies the great difference between horror and terror, but in uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreader evil'. The distinction was drawn to set apart Mrs Radcliffe's own politer output from the trashier and more explicit stuff which imitated it; it remains useful, for though 'Gothic' and 'horror' are often used as if the words were synonyms, differences can be discerned in most artistic forms.

Gothic's essence lies in morbidity – the sentiment that things are out of place, opening up the possibility that reality is not what we thought. This process of existential unsettlement relies more on suggestion and implication than explicit statement, while the characteristic mechanism of horror is a positive turning-away from a perceptible, repugnant object; the **ambiguous** quality of Gothic is often to question whether simple repugnance can be taken at face value. Thus we might say that Horror states 'It's coming to get you!' while Gothic insists 'You *want* it to come and get you!' There is, however, a close relationship between the two, since the **uncanny** effect of Gothic relies on periodic glimpses of the explicit threat that horror provides (the ghost stories of MR **James** provide useful illustrations).

The tension is commonly resolved in either of two Gothically appropriate ways. Firstly, horrific events can be described in cool, meticulous detail, an unflinching depiction which leaves the imagination overwhelmed with precision. Secondly, they can be draped with lyricism and rendered into a sickly beauty. In literary terms, some of Poppy Z **Brite's** work supplies good examples of the former tactic, while Dario Argento's queasy triumph *Suspiria* (1976) provides a cinematic lesson in the relationship of Gothic with horror. The few episodes of extreme bloodiness inform the rest of the film in which terrible incidents are hinted at but do not occur, round the corners and in the shadows of an extraordinary visual environment modelled on a **colour** palette derived from *Snow White*. Gothic here, as elsewhere, is pegged into horror, but not limited to or defined by it.

### ***The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901-2)**

Arthur Conan Doyle was heartily glad to have killed off Sherlock Holmes at the Reichenbach Falls in 1892, but found himself so captivated by the folktales he encountered on holiday of the spectral dogs of Norfolk and Devon, and by the monstrous geography of Dartmoor, that he had to write 'a real creeper' for *the Strand* magazine to get it out of his system - so intensely dramatic a tale, as it turned out, with not only a supernatural beast but an isolated community guarding its secrets, a cursed family, and all around murderous **nature** in the form of the fog-clung Moor, that it required the charismatic Holmes's resurrection to deal with it. Although the Hound is revealed as palpable and natural enough, the delicious atmospheric and sense of dread are what everyone remembers, particularly if they've seen the 1939 film adaptation in which Nigel Bruce neglects to make Watson quite as overpoweringly clueless as he later became. The 1959 **Hammer** version brings out the

implied class-conflict, a **political** reading in which the curse becomes a retribution on the oppressive Baskervilles.

### *House of Leaves* (2000)

Mark Z Danielewski's novel is, arguably, the most original contribution to Gothic literature for a century. Critically acclaimed and already subject to academic scrutiny, it appears set for great influence.

The story updates and transforms older Gothic narratives. In 1990, photo-journalist Will Navidson moves into a new home in Virginia with his family; they soon discover that the house contains topographical paradoxes. The consequent events are subject to four layers of interpretation: Navidson's own film; the blind scholar Zampanó's super-annotated account of the film and its academic commentaries; the gloss on Zampanó's notes by the erudite waster Johnny Truant; and the interjections of the reticent 'Editors'.

Its effect is worrying. Just as the impossible geography of the house opens out into empty eternity, so the book itself expands into unimagined inner space, tempting towards the Charybdis of obsession: its mock-erudition, its mixture of real and fake references, its crazy typography, are a landscape of incipient madness recalling other damned books of Gothic fiction - **Lovecraft's** *Necronomicon*, Chambers's *The King in Yellow*. Just as we begin to glimpse an explanation, a means of escape, the Editors quietly bring in their 'contrary evidence' - and the walls and doors of the house reconfigure themselves again.

Danielewski's sister Anna performs as a goth-oriented **musician** under the name of **Poe**, and in 2001 released a widely-acclaimed second album, *Haunted*, several tracks of which made explicit reference to her brother's novel. With admirable pretention it was released on **Halloween**, the day the novel's narrative ends.

### **hysteria**

Gothic regularly goes over the top, and excess is one of its chief mechanisms. Its matter is extremity of passion and thought, and a sense of lack of control is integral to much of Gothic art, though the relationship is similar to that of Gothic with **horror** – Gothic's customary mode of hints and implications only works when underpinned by its own potential dissolution in hysteria, while the currency of hysteria is debased if overused. In Gothic art, then, hysterical collapse is present usually in suggestion, and thus 'Hysteria' in a Gothic sense can also be used more subtly, to suggest a state in which a violent and extreme reality is hidden beneath an outwardly placid surface, but inescapably suggested by oddities in that surface – for instance, the peculiar geometry of **Japanese** traditional costume. It is 'suspense' – something is going to happen, something objectionable.

### **International Gothic Association**

Academic organisation. The IGA was founded in 1991, the chief movers being Drs A. Lloyd-Smith and V. Sage at the University of East Anglia, and provides a forum for investigation into 'Gothic fiction, film and theatre since the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and the sources and off-shoots of them' via its biennial conference and journal, *Gothic Studies*. The IGA's scope is largely confined to the UK and North America, though there are members in many other countries, and its field of interest is admirably broad. The organisation feeds the self-awareness of Gothic studies world-wide, and more courses examining the genre continue to be arranged.

## Isenheim Altarpiece

Artwork commissioned by the Antonin friars of the priory-hospital of Isenheim in Alsace, painted by Matthias Grunewald between about 1510 and 1516. The altarpiece, made for the hospital chapel, depicts Saints Sebastian and Antony, scenes from the life of the latter (particularly the **Temptation**), the Nativity, the Annunciation, the luminous Resurrection of Christ – and the most horrific depiction of Jesus’s crucifixion ever attempted. It is this hideous image which has proved so influential and inescapable. Christ’s body, livid, wasted and discoloured, is all but dead, pricked and stuck in every part by the scourging thorns, mottled with gangrenous wounds, the muscles stretched and knotted; the hands and feet contort around grinding nails in an effort to escape implacable pain; the crosspiece bows like a roofbeam. Below, an ashen-faced Mary faints in the arms of St John, and the Magdalene kneels, strained and elongated in grief. If we are ever led to look away from the Man of Sorrows, the stern figure of John the Baptist points us back. The landscape and sky are an obscure, thundrous black.

This uniquely terrible image, which derives from the pietàs and crucifixions of late-medieval Germany, is not only a self-indulgent or sadistic revelling in pain, though, as a Gothic picture, it is surely that too. Its purpose was to comfort the sick and dying brought into the hospital chapel, and to move visitors to repentance and charity.

## ‘Jack the Ripper’

The press of Victorian London fell with glee upon the story of the anatomically-obsessed **murderer** of prostitutes in Whitechapel in 1888. It was probably an enterprising newshound who sent the hoax letter containing the resonantly grisly sobriquet in the first place, and this, plus ‘Jack’'s remaining defiantly unidentified, has ensured that the killings have haunted the Gothic imagination for over a century.

What made Jack a Gothic figure as well as one of **horror** was the suspicion from the start that he was a member of the Establishment – a doctor, it was speculated – and so represented the dark, suppressed desires that bubbled beneath the placid surface of Victorian propriety: respected physician by day and demented murderer by night. He bloodily personified all that society’s self-misgivings, and in doing so made the serial killer an emblem of **ambiguity** that Gothic fiction would continually reach for, as instanced by *The Silence of the Lambs* (filmed in 1990) or **Brite’s** *Exquisite Corpse* (1993).

Coincidentally, the hysteria about the Ripper was helped on its way by the fact that a stage version of Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* was playing at the Lycaenum Theatre. The play had already coarsened the author’s subtle themes and distinctions; now the two figures of Jack and Hyde became inescapably confused as the real killer provided melodrama for the fictional one, and the latter acquired the top hat, cane, and opera cloak of the former. These props made dutiful appearance in the cinematic treatments by **Universal** and **Hammer**.

The most compelling presence of Jack in fiction comes in a story which is not his at all. The German playwright Frank Wedekind placed him at the climax of his *Lulu* plays, composed in 1895 and 1903 and later amalgamated. Jack acts regretfully as the instrument of the hypocritical society of which he is part to destroy the innocent Lulu who has defied it. The 1928 film version poured new resonances into the narrative by featuring Louise **Brooks** as Lulu.

## Jacobean Dramatists

‘Elizabethan dramatists’ could easily be used as an alternative term, for the playwrights normally embraced by it were not confined to the post-1603 period, and not even all their plays seem to warrant the comprehension of this title. ‘Revenge tragedy’ makes more sense,

including as it does an interest in murderous incidents, inventive violence, and the corrupting influence of human evil, particularly using the body, poisoned, mutilated, or decayed, as the map of moral truths. Traditionally the sequence begins with Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, written about 1580. The drama is commonly (though not always) located in **Catholic** Italy, which was in contemporary English fantasy a land of intrigue and internecine bloodshed, and combines varying degrees of psychological insight with a revelling in sadistic spectacle. A useful model for violent tragedy had been provided by the Roman author Seneca, whose dramas were translated into English between 1555 and 1587, and who based his work in turn on the most savage incidents recorded by his Greek **tragedian** predecessors. However, the trend needed more than just precedent: the plays' exploration of moral and psychological **ambiguity** through bloody incident seemed to arise from a great fault line in particularly English experience. A whole culture was struggling to settle into new assumptions about religion, morality, fate, and politics; by the late 1620s this had taken place (even if it would yet take a civil war to decide the fate of this new world), and the line of tragedies petered out. In all essentials, Jacobean drama anticipated Gothic fiction a century and a half later, and indeed was used by those writers as a point of reference. In other fields, **Fuseli** revelled in painting supernatural and murderous episodes from Shakespeare, and **Beddoes** and **Eliot** both very deliberately claimed inheritance of the meaty physical precision of John Webster, in particular, at times when his work was not highly thought of.

#### **James, Montague Rhodes** (1862-1936)

The ghost stories of MR James, academic, museum curator and devout Anglican, provide a perfect illustration of the operation of the Gothic. Fastidious and reticent, James professed disdain for **horror** literature, scorning *The Monk* in particular, and worked instead through extreme understatement reinforced by tightly constrained episodes of disgust. Typically James presents a perfectly ordinary, unexceptionable situation into which, after a suitable interlude of atmospheric crescendo, irrupts a presence of appalling demonic malevolence, unexplained and implacable. The monstrosity is usually described with masterly imprecision; the famous 'face of crumpled linen' from 'Oh Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad', tells the reader virtually nothing, but is just enough to send the imagination down repulsive roads. Nor are matters ever resolved – the evil remains abroad, leaving the unsettling possibility that the horror may recur. James's attitude to his writing was ostensibly craftsmanlike, and these flashes of Gothicism are unreflected in the rest of his life. He admired and revived the earlier supernatural fiction of Sheridan **Le Fanu**.

#### **Japan**

The extremity of traditional Japanese art and culture exerts a lasting influence on the Gothic. Visually, Japanese art combines elements likely to appeal to the Goth palate: broad and bold colour, stylisation, precision, austerity and a strain of melancholy. The tendency to arrange graphic art and even costume within geometric patterns introduces an **hysterical** note all the more potent for its constraint within a tight system of ritual and custom, a reticent delicacy juxtaposed with aesthetic violence. Japonic was one influence on the evolving style of Aubrey **Beardsley**, and the whole of **Art Nouveau**. Japan has also been responsible for the brightly disjointed, and bloody, world of Manga and Anime cartoons, which shaped the techno-kitsch enthusiasms of **cybergoth**. In 1982 **Siouxsie Sioux** posed for a justly celebrated photo-shoot for iconic style magazine *The Face*. Scorning her trademark black, Sioux donned a white kimono spattered with calligraphic devices and played with fans and

paper lanterns in front of sunburst flags in red and white. The stark **colour** made it a series of stunning images, underlining again Sioux's ability to identify and define modern Gothic.

### **Jekyll & Hyde** *recte The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* (1886)

The key work of Robert Louis Stevenson, whose writing was itself turned into a Gothic romance, incorporating a fever and a burned manuscript. Stevenson claimed his chief influences as the duality of the Edinburgh environment, polarised between the filthy courts of the Old Town and the affluent gentility of the New, and the tale of Deacon Brodie, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century day-time pillar of the Kirk and night-time bandit. The story fits into a long-standing Gothic tradition of doubles, doppelgangers, and dual identities, but uses an entirely unprecedented method of imagining this multiplicity. Through three different narratives, Stevenson explores hypocrisy, centred on the self-divided doctor who attempts to deny his own contradictions by sloughing off his dark impulses onto an externalised personality. He makes use of this chemically-created cover for evil until it takes him over entirely. The demonic doctor ended up merging with the figure of **Jack the Ripper** through the accident of the theatrical version of the story emerging at the exactly the same time at the Whitechapel murders took place, despite the fact that the book is set in Edinburgh. *Jekyll & Hyde* has been analysed, like so much Gothic fiction, as representing the repression of such tedious fears as homosexuality, heterosexual excess, alcoholism, or the brutalisation of the poor; in short, as Christopher Frayling remarks, 'anything that late Victorian single gentlemen could conceivably cram into their closets'. Stevenson wisely refrained from defining Hyde's beastliness very closely, relying instead on properly Gothic unease.

### **Joy Division**

British band, probably the earliest to whom the critics attached the 'Gothic' tag. Formed as the Stiff Kittens in Manchester early in 1977, Joy Division's origins lay obviously in punk, and the group did not survive long enough to move on; they did however tone down punk's raucous guitar-based sound in favour of the rhythm section, creating a spare, hollow sound which was highly influential. A first album was junked by the band after an engineer added synthesisers; 1979's *Unknown Pleasures* concentrated their trademark gloom and atmospheric despair. Joy Division came to an end after singer-songwriter Ian Curtis's suicide in 1980 just before his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, an act he seemed always to have planned, and the remaining members rearranged themselves as New Order.

Joy Division occupy an undeniable but odd place in the Gothic tradition. Their relentless misery was far too dour, passive and straightforward to be Gothic, for proper Gothic is much more fake, much more of a pose. While they stayed true to the rough-and-ready style of punk, their more authentically Goth peers such as **Bauhaus** and **Siouxsie & the Banshees** abandoned it to enliven their dark little narratives with pretention and mischief. Still, Bernard Albrecht did cite *Nosferatu* as his favourite film.

### **Keats, John** (1795-1820)

British poet. Youngest of the great **romantic** triumvirate, Keats's work was treated generously by **Shelley** but mercilessly insulted by **Byron** as 'piss-a-bed poetry'. Much of it was indeed jejune, weak, neurotic and overlong: he could hardly resist springing into verse in response to any event, yet his experiences as a medical student appeared to have had no effect whatever on what was surely a morbidly sensitive nature.

Signs of a Gothic taste are not entirely drowned in the swooning romantic slop of Keats's poetry. His long narratives 'Isabella' and 'Lamia', based respectively on a story by Boccaccio and a Greek myth recorded in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, include some

enjoyably grisly language. The surviving fragment of ‘The Castle Builder’ rehearses the rhetoric of Gothic (‘my pictures all Salvator’s’) with some relish; and the shivering lines of ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’ seem to show inklings of a harder, more vicious aesthetic which might have yielded more fruit had tuberculosis not intervened.

### **Kronos Quartet**

American classical group, formed in New York in 1973 to perform George Crumb’s *Black Angels*. The group blends classical precision and expertise with a breadth of scope unusual at the time, including jazz and rock adaptations as well as the work of modernist composers and other lesser-known traditions from around the world. Key Gothic elements of Kronos’s output are the 1991 *Black Angels* and the 1997 collection of early music, *Lachrymae Antiquae*, **melancholy** compositions from across a millennium which culminate in the tolling of the Passing Bell at the Abbey of Solême. In 1998 the group performed Philip Glass’s new score for the revived version of the 1931 *Dracula*, and in 2003 collaborated with *Struwwelpeter* interpreters the Tiger Lillies to adapt extracts from Edward **Gorey**. They remain an ensemble hardly defined by the Gothic, but certainly including it.

### **laudanum**

Educated Victorian England’s drug of choice, capable of inspiring morphyic melodramas, wild phantasmagorias, and narcolepsies. Supposedly invented by the medieval alchemist Paracelsus, whose mysterious curative elixir was always believed to include opium as its active element, the meaningless name was used by physician Thomas Sydenham (1624-89) for his own suspension of opium in sherry with added cinnamon, saffron and other spices. By the mid-1800s laudanum was treated as a universal tonic medicine: in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) Thomas de Quincey claimed to drink a pint a day, and its use was practised by everyone from milliners’ assistants to Queen Victoria. Critic Jonathan Meades has even traced the origins of the fantastic colour schemes and irregular geometry of some Victorian **Gothic Revival** art – the work of William Burges, for instance – to the influence of the intoxicant. From the 1870s onwards doctors began to warn of the dangers of opium addiction, until the taking of laudanum eventually died out in favour of other drugs.

### **League of Gentlemen**

British comedy writer-performers, namely Mssrs Gatiss, Pemberton, Shearsmith, and Dyson, the last of whom writes but generally does not, generally, act. After a childhood and youth frittered on television, films and the morbid (‘My essays would start like ‘A day on the beach’, but then giant squid would appear’, recalls Gatiss) in 1994 the members channelled the accumulated macabre debris into a stage show at the Cockpit Theatre, London, adding other grotesque characters and situations drawn from reality and then twisted. The stage show became a radio series and moved to TV. The central creation is a fictional town – on the radio it went under the eloquently depressing name of ‘Spent’ and for TV became ‘Royston Vasey’ – a grim, run-down open-air madhouse which the sun shirks past, populated by monsters, sadists, freaks, and the simply sad. The town is riddled with hideous secrets, hypocrisies, bitterness and insanity, but with typical Gothic **ambiguity** most of the inhabitants retain some real sympathy. The one exception is the truly horrid voodoo circus ringmaster Papa Lazarou (Dyson’s only role) whose catchphrase ‘You are my wife now, Dave’, manages to be meaningless and yet chilling.

### **Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan** (1814-73)

Irish writer. Le Fanu made his living from journalism, but between 1845 and his death wrote 14 novels and numerous short stories. *Uncle Silas* (1864), the tale of a menaced heiress, stands in a direct line from 18<sup>th</sup>-century **Gothic novels** and is one of the few to have gained critical respect; *The House by the Churchyard* (1863) reflects his concern with the supernatural that began with 'A Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter' (1839), a strikingly **Poe-like** title. Le Fanu's most important contribution to Gothic is the collection of short psychological **horror** stories, *In A Glass Darkly* (1872). These tales are presented as extracts from the casebook of the learned physician Dr Heselius – an unconvincing rationalist, but surely a forerunner of *Dracula's* Van Helsing – and finish with 'Carmilla', the ancestor of all subsequent female **vampires**, especially in the cinema which has enjoyed the lesbian frisson between Carmilla and her victim Laura. Carl **Dreyer's** *Vampyr* (1931) claimed to be modelled on the story. Le Fanu's stories, while popular in their day, went out of fashion until rescued, edited and championed by MR **James** who was responsible for two 1923 collections, *In A Glass Darkly* and *Madam Crowl's Ghost*.

### **Lovecraft, Howard Phillips** (1890-1937)

American writer. Lovecraft's prolific output of short stories, beginning in 1917, has become enormously influential throughout the **horror**, fantasy, and science fiction genres, though critics have often regarded much of it as florid and overblown. These were faults Lovecraft himself recognised, and by the end of his career he had gone some way towards eradicating them. Drawing on Ambrose Bierce, Algernon Blackwood, Lord Dunsany and **Poe**, Lovecraft's fiction represents most horror themes, but two stand out as especially resonant. 'The Nameless City' (1921) introduced the forbidden 'book of dead names', which appears as *Al Arif* in Arabic and *Necronomicon* in Greek. The idea of the book whose perusal brings madness and disaster has a long pedigree, but its immediate precursor was *The King In Yellow* (1894), the monstrous tome imagined by Robert W Chambers. The spectral *Necronomicon* makes numerous appearances in fiction and art (**Giger** used the title for a collection in 1977). Lovecraft's statement of authorial faith declared his fascination with 'monstrous intrusions on our everyday world by unknown things', and this second Gothic element to his work was encapsulated in his development of the Cthulhu theme in stories centred on 'The Call of Cthulhu' (1926). The *Necronomicon*, according to Lovecraft, contained references to a race of infernal or alien beings who had once controlled the Earth and who strove to recapture it from humankind, surviving under the guise of pagan deities. Like most Gothic themes this also has many antecedents (reaching back to the Bible, in one sense) but it is the Cthulhu treatment which has become most distinctive. Traces of its influence emerge in Satanic rock bands who want to welcome the idea of chaotic forces taking over the world, through to paranoid fiction such as *The X-Files*.

### **Lynch, David** (b.1945)

American film director. Lynch reacted to a remarkably 'normal' upbringing in the US Midwest by developing a fascination with the relationship between normality and its disruption, and exploring it first through the medium of paint, and then film. Much of his most celebrated work – *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and the TV series *Twin Peaks* (1990) – sets up a superficially serene suburban or small-town landscape, and then undermines it with glimpses of violence, lust, or simple weirdness. This is often first suggested through intense detail, concentrating on insects or images of putrefaction and decay. In this mode, Lynch's keynote is a **surrealistic** incoherence; narrative is of minor interest, most obviously in *Eraserhead* (1976), his dyspeptic nightmare satire on

domesticity. However, he is more than just a cynic intent on mocking everyday **American** life: the other half of his output, including *The Elephant Man* (1980) and *The Straight Story* (1999), exhibits an uncomplicated compassion.

**McGrath, Patrick** (b.1950)

British novelist. McGrath's father was medical supervisor at the high-security hospital at Broadmoor (where the novelist also worked for a short while), leaving him with a permanent interest in the relationship between psychology and control. This is most vividly explored in his 1997 novel *Asylum*, set in a Broadmoor-like institution where the moral order collapses when a doctor's wife begins an affair with a psychopathic inmate. The witty pastiche *Martha Peake* (2001) is the most firmly rooted in the Gothic milieu, complete with historical setting (the American Revolution), rotting castle, and issues of physical deformity, power and truth, though in common with the rest of McGrath's work the Gothicism is thoroughly naturalistic. He is also a notable theorist of the Gothic, contributing a chapter to Grunenberg's *Gothic: transmutations of horror in modern art* (1997) and helping to compile and introduce *The New Gothic* in 1991, a consciously revivalist collection of short fiction.

**Manson, Marilyn** (b. Brian Warner, 1970)

US popular musician, a standing challenge to **American** Christianity and **politics**, and embarrassment to Goths. The name – combining 'a celebrity martyr and a celebrity killer' in a sickly ironic dig at US popular culture – applies to the band as well as its star, and was echoed in the axial 1996 album *Antichrist Superstar*. As befits a protégé of Nine Inch Nails mastermind Trent Reznor, Manson's music is unremarkable raucous metal, and it is rather his ability to recycle Gothic imagery to make his points that lends him any interest. Manson's sense of parody, irony and **ambiguity** are properly Goth traits, yet his clever theatrics strike one as poses put to the service of a fundamentally optimistic, progressive politics, rather than representing an internalised dynamic of attraction to and repulsion from the morbid: Manson never locates himself within the phenomena he criticises. Goths may find him obvious and shallow, but, thanks to media pigeonholing, they're stuck with him.

**Marsden, Simon** (b.1948)

British photographer – though, as Jennie Gray of the **Gothic Society** commented 'calling Marsden's ethereal compositions 'photographs' is like calling the Brighton Pavilion a beach hut'. The aristocratic Marsden was brought up in half-derelict Lincolnshire mansions and fed imaginatively on MR **James**, Arthur Machen, and **Poe**, and when bought a camera in 1969 began to make concrete his fantasies of **ruin** and desolation, developing a unique method using infra-red film and bizarre lighting effects to draw out the **uncanny** even from bright and sunny landscapes. *In Ruins – the Once Great Houses of Ireland* appeared in 1980 and expressed a reactionary **romanticism** which acquired a more severe edge in *Beyond the Wall*, an examination of the wrecked palaces of Communist East Germany (1999). Several books on haunted sites and the eerie compilation *Visions of Poe* (1988) lead up to **Venice, City of Haunting Dreams** (2001), a banquet of virtuoso **melancholy** which, for the first time, exploits colour photography.

**Maturin, Charles Robert** (1780-1824)

Irish novelist, 'the last of the Goths' according to some, for producing the final great work in the original sequence of **Gothic novels** descending from *The Castle of Otranto*. An unusual combination of cleric and author, the Rev. Maturin's greatest success was the play *Bertram* (staged by **Byron** and Charles Lamb). His first novels were firmly in the tradition of Mrs

**Radcliffe** and *The Monk*, but Maturin eventually succumbed to pressure to tone his style down until 1820, when the leviathan *Melmoth the Wanderer* was published. This sprawling, picaresque collection of tales-within-tales, linked by the Faustian (and indeed Byronic) figure of Melmoth who wanders the earth attempting to find a soul on which to foist his own bargain with the Devil, is a sort of palimpsest of Gothic fictional themes up to that point, an intricate and fervid brew of excess and monstrosity; the setting is **Catholic Spain**, playing its customary role as the theatre of barbarity and extremism. Maturin's introductions to his novels also contain important thoughts on the Gothic genre. Literary tributes are rare, although Oscar **Wilde** adopted 'Sebastian Melmoth' as a pseudonym during his European exile.

### **Medea**

The original 'Fatal Woman': although the Homeric sorceress may have fallen under the shade of even older dark goddesses such as Hecate and Artemis, her violence was all her own. Daughter of the King of Colchis, Medea enabled the hero Jason to steal the Golden Fleece, married him and tricked the daughters of his enemy, King Pelias, into dismembering and cooking their father. When Jason deserted her, she killed their sons, murdered his new wife with the gift of an inflammable gown, and disposed of her father, King Creon of Corinth. She then married King Aegeus of Athens, who eventually drove her away after she attempted to poison his son by his first wife.

Medea's sanguinary career was fictionalised by the **tragedian** Euripedes, the Roman poet Ovid and the dramatist Seneca, painted by the **Pre-Raphaelite** Frederick Sandys, and eventually made the subject of Cherubini's opera. It was that treatment which captured the imagination of the *prima diva* Maria Callas, who became so possessed by the role that, during the rehearsals for the performance of *Medée* in Dallas in 1958, the director found her on all fours pounding the floor with her fists, howling imprecations to the gods of the Underworld. Diamanda **Galás**, unsurprisingly, cites Medea as a role model.

Feminism notwithstanding, the female **murderer** still seems more unnatural, and consequently more creative, than her male counterpart. Medea may be the mythical epitome of the type, but her sorority is numerous, even if some have not wielded the knife themselves but rather inspired terrible acts in others: it includes Cleopatra, Morgan le Fay, Salome, Lucrezia Borgia, Judith, Jael, **Schwob's** 'Morgane the Insensitive', **Casati**, Lulu, and, at the outermost extreme, **Sade's** Juliette.

### **medieval** of Middle Ages

#### **melancholy**

With terror, or the **Sublime**, one of the two chief notes of the Gothic temper, and the gentler, whose characteristic environment is the **ruin**, where the Sublime's is the storm. Melancholy has been theorised about at least since the time of Aristotle, who related it to human greatness, and it was at that early date already being connected to a bodily excess of 'black bile' – the *melan cholera*. The physician Galen (129-99 BC), with his theory of the four humours governing human character, gave the idea some spurious medical credibility, while the **Middle Ages**, with its passion for systematisation and sympathetic magic, placed the black humour under the interest of the planet Saturn, notoriously cold, vicious, depressive, and malefic.

Renaissance philosophers and artists were the first to recognise positive aspects in melancholy's typical gloom and discontent. In *La Vita Triplice* Marsiglio Ficino maintained that intellectuals were more influenced by it than any other humour, and laid down in great

detail the lifestyle a melancholic should adopt to avoid being overwhelmed by the Saturnine influence. For 3½ centuries afterwards, the poets and artists adopted Dame Melancholy as their patron goddess; she appears in Albrecht **Dürer**'s 'Melancholia 1' of 1514 which, notwithstanding numerous conflicting interpretations, shows a listless soul surrounded by the unused instruments of human endeavour. Rediscovery of **classical** antiquity in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries created an awareness that the past had actually looked different from the present, and enabled melancholy to be experienced in images of ruin (rather than merely physical decay, as the Middle Ages had imagined it) which became the outward sign of the destruction of human dreams. In England, the Reformation ensured that these ruins would commonly be Gothic ones.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century two contradictory aspects of melancholy were identified: the pleasurable sensations of solitude and contemplation; and the spirit-numbing paralysis into which contemplation could all too easily move, more familiarly known to us as 'depression'. This distinction was made in the Abstract of Burton's monumental *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), and **Milton** balances side by side its negative ('loathéd Melancholy/ Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born' as in 'L'Allegro') and positive aspects ('Goddess sage and holy./ Hail, divinest Melancholy', from 'Il Penseroso'). This contradiction goes to the root of the phenomenon: contemplative melancholy is required for artistic creativity (it is argued), yet it leads to an awareness either of existential futility or of the artist's own incapacity so intense that it can in fact paralyse the creative process.

For the next two centuries all continues in the same manner, as in Coleridge's 'Dejection – An Ode' ('A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear./ A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief./ Which finds no natural outlet, no relief'), the only discernible change being the tinge of masochism that begins to enter the hymnody of the Goddess (as in **Keats**'s 'Ode to Melancholy': 'His soul shall taste the sadness of her might/ And be among her cloudy trophies hung'). However, the development of Gothic fiction seems to have encouraged a taste for meatier expressions of misery than melancholy traditionally offered, and it faded along with **Romanticism**, making thereafter only occasional incognito visits to the world of culture (some of Thomas **Hardy**'s poetry, for instance, or the compositions of the **Pre-Raphaelites**, could be described as melancholic).

In time, the sophisticated worlds of literature and art seemed to find melancholy faintly embarrassing and jejune – to enjoy being unhappy was too emotionally committed, too naïve, and too pre-modern for most to stomach. When the Southampton Art Gallery came to stage the exhibition 'I Love Melancholy' in 2001 – the first time anyone had dared speak the word for decades – it settled on a disparate collection of representations of misery that were deeply reticent (for instance, Rachel Whiteread's plaster cast of a disused hospital mattress) and eschewed many of the obvious outward marks that melancholy had gathered about itself in the past. Oddly, considering how it managed to coarsen so much of the Gothic tradition, it was late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Goth **music** that proved unafraid to reach out for the miserable hand of melancholy; the more 'ethereal' end of the Goth spectrum (as epitomised by the Cocteau Twins, for instance), and its points of crossover with the folk and early music genres, were particularly susceptible.

The relationship of melancholy to the Gothic continuum has been doubted in some quarters; it has a characteristic mood of gentle passivity which seems at first sight to contradict the **hysteria** and extremity inherent in the Gothic. Yet the history of melancholic expression suggests a connection, as melancholics will find confirmed by examining their own emotional processes. Goths and melancholics are commonly the same people, and melancholy has a tendency to darken and harden as it is experienced. Gentle and pleasurable feelings of sadness, pursued into musings on the ubiquity of loss and pain, move us to a

conviction that ‘stale, dull and unprofitable seem all the uses of this world’; the moral sense is accordingly weakened, and a dark cloud of murderousness, the voluptuous desire for destruction, descends to overshadow the soul. This is hinted in the classic Renaissance depictions of melancholy: in Lucas Cranach’s 1528 imitation of Dürer, *Melancholia*, for instance, Melancholy sits with a savage expression watching children play, and sharpening a stick.

### Middle Ages

Most writers on the Gothic mention the Middle Ages only to describe that period’s relationship to Goth culture as tangential, as providing the **architectural** style to which the word Gothic was then applied, and from which it was broadened into its current gloomy significations (‘Middle Ages’ – the *medium aevum* – itself is of course a Renaissance misdescription). Nonetheless, when the **Gothic Novelists** and early **Gothic Revivalists** saw in the time of unchallenged **Catholic** Christian dominance of Europe – roughly from the founding of the Holy Roman Empire in 800 to the disruption of the Reformation in the 1520s – a reservoir of extremity and violence which they desired to tap, they were not entirely incorrect. The art critic Wilhelm **Worringer** even went so far as to suggest that the architecture reflected the mentality.

It used to be an historiographical commonplace that the Black Death of 1348-50 (yet another later name – the contemporary term was usually ‘the Great Pestilence’) marked a disjuncture in the European mind, a shift from a fundamentally optimistic, expansionist outlook to one haunted and possessed, increasingly dedicated to the commemoration of death and to sick religious devotions. This was the essential thesis of Huizinga’s *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919), which saw the post-Black Death culture as a decadent and rotten one, yet its ‘mingled scent of blood and roses’ retaining a disturbing allure (Huizinga could well have had the **decadent** art of his own *fin-de-siècle* at the back of his mind). Weakened though this theory has been, various phenomena in late medieval culture give it undeniable bite: the multiplication of the Requiem Mass; the increasing emphasis on the blood-symbolism of the Eucharist in devotions such as the feast of Corpus Christi (instituted in 1346); and a growing willingness to represent the grisly in art, all seem manifestations of a mentality which relished the funereal and carnal. After all, this, and no other, is the age of the **Dies Irae**, the **Danse Macabre**, and the Cult of the Five Wounds, an entire society organised around the contemplation of a single violent life (Christ’s) and the threat of one’s own demise, both individually and corporately in the great cataclysm God would soon unleash upon the earth.

Whatever the significations of Gothic architecture, late Gothic **art** ran with this tendency into dark places indeed. 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Germany was filled with gruesome depictions of the Crucifixion, intended as aids to prayer and faith, culminating in the horror and pity of Grunewald’s masterpiece at **Isenheim**. **Bosch** expressed violent fantasies of nightmare and destruction. Cranach, **Holbein**, **Brueghel**, **Dürer** and others tackled mortality by concentrating on individuality and ultra-realism.

As the Catholic culture of the Middle Ages faded into memory, to be replaced eventually by a restrained Protestantism or the entirely different style of the post-Reformation Church of Rome, it became the imaginary location of oppression, cruelty and superstition; because Goths were drawn to these things, it came to play the same role in later Gothic as Italy had for the **Jacobean dramatists**. **Spain**, in particular, was imagined as the place where the Middle Ages had survived most unscathed. Rather different meanings were drawn out by later, more serious Gothic Revivalists such as **Pugin** who saw the medieval period as a time of faith, humanity and charity (the most significant novel in the Gothic canon actually set in the Middle Ages, Hugo’s *Nôtre-Dame de Paris* (1831) seems to take this **Romantic**

viewpoint). The medieval fantasy of darkness soon lingered only in tattered shreds as the paraphernalia of the **horror** movie, while Goths sought their signifiers of extremity elsewhere. There is some minor crossover between modern Goth **music**, as practised by bands such as **Dead Can Dance** or Miranda Sex Garden, and the 'early music' of the Gothic age.

### **Milton, John** (1608-74)

English poet and controversialist. The **Puritan** genius haunts Gothic as indeed he does the whole of English letters, but his credentials for doing so are actually slim. Firstly, he ranks as a theorist of **melancholy** thanks to the early poems 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' (which, it must be admitted, clank a bit); and secondly the blindness which afflicted him later in life renders the poet a truly and bitterly Gothic figure, the seer deprived of sight thus echoing both Homer and Tiresias of the Greek **Tragedies**. But it is his masterwork *Paradise Lost* that places him in the line of **Dante** and other delineators of the spiritual realms; it takes Biblical accounts and the speculations of **medieval** folklore to create a vast epic 'of man's first disobedience ... and all our woe', whose sonorous and magisterial verse proves a regal vessel for both **horror** and transcendence.

Famously, Milton's Satan is the most grand and compelling character in the drama. **Blake's** overworn remark that Milton was 'of the Devil's party without knowing it' really refers to Blake's own peculiar theology which deified impulse (in the person of Jesus) and regarded Reason as the enemy of Man and God, implicating Milton as Reason's chief ideological apologist. However, Satan in the poem does become the mouthpiece of a grandiose sort of pride which it is not difficult to glimpse in the author's own character. Satan stands out among the vile crowd of the fallen angels, the obsequious loyal ones, and the chilly and self-congratulatory God, Father and Son; in much the same way, Dante finds admirable qualities in the proud souls he meets confined in Hell.

Milton later penned *Paradise Regained* to tell the antithetical story of Christ's resistance to devilish temptation, and attempts to interpret him as a secret atheist are unconvincing. Yet in Satan he created a figure so tragic and immense that his vision of the Enemy became the ironic patron saint of anyone claiming to prefer knowledge to ignorance, freedom to servitude, and rebellion to obedience. This is the role he plays for the **Romantics** (**Shelley** praised his 'energy and magnificence' and **Baudelaire** wrote him a Litany), and modern Satanists therefore have the presumption to see in Milton a precursor.

John Aubrey maintained incongruously that Milton was 'of a very cheerful humour'.

### **Moby Dick** (1851)

There is at first glance nothing connecting Herman Melville's **American** classic with the Gothic continuum apart from its dedication to Nathaniel **Hawthorne**, but Gothic it is, both in matter and manner. It features a villain-hero, Ahab (named after a Biblical tyrant), apparently powerful and dominant but tethered in a doomed and obsessive quest to a near-supernatural enemy. The action is sprinkled with extreme incidents and personalities, from Father Mapple who seems almost as mad as Ahab to the chapter 'The Quarterdeck' in which the harpooners toast the death of the whale drinking rum from the sockets of their harpoons to Ahab's lurid beratings. *Moby Dick* is also written in a language of such compressed poetic intensity, interspersed with passages of technical reportage and spattered with alliterative and rhythmic tricks, that it fits seamlessly around the dementia of the narrative. In this, plus its tendency to extended yet precise description, digressions, and the depiction of an entirely eccentric yet coherent world, it resembles no other work so much as **Peake's** *Gormenghast*.

### *The Monk* (1796)

Praised by **de Sade**, trashed by Coleridge, *The Monk* was the work of Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1819), a War Office official's son and later MP and West Indian planter. The novel has a major romantic sub-plot, but chiefly concerns Ambrosio, devout Prior of the Capuchins in Madrid; sexually awakened by a mysterious and demonic girl, Matilda, he degenerates into a monstrous religious hypocrite, becoming outwardly ever more pious as he progresses through seduction, rape, incest and murder (a subject treated with less extremity in **Hawthorne's** *Scarlet Letter*). He is aided by the sadistic Prioress who, like him, meets a particularly nasty end. These horrors all take place in an exotic environment of **Catholic** repression and oppression, replete with abbeys, catacombs, and dungeons. The voluptuous sexual violence of the novel led to great success, critical opprobrium, and a reputation for years after as the prime example of the excesses of Gothic art (MR **James**, for instance, used *The Monk* as a touchstone for all he disliked about **horror** fiction). Lewis's other literary offerings, such as his play *The Castle Spectre*, were more restrained.

### *The Monkey's Paw* (1898 ...)

... but not published until it appeared in *Harper's Magazine* in 1902. WW Jacobs, the author of this macabre short story, was mainly a comic writer but is now best remembered for the neat cautionary tale whose moral is 'be careful what you wish for'. It relies for its final effect on hinting at a monstrosity which is never seen (as in MR **James's** work) and which is the more horrible for arising out of misdirected human love. The story has appeared in numerous fictional or cinematic disguises.

### **Munch, Edvard** (1863-1944)

Norwegian artist. It could hardly have been a more appropriate upbringing to produce a morbid artist – a home in a stifling provincial bourgeois town, a fundamentalist Christian father, a mother dying in one's infancy and an atmosphere of disease and disturbance. 'Sickness, insanity and death were the black angels that hovered about my cradle', Munch wrote, 'and they have followed me all my life'. Certainly the reappearance of key themes – deathbeds, **melancholy** lovers, and isolated or enigmatic figures – and the reworking of certain paintings which exist in version after version are testament to the obsessive nature of his quest to depict extreme emotion. Along with a number of prints he produced in 1895 – 'Madonna', '**Vampire**' and 'Self-portrait with Skeleton Arm', Munch's most important achievement was his 'Frieze of Life', a bold attempt to make a grand and definitive statement about human existence in a changing sequence of paintings begun in 1891 and eventually exhibited in various European cities in the early 1900s. '**The Scream**' is the most famous of these images.

Munch worked very deliberately through naturalism and Impressionism before settling on his own style, which sought to replicate the alienated or anguished emotions of his figures in the forms of the environment around them, essentially painting emotions rather than the *effect* of those emotions on individual persons – hence the sketchy and indistinct representations of people and things in his pictures. This made him the chief forerunner of **expressionism**, though he is often described as a **Symbolist** despite his obvious contrast with the superficial **romanticism** of that movement. He illustrated an edition of *Les Fleurs de Mal* in 1896 and worked in Berlin as a set designer for Max Reinhardt, the proto-expressionist theatre director, notably on a production of Ibsen's *Ghosts*. A mental breakdown in 1908 brought to a close Munch's most creative period: he remained a remarkable visionary painter, but freed from his earlier gloomy compulsions.

## murderers

The killing of one human by another has normally been represented as the epitome of wrongdoing, though social custom and political sophistry can excuse or even justify it. The first sin committed after the Fall of Man, according to the Bible, was Cain's murder of his brother Abel, and Goths have traditionally responded with sympathy to Cain's punishment, condemned by God to wander the earth working out his salvation; he appears in a verse play by **Byron** and a poem by **Baudelaire** later set to music by Diamanda **Galás**.

However, Gothic approval for Cain as the murderer-as-divine-rebel is unusual; more often the murderer is a figure of disturbance who unsettles society by violating its most sacred principle. Sometimes these outsiders are grandiose, aristocratic killers for whom murder is almost an artistic declaration. Gilles de **Rais** and Cesare Borgia have a modern, fictional counterpart in Thomas Harris's Hannibal Lecter, all perceived as charming, erudite monsters who take so seriously the ideal that art carries its own morality that they make slaughter a matter of intellectual gaming or aesthetics. We both shudder and thrill to imagine that this might be the truth, a classic exercise of Gothic **ambiguity**.

More mundane murderers disturb because of their closeness to the everyday: they are solid citizens with hidden lives, becoming signs of the concealed horrors of society itself. The twentieth century has been marked by a series of such scandalous individuals. The so-called 'Vampire of Dusseldorf' was fictionalised in *M*, the 1931 film which made Peter Lorre's name; **Hitchcock's** *Psycho* (1960) was based on the case of Wisconsin farmer Ed Gein (English murderers, the Crippens and Christies, seem cut from a meaner cloth and do not feature large in the Gothic consciousness, though it remains to be seen what impact the truly heroic levels of homicide committed by Dr Harold Shipman will have). *Psycho's* Norman Bates epitomises the twentieth-century killer-next-door, combining unremarkable outward conformity with twisted psychology, pathetic, and, if you ignore the suffering he causes, comic. Hitchcock has a smug **Freudian** explain Norman's proclivities at the end, in a manner which is now our standard means of defusing the existential threat the murderer poses. The purest Gothic rejects any such comfort, preferring to locate the origins of such behaviour in mysterious, unalloyed evil: in *Exquisite Corpse*, Poppy Z **Brite** very deliberately has her psychopath Compton state that 'nobody abused me'.

When he is neither aesthete nor sad case, the murderer can assume the mantle of executioner. At its lightest, this can mean Dennis Price disposing of the aristocratic D'Ascoynes who stand between him and his inheritance in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949); at its darkest, it includes the puritanical puzzle-setter of *Se7en* (1995), patterning his victims and methods of killing on the Deadly Sins. The most charismatic of this class of killer is still **Jack the Ripper**, whose 'inverted tombstone of a starched and ghastly shirtfront', as Mervyn **Peake** would have it, stalks even now the gaslit London fog of the Gothic imagination. In no way a Cain-like rebel, Jack's victims are society's own: he acts on behalf of a vengeful **nature** and a callous world, his knife merely a particularly sharp illustration of the truth that the social order is the most implacable of murderers. These subtleties are, unfortunately, lost in the variously-disguised serial-killer narratives which currently choke the British TV schedules.

By and large, women, such as **Medea**, still make more alluring murderers.

Few murder *victims* achieve any kind of Gothic status. One exception is Elizabeth Short, the 'Black Dahlia', an aspiring model whose bisected body was found in a South Los Angeles vacant lot in 1947 and whose case remains unsolved and much written-about. Friends gave her the nickname for her preference for black clothes, pale skin and dyed hair. David **Lynch's** 2001 movie *Mulholland Drive* was inspired by the case.

## music

The prehistory of Gothic music is extensive. Most Western music before about 1650 can be classed as Gothic since the remnants of **medieval** rhythm can be detected in the work of composers such as Praetorius and Monteverdi. Occasionally an individual figure stands out as particularly fitting the definition, notably Carlo Gesualdo (1560-1613), a Renaissance prince who combined a life of violence, masochism and intense religiosity with remarkable musical experiment in his 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Books of Madrigals. For centuries the Requiem Mass provided an outlet for the more solemn ambitions of composers, and the development of opera from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century onwards proved an opportunity for exaggeration, savagery, and general **hysteria**. Representatively Gothic items in the Classical repertoire include: Purcell's 'In the Midst of Life We Are in Death' from *Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary* (1695), and beautifully mournful opera *Dido and Aeneas*; Tartini's *The Devil's Trill* (1745); Mozart's *Requiem* (1791); Marschner's *Lucretia der Vampyr* (1828); the Clog Dance from Herold's *La Fille Mal Gardee* (1828); much by Chopin (1810-49) and several pieces by Berlioz (1803-69); Mussorgsky's *Night on the Bare Mountain* (1867); Saint-Saens's *Danse Macabre* (1875); Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, especially 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy', based on a **Hoffman** tale (1892); Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913); Berg's *Lulu*, an adaptation of the Wedekind plays (1929-35); Schoenberg's *Music to accompany a film scene* (1929-30); Crumb's *Black Angels* (1970); James MacMillan's *Inez de Castro* (1995). 20<sup>th</sup>-century popular music naturally includes its own dark and **melancholy** elements. The blues tradition is particularly strong in these, and more broad-minded Goths recognise a precursor in folk-and-country 'Man in Black' Johnny Cash (who returned the favour by covering Nick Cave's track 'Mercy Seat'), while the Rolling Stones' eerie 'Paint it Black' is often cited. The macabre theatrics of Alice Cooper are described as a forerunner of Goth visuals, always by non-Goths: a more pertinent though still oblique influence is idiosyncratic soul singer Screamin' Jay Hawkins, whose 'I Put a Spell on You' has been covered by both Diamanda **Galás** and Marilyn **Manson**. More appropriately, we can detect in Goth music the characteristic tendency to mine the past not so much for direct antecedents but rather for material amenable to Gothic reinterpretation. **Siouxsie & the Banshees'** greatest commercial success was the 1983 Beatles cover 'Dear Prudence'; more confrontationally, Galás absorbs a colossal range of music from '30s standards to Armenian folksong, sorts the unsettling implications of each, and turns them back out as her own recreations.

The punk revolution of the late 1970s in Britain encouraged a wide variety of musicians who, once the initial phase of the movement was over, began combining its aggressive energy with other influences. Among these were three bands whose dramatically melancholy or threatening music and style clearly differentiated them not only from the pop mainstream but also from the rest of the post-punk crowd. **Bauhaus** drew inspiration from old movies and artistic references; **Joy Division** created echoey, sparse aural arenas of misery; and Siouxsie & the Banshees pillaged the morbid remains not only of their own glam-rock enthusiasms but other cultures as well. It will never be entirely clear who was responsible for labelling this phenomenon 'Gothic', but by late 1979 it was already considered 'a somewhat overworked definition' in journalistic circles. The groups that emerged subsequently defined themselves contrapuntally against the template established by the original three.

If anything united the disparate musical styles of these bands – and the Banshees were eclectic within their own output, quite apart from contributing to the general variety – it was 'dark' subject matter and a preference for minor tones rather than any technical similarity. This was complicated further once 'Goth' came to refer to an entire subculture as well as the

music at its centre. The standard, and illuminating, account tells how the title was first applied by Ian Astbury of the (Southern Death) Cult to Andi, lead singer of Sex Gang Children, because he ‘dressed like a Banshees fan’ and ‘lived on the top floor of an old Victorian house [wearing] a Chinese robe with black eye makeup on and his hair all done up, playing Edith Piaf albums’. The question could thus now be asked whether Gothic music was just music produced or consumed by Goths, or whether it had any genuine characteristics of its own. If it could include Edith Piaf, probably not.

This question was not in any way resolved as the Goth movement spread and developed: instead, its eclecticism became ever more marked. **All About Eve** pioneered the crossover between Goth and folk; **Dead Can Dance** became enamoured of **medieval** music; the spearheads of **American Goth**, **Christian Death**, formed the first bridge between it and heavy metal. By the end of the century, it could hardly be said that there was any such thing as ‘Gothic’ music at all, though Goths themselves managed to distinguish numerous categories whose fine distinctions were lost on anyone not versed in the minute gradations between different sorts of raucous crap. These complexities are brought home most forcibly when a musician outside the core of the Gothic continuum, but whose work bears resemblances to it, uses its trappings as a model. This is arguably the case with Manson; award-winning *fado* singer Mariza, too, dresses in a style clearly related to contemporary Goth **fashion** to dramatise the gloomy extremity of her own tradition.

Still, a number of ‘poles’ can be identified between which most Goth musicians range. ‘Gothic rock’ refers to the styles of the original bands of the late ‘70s and early ‘80s in Britain, while the related ‘darkwave’ is often used to denote a similar tone with more presence from synthesisers; ‘ethereal’ describes gentle, melancholy **romanticism** typified by the output of the Projekt and Hyperium labels, and often used to include the medieval influence as well; ‘industrial’ places minimal emphasis on melody and features an aggressive, heavy sound shading on its edges into atonal experimentation; ‘electronic’ derives originally from the synthesiser-based musicians who emerged at the same time as the original Goths and now linked with the mainstream club scene; and ‘death rock’ or ‘death metal’ denotes rhythmic guitar and drum music with threatening tones. A sixth ‘pole’ is the blues, often exploited by artists whose relations with the Gothic mainstream is indefinite (for instance, Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds, Galás, and PJ Harvey), and ‘neoclassical’ also refers to musical styles well outside pop, often exploiting strings and operatic vocals. All these styles move on their extremes into areas which are not Gothic at all, which only serves to emphasise the questionable nature of the entire genre.

Goth musicians now play a pivotal role in the production of the Gothic aesthetic, figures such as Sioux or, more contentiously, Manson, processing and interpreting the Gothic tradition for those who consume it. They act as helpful models for Goth behaviour and, because in most countries the Goth scene is relatively small and close-knit, it is actually possible for more humble participants to project a similarly glamorous persona.

### **nature**

Gothic maintains no philosophical position, only a set of persistent suspicions. One of these is a radically **ambiguous** attitude to the natural world. Where **Classicism** states that nature is ordered, rational, and a species of divine clockwork, the Gothic points disdainfully to earthquake, famine, and earthward-hurling asteroids. Where **Romanticism** insists that man’s natural instincts are the surest guide to morality and truth because they derive from a pure and beautiful nature, Gothic draws attention to the lively sadism of animal and human, the bestial and corrupt. Where traditional Christianity sees the natural order as the expression of God’s will, Gothic replies that this merely reflects poorly on God. It takes

seriously, instead, God's warning to Adam and Eve that the earth would bring forth thorns and briars against them, and, though it may have little to say in the defence of humans, prefers the hazards of social living to the pullulating mass of anonymous savagery which is its eternal enemy, constantly threatening to undermine civilisation whenever its guard is down. The threat can be moral, where landscape mirrors human degradation (as in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*), or physical (contributing to the masochistic pathos of **ruins**). Most often the natural world in Gothic simply observes human misery with imperturbable indifference: **Hardy** and **Plath** are especially good at expressing this.

### **Nazarenes**

German artistic movement, superficially a Teutonic counterpart of the **Pre-Raphaelites**. The interest in Gothic **art** and **architecture** affected German culture as well as English, and emerged in a **romantic** reaction against **Classical** aesthetics. The 'Brotherhood of St Luke' was founded in 1809 by a group of young painters led by Franz Pforr (1788-1812) and Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869); between 1810 and 1812 they inhabited the ruined monastery of San Isidro near Rome, as a result of which the Biblical 'Nazarene' title developed. Turning back to the intense realism of **Dürer**, and painting portraits of one another in Gothic architectural framings, the Nazarenes' uncomplicated and devoted Christianity was a world away from truly Gothic tension, but close in spirit to the later **Gothic revivalists**.

### *Nightmare, The* (1781 & 1791)

Painting by Henry **Fuseli**, theoretician of the Gothic and advocate of superstition. It exists in two versions: the earlier has a touch of comic menace which in the latter is eliminated in favour of **ambiguity** and disturbance. Both show one of Fuseli's favourite meaty young women draped supine over a bed in what could be death, or fevered sleep, or post-orgasmic swoon. On her stomach squats a dark hobgoblin, contrasting with the virginal white of the woman's flimsy gown, and, in the 1781 version, glaring at the onlooker and implicating them in the action. Behind, a goggle-eyed horse (based on a statue in the Roman Piazza Quirinale) pokes its head through the red drapes - inquisitively in the first version, and rendered in ghostly, disembodied opalescence in the second. Given the folkloric significance of the horse as the embodiment of male sexual desire, the symbolism of *The Nightmare* was always pretty obvious.

Fuseli's painting was the first image to make the point that unbidden horrors could come in dreams, and part of its disturbing quality is the awareness that everyone is a potential victim of such visitations, and is powerless to prevent them (he had in fact courted nightmares by eating raw pork chops the night before beginning the picture). *The Nightmare* was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1782: such was its unsettling impact that it spread in print form all across Europe within two years, was praised in poetry and travestied in political satire. It retains its malign power: both *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and **Universal's** 1931 movie version of *Frankenstein* have scenes which are directly based on the picture, while in *Gothic* (1986) Ken Russell re-stages it. **Freud** hung a print of it in his waiting-room in Vienna, presumably to put patients in an appropriate mood.

### *Nôtre-Dame de Paris* (1831)

Best-known work of French **romantic** and liberal Victor Hugo (1802-85). The misunderstood, deformed bellringer Quasimodo has become the central character in subsequent adaptations and popular imagination (though sometimes Esmeralda comes to the fore, as in the 1909 film of that name, or *Darling of Paris* in 1917 starring **vamp** Theda

Bara) but in the book it is the cathedral of Nôtre-Dame itself which is the focus of attention, the witness of the dramatic tale of malignity and hopeless love. The **architectural** setting (which imprisons the actors in an almost predetermined drama), a **medieval** passion, and the extremity of the events, make this a properly Gothic novel, and later commentators bracketed it with *frénétique* fiction such as Jules Janin's *The Guillotined Woman* as an example of **de Sade's** influence in literature. Yet Hugo insists that Gothic itself embodies not violence and transcendence but a vibrant egalitarian humanist ethic, providing a stage for life in all its fascinating and pitiable detail. His attitude is closer to that of the serious **Gothic Revivalists** rather than traditional Goths, and oddly the subsequent versions, such as the 1923 film starring Lon **Chaney**, brought out the story's Gothicisms better than the book.

### occultism

All magic depends on assuming that there is a hidden, 'occult' spiritual world which can be affected by acts in the physical world and in turn can affect it. Beginning with simple sympathetic magic, symbolic acts intended to produce a parallel effect in the real world, an ever-growing repertoire of concordances and sympathies was developed, such as placing the humour of **melancholy** under the influence of the planet Saturn, and further associating it with certain minerals, plants and numbers. These were eventually codified in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the part-Greek, part-**Egyptian** inspired writings of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD which are the basis of modern occult practice.

Popular folk magic, which worked with herbs, animals, and verbal spells, survived to inform modern witchcraft. Conversely, an extremely erudite tradition developed which combined the *Corpus* with the linguistic tinkering of the Jewish Kabbalah, Arabic geometry and mathematics, alchemy and astrology - a system whose kaleidoscopic intricacy shows that some people in the past must have had more time on their hands than we often imagine. The Masonic organisations, probably deriving from the English master-masons' guild established in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, were central in this process of accretion.

The **medieval** and Renaissance magicians may genuinely have believed that they were contacting and using the services of real supernatural beings, but by the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was no longer respectable in educated circles to credit such things. It took the unorthodox French Catholic Eliphas Lévi (1810-75) to take the underlying idea of magical 'correspondences' and attach to them a vague mystical philosophy which argued that magic animated forces of will and desire and thus brought about certain concrete effects. This outlook informed the Order of the **Golden Dawn**, whose ideas remain dominant today in occult circles.

There is much confusion in the popular imagination about the role of magical practice. Broadly speaking, there are four attitudes or movements which treat one another with varying degrees of condescension and contempt. Modern *pagans* understand the world in terms of ancient nature-worshipping religions; they may or may not recognise any element of fantasy in this, and may or may not practice magic. *Witches* are pagans who do practice magic, which may incorporate occultic elements. True *occultists* of the **Crowleyan** or Golden Dawn variety use syncretistic magical systems to achieve sometimes psychological and sometimes concrete results. *Satanists* may or may not use magic: they range from the urbane Church of Satan devised by Anton le Vay, which amounts to Nietzscheanism with added dressing-up, to the more malign; most deny any actual reality to the Devil or any supernatural entity, though doubtless the Master is happy enough for the credit.

Gothic narratives tend to ignore the fine and energetically-defended distinctions between these groups, and treat them all as part of an underground conspiracy to pervert and destroy society, typically granting them a seductive charm while making sure they are vanquished at the end. Huysman's *Là-Bas* is at the centre of these narratives; the hero of this 1891 novel,

Durtal, is writing a biography of Gilles de **Rais**; his story is interwoven with contemporary events in the underground world of the secret black magic societies of Paris. Taken seriously, it contributed both to panic among the orthodox and the growth of the occult movement. Huysmans was almost certainly misinformed about the activities of the various sects, but was involved enough in the conflict between the Rosicrucians and the Church of Carmel to believe himself under demonic attack from the former. In the English context Dennis Wheatley's *The Devil Rides Out* (1926) created the stereotype of a coven of wealthy, influential diabolists led by a suave Crowley-like magus working beneath a veneer of outward conformity to achieve their evil aims. Occultic motifs, like **religious** ones – and often in teasing juxtaposition to them – have found their way into Gothic **fashion** and art, though usually in a typically superficial way.

### **orientalism**

Gothic consists in manifesting the hidden objects of fear. Given that Gothic narrative developed within the comparative civilisation and security of northwest Europe, locating those narratives far from this comforting environment is a shorthand way of hinting at the objects of fear long before anything actually happens. Typically the displacement is to the east. Eastern Europe is a benighted realm of superstition and barbarism, haunted by **vampires**; **Egypt** provides a paradigm of antique magic and mystery; the excessive luxury and sexual exoticism of the Near East emerges in the paintings of **Delacroix** and the **Symbolists**, the verse of **Baudelaire** and the frothy prose of **Beckford's** *Vathek*. Anything further east than that – in the realms of inscrutable rituals, opium smoke, and the original Torture Garden in Octave Mirbeau's **decadent** 1897 novel *Le Jardin des Supplices* - is simply inaccessible to Occidental reasoning.

### **Peake, Mervyn** (1911-68)

British author and artist. Peake was a son of a medical missionary in China; the figure of a young boy in a strange environment, and the vision of a grandiose, ossified and decaying culture enmeshed in ritual and hierarchy were to emerge in the *Gormenghast* trilogy. Memories of his father's procession of appallingly disabled or diseased patients, and flashes of the morbid sensibility that led Dr Peake to keep a massive gallstone removed from one sufferer as a paperweight, stayed with him; throughout his life, Peake alternated between delight in boyish adventure and macabre obsessions, and as he never attempted to theorise about either, his real personality remains elusive. These two voices occasionally could not be kept apart, as in *Captain Slaughterboard Drops Anchor* (1939); ostensibly a juvenile yarn about a pirate, this little book was attacked for its sadism and grotesque quality even in the published version, itself considerably mellowed from Peake's nasty original draft which is unsuitable for almost anyone, let alone children. It epitomised the irony that this very conservative artist was so firm a believer in the **romantic** ideal of the creative genius that his insistence on delineating his interior fantasies made his work unclassifiable and unapproachable. Critics could appreciate the prodigious talent, particularly in his graphic art and book illustrations, but often didn't know what to make of it; his prose was commonly rejected as flippant, over-elaborate, and empty. His poetry was simply unfashionable, veering between scintillating, compressed beauty and a relish for the horrid which, at its best, surpassed **Beddoes** or the **decadents** (as in *A Reverie of Bone* (1941). Peake died prematurely after a long physical and mental decline.

Never very scholarly, Peake derived little from the Gothic literary tradition apart from what filtered through Dickens and Shakespeare, and even his artistic education had enormous gaps although **Goya** was one of his favourite predecessors. His work represents a chance

eruption of the Gothic temper rather than a continuation of it: the attempt to discipline an extreme visual imagination which transformed everything around into either the fantastically beautiful or the fantastically grotesque, coupled with a vibrant love of verbal precision.

### *The Phantom of the Opera* (1911)

Novel by French lawyer and adventurer Gaston Leroux. A curiously counterfeit piece – a mystery thriller in which there is hardly any mystery at all – this odd little narrative has echoes of so much else. Most obviously its central deformed figure and its ponderous architectural backdrop look back to *Nôtre Dame de Paris*, while there are shades of **Poe's** detective fiction, and the hyperbolic (indeed, operatic) expressiveness of the characters has more than touches of the **Gothic novels** of the 1790s. The Phantom's abduction of the diva Christine even dimly recalls Hades's incarceration of Persephone in a similar subterranean realm. Far less pitiable than Hugo's bellerenger, Erik is a brilliant monster, absolute master of the Opera's cellars and secrets, who has the temerity to claim a sexual identity despite his vileness ('When a woman has seen me ... she belongs to me'). He thus becomes the ancestor of innumerable other fiendish fictional geniuses.

*Phantom* was yet another great Gothic narrative adapted by **Universal** with, predictably enough, Lon **Chaney** in the title role (1925) and Leroux advising. Director Robert Julian turned the story into a suitably ripe slice of **Grand Guignol**, reusing the sets from 1923's *Hunchback of Nôtre Dame* and adding a gilded opera interior. The centrepiece is the masked ball when the Phantom appears as the Red Death, a direct borrowing from **Poe**. Naturally **Hammer** tried a version in 1962.

### **Piaf, Edith** (b. Edith Gassion, 1915-63)

French singer. An unlikely Gothic figure, but an artist who lived in persistent passion and excess and turned this into song. By her own account she was born beneath a street lamp on a spread-out gendarme's cape, the daughter of a travelling acrobat and a street singer, brought up among prostitutes, and made her first public performance singing the *Marseillaise* at 10 to pay the rent; she believed her childhood blindness to have been cured by the intervention of St Thérèse. At first Piaf deliberately modelled herself on her most famous immediate predecessor, Maryse Damia (1890-1978), and borrowed her plain black ensemble as a badge of tragedy, to which she added a purple scarf in an unconscious adoption of the Gothic rhetoric of **colour** (Damia, too, sang '**Gloomy Sunday**', though Piaf never attempted this). Her most macabre and **melancholy** work dates to the period before her international stardom, and described Parisian low-life with a diabolical gloss. Her intense radiating unhappiness had a minor but interesting role to play in the early definition of Goth subculture (cf. **Music**).

### *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)

By and large, respectable Victorian England hated Oscar **Wilde's** study of hypocrisy, seeing in it a primer of morbidity, sexual perversion and **decadence**. Like many Gothic texts, in fact, the story is peculiarly moral. A beautiful young aristocrat finds he is able to transfer the effects of age and sin onto a portrait; it becomes so loathsome it must be hidden away while he remains young and unsullied, until he can bear its presence no longer and stabs it, immediately absorbing its reservoir of debauchery and evil. This startling concept fits admirably into the Gothic tradition of the *double*, the mirrored self who exhibits the protagonist's darker instincts, and bears a close relationship to *Jekyll & Hyde* – although Jekyll's wrongdoings do not have the aesthetic allure of Gray's so eloquently described in the eleventh chapter. Gray's imagination is 'poisoned' into decadence by a book, surely an

allusion to Huysman's *À Rebours*, a theme which anticipates Chambers's *The King In Yellow*. Critics may have obsessed about the work being a coded treatment of homosexuality (it was used in evidence at Wilde's trial) but Gray's situation can be taken as referring to any wrongdoing and, on the face of it, incorporates many. Most interesting and subtle among these is self-deceit: he convinces himself, even to the end, that he intends and is capable of reforming, only to have the truth revealed by the painting – that even his good acts are tainted by self-interest and self-regard. *Dorian Gray* is a comfortless work. Will Self's AIDS-parable reworking of 2002, *Dorian*, is amusing enough but defuses the moral **ambiguity** and makes the story less worrisome.

### **Plath, Sylvia** (1932-63)

American-British poet. Plath's tempestuous relationship with her husband and fellow-poet Ted Hughes (she famously bit his cheek at their first meeting), and her repeated attempts at suicide, culminating in success after their separation, turned an essentially conservative but unstable woman into a feminist martyr, a role she would have rejected firmly. Yet there is no sense of abandon or lack of control in her work: Plath's ability to step outside her own emotions (famously reviewing her own suicidal tendencies in 'Lady Lazarus') makes for exceptionally hard, bitter, ironic verse.

For Plath, **nature** is relentlessly malign ('a bonewhite light, like death, behind all things') and the human soul – especially her own – a landscape of **horror** and disgust: she imagines herself a whore inviting violence ('Strumpet Song') or a bearer of secret wounds ('Street Song'). Only her children provide any positive balance, and even their presence is **ambiguous** ('the child in the white crib revolves and sighs'). This savage morbidity is expressed by a towering command of language and imagery which sets her beside **Dickinson**, although in later verse the system of symbols becomes personal and obscure. The Gothic proper makes frequent appearances ('**Danse Macabre**', 'Ouija', allusions to the **Surrealist** painter de Chirico), but with material this extreme it doesn't really need to.

Like plenty of Goths, Plath presented a generally benign face to friends and relatives, belied by her verse and her depressive episodes; her last poems demonstrate both her divided character, her insight, and the fact that the last, fatal lapse into depression deprived the world of a talent of the highest order. On the same day, less than a week before her death, she penned a touchingly domestic yet queasy account of leftover Christmas balloons; and, finally, 'The Edge', a steely paean to suicide which has the quality of an **Expressionist** block-print and stands like a full stop at her life's end.

### **Pleasure of Ruins** (1953)

Rose Macaulay, the English novelist of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wrote this **melancholy** travelogue after many years of what Henry James called 'a heartless pastime'. She ended up omitting 'theatres, forums, aqueducts, arches, baths or bridges ... and a chapter to be called 'Mouldering Mansions' [which] never got past a rough draft', but included meditations on cities, temples, abbeys and castles. Macaulay's itinerary of desolation began at the desert metropoli of Palmyra, Persepolis and Petra, and incorporated the jungle-swallowed temples of Angkor and the bloodstained ziggurats of the Aztecs. A tone of ecstasy tempered with erudition runs through the book, a feeling Macaulay attempted to analyse with results that place her among the most perspicacious commentators on the delights of morbidity. A photographic edition was published in 1966, illustrated by Roloff Beny (a precursor of Simon **Marsden** to whose earlier book, *The Thrones of Earth & Heaven*, Macaulay had contributed an essay).

### **Poe, Edgar Allan (1809-49)**

American writer. Poe, who after all swam the Hudson River upstream for six miles in an effort to mimic **Byron's** traversing the Hellespont, was surely a more robust character than the weedy, tormented alcoholic so beloved of **romanticism** (Simon **Marsden's** account in *Visions of Poe* is an excellent example of this). He was a literary controversialist and, in a coded way, a **political** one as well, frequently engaged in battles with other writers and critics and in a tireless campaign to establish his career in *belles-lettres*. Several of his tales are hoaxes and games, some of which disguise serious intentions (as in 'Mesmeric Revelation') and some of which do not; there are vicious little satires on democracy; there are pioneering detective fictions; there are fifty mostly dire poems scattered with a few flawed gems. Yet despite this intellectual control (and Poe's prose is nothing if not scientific and exact), he was indeed genuinely haunted, his ingrained morbid suspicions confirmed by a series of personal tragedies in which virtually everyone he cared for ended prematurely dead, usually of tuberculosis. There can be little doubt that some of his most famous tales represent conscious or unconscious attempts to work through these events, alternating with efforts to erase them with drinking binges. He was led to a particular conviction. In Gothic mode he termed it 'The Imp of the Perverse', an instinct which impels his characters to commit terrible acts and then, equally irrationally, to betray themselves ('Berenice', 'The Tell-Tale Heart', 'The Black Cat'). Exploring the same issue in the strange scientific essay *Eureka*, he insisted that all matter yearned to return to its original state of divine undifferentiation, a curious rationalisation of the Gothic instinct. Poe's masterpiece, 'The Fall of the House of Usher', despite its decaying mansion, its themes of tainted inheritance and burial alive, its haunted protagonist and its hints at incest, is made by this principle more than just the re-heated dish of Gothic clichés it appears.

Poe was rediscovered by **Baudelaire** and via his translations (some of the poems may well have been improved by rendering into French) inspired the **decadents** and **Symbolists**. Eventually even TS **Eliot** had sniffily to admit that 'one cannot be sure that one's writing has *not* been influenced by Poe'. His contribution has usually been to provide a single striking image which others have exploited, and he is very effective at doing so. Even 'The Raven', so overwrought as to be almost comic, manages to produce shudders because its central idea is so uncanny. Roger **Corman's** sequence of film adaptations form the obvious examples in that they use Poe's stories as a starting-point rather than a script, but his influence emerges in unexpected places: Diamanda **Galás** traced her interest in disease, which was first emotional, then academic, and finally artistic, to a childhood reading of 'The Masque of the Red Death'.

### **politics**

The Gothic is a reactionary temper. This is not to say that all Goths are instinctive conservatives, but that they construct no blueprint for an ideal mode of governing society, believing that the corruption to which human beings are subject renders all relations of power tainted and therefore rules out a grand plan of social organisation. Their political keynotes are thus endless questioning and scepticism. 'Goths believe in mistrust; [as] pain is inseparable from power, our attitude to our superiors should always include an element of dread', insists Richard Davenport-Hines. The Gothic view of human corruption and the general malignity of **nature** make any progressive movement difficult to envisage. Gothic radicals are most uncommon and all problematic: **Milton** naively considered only how society could best serve the needs of **Puritan** intellectuals like himself; **Sade** embraced Nietzschean conflict confident that he would naturally rise to the top of his future Utopia; **Shelley's** youthful enthusiasms were disappointed and by the end of his life he retreated into

artistic activity alone. Out-and-out reactionaries are equally rare: even **Poe**, racist, misogynist and anti-democrat, realised his fantasies of the hierarchical, aristocratic **American South** could only ever remain that. Instead the most characteristic Gothic political stance is perhaps a form of conservative liberalism, scorning both the past and established authority, yet hoping for nothing better.

At various points in cultural history Gothic has become the channel for expressing political and societal anxieties. The horrors of the French Revolution seem to be reflected in episodes of mob violence in *The Monk*, while **Maturin** based the Grand Inquisitor's murder in *Melmoth the Wanderer* on an incident in the Irish rebellion of 1798. *Frankenstein* arguably deals with the same fears as well as the use of scientific knowledge. A radical concern with the hypocrisies of the Victorian upper classes affected two narratives of **ambiguity** and double identity, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, while the horror film cycle of the 1920s and 30s, centred on **Universal Studios**, with its concern with deformity and monstrosity, can be seen as reflecting deep-seated guilt and unease at the presence in Western countries of so many mutilated survivors of World War One. It was not until the late 1930s that this issue began to be talked about openly; as so often, the Gothic discourse developed the vocabulary for the rational one.

### **Pre-Raphaelites**

British artistic movement. Its seven original members defined themselves in 1848 against the dominant **Classical romanticism** of the Royal Academy by turning back to **medieval** models, hence their adopted name. What they seem to have understood by this, at least at first, was an attempt to scorn idealism and exactly depict nature, using techniques such as building thin layers of paint over a white canvas to produce brilliant, vivid colours, and an intensive observation of detail. Early influences on the movement included the art criticism of John Ruskin, who argued in favour of the purity and rectitude of Gothic **architecture**, and the older painter Ford Madox Brown, who had had contact with the **Nazarenes**. Early Pre-Raphaelite works brought a good-humoured but unsentimental realism into the traditional world of escapist historical art; most famously, John Everett Millais's 'Christ in the House of his Parents' was denounced (particularly by Dickens) for depicting the Holy Family with a down-to-earth robustness that turned Christ into a 'sickly brat', Mary into a 'hag' and made Joseph seem 'vulgar'. Not all the associates of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, however, were content with illustrating Shakespeare, **Dante** and the Bible, and some of the movement's most triumphant works were the social commentaries of William Holman Hunt (as in 'Work' and 'Take Your Son, Sir!'). By the mid-1850s, dissipation of the original focus was apparent, and 'Pre-Raphaelite' artists could be found producing paintings every bit as sentimental as those of mainstream Victoriana; Edward Burne-Jones took the movement in the direction of a swooning dream-world based on Arthurian and Classical legend, and Pre-Raphaelitism had miraculously turned into another version of what it had opposed.

The Gothic temper is most obviously at work in Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Appropriately, since the PRB coincided with both the **Gothic Revival** and the High Church movement, his first painting was 'The Girlhood of the Virgin Mary', a flawed but influential exercise in renaissance Mannerism, a style not Gothic in its time but in the 1840s a mark of artistic revolt. More religious pictures followed, as well as illustrations of the *Divine Comedy* and imaginary scenes from Dante's life, all in a flat, perspectiveless, vividly-coloured medieval manner. It was notable that Rossetti chose to depict the doomed lovers Paolo and Francesca from the *Comedy*; his interest in romantic eroticism led to painting after painting of heavy-haired, thick-necked, cruel-looking girls which became a cliché (Burne-Jones's figures look

similar – they shared models, after all – but lack the same stifling sexiness). Other Pre-Raphaelite ‘Fatal Women’ occur in the paintings of Frederick Sandys (‘Morgan Le Fay’, ‘**Medea**’) and JW Waterhouse (‘Ophelia’, ‘The Lady of Shalott’). These images were being produced well into the period of high **decadence**, and fed into that mood.

### ***The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824)**

Scottish novel, an examination of **religious** psychopathy partly anticipated by **Brown’s** *Wieland*. James Hogg, an Ettrick farmer, had already penned supernatural stories and poems; in *Memoirs* he took the Calvinist **Puritan** and examined the consequences of the doctrine of predestination – that salvation is dependent not on one’s own acts or even faith, but on God’s sovereign choice determined from eternity, and therefore cannot be affected by what good or evil one does (a belief into which the young **Byron** was also inculcated). Robert Wringhim, illegitimate laird’s son raised by a Calvinist minister, believes himself one of God’s elect. On the very day this conviction dawns, he encounters a mysterious man in the woods – a mirror-image of himself, who with pious arguments gradually breaks down all his objections to various acts of evil. He eventually works out the stranger’s identity, but by then he has only one way of release. This satire on one soul’s descent into madness avoids the lurid paraphernalia of parallel works such as *The Monk*, and for all its archaicism (it’s set in 1712) feels significantly modern.

### **prophets**

Now associated wholly with foretelling the future, Biblical ‘prophecy’ involved not only prediction but also clairvoyance and ecstatic utterances, and later the delivery of a divine instruction, either verbally or through symbolic action. Prophets were deeply **ambiguous** figures. It was recognised that pagan divinities could inspire prophets, and that God could place lies in their minds as well as truth. Their divine inspiration could license very odd behaviour – as when Isaiah went naked for three years to make a point – and, since they were completely outside any power structure and could be sent from very humble circumstances to deliver God’s word to the kings of Israel and Judah, the office could bring reverence or opprobrium and persecution. It was hardly a gift to be welcomed, and some prophets, such as Jonah, sought to evade their responsibilities.

The Biblical prophets were concerned with the relationship between the Israelites and their God, and their themes included his retribution for his people’s faithlessness and the punishment to be visited on their neighbours for persecuting them. There must be a suspicion that the prophets rather relished their pronouncements: ‘they have been the most single-minded of **ruin** lovers’, wrote Rose Macaulay, ‘having no use for cities until they fall, and then rejoicing over the shattered remains’. As filtered through the lofty sonorities of the King James Bible, their violent fantasies of destruction have been echoed down the centuries. Diamanda **Galás** has made eloquent use of Jeremiah and the Psalms.

### **Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore (1812-52)**

British architect, the doyen of **Gothic revivalists**. Pugin converted to **Catholicism** at 23 and, taking a taste for frivolous Gothic from his designer father, discovered an overpowering moral purpose not just to revive Gothic **architecture**, but the entire **medieval** culture which accompanied it, a programme he outlined in the dogmatic *Contrasts and Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England*. There was some outrage when his contribution to the new Houses of Parliament became known – that a Papist should have any hand in designing the heart of the Protestant Empire! – but with the High Church revival his principles were adopted among Anglicans with a thoroughness that the Catholics never took

on board as heartily as Pugin would have wished; they even had reflections in secular architecture. Not content with designing buildings, he also produced everything associated with them – furniture, vestments, bookbindings, metalwork, even tiles and wallpaper. Apart from a morbid fear of the dark and haunted places, and despite his passionate eccentricities, Pugin was no Gothic character, and his aim was to revive an age of uncomplicated, hierarchical Christianity, not to celebrate superstition and dread. He died Gothically, however, suffering a breakdown through overwork brought on by the sheer scale of the task he set himself, and his influence on many parts of the Gothic continuum is too great to ignore.

## **Puritanism**

The more extreme Protestant Christian movements which arose out of the Reformation tended, in their reaction against the carnality of **medieval Catholicism**, towards a dour seriousness which looked on forms of pleasure as suspect; or rather, were more serious in working out that disapproval than their Catholic opponents had been. They both defined holiness more in terms of virtuous behaviour than emotional devotion or ritual observance, and extended its application beyond monks and nuns to laypeople. John Calvin's holy republic of Geneva was their ideal, although the most that could be achieved in England was cutting down maypoles and closing alehouses. By the 1570s such people were referred to abusively as 'puritans'. The apogee of English Puritanism came with the revolutionary government established by the Civil War, which reformed the Church on Presbyterian lines, abolished Christmas and closed the theatres. The failure of the Commonwealth broke the back of the Puritan movement in England, and when religious enthusiasm revived in the 1740s with Methodism it took a very different form.

Puritanism had a number of influences on the Gothic. It created a set of Protestant bigotries to mirror Catholic ones, and thus a range of different hypocrisies to be exposed (there are nice examples in Peter Cushing's witch-burning zealots from **Hammer's *Twins of Evil***, and a sympathetic hypocrite is central to **Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter***). Formally, it developed the tradition of the introspective narrative. Because Puritanism placed such emphasis on demonstrating genuine conversion from reprobation to redemption, Puritans became accustomed to a degree of self-examination, self-reproach and self-dramatisation which had formerly not existed outside religious orders. Thirdly, there was a new emphasis on the family as the basic unit of godly society.

In Scotland and **America**, where neo-Puritan movements remained important, the Gothic tradition fed on these influences. Hogg's ***Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*** (1824) is the supreme account of morbid religious psychopathy, as well as adapting in a very obvious way the Puritan tradition of the confessional narrative. American Goths such as **Poe** not only exhibited quiveringly melodramatic introspection, but also depicted families which inverted the Puritan ideal by being dysfunctional on a grand scale, as in works by Hawthorne, **Faulkner**, and even, in a lighter mood, the **Adams Family**.

## **Radcliffe, Ann (1764-1823)**

British author. The story goes that Christina Rossetti (poet and sister of the pre-eminent **Pre-Raphaelite**) abandoned her planned biography of Mrs Radcliffe – 'the great enchantress', as Montague **Summers** called her – for lack of material. Why this journalist's wife took up the **Gothic Novel** with *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* in 1789 and just as suddenly abandoned it after *The Italian* was published in 1797 are questions which can be answered only hesitantly. She became the most noticeable and most celebrated of the female authors among the Gothic novel's first wave. Her best-known, though perhaps not finest, book was

*The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794); the whole of her work is based around a repertoire of threatened heiresses, **Sadean** villains, mysterious castles, gloomy nunneries, and mistaken identities.

Along with **Walpole** and ‘**Monk**’ Lewis, Mrs Radcliffe was early identified as one of the leading triumvirate of the Gothic novelists, but differed from either: where Walpole was camp and superficial, and Lewis violent and sensational, she aimed for melodrama, romance, and thrilling incidents. She was careful to distinguish between her own taste for ‘terror’, and ‘**horror**’, in her view a generally inferior effect which characterised Lewis and other Gothic writers. More advanced Goths were critical of this very attitude, especially her habit of debunking in the end the supernatural shocks in which her novels indulged, leading to a certain cosiness and literary anticlimax.

### **Rais, Gilles de** (1404-40)

French noble, alchemist and, depending on your taste, innocent victim of a legal travesty or one of the most horrific mass-**murderers** in history. Gilles de Laval, Baron de Rais, had acquitted himself honourably as Marshal of France, but squandered his colossal fortune. Forbidden by the Crown to sell more of his estates to service his spending, he turned to alchemy and gave the secular and ecclesiastical authorities a reason to seize his lands via dubious legal means. He was charged with heresy, devil-worship, and with having tried to secure the assistance of demons in his alchemical quest by sacrificing dozens of local children – though not before he had sexually molested and tortured them. He contested none of the charges, and was executed by strangulation.

Contemporaries regarded these tainted proceedings as ‘disgraceful’, but the excessiveness of the charges has not stopped the Gothic tradition from swallowing the whole sulphurous story. De Rais became confused with the monstrous Bluebeard of folklore, and the subject of a play by Maeterlinck and operas by Dukas, Offenbach, and Bartok. Somewhere along the line the story lifted the motif of the ‘threatened woman’ from the **Gothic novel** and added Gilles’s wife as the last of his intended sacrifices; in later versions he can also be found celebrating the Black Mass and basing his crimes on the excesses of the Roman emperors. Although no biography was written until 1886, his infernal reputation spread nonetheless: **Sade** saw in him a forebear; he crops up in Jules Janin’s *frénétique* tales; and he is the haunting presence behind Huysmans’s novel of Parisian **occultism**, *Là-Bas*. Assuming that the charges against him were in fact baseless, perhaps the most unsettling aspect of the business is to reflect where the grisly fantasies really came from.

### **religion**

The Gothic relationship with religion is, to put it mildly, troubled. Its characteristic mistrust of any rationalistic approach to human problems, and consequently all **political** solutions to them, might be seen to encourage a move towards the extremity of a religious viewpoint; but equally its insistence on the tainted quality of human authority and knowledge tends to make even the most sincere Goth believer an awkward and uncompliant one.

At its most superficial, Gothic uses religious images, especially the Christian cross and the **occult** pentangle, as badges of emotional extremity; rather more interestingly, they can become the ultimate signifiers of corrupted goodness, making blasphemy the ultimate rebellion (hence the persistent presence of religious motifs in Goth art and **fashion**, though blasphemy no longer has quite the shock value some modern Goths seem to imagine). From **Sade**’s amplification of the folkloric Black Mass, which mixed the excitements of sacrilege with those of abusive sex, through Swinburne’s hymn to ‘Dolores, Our Lady of Pain’, to **Christian Death**’s slightly more sophisticated inversions of Christian prayers and images,

the Gothic tradition disdains contending with lesser forms of power, and with typical bravado proceeds straight to the abuse and mockery of God. Trump that, it says. On the other hand, **Catholic** Christianity in particular exercises an alternate attraction and repulsion. It shares with the Gothic instinct a belief in the abiding corruption of man, and a system of imagery which combines blood and violence with both **melancholy** and transcendent beauty; yet it also demands acceptance of a restrictive and hierarchical system of authority. Many Goths wait until the safety of the deathbed before converting, or spend a lifetime in precarious belief but separation from the institutional Church. An excellent example is **Baudelaire**, whose declarations of allegiance to the Devil were matched by very orthodox beliefs and acts. Baudelaire's 'Litanies of Satan' have been interpreted in music by the modern artist closest to his spirit, Diamanda **Galás**. Her own masterwork, *The Plague Mass*, parodies the eucharist to achieve a deeply serious statement on behalf of all those shut out by established religious or social authority - one compatible with orthodox Christianity. Nonetheless, there is nothing essentially preventing Goths from adhering to any religious belief or none, although it is difficult to see the sickly flower of Gothic budding in, say, the placid and serene soil of Buddhism. This hasn't stopped many modern Goths declaring for pagan beliefs; although drippy-hippy **nature**-worship may not seem very Gothic from the outside, its freedom from organised structures and emphasis on creativity coincides with the individualism of the Gothic temper. The British band Inkubus Sukkubus (among others) represents this attitude, and has at least managed to squeeze some not entirely-uninteresting **music** from it.

#### **Rice, Anne** (b.1941)

American author. Rice's contribution has been to insinuate sexualised **vampirism** into mainstream consciousness. Beginning with *Interview with the Vampire* in 1976, Rice traces through the centuries the experiences of her hero Lestat and other vampires, those experiences mainly being a sort of luxuriant boredom which only the decorative slaughter of humans can enliven: they are similar to the voluptuaries of **decadent** literature. A true heir to the **Gothic novelists** of two centuries before, Rice is unafraid of overstatement edging into parody, naming books *Queen of the Damned* (1988), *The Mummy: Or, Ramses the Great* (1989), and even *Memnoch the Devil* (1995), a title which should really have **Maturin** suing from beyond the grave. She is an active self-dramatist who makes her own New Orleans home the fictional haunt of a coven of witches, and writes erotica under preposterous *noms-de-plume*. Her enormous success was both recognised and aided by the 1994 film version of *Interview*, even though it is a flashy and vacuous *longueur* in which the clothes are more interesting than the characters.

#### **The Romantic Agony** (1930)

When critic Frank Kermode wrote the preface to the second English edition of Professor Mario Praz's masterwork, he hit on the word 'Burtonian' as a description. Indeed, like the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, *The Romantic Agony* is a *liber librorum*, a book containing other books which opens out through the doors of notes and appendices to winding and obscure ramifications like a vast and phantom library. Its colossal learning, the fruit of years misspent ferreting through the obscurest literary detritus of four languages, is what impresses most about it.

*The Romantic Agony* is an account of how the **romantic** imagination darkened into **decadence**, beginning with the 18<sup>th</sup> century's 'discovery of **horror** as a source of delight and beauty (which) ended by reacting on man's actual conception of beauty', proceeding through **Shelley's** hymning of the Medusa and **Byron's** Satanic posing, coloured by **Sade**,

and ending in the twilight unhealthiness of the *fin-de-siècle*. Praz attempts to restrain the definition of 'romantic' to its late 18<sup>th</sup>-century core, and prevent it lifting off into the airy vapours of complete meaninglessness through the extension of that definition backwards in time or sideways in extent. This book's own treatment of the Gothic sensibility would have horrified him.

At first it seems as though the Professor is himself gearing up for an account of that sensibility, but his very restraint in dealing with his subject, admirable in its own terms, limits the book's usefulness as a Gothic history: the development of the erotic imagination is only one, and not the chiefest, element of the Gothic, but *The Romantic Agony*'s very dominance in its field has made it very difficult to think in any other terms. A jewelled trap for the mind.

### romanticism

The Gothic is often dismissed as a subgenus of the Romantic, although this attempt to subsume one problematic term within another risks obfuscating both. The word in its strong, ideological sense did not emerge until the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the origins of Romanticism lay in a reaction against the rationalistic ideas which had prevailed in the world of thought since the Renaissance, epitomised by the philosopher Descartes's belief that universal truth could be derived by a process of pure reason, and by Sir Isaac Newton's sway over the nascent disciplines of physics and mathematics. Since the end of the religious wars, which made such 'enthusiasm' unfashionable, rationalism had become even more entrenched.

Signs of the reaction were evident, at least in England, from the 1730s and 1740s when Horace **Walpole**, and friend the **graveyard poet** Thomas Gray, went tripping in the Alps and waxed lyrical over the thrilling effects of mountains and waterfalls. Philosophically it was underpinned by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose *Discourse on Inequality* (1750) sought an ideal for human social organisation in primitive liberty; instinct and emotion, for Rousseau, was a means of discovering the truth. This doctrine placed the individual and their thoughts at the heart of philosophical and artistic discourse; it made *feeling* not just respectable but also worthy of exploration. Eventually Wordsworth, together with Coleridge the purest English exponent of Romanticism, could write in 'Tintern Abbey' of being 'well pleased to recognise /In nature and the language of my sense/ The anchor of my purest thoughts'.

Yet not all feelings were positive and uncomplicated, even if they could be legitimised by having positive results. In 1755 JJ Winckelmann published *Thoughts on the Imitation of the Arts of the Ancients* which applied the emergent Romantic philosophy to the **Classical** remains of Greece and Rome to discover principles of order and wisdom; in contrast, Edmund Burke's 1757 essay on the **Sublime** attempted to bring evocations of **horror** and fear within the same ideological framework. These two 'light' and 'dark' modes of Romanticism would remain in quivering connection for some decades yet.

Clearly Romanticism cut across the pre-existing distinction between Classical and Gothic. The romantic could feel, for instance, precisely the same emotions in respect of Classical **ruins** as he might of Gothic ones, leading to both sorts proliferating in the gardens of the rich from the mid-1700s onwards. **Politically** radical romantics, too, could see in Greek antiquity ideals of liberty and democracy they wanted to emulate, and looser, more 'Grecian' styles of dress, especially fashionable for women as the century changed, testified to a desire to signal greater informality and put a greater emphasis on feeling. Glances at the paintings of David or Canova's sculptures are enough to prove that the Romantic could be expressed in Classical forms. **Fuseli**, whose Romantic credentials are hardly in doubt,

expressed contempt for Gothic **art** of all varieties (for him, **Botticelli's** paintings were 'culinary abominations', and **Dürer's** etchings 'blasphemies on nature') and spent his life in reverence at the Classic temple.

However, informality also meant asymmetry and disorder, characteristics traditionally associated with Gothic art and **architecture** by its critics, and Romanticism developed a progressively closer relationship with the Gothic. By the time the Schlegel brothers in Germany came to coin the word 'romanticism' itself in 1798, what was *thought* 'Classical' and what was *thought* 'Romantic' had become opposites. The Romantic-Gothic connection is obvious, too, in the way Romanticism plundered the past, reviving obsolete precedents in order to express feelings about the contemporary world. The word reflected a retrospective to **medieval** 'romances'; the **Gothic novel**, the **Gothic Revival**, the work of the **Nazarenes** and the taste for the antique in **fashion** worked on similar lines.

The cult of feeling, gradually, took the Romantic idealists down darker byways. This tendency was incipient, but was given a vocabulary by Burke, impetus by the Gothic novelists and Fuseli, and force by the horrors of the French Revolution, and as it darkened it parted company with Romanticism proper. Romantics had believed in the redemptive quality of fine sensibilities; there was no such confidence in Fuseli's painting '**The Nightmare**', for instance, where emotion and reason are contending rather than co-operating forces and where instinct is a wild, unbiddable thing in which there is nothing to admire. A little later **Goya** declared in one of the *Caprices* that '**The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters**'. This newly articulated awareness that the soul contained much to be feared, coupled with a perverse readiness to celebrate the base and depraved, was properly Gothic, and would intensify steadily until, after a century, Romanticism blossomed into **Decadence**.

### **Rops, Felicien** (1833-98)

Belgian artist. Noone would claim Rops as a great stylist; Praz called him 'the artist of the **decadents**', but that movement produced better, and he only warrants a place in this compilation because some of his works are often reproduced in Gothic contexts. Rops began as a journalist and political satirist; a move to Paris and a reading of **Baudelaire** exposed a vein of morbidity and misogyny which led to a number of pictures celebrating the demonic power of the Female. A series of etchings entitled *Les Sataniques* depicted a sexual cacophony with hints of **Giger** and in illustrations to **The Temptation of St Anthony** he placed a prostitute on the Cross. His frontispiece to Joséphin Péladan's *La Vice Supreme* (1884) shows a skeletal couple in evening dress; the male, headless, holds open a coffin revealing the female, and they stand atop a perversion of the Roman state emblem wherein a withered wolf fails to suckle an emaciated Romulus and Remus. This exercise in grisly humour shows Rops at his most Gothic, but also his most superficial and commercial.

### **Rosa, Salvator** (1615-73)

Italian artist. Rosa's campaign to have himself seen as more than a standard painter of his day working on portraits and Biblical scenes was a great success. His pose of contempt for patrons and other artists was original, familiar though it may now be; the stories of his youthful excursions with the bandits featured in his pictures, and murdering Spanish soldiers on the streets of occupied Naples, were eagerly believed by **Romantic** posterity; the famous self-portrait of the piratical, outlaw painter clad in black had the desired effect. All this, pose though it was, did genuinely coincide with a taste for depicting desolation and extremity which marked Rosa out; although, for instance, Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin similarly affected subsequent tastes with their pictures of dramatic landscapes scattered with

**ruins**, the Italian was the master of barren and savage places, unrivalled delineator of the jutting crag and the dead and twisted tree (similar scenes appeared in the work of many late **medieval** artists, including Mantegna and **Brueghel**, but Rosa made them the centre of the composition). His 'Scene of Witchcraft' seems to emerge from a markedly jaundiced worldview, with its different sorts of people busily engaged in the black arts, supervised by monsters; evil can be found in everyone, it implies - a peculiar pre-echo of **Goya**, and with a Goya-like mixture of **horror** and the burlesque.

The English were particularly susceptible to Rosa. Few of his works actually contained the 'Salvatorian' devices of rocks and trees, but in print form they circulated freely enough to provide an intelligible point of comparison for *real* landscapes. Landscapes, in fact, became 'such as Salvator might have painted': swooning with admiration for the jagged grandeur of the Alps in 1739, Horace **Walpole** scribbled breathlessly 'precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings, Salvator Rosa'. As a shorthand for rebellion and the **Sublime**, Rosa's theatrics taught 18<sup>th</sup>-century Goths how to imagine the world.

### **Roubiliac, Louis Francois** (c.1700-1762)

French sculptor working in England, the *doyen* of all funerary artists. At a time when the traditionally didactic grimness of Christian funerary art was being diluted in favour of sentimental or pompous commemorations of the virtues of the departed, Roubiliac stood out in favour of drama, extremity, and **horror**. He harnessed the visual rhetoric of **neo-classicism**, with its drapes, urns and cherubs, to an emotional violence that represented a vicious manifestation of **Romanticism**. His monuments can be found in several places (where they can be identified), but the most famous is Lady Elizabeth Nightingale's in Westminster Abbey, which shows her husband fending off the blows of elongated, skeletal Death who twists below them, wielding a lightning bolt (Her Ladyship was struck by lightning in 1731). His portraiture was remarkably expressive, thought less grim: the bust of the composer Handel is his most celebrated piece.

### **ruins**

Rose Macaulay insists in *Pleasure of Ruins* that 'the human race is and always has been ruin-minded', but the Gothic temper did not express itself through a love of ruins for many centuries. When ancient writers such as Herodotus or Strabo visited the monuments of **Egypt**, reporting on the Pyramids or the Labyrinth at Fayyum, it was always to marvel over the skill, ingenuity, effort or expense which went into their construction, rather than luxuriating in their **melancholy** atmosphere. That development needed the discovery of Time ushered in by the Renaissance: a sudden awareness of the real distinctiveness of the ancient cultures which had produced antique monuments.

In England, there were no **Classical** remains to attract attention: instead the Reformation of the 1530s and 1540s made a landscape of Gothic wrecks out of the monasteries and abbeys of the **Middle Ages**, visible marks of a paradigm shift between two mental universes. For anyone who felt nostalgic for the 'Old Time', the tag that lost world soon acquired, a certain degree of dissembling was in order: such people were often **Catholics**, subject to social isolation, financial penalty, and judicial homicide. This was the modern mind's first large-scale experience of self-conscious pretence, of the construction of identity that formed a key element of the Gothic mentality: of being a spy in a foreign land.

The Gothic vocabulary of ruins was already developing when one anonymous Catholic reactionary visited the wreckage of the great pilgrimage site of Walsingham and wrote 'Owls do shriek where the sweetest hymns/Lately were sung;/Toads and serpents hold their dens/Where the palmers did throng'. Owls carried on shrieking and toads and serpents

creeping through ruined arches and pillars in the work of the **Jacobean dramatists**, Spenser, **Milton**, even Pope, the **Graveyard Poets** and the **romantics**, before the imagery finally perished in the collapse of the **Gothic novel** under the weight of its own clichés. In Europe, the masters of ruin were Piranesi and **Fuseli**, who treated the remains of Classical antiquity with the same spirit the English poets invested in the Gothic, while it was a wreck further afield still that provided the inspiration for one of the finest poetic meditations on the meaning of the ruin, though its author never saw the site involved: **Shelley's** 'Ozymandias', based around the Colossi of Memnon outside Thebes.

Along with the cult of melancholy for which they provided set dressing, ruins faded from high literature, but survived in other forms. Caspar David **Friedrich's** 'The Abbey in the Oakwood' proved a great influence on the Gothic visual system via German theatre and film. Photography - and eventually the work of Simon **Marsden** - allowed the ruin-hunting so enjoyed by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century romantics to be democratised until by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century's end every abbey, castle, swallowed temple and desert city was crammed with tourists. Modern Goths will seek instead the less obvious pleasures of broken warehouses, abandoned cityscapes, and industrial wastelands. In this, Miss Macaulay would have concurred: her analysis is still the subtlest treatment of the appeal of devastation.

### **Ruysch, Frederik** (1638-1731)

Dutch **anatomist**. Ruysch taught anatomy to the Surgeon's Guild of Amsterdam for more than 50 years; his appointment as Doctor to the Court from 1679 gave him the opportunity to build up a collection of some 2000 medical specimens, prepared with his own ground-breaking techniques of visualising the blood and lymphatic vessels. This assembly was sold to the Russian despot Peter the Great in 1717.

Ruysch was more than a gifted surgeon; he saw the human body as a moral cypher and its dissection as an art, albeit a grisly one. He would sever the arm of a dead child, dress it in a lace sleeve sewn by his daughter, and place it in alcohol with an organ suspended from the hand; drape foetuses with strings of beads; preserve the heads of babies as if asleep, or awake in wonder at their new situation. However challenging these elegant, macabre, and piteous meditations on mortality seem to the modern mind, Ruysch's 'tableaux' appear even more shocking today. These were allegories on the transience of life consisting of posed foetal skeletons amid delicate arrangements of other carnal detritus. None are known to have survived.

### **De Sade, Donatien Alphonse Francois** (1740-1814)

French writer and controversialist. Always more than merely an incarcerated scribbler of pornography, Sade's life was deeply expressive of his time, encapsulating both the violent corruption of the *ancien regime* and the trimming needed to survive the insanity of the revolutionary Terror and the Directorate - yet he remains enigmatic, although everyone thinks they know the mechanics of his mind. His blasphemous sexual antics were no worse than those of other aristocrats, and, when given the chance, he proved himself moderate, liberal and humane. What, then, was the relationship between these incarnations and the monstrous philosophy expounded in his works?

The first of these, *Dialogue between a Priest and a Dying Man* (written 1782 but not published until 1926) is a dramatised polemic against Christianity as irrational and unnatural. *The 120 Days of Sodom* (1785, in its unfinished form) places four libertines representing the ruling classes of France in a remote castle with a retinue of victims and then details escalating sexual deviations which culminate in mass slaughter. After several preliminary versions, *The New 'Justine'* emerged in 1797, telling the story of two

contrasting twin sisters. Justine is a pious girl whose devotion to virtue is rewarded by unremitting punishment at the hands of a hypocritical society and implacable Nature. Juliette, on the other hand, is Sade's heroine. She realises that 'the law of nature is crime and death', and that the strong, truthful person lives in accordance with this fact, trying – if they have any artistry or ambition – to outdo Nature's own barbarity. In proper obedience to Sadean principles Juliette stifles any weak feelings of conventional morality and systematically deranges her sensual responses, training herself to find pleasure in the degraded and monstrous. She fucks and kills her way across Europe, amassing a toll of victims that runs to hundreds, and meets with nothing but approbation.

All this, like the characters, can be taken a number of ways. Critics commonly assert that Sade's outpourings are 'not erotic', which seems intended as more a judgement on the quality of the writing than an accurate gauge of its effect, though it's true that he puts sex to the service of philosophy. As an exposure of human corruption it has a satirical point, but is too relentless and obsessive to be nothing more than satire. The nihilism put into the mouths of Juliette and her companion monsters coincides so thoroughly with the opinions of the Divine Marquis that they must in some way express a moral programme. How far Sade would have imitated Juliette, had he been able, is thankfully a matter only for speculation.

Sade's relevance to the Gothic tradition is both enormous and misleading. He adopts the conventions of the **Gothic Novel** and takes them to a logical conclusion: like Otranto, or Udolpho, or Gilles de Rais's castle, the scene of *The 120 Days* is an isolated Gothic fortress whose walls hide dark deeds, and the men Justine and Juliette encounter are the saturnine villains of **Walpole** and **Radcliffe's** books made explicitly sexual. Sade's extremity made it possible for other writers to think in more extreme terms, beginning with Lewis (passages in *The Monk* appear to be modelled on ones in *Justine*) and carrying down through the **decadents** to modern examples. Ideologically, although he scorned all hints of the superstition and dread Goths so often find appealing, his insistence that human discourse must take into account the basic savagery of **Nature** puts him alongside the Gothic camp, and against the optimism of Rousseauian **Romanticism** and renaissance **Classicism** alike. However, by making sexual gratification the only credible form of pleasure or power he skewed Gothic in the direction of the specifically sexual and thus tied it down, as it were, to a narrower range of interest. By the time the decadents had fully digested him, for example, the repetition of sadistic motifs in the works of figures such as Swinburne and D'Annunzio became a wearisome routine, dressing Sade's passions up in flowers, gauze and incense smoke.

Camus called Sade the originator of the modern world, and the very extremity which makes him a touchstone figure for Goths and others is problematic. He creates a literary and moral scorched earth; beyond Sade, beyond asserting that evil is necessary and turning it into the basis for a philosophy, there is nowhere else to go. The only option for those who want to explore the outermost reaches of human behaviour must be (like Poppy Z **Brite**) to go over the same ground with greater poetry or psychological sophistication.

### **Schwob, Marcel** (1867-1905)

French author. Schwob's upbringing in a highly literary circle (his father knew Flaubert, Jules Verne and **Baudelaire**) and a high native intellect made him the finest stylist of the **decadence**. He earned a living as a journalist, but despite having rejected an academic career spent most of his time researching historical arcana, notably bloody episodes in the **Middle Ages** and the 15<sup>th</sup>-century criminal poet Villon. This weighty erudition allowed him to develop a convincing, though only half-seen, background for his twilight fantasies. He corresponded with Robert Louis Stevenson; he and Oscar **Wilde** dedicated works to one

another; he turned Aleister **Crowley**'s awful English poems into rather acceptable French. Disease, criminality, and the familiar Fatal Woman of *fin-de-siècle* literature are dealt with in *The King in the Golden Mask* (1892), *Imaginary Lives* (1896) and the crystalline, shimmering *Book of Monelle* (1894). Indirect, delicate presentations of the signs of degradation, a fine taste for debasement, are Schwob's guiding lights.

'**The Scream**' (1893)

**Siouxie** may currently deny that the Banshees' debut album of the same name bore any debt to it, but nonetheless Edvard **Munch**'s most famous painting has sunk deep into global consciousness and re-emerges in the most surprising places: recent kitsch treatments (turning it into inflatable toys, for instance) can be seen as an attempt to defuse its worrying power. Part of its authority lies in its extreme simplicity: a single, androgynous figure, ignored by two others in the background, stands with a look of horrified awareness on a road above a swirling and indistinct landscape. The 'original' – dramatically stolen and recovered in 1994 – in the Oslo National Gallery is matched by fifty other versions, reflecting Munch's obsessive revising of his 'Frieze of Life' paintings. It arose from his perception of 'an endless scream passing through **nature**' while on a walk above the Oslo fjord, and broke new ground in several ways. It is soundless – the figure itself is not screaming, it is the landscape which screams – yet marks the first attempt to depict sound itself visually, and its forcing of an internal experience out through the environment was an inspiration to the **expressionist** movement. In Gothic terms, 'The Scream' (originally 'Despair' and then, in literal Norwegian, 'Shriek') is an iconic depiction of angst, insisting in the isolated figure's sudden overwhelming awareness of the weight of universal pain and sorrow, that **horror** is the proper response to existence. It remains **ambiguous**, as it is never clear whether the emotion arises from the oppression of horror in the external world, or from internal sources.

**Shelley, Percy Bysshe** (1792-1822) & **Mary** (1797-1851)

British writers. Percy Shelley, so long overshadowed by **Byron** (the friend whose company made him feel both socially and morally uncomfortable on occasions), has since emerged as the foremost poet of the first wave of Gothic. Reacting against his conservative gentry background, Shelley became an atheist and political radical animated by a **Romantic** belief in the free instincts of the spirit and ascribing human suffering to political repression: he makes Rousseau the spectral guide in his unfinished **Dante**-esque testament, 'The Triumph of Life'. This progressive optimism, which survived disenchantment with a range of left-wing movements and individuals, was in curious juxtaposition with a deep-laid Gothic strain. From childhood Shelley was obsessed with ghosts and demons, a taste he retained rather against his own scepticism, buying **Gothic novels** (and writing his own, *Zastrozzi* and *St Irvyne*) and attempting to raise ghosts at Eton. This sensibility pokes through much of his work but is most consistent in *The Cenci* (1819), a verse drama and part Shakespeare pastiche inspired by a visit to that bloodstained family's palace in Rome. In 'The Masque of Anarchy' and 'The Revolt of Islam' he puts Gothic to the service of **politics**. Shelley's honesty and passion puts his poetry in a different league entirely from Byron's, which always carries the element of pose; but there were depths he was unwilling to plumb. Shelley's second wife Mary was more prepared to look into those dark recesses. Like her husband, she was reacting against her own upbringing, in her case a radical one, her parents being the 'philosophical anarchist' William Godwin and the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft. She was not exactly Shelley's opposite, but still no romantic: she masked a nature whose passion matched his with deep and conservative reserve. In adolescence her closest confidant was her dead mother, and her most beloved haunt her grave in St Pancras's

churchyard. Experience only confirmed her sense of tragedy: by 27 she had lost mother, sister, husband, three children, and had suffered a miscarriage; only she and Claire Clairmont survived from the damned circle of the Villa Diodati. Her poems and novels were muted, with the exceptions of the apocalyptic *The Last Man* (1826), and *Frankenstein* - an exception so extraordinary it justifies her place here.

### **Siouxsie & the Banshees**

British band. Formed in 1976 to play at one relentlessly incoherent outing, the Banshees accidentally persisted to become one of the most enduring offspring of the punk revolution; together with **Joy Division** and **Bauhaus**, they were the progenitors of Goth pop **music**, but became more central to the tradition than either, thanks to an unmatched ability to process and reuse fragments from the Gothic past with stylish panache and combine them with their glam-rock enthusiasms for Bowie and the Velvet Underground. The creative core of Siouxsie Sioux (Janet Susan Ballion), Steve Severin (Steven Bailey) and, after a break-up and reorganisation in 1979, drummer Budgie (Peter Clark) remained constant with several changes in the rest of the line-up. They have become a touchstone for modern Gothic: in 1992, for instance, Tim **Burton** courted them to provide a theme song for *Batman Returns*.

Sioux's personality was dominant from the start, in both the Banshees' style and subject-matter. A bookish drop-out energised by reservoirs of childhood rage, her mezzo wail could articulate menace, mischief, regret, or pure anger, and her love of creepy old movies led to echoes of **Hitchcock** and *The Spiral Staircase* appearing in the early singles. There were also themes of madness, violence, prostitution, and very **ambiguous politics** which could combine a tribute to an anti-Nazi campaigner ('Mittageisen') with a vicious, subtle, and daring assault on the state of Israel and victim-Judaism generally. A similar breadth was evident in the music, signalled by the first single which matched 'Hong Kong Garden's' sparkly cod-Chinese pop driven by punk thump with the B-side 'Voices', a painfully abstract howl. It was followed by albums characterised by eerie, echoey misanthropy (*The Scream*, 1979); deeply unpleasant, aurally muffled supernaturalism (*Juju*, 1981); 'sub-hippie drivel' (*A Kiss in the Dreamhouse*, 1982); a flawed but bold selection of covers (*Through the Looking Glass*, 1987); and finally shimmering glam, sometimes triumphant and occasionally crass. In her side-project with husband Budgie, The Creatures, Sioux has been even bolder, incorporating percussive elements, central-American and Hispanic tradition, and dance music. The Banshees' most popular recording is still the compilation of early singles released in 1982, *Once Upon a Time*, and justly so: the sequence of tight, superbly controlled compositions inscribes a mighty scratch across the face of popular music, vicious, raging, and silkily seductive. It remains a more powerful single statement than anything else managed by their peers or successors or, arguably, themselves.

Eclecticism also characterised Sioux's dress style. She graduated dizzily from combining Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* with Droog makeup from *A Clockwork Orange* to imitating Theda Bara and the early screen **vamps**, and thus reached back to the origins of Goth **fashion**. Showing a remarkable aptitude for extracting the Gothic potential from a wide range of cultural and historical signifiers, she appeared as a geisha, a Hawaiian princess, a virgin saint, and Louise **Brooks**, and together with **Bauhaus's** Peter Murphy exerted a decisive influence on Goth style.

In the band's whole career the keynotes, set by Sioux herself, were flamboyance, a truly majestic degree of elitism and pretention, and a wicked sense of humour. These characteristics always set the Banshees well above a Goth movement they inspired yet affected to spurn. They called it a day in 1995, but reunited for a tour in 2002;

characteristically Sioux selected Hitchcock's theme music, '**Funeral March of a Marionette**', to serenade the audience on their way out of the Shepherds Bush Empire.

### '**The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters**' (1797)

No.43 in **Goya's** series of prints, *Los Caprichos*, shows an artist sleeping, head in arms, at a desk, surrounded by a fluttering crowd of demonic bats and owls which gather out of the darkness – the owl with the most goggle-eyed, satiric sneer holds out a pen, while a monstrous cat observes behind. Like all of Goya's grotesque illustrations, there is a brush of macabre comedy in these horrid things bred out of the imagination; yet only their size makes them 'monsters', as weirder beings would have skewed the image too far towards burlesque. The familiarity of these horrors, and in fact their un-horrificness, builds a bridge into the waking world along which they might at any moment pass. They are the limitless ocean of **natural** monstrosity which, Goya insists, only the thin sea-wall of reason restrains.

### **Spain**

For the **Gothic novelists**, Spain was the Gothic backdrop *par excellence*. Here was the most backwardly **Catholic**, priest-ridden nation in Europe, a baking, brutal landscape of superstition, tyranny and violence. It was the place where the **Middle Ages** had most obviously survived. Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* was set in the sinister monastery of the Capuchins in Madrid; **Maturin's** *Melmoth the Wanderer* placed its hero in the heat of the Castilian plains. The motif survived as late as 1892, when Charlotte Mew's story 'A White Night', set in 1876, depicted a horrific ritual taking place in a secretive Hispanic abbey, of the sort that tourists could easily visit by that time.

There is some point behind all this: Spanish **religion**, and the wider culture, has a sense of dramatic contrast about it, of light and shadow, of Flagellants and the Inquisition, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century mystics with their emphasis on 'the dark night of the soul', of Philip II introducing the fashion for black to Reformation Europe, the Holy Week processions of Seville, bullfighting, *flamenco*, Civil War. As the saying went, 'Death is the patron saint of Spain'.

### *Struwelpeter* (1845)

It is not entirely clear whether or not Dr Heinrich Hoffmann's collection of sadistic little tales, taking its name, 'Shock-headed Peter', from its central bogeyman, was *actually* intended for the perusal of the young (although he certainly used it to scare children into silence in his waiting-room, as fear was an important tool in his paediatric approach); they may have been a satire of such cautionary tales rather for the amusement of grown-ups, in the manner of *Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes* sixty years later. *Struwelpeter*, however, has gathered a uniquely infernal reputation for expressing adult desires to punish and destroy children, as well as masking very 19<sup>th</sup>-century fears about sexuality in the story of Little Suck-a-Thumb, which provides the exemplary couplet 'The great tall tailor always comes/ To little boys who suck their thumbs'. The vicious narratives were much enhanced by the gruesome illustrations whose production Hoffmann personally directed.

In 1998 Julian Crouch and Phelim MacDermott, in collaboration with pervert fairground combo the Tiger Lillies, turned *Struwelpeter* into a ghostly post-**Freudian** Gothic comedy musical. 'Shockheaded Peter' framed the individual tales with that of a bourgeois couple who bury their disruptive baby under the floorboards until it re-emerges years later like all repressed desires, secrets, and bad dreams, all presented as though by an outrageously ropery travelling theatre troupe with cardboard sets and ragged costumes. One of the most slyly knowing products of modern Gothic, its effect relied on nothing being stated but everybody understanding exactly how the layers of subtext slipped over one another.

## sublime

The word had already acquired its sense of ‘awesome’ and ‘exalted’ by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, so when Edmund Burke came to publish *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* in 1757 he was not inventing concepts, or even naming them anew, but systematising thoughts and feelings which were already widely discussed, and structuring existing tendencies in art. Burke’s essay was an analysis of why people are excited by the horrible and chaotic as well as the beautiful and orderly: he speculated that love and hate, expressed aesthetically as attraction and repulsion, are our strongest emotions, so the modes of art reflecting them are the categories of the ‘Beautiful’ and the ‘Sublime’. The latter could be aroused by things over which human beings had no control, or which reduced them to insignificance, such as dramatic landscapes, antique **ruins**, or **natural** disasters. Insofar as something of God could be perceived in these terrible images, enjoying them (at a safe distance, as Burke was careful to stress) was not just a cheap thrill but a worthwhile aesthetic and moral experience. Burke thus provided a philosophical justification and an artistic vocabulary for dark emotions, and helped divert the Gothic stream into the swelling currents of 18<sup>th</sup>-century **Romanticism**.

## Summers, Montague (1880-1948)

British writer, priest and **occultist**. From childhood Summers was obsessed with Gothic literature and the theatre, and saw ghosts throughout his life. At Oxford he posed as a **decadent**, idolised Oscar **Wilde**, dressed dramatically, and left with an atrocious degree. He was ordained into the Anglican priesthood in 1908 but later claimed to have been priested as a Roman **Catholic** in Italy. His ordination may have been intended partly for **occult** purposes: he celebrated Black Masses on occasions and became an erudite suburban diabolist (Aleister **Crowley** put about the story that he had turned Summers into a giraffe!). However, about 1920 he underwent a complete *volte-face* and emerged as a fervently anti-occult author. His histories of witchcraft (1925) and lycanthropy (1933) puzzled reviewers with their mixture of enormous scholarship and **medieval** credulity. He was the first historian of the **Gothic novel**, and in the 1910s identified all but one of the famous list of Gothic books in Chapter 6 of *Northanger Abbey* which had previously been thought to be mere spoofs. His *The Gothic Quest* (1938) was patchy but groundbreaking.

## surrealism

20<sup>th</sup>-century artistic movement. Just after World War 1 contributors to the Parisian literary review *Litterature* began to argue for spontaneity in composition and the deliberate derangement of reason in order to uncover ‘pure’ thoughts and emotions; the first *Surrealist Manifesto*, penned by André Bréton (1924) systematised these ideas, which soon became more influential in the visual arts than in writing. The Surrealist movement survived Bréton’s increasingly dictatorial tastes (by the mid-1930s he had expelled virtually every other associate of the group), and had faded by the late 1960s as its ideas became commonplaces, incorporated into the way the world saw itself.

To a basic ideological **romanticism** which linked them very explicitly with the **Symbolists** (Bréton claimed Moreau as the spiritual forebear of Surrealism), the Surrealists added the idea of the unconscious developed by **Freud**, but whereas the Doctor had therapeutic aims in illuminating the mind’s dark mechanisms, theirs was to wallow in its disturbance and unease. Their essential contribution was to add an awareness of the morbid quality of juxtaposing familiar objects with unfamiliar settings and events, a truly Gothic sensitivity derived from the observation of dreams and exemplified in the famous definition of beauty borrowed from the **decadent** de Lautremont – ‘the accidental meeting of a sewing machine

and an umbrella on a dissecting table'. In this world, nothing can be taken for granted, and the most ordinary environment is capable of spiralling into dementia. Bréton followed Freud, in fact, in seeing 18<sup>th</sup>-century **Gothic novels** as great revealers of the unconscious, and surrealist fellow-travelling playwright Antonin Artaud, originator of the 'theatre of cruelty', expressed a desire to replicate their gaudy sense of spectacle.

The most unsettling, and subtlest, Surrealists were those who most closely traced the outlines of the dream world. The best instances are the **melancholic** early paintings of Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978), depicting silent arcaded squares barred with shadows and scattered with fruit and statues; of René Magritte (1898-1967), in whose pictures anonymous, often faceless bowler-hatted men move through improbable landscapes; and Dorothea Tanning (b.1910), several of whose weird, fragmentary dramas seem to be influenced by **horror** movie visuals. Bréton and his confederates invented the game 'La Cadavre Exquisite' which **Bauhaus** borrowed for a song title, and **Brite** for a novel.

### **symbolism**

19<sup>th</sup>-century artistic movement. The art critics who defined it rejected what they saw as the enervating, anti-artistic mass democracy and materialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in favour of retreat into a world of symbol and dream whose alternative reality could be used to re-energise the everyday. As with other sub-species of **Romanticism**, the first currents of Symbolism were literary, emerging in the works of Rimbaud and Mallarmé, but these were overtaken by the visuals. As **Art Nouveau**'s concentration on sinuous line and barbaric decoration became dominant with the century's end, Symbolism's concerns with the world of myth and interior compulsion succumbed: Gustav Klimt was perhaps the last artist able to hold the balance.

Symbolism's importance to the Gothic lies in its forming a visual counterpart to literary **decadence**. A pioneering instance was the later art of the **Pre-Raphaelite** Rossetti, who, by the 1850s, was already abandoning any pretence at realism and spatial representation for static, iconic depictions of heavy-haired women with wickedness on their minds, surrounded with flowers – the Fatal Woman who was the final concentrated representation of the Romantic linkage of beauty and death, and who would appear repeatedly in later Symbolist art as Astarte, Cleopatra, the Sphinx, or Salome. Salome, in particular, was the focus of sadistic images from artists such as Gustave Moreau whose 1874 painting 'The Apparition' received pages of lavish praise in JK Huysman's 'decadent Bible', *À Rebours*. Virtually anything could be poured into this cauldron of fantasy: **Egypt** and the **Orient**, Arthurian or **Classical** legend, fairies, or **Catholic** mysticism, an eclectic process exhaustively analysed by Mario Praz in *The Romantic Agony*. The **Surrealists** recognised definite coincidences with the Symbolists, but added **Freudianism**, an interest in the morbidity of everyday things, and considerably more laughs.

If Moreau is the prime Symbolist artist, more beloved of the Gothic tradition is a complete contrast to his monumental elaboration, Odilon Rédon (1840-1918). Admired by the Symbolist critics but always independent of the movement, Rédon's charcoal pictures made before 1900 are tiny, monochrome glimpses of a silent, contemplative world. Even his illustrations for *Les Fleurs de Mal* and Flaubert's *Temptation of St Antony* have none of the dash and violence of his peers.

### **Temptation of St Antony**

St Antony, who died in 356, was the first Christian hermit and, according to the medieval *Golden Legend*, was beset by diabolical temptations in the **Egyptian** desert. This tale gave artists with a liking for the fantastic an excuse to unleash their imaginations. Among the

earliest to do so was Martin Schongauer (c.1472), followed by Lucas Cranach (1506), Matthias Grunewald (as part of the **Isenheim Altarpiece**), and **Brueghel** (1566). Among these late Gothic **artists** the most startling treatment of the motif was by Hieronymus **Bosch**: his version is filled with grotesque deformations of human, animal and vegetable forms, which do not assault Antony physically but illustrate the corruption of the world around him. The motif underwent a revival in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Flaubert's novel, which first appeared in 1849, entered the workings of the saint's mind, cataloguing **Sadean** fantasies of lust and cruelty; **Rops** illustrated Antony's vision with a prostitute displacing Christ from the Cross. One might expect the **Surrealists** to have taken an interest in the story, but Salvador Dalí's version (1946) is typically flashy and meaningless.

### **Toorop, Jan Teodor** (1858-1928)

Dutch artist. Toorop absorbed the artistic traditions of Java, his country of birth, was a member of 'Les Vingt' in the 1880s (and so associated with **Ensor** and **Rops**) and had contact with the tail-end of the English **Pre-Raphaelite** movement. These influences he turned into an extreme end-game **Symbolism**, stylised with the flowing, sinuous lines of **Art Nouveau**; 'The Three Brides' of 1893 is his best-known work, a sort of graphic map of the erotic imagination of the *fin-de-siècle* male artist. How Toorop was introduced into the imagination of the modern Goth movement is not clear, but UK Decay used a detail from his 'Faith in Decline' for an album cover, and some modern pagan art seems to have been influenced by his swirling line, though the artist himself became a **Catholic**.

### **tragedy, Greek**

Although Athenian drama was the first to develop out of basic shamanic and ritual performances, it retained a ghostly religious element – the tragedies were performed at the Feast of Dionysius, whose altar stood in the centre of the theatre, and the drama had an almost apotropaic function, exorcising the violent emotions and conflicts which could overwhelm reason and threaten the good government of the city-state. The annual performances began in 534 BE when Thespis's tragedy won a dramatic competition; the earliest surviving plays are seven from Aeschylus's total of a hundred; the other great figures are Sophocles and Euripedes. The tragedies were revised several centuries later by the Roman author Seneca, who revelled in their bloodier episodes.

The Gothic significance of the Attic tragedies lies in their structure and subject-matter which were, at least to modern eyes, somewhat at odds. The extreme stylisation - the use of the *chorus*, the wearing of masks to allow the actors (no more than three in number) to indicate characters, and only the most minimal sets and props – meant that the bloodiest incidents were rarely portrayed, only described, in cold and magisterial tones. Good examples are the murder of Agamemnon in Aeschylus's play, or Jocasta's suicide and Oedipus's self-blinding in Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*. Thematically, the plays usually placed the darkness and violence of human character in a cosmic context, particularly where characters were pursued by the Furies, embodiments of a vicious, primitive divine justice whose function was to avenge, or ensure vengeance for, parricide and the breaking of oaths; in the *Oresteia* Aeschylus calls them 'children of eternal Night', while Sophocles's term is 'daughters of the Earth and Shadow'. The Furies made horribly concrete the complete subjection of human beings to the relentless forces of **nature**, fate and compulsive psychology. It was understandable that **Freud** should name his theories after these mythical figures: beneath the surface of **Classical** reason and order he perceived an ocean of blood, and was surely correct to do so.

## uncanny

The core experience of Gothic is the awareness of things out of place and wrong. ‘Morbid’ is the medical term I used above; ‘uncanny’ is the one currently favoured in literary theory.

In 1919, Sigmund **Freud** published his essay *Das Unheimliche*, ‘The Uncanny’, a work prompted not by one of his cases or psychoanalytic theories, but apparently an interior compulsion alone (although he failed to give any credit to a similar work by a predecessor, Dr Rentsch). He recounted, as an example, an experience of being lost in an Italian town, where every attempt to find his way led back to the same place, as though he was trapped in an **Escher** print. The essay is pointless, contradictory, and intriguing, the one graspable idea it produces being the suggestion that uncanny feelings arise from the re-appearance of a familiar thing in an unfamiliar context – occurring where it has no right to be. *Das Unheimliche*, and the ideas it has given rise to, have been dissected in Nicholas Royle’s striking if often infuriating study *The Uncanny* (2003). Royle finds definition of ‘uncanny’ as difficult as the Doctor does (since uncanniness necessarily arises from vagueness and unsettlement, this is not surprising), but though ‘Gothic’ makes few appearances in the book, the two shiver-producing phenomena are clearly related.

Yet not identical. In visual art, the distinction is difficult to draw. Paintings such as Leonardo’s ‘The Madonna Litta’ (Royle’s frontispiece) and **surrealist** works make a single statement of undiluted morbidity, and can be both Gothic and uncanny. More sustained, narrative works, on the other hand, require differentiation along their course. A book or film that contained *only* uncanny happenings or feelings would not be properly Gothic; in these cases, Gothic demands some glimpse of the threatened **horror**, the maelstrom of original chaos which lies behind the uncanny’s suggestions and evasions. Even such masterpieces of non-events as Guy de Maupassant’s story ‘The Horla’ and Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* contain enough episodes of madness and horror to spike the suspense.

## Universal horrors

A sequence of classic **horror** movies which have had not only a deep, but a redefining effect on the Gothic imagination, visualising the great narratives for mass consumption, at the expense of a degree of roughening.

The beginnings were visible with Lon **Chaney**’s two silent films for Universal Studios, *The Hunchback of Nôtre Dame* (1923) and *Phantom of the Opera* (1925), and much of the visual repertoire, particularly the cinematic haunted house, was established by *The Cat and the Canary* (1927). Universal’s art director, Charles D Hall, was influenced by the German **expressionist** ‘cinema of shadows’, and his taste for its melodrama and abstraction was reinforced by an influx of German film makers and actors in the late ‘20s and early ‘30s, bringing the Gothic style which had previously had limited exposure into the heart of Hollywood (it helped that Universal was owned by the German emigré Carl Laemmle). In 1931 the studio took a set of frankly counter-intuitive decisions, treating the **vampire** legend seriously, allowing its coded eroticism full expression, lifting a Hungarian actor from the stage into the middle of it, and came up with *Dracula* almost by accident – the first horror film to be marketed as such.

Over the next decade, Universal’s films set the terms in which the world would conceive *Dracula*, **vampires** in general, *Frankenstein*, revived **Egyptian** mummies, and werewolves. A remarkable coincidence of technical and acting talents ensured that (Christopher Lee notwithstanding) vampires would continue to look and sound like Bela Lugosi, and Boris Karloff’s stumbling, childlike monster continue to haunt the world’s imagination (the cod folklore dreamt up by the screenwriters, too, such as the werewolf’s antipathy to silver, became part of the story). The director James **Whale**, particularly,

produced a series of near-masterpieces in which he brought a subversive sense of humour to the genre. After a hiatus brought about by the reaction to the gleeful sadism of the **Poe**-inspired *The Raven* (1935), a final sequence of movies was issued culminating in the somewhat muffled *The Wolfman* (1941), after which creative film-makers with a taste for macabre extremity turned their attention to **film noir**.

Other studios were influenced by Universal's success at the time to try their own horror movies (*Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* (1931) at Paramount and *Mystery of the Wax Museum* (1933) at Warner, for instance); and later **Hammer** partially succeeded in redefining the '30s blueprints, though not enough to erase their impact. **Bauhaus's** anthemic 'Bela Lugosi's Dead' was a tongue-in-cheek tribute to the visual style of the Universal horrors which the band found so exciting.

### **Valdes Léal, Juan de (1622-90)**

Spanish artist. Along with figures such as Zubarán and Velasquez, one of the vivid and sensual Seville school but with a streak of extremity that makes him less easy to classify. His troubling nature is best captured in two allegories painted for the Ospidal de la Caridad in Seville. 'In Ictu Oculi' presents Death, bearing shroud, coffin and sickle ready for the onlooker, snuffing out the candle of life 'in the twinkling of an eye' atop a pile of earthly paraphernalia. 'Finis Gloria Mundi', which hangs opposite, shows a crypt piled with bones; a bishop decays on the left, and on the right rots a knight in the robes of the Order of Calatрева (Valdes Léal's patron, Don Miguel de Mañara, was a member). In the dark, luridly illuminated, hangs a pair of scales, one pan weighed with human sins – at the centre a cancered heart gnawed by a bat – and the other, human pieties, the two held in perilous balance by a descending hand, pierced with the mark of a nail.

### **vampires & vamps**

The development of the fictional vampire should be familiar enough by now. Eastern European legends of corpses which brought death to the living by unclear means, and sometimes drank blood, reached the educated West in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (most notably the 11 vampires exhumed in the Serbian village of Medvegia in 1732); the stories were fastened by John Polidori onto the image of Lord **Byron** in *The Vampyre* (1819); and progressed through the treatment of poets such as Théophile Gautier and **Baudelaire** and less sophisticated pulp incarnations such as JM Rymer's *Varney the Vampire* (1846-7) to reach the end of the century embodied in the fantasies of the **decadents** and *Dracula*, the first and, **Brite** aside, last piece of sustained high literature the vampire theme has produced. The vampire's form in popular culture was fixed by the **Universal horrors** of the 1930s (alternative versions such as *Nosferatu* and Carl **Dreyer's** *Vampyr* never stood much of a chance against the lascivious appeal of Bela Lugosi and Gloria Holden), and its appearance in parodic form – Morticia **Addams**, for instance – showed how it had conquered the popular imagination. This image would not really shift until Anne **Rice** invented her listless, undead clothes-models in the 1970s, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* imagined vampires as rednecked Midwestern high-school jocks with fangs who were doomed to retain the stupidity and poor dress-sense they exhibited in life.

In serious terms, the vampire is a rebel and outsider, whose **ambiguous** relationship with human society is the subject of much modern genre fiction from *Interview* to *The Addiction* (1995) to the *Buffy* spin-off *Angel*: should the vampire accept his parasitic status or attempt peaceful coexistence with the human race? Those who decide not to apologise make a virtue of their chemical dependency on blood, therefore adopting a set of aristocratic, Nietzschean values deeply at odds with bourgeois democracy. For such a vampire, humans are meat or

playthings, except for the elect he decides to convert into fellow undead, and servicing the needs of an altogether superior being is not only their purpose but a privilege. Typically for a Gothic motif, there is transgressive morality here, but one which makes explicit power inequalities in the real world rather than offering them a challenge.

Vampire motifs are highly controversial in the Goth subculture. Firstly, there is a feeling that vampirism is a bit obvious, and its paraphernalia so undermined by camp that it is no longer possible to derive anything acceptably stylish from it. Secondly, most Goths affect to regard with scorn those people who actually claim to *be* vampires, treating them as literal-minded geeks incapable of understanding the rules of kitsch and not nearly as shocking as they claim to be. Brite sums it up succinctly: 'I have met many people who claimed to enjoy drinking blood, but none whose physiology positively demanded it'.

The word *vamp* was coined in the 1910s and was quickly applied to sexually predatory women, an image related to Sheridan **le Fanu's** 'Carmilla' and the 'fatal women' beloved of the **Decadents** and **Symbolists**. Several early movie actresses became associated with the type and adopted the heavy, funereal eyeshadow and lipstick made almost-fashionable by the Marquesa **Casati**: Asta Neilsen in Denmark was an early instance, and in France Musidora starred as the mysterious super-thief Irma Vep in Louis Feuillade's 1915 serial *Les Vampires*. Most notable of all was Theda Bara, born Theodosia Goodman and groomed by Fox Studios in the States as their *femme fatale* with a name which was an anagram of 'Arab Death' and all the exotic, erotic and dangerous associations of the **Orient**. She was made to receive journalists in a darkened room draped in velvet and thick with incense, and seemed almost condemned by destiny to play Cleopatra. It was Bara's look which, filtered through Siouxsie **Sioux**, affected later Goth **fashion**.

## Venice

'All the forgotten diseases of all the leproseries of all the **Orient** seemed to gnaw these blistered walls' wrote Théophile Gautier; but the Most Serene Republic only assumed this role – a vast, rotting, open-air art gallery-cum-brothel – in the period of its decline.

Venice's unique nature derives from its strange history. Nominally claimed by both the Lombard kingdom of Italy and the Byzantine Empire, the island communities of the Venice Lagoon elected their first *dux* or Doge in 726 and slowly built up a trading empire as a crucial *entrepôt* for East and West. From 1000, when its forces captured Dalmatia, it became a territorial empire as well. Caught halfway between Christendom and the Turks, the city worshipped nothing but art and money, yet its cash was indispensable to ventures such as the Fourth Crusade. The opening of new spice routes in the 16<sup>th</sup> century disabled the engine of the Venetian economy at a stroke, and gradually, deprived of its dynamism, frozen in its ossified constitution, it became a living **ruin**, a state whose currency was memory, whose merchandise was legend, and whose defences were a navy of ghosts. Napoleon dealt the *coup de grâce* when he conquered and dissolved the Republic in 1797; thereafter Venice entered an ever more phantom existence, rendered increasingly poignant in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it became clear how its treasures were threatened by pollution, age, and salt water.

That such stupefying beauty should be found floating in a marsh makes Venice surreal enough; that the city has for centuries served no purpose but to luxuriate in its own tubercular decline turns it into a dying Camille rendered in marble, and has attracted every poet and artist susceptible to the morbid. But Death is the patron saint of Venice in more concrete ways. Unique in the history of the world, La Serenissima was a police state that hated power: its fearsome magistrates, the Council of Ten and the Three Inquisitors, arrested and disposed not only of traitors and those who failed the Republic militarily, but also anyone who appeared about to gather any popular following. Secret denunciations were left

in the lions' mouths in the Piazza San Marco for the Ten to investigate; the Bridge of Sighs gave prisoners their final view of the Lagoon on their way to the Doge's dungeons. Venice is a city of secrets, hidden conspiracies, whispers, and events happening just out of sight, wrapped in mist and proceeding at the funereal pace of the gondola. Nicholas Roeg's 1972 **horror** *Don't Look Now* distills the atmosphere of doom with poignant grimness.

### **Walpole, Horace** (1717-97)

British writer, an outrageously waspish and arch commentator on social affairs, whose impact on the Gothic tradition is both unlikely and remarkable. In his early twenties his visits with the **graveyard poet** Thomas Gray to the Alps helped formulate the vocabulary of **romanticism**. Son of the most grandly corrupt Prime Minister in British history, Walpole never wanted for sufficient cash to transform his fantasies not so much into bricks and mortar as paint and plaster. He acquired Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, in 1747, and set about turning it into a frivolous piece of **Gothic revival** froth, entirely fake, entirely camp, filled with Gothic paraphernalia either pinched from elsewhere or completely fabricated. The house was a physical piss-take directed at aristocratic power, history, and good taste; at the same time, its designer opined that Gothic was the only proper English style of building, an attitude Walpole helped popularise through his constant stream of influential visitors. Finally, Walpole was centrally responsible for the late-18th century **Gothic novel** as a result of *The Castle of Otranto* (1765). He had an abiding rivalry with his similar younger contemporary William **Beckford**, who was delighted to outlive him.

### **Whale, James** (1889-1957)

British film director. Whale learned his craft via the unusual route of an education as an artist, staging plays in a World War One prisoner-of-war camp, returning to Germany under more agreeable circumstances to work in the proto-**expressionist** theatre, and finally working as a set designer. An **ambiguous** individual in terms of sexuality and social class, Whale recruited a troupe of similar English oddballs for his four triumphant productions for **Universal Studios**, including Boris Karloff, Elsa Lanchester, Colin Clive, and the peerlessly camp Ernest Thesiger, and with them brought a dark, subversive humour to some of the most enduring images of Gothic cinema. *Frankenstein* (1931) roughened the lines of Mary **Shelley's** masterpiece but coupled its themes of rebellion against divine order with dramatic visuals. *The Old Dark House* (1932) presented a collision between a group of travellers whose identities, as modern people, were like Whale's a matter of self-invention and improvisation, and a benighted aristocratic family trapped by dark secrets and physical isolation. *The Invisible Man* (1933) pitted an exceptional, but unbalanced, individual against social mediocrity. Finally, the triumphant *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) revisited the first film's ideas, but added an undertone of daring blasphemy and questioning of the heterosexual family: the pyrotechnics of the lab scene are unforgettable.

One of Whale's biographers is Mr Gatiss of the **League of Gentlemen**, whose gruesome scenarios often allude to his films.

### **Whitby**

The north Yorkshire fishing town was only known for an Anglo-Saxon church synod, St Hilda and Captain Cook until Bram Stoker decided to make it Count **Dracula's** unlikely landing-place in the 1897 novel. This gave the town a Gothic identity strengthened in 1993 when the Whitby Gothic Weekend was begun as a focus for the UK Goth movement. It is now a proud if incongruous feature of the area's tourist calendar. As the only Goth festival which links into the wider Gothic tradition, Whitby exercises a fascination outside the UK

itself: originally held on 2nd September, it has edged closer to **Hallowe'en** and Stoker's birthday, and in 1997 split in two with a second date in April, commemorating Dracula's arrival in the town. The fact that Whitby was a leading source of jet, used in Victorian mourning jewellery, seems entirely in keeping.

### **Wilde, Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills** (1854-1900)

Extremity, aestheticism and a startling transition from glittering literary darling to despised prisoner lends Wilde tragedy and glamour, but his place in the Gothic pantheon is more debatable. His poetry, full of splendid details and the dry sunlight of the Mediterranean, is **Romantic** enough, but he turns Gothic only in the occasional touch picked up in France, 'The Sphinx' (dedicated to Marcel **Schwob**) and certain bitter shafts through 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol'; among his prose works, only *The Picture of Dorian Gray* sits comfortably within the Gothic spectrum. It is Wilde's own presence that acts Gothically: the camp social critic, the lofty wit who mixes both with high society and the decadent *demi-monde*, a dandyfied jester who lives in troubling **ambiguity** and yet makes grand pronouncements on interior furnishings. Even Wilde's politics were quintessentially Goth - despising aristocracy and mocking bourgeois convention, yet fearing democracy and revolution. In other words, an abiding role model.

### **Worringer, Wilhelm** (1881-1965)

German art critic. Extremely influential in his day and virtually forgotten now, Worringer wrote his doctoral thesis at Bern and published it as *Abstraction and Empathy* in 1908. His theory was that these two impulses marked the whole history of art: 'primitive' cultures, faced with a fearful world beyond human control, tended to look for significance, meaning and symbol in **nature** as a means of exerting power over it, then gradually developed an interest in depicting reality and experience. Worringer insisted that the apparent clumsiness and unreality of 'primitive' art was not a result of incompetence as judged by an external standard of beauty, but was consonant with the state of the human mind. In fact, 'abstraction' could be seen as a more 'genuine' artistic impulse as art began with it and it was based not on reality but on ideas, and the book thus became an unwitting inspiration for the whole abstract movement.

In *The Problem of Form in Gothic* (1912) Worringer refined his concepts, increasing the competing strains in Western art to three, which he termed the Primitive, the **Classical**, and the Gothic. The Primitive view of nature was one of fear and propitiation, and Primitive art was a form of magic, of taking control of a hostile world. Through the process of 'empathy' outlined in the previous book, the Classical mind had reached reconciliation with nature, and saw the cosmos as basically harmonious and orderly. Gothic, however, was a form of tension: it expressed everlasting unrest, a juxtaposition of the transcendent awareness of human potential with the more sordid reality. The Gothic arch itself, Worringer argued, rendered this irreconcilable disturbance in stone; soaring but reaching a point, its aspirations towards Heaven can never be realised, and this unresolved angst stood in contrast to the calm of the Classical round-headed arch. Gothic is about paradox and extremity, activity and conflict.

Worringer's ideas provide a theoretical basis for examining and to a degree identifying Gothic expression across cultures and epochs, and go some way towards explaining the mysterious transmutations of the Gothic from the culture of the **middle ages** to its more modern manifestations.

### *X-Files*

US TV series (1993-2001), and defining Gothic narrative of the 1990s. The two protagonist-investigators, Mulder and Scully – a team later varied as the one disappears and the other breeds – move through a paranoid landscape, attempting to disentangle supernatural and paranormal cases and uncover a truth which continually eludes them. They are frustrated at every turn by what may, or may not, be a colossal conspiracy implicating the US government and alien intelligences. The series creator, Chris Carter, was well versed in previous televisual excursions into Gothic such as the early-70s *Night Stalker*, and despite the sci-fi gloss the Gothic staples of monsters, isolated houses, impenetrable darkness that shelters nameless evil, and demented communities all make an appearance. A **Cronenbergian** theme of the body invaded by parasites, poisons, and other harms also regularly crops up. The series expressed contemporary fears about **nature** and authority yet refused to hand over easy answers – until a concluding episode most viewers found impenetrably obscure.

# PART 3: DOCUMENTS

## 1. The Nature of Gothic

Since down the ages men have meditated before ruins, rhapsodised before them, mourned pleasurably over their ruination, it is interesting to speculate on the various strands in this complex enjoyment, on how much of it is admiration for the ruin as it was in its prime - *quanta Roma fuit, ipsa ruina docet* - how much aesthetic pleasure in its present appearance - *plus belle que la beauté est la ruine de la beauté* - how much is association, historical or literary, what part is played by morbid pleasure in decay, by righteous pleasure in retribution (for so often it is the proud and bad who have fallen), by mystical pleasure in the destruction of all things mortal and the eternity of God (a common reaction in the Middle Ages), by egotistic satisfaction in surviving (where art thou? here still am I), by masochistic joy in a common destruction - *l'homme va méditer sur les ruines des empires, il oublie qu'il est lui-meme une ruine encore plus chancelante, et qu'il sera tombé avant ces débris* - and by a dozen other entwined threads of pleasurable and melancholy emotion, of which the main strand is, one imagines, the romantic and conscious swimming down the hurrying river of time, whose mysterious reaches, stretching limitlessly behind, glimmer suddenly into view with these wracks washed onto the silted shores.

(Rose Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins*, 1953)

The violent thunder is adored by those  
Are pash'd in pieces by it.

(John Webster, *The White Devil*, 1612)

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime.

(Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry ...*, 1796 ed.)

Goths choose to stand on the giddy edge of things: they take the riskiest path up the volcanic slopes to peer into the crater. Like satirists, they are reactive, seek to provoke reactions, and seldom respect progressive ideals ... At the end of a century when the therapeutic claims of affirming loudly and shamelessly one's personal truth have become so hackneyed, goths still offer exciting but uncomfortable alternatives. They ceaselessly insist that there is much that should make us ashamed.

(Richard Davenport-Hines, *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin*, 1998)

So shall you hear  
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts;  
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,  
Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause ...

(Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

Serious history and the wildly apocryphal - gossip and malignant chat - biography or critique on Gothic luminaries, artists, writers, eccentrics etc. - Gothic lifestyle, fashions, & architecture - tales of ghosts, goblins, beasties, & co - madness, near-death experiences, illness, premature burial - Doppelgangers, wraiths, neuroses of all sorts - modern-day Gothic, including straightforward autobiographical accounts of a dark-hued and dramatic nature - animals, monsters, birds, and beautiful beasts, or anything from the natural world identifiable with the night, or the netherworld, or the Gothic - *anything scented with the rising effluvia of the tomb.*

(Jennie Gray, *Udolpho* 1996)

Bending too fixedly over hideousness, one feels queerly drawn. In some strange way, the horror flatters attention. It gives to one's limited means a spurious resonance. I am not sure whether anyone, however scrupulous, who spends time and imaginative resources on those dark places can, or indeed ought to leave them personally intact. Yet the dark places are at the centre. Pass them by and there can be no serious discussion of the human potential.

(George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle*, 1971)

It's very hard to know what people mean by Gothic. In architecture it refers to a style of medieval building that involves soaring space and pointy arches and to its eighteenth-century revivalist mode of designer wildernesses and artfully positioned grottoes and ruins. In typescript, **Gothic tends to mean this kind of thing.** In literature it applies to romances like Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, a prototype of the horror writing familiar to cinema-goers today, complete with foolhardy heroines who explore dungeons and peep into coffins at dead of night, a genre exquisitely mocked by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey*. From the late 1700s onwards, by way of Mary Shelley, William Beckford and Edgar Allan Poe, a sense of the Gothic continued to titillate and alarm the public until the genre entered our century with Bram Stoker, translated itself into cinema via *Nosferatu*, Vincent Price and Christopher Lee and finally fell into the curly-fingernailed clutches of the nightclubbing Goth and maniacal Anne Rice groupie, all black lipstick and corvine locks. In other words Gothic means almost precisely nothing. It is as washed out as the anaemic face of its modern adherent. It certainly has nothing to do with Mervyn Peake, for all that the G-word is as permanently and erroneously affixed to *Gormenghast* as a horned helmet is tiresomely and wrongly cartooned to the head of a Wagnerian soprano. Gothic attaches to *Gormenghast* because no one can think of a better description.

(Stephen Fry in *The Art of Gormenghast*, 2000)

Greek and Roman architecture answered all the perfections required in a faultless and accomplished building. The Goths demolished these, and introduced in their stead a certain fantastical and licentious manner of building: congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy, monkish piles, without any just proportion, use or beauty.

(John Evelyn, *Diary* (16--))

Skies torn apart like wind-swept sands,  
You are the mirrors of my pride;  
Your mourning clouds, so black and wide,

Are hearses that my dreams command,  
And you reflect in flashing light  
The Hell in which my heart delights.

(Charles Baudelaire, 'Horreur Sympathique',  
*Les Fleurs de Mal*, 1842-66 (trans.))

There are few of us who have not sometimes wakened before dawn, either after one of those dreamless nights that make us almost enamoured of death, or one of those nights of horror and misshapen joy, when through the chambers of the brain sweep phantoms more terrible than reality itself, and instinct with that vivid life that lurks in all grotesques, and that lends to Gothic art its enduring vitality, this art being, one might fancy, especially the art of those whose minds have been troubled with the malady of reverie. Gradually white fingers creep through the curtains, and they appear to tremble. In black fantastic shapes, dumb shadows crawl into the corners of the rooms, and crouch there.

(Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891)

## 2. The Gothic of Nature

The lips that are hands, and the horns that are eyes, and the tongues that are drills; the multiple devilish mouths that move in four ways at once, the living scissors and saws and boring-pumps and brace-bits; the exquisite elfish weapons which no human skill can copy, even in the finest watch-spring ... All that nightmare ever conceived of faceless horror, and that ecstasy ever imagines of phantasmal pulchritude, can appear but vapid and void by comparison with the stupefying facts of entymology. But there is something spectral, something alarming, in the very beauty of insects ...

(Lafcadio Hearn, 'Gaki' in *Kotto, or Japanese Curios*, 1902)

Luckless man  
Avoids the miserable bodkin's point,  
And, flinching from the insect's little sting,  
In pitiful security keeps watch,  
While 'twixt him and that hypocrite the sun,  
To which he prays, comes windless pestilence,  
Transparent as a glass of poisoned water  
Through which the drinker sees his murderer smiling;  
She stirs no dust, and makes no grass to nod,  
Yet every footstep is a thousand graves,  
And every breath of her's as full of ghosts  
As a sunbeam with motes.

(Thomas Lovell Beddoes, 'Man's Anxious,  
But Ineffectual Guard Against Death')

That nature, being sick of man's unkindness,  
Should yet be hungry! Common mother, thou,

Whose womb unmeasurable and infinite breast  
Teems and feeds all; whose self-same mettle,  
Whereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is puff'd,  
Engenders the black toad and adder blue,  
The gilded newt and eyeless venom'd worm,  
With all thy abhorr'd births below crisp heaven  
Whereon Hyperion's quick'ning fire doth shine -

(Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*)

### 3. Gothic by Principle

Corpses are cold in the tomb;  
Stones on the pavement are dumb;  
Abortions are dead in the womb,  
And their mothers look pale - like the death-white shore  
Of Albion, free no more. ...

Then trample and dance, thou Oppressor!  
For thy victim is no redresser;  
Thou art sole lord and possessor  
Of her corpses, and clods, and abortions - they pave  
Thy path to the grave.

(Shelley, from 'Lines Written During  
the Castlereagh Administration', 1818)

I met Murder on the way  
He had a mask like Castlereagh -  
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;  
Seven bloodhounds followed him: ...

Last came Anarchy: he rode  
On a white horse, splashed with blood:  
He was pale even to the lips,  
Like Death in the Apocalypse. ...  
With a pace stately and fast,  
Over the English land he passed,  
Trampling to a mire of blood  
The adoring multitude!

(Shelley, *The Mask of Anarchy*, 1819)

*Masque* is an expression of the anger of the dead. The dead are not nonexistent. When I think of Philip, I think of him screaming with anger, demanding revenge. We who have died shall never rest in peace.

(Diamanda Galás interviewed in *Outweek* 17.10.90)

It can seem at times as if evil and death have become their toys or fashion accessories; but the new goths are not playing with evil; they are trespassers wandering disruptively over the neat turf of suburban conventions, graffiti artists disfiguring the antiseptic walls of the factual mentality, hecklers with a discordant idiom pitched to jangle the nerves of authority.

(Richard Davenport-Hines, *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin*, 1998)

The ruins of these once magnificent edifices are the pride and boast of this island; we may well be proud of them, not merely in a picturesque point of view - we may glory that the abodes of tyranny and superstition are in ruin –

(Sir Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*, 1794)

#### 4. Gothic Visions

Actuality, which Gothic man could not transform into naturalness by means of clear-sighted knowledge, was overpowered by this intensified play of fantasy and transformed into a spectrally heightened and distorted actuality. Everything becomes weird and fantastic. Behind the visible appearance of a thing lurks its caricature, behind the likeness of a thing an uncanny, ghostly life, and so all actual things become grotesque ...

(Wilhelm Worringer, *Form in Gothic*, 1927 English ed.)

What is the world itself? Thy world? - a grave?  
Where is the dust that has not been alive?  
The spade, the plough, disturb our ancestors;  
From human mould we reap our daily bread:  
The globe around earth's hollow surface shakes,  
And is the ceiling of her sleeping sons:  
O'er devastation we blind revels keep;  
Whole buried towns support the dancer's heel:  
The moist of human frame the sun exhales;  
Winds scatter, through the mighty void, the dry;  
Earth re-possesses part of what she gave,  
And the freed spirit mounts on wings of fire;  
Each element partakes our scatter'd spoils;  
As nature wide, our ruins spread: man's death  
Inhabits all things, but the thought of man.

(Edward Young, 'Night Thoughts' part 284)

One need not be a Chamber - to be Haunted -  
One need not be a House -  
The Brain has corridors - surpassing  
Material place -

Far safer, of a Midnight Meeting  
External Ghost

Than its interior Confronting -  
That Cooler Host.

Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,  
The Stones a'chase -  
Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounter -  
In lonesome place -

Ourselves behind ourselves, concealed -  
Should startle most -  
Assassin hid in our Apartment  
Be Horror's least.

The Body - borrows a Revolver -  
He bolts the Door -  
O'erlooking a superior spectre -  
Or More -

(Emily Dickinson, c.1863)

I saw all the people behind their masks - smiling, phlegmatic, composed faces - I saw through them and there was suffering - in them all - pale corpses - who without rest ran around along a twisted road, at the end of which was the grave.

(Edvard Munch, *The Tree of Knowledge for Better or Worse*)

You kissed his mouth with mouths of flame: you made the hornéd god your own;  
You stood behind him on his throne: you called him by his secret name.  
You whispered monstrous oracles into the caverns of his ears:  
With blood of goats and blood of steers you taught him monstrous miracles.  
White Ammon was your bedfellow! Your chamber was the steaming Nile!  
And with your curved archaic smile you watched his passion come and go.  
(Oscar Wilde, 'The Sphinx')

I saw - with shut eyes but acute mental vision - I saw the pale student of the unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful it must be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken. He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade ... He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking upon him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.

I opened mine in terror. ... I could not so easily get rid of my hideous phantom; still it haunted me. ... Swift as light and as cheering was the idea that broke in upon me. 'I have found it! What terrified me will terrify others; and I need only describe the spectre which haunted my midnight pillow'.

(Mary Shelley, introduction to *Frankenstein*, 1839 ed.)

Morning stirs the feet and hands  
(Nausicaa and Polypheme).  
Gesture of orang-outang  
Rises from the sheets in steam.

This withered root of knots of hair  
Slitted below and gashed with eyes,  
The oval O cropped out with teeth:  
The sickle motion from the thighs

Jackknives upward at the knees  
Then straightens out from heel to hip  
Pushing the framework of the bed  
And clawing at the pillow slip.

(TS Eliot, 'Sweeney Erect' (pub 1920))

## 5. Gothic Survival

The human race is, and always has been, ruin-minded. The literature of all ages has found beauty in the dark and violent forces, physical and spiritual, of which ruin is one symbol. The symbols change; the need does not. Oedipus, Clytemnestra, Atreus, Medea, children slain and served up in pies to their parents, all the atrocious horrors of Greek drama, of Seneca, of Dante's Hell, of Tasso, of the Elizabethans and the Jacobean - these have a profoundly ruinous and welcome gloom, far greater than that of the romantic ruined towers, the bats, toads and ghosts that were so fashionable in eighteenth-century poetry. Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster, Ford, have all the properties - mass murder, torture, rape, loathsome dungeons and caves, haunted castles, minatory ghosts, witches, blasted heaths, blindings, madness, owls and flitting bats, adders and speckled toads, monstrous passions, suicide, revenge; it is indeed a ruined and ruinous world that they inhabit and portray ... there was not much that the later century could add.

(Rose Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins*, 1953)

The leaning towards violent contrast ... and the inborn German liking for chiaroscuro and shadow, obviously found an ideal artistic outlet in the cinema. Visions nourished by moods of vague and troubled yearning could have found no more apt mode of expression, at once concrete and unreal ...

(Lotte Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, English ed, 1969)

The faeces of barbarity, the remnants of Gothic adventurers, humanised only by the Cross, mouldering amid the ruins of the temples they had demolished and the battered fragments of the images their rage had crushed.

(Fuseli, Lecture 2, 1801)

Webster was much possessed by death

And saw the skull beneath the skin;  
And breastless creatures under ground  
Leaned backward with a lipless grin.

Daffodil bulbs instead of balls  
Stared from the sockets of the eyes!  
He knew that thought clings round dead limbs  
Tightening its lusts and luxuries.

Donne, I suppose, was such another  
Who found no substitute for sense,  
To seize and clutch and penetrate;  
Expert beyond experience,

He knew the anguish of the marrow  
The age of the skeleton;  
No contact possible to flesh  
Allayed the fever of the bone.

(TS Eliot, 'Whispers of Immortality' (pub 1920))

When I heard the word Gothic for the first time I thought it referred to Edgar Allan Poe and Chopin and all these people full of real seriousness. Because I always felt that Chopin was speaking in the words of Poe, or Poe was speaking in the words of Chopin or whatever. ... It didn't occur to me until I went to London that it no longer means that. People would say to me, 'Your work is Gothic', and I'd say, 'Hmm, probably. Yeah'. I was just really naive. I thought they were talking about films of a certain period. ... In Australia somebody came up to me with a tape of *The Mission* and said, 'You should listen to this because they are also Gothic' ... I put it on my headphones on the plane and I just thought, oh God!

(Diamanda Galás interviewed in *Forced Exposure* 1.89)

## 6. Becoming & Being Gothic

I would advise him that is actually melancholy not to read this tract of Symptoms, lest he disquiet or make himself for a time worse, and more melancholy than he was before ... Though they laugh many times, and seem to be extraordinary merry (as they will by fits), yet extreme lumpish again in an instant, dull and heavy, *semel et simul* merry and sad ... No sooner are their eyes open, but after terrible and troublesome dreams their heavy hearts begin to sigh: they are still fretting, chafing, sighing, grieving, complaining, finding faults, repining, grudging, weeping, *Heautontimorumenoi*, vexing themselves, disquieted in mind, with restless, unquiet thoughts, discontent, either for their own, other men's or public affairs, such as concern them not ...

(Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621)

Gothic ... acknowledges that paranoia can be a sane response ... it is a goth intuition that one has few chances of sanity or fulfilment pretending to be an integrated part of humanity;

happiness and survival depend upon vulnerable, hopelessly isolated individuals deploying evasive tactics.

(Richard Davenport-Hines, *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin*, 1998)

There were times when it appeared to Dorian Gray that the whole of history was merely the record of his own life, not as he had lived it in act and circumstance, but as his imagination had created it for him, as it had been in his brain and in his passions. He felt that he had known them all, those strange terrible figures that had passed across the stage of the world and made sin so marvellous, and evil so full of subtlety. It seemed to him that in some mysterious way their lives had been his own ... those whom Vice and Blood and Weariness had made monstrous or mad: Filippo, Duke of Milan, who slew his wife, and painted her lips with a scarlet poison that her lover might suck death from the dead thing he fondled; ... Gian Maria Visconti, who used hounds to chase living men, and whose murdered body was covered with roses by a harlot who had loved him; the Borgia on his white horse, with Fratricide riding beside him, and his mantle stained with the blood of Perotto ... Ezzelin, whose melancholy could be cured only by the spectacle of death, and who had a passion for red blood as other men have for red wine ... Sigismondo Malatesta, the lover of Isotta, and the lord of Rimini, whose effigy was burned at Rome as the enemy of God and man, who strangled Polyssena with a napkin, and gave poison to Ginevra d'Este in a cup of emerald ... There was a horrible fascination in them all. He saw them at night, and they troubled his imagination in the day.

(Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891)

My love for the romances of Mrs Radcliffe dates from my very first years. Amongst my earliest recollections is an edition of her Works in one rather formidable fat volume ... embellished with woodcuts ... Bound in dull black Morocco, gilt-tooled, Mrs Radcliffe lived on the summit of the highest shelves in a sombre and shadowy but by no means large old library, where the books stood ranged in very neat rows in tall mahogany cases behind heavy glass doors.

(Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest*, 1938)

You have made yourself a devil. You have tried to tear their secrets from the demons of the night. In doing that with subtlety, with refinement, with a rare talent and an almost precious abandon in expression, by perfecting detail, by making yourself the Petrarch of the horrible, you appear to have amused yourself; and yet you have suffered, you have grieved as you paraded your vexations, your nightmares, your spiritual tortures.

(Charles-Augustin Saint-Beuve to Baudelaire, 1857)

He was passionately attached to the study of what used to be called the occult sciences ... His pocket money was spent on the purchase of books relative to these darling pursuits - of chemical apparatus and materials. The books consisted of treatises on magic and witchcraft as well as those more modern ones detailing the miracles of electricity and galvanism. Sometimes he watched the livelong night for ghosts ... He even planned how he might get admission to the vault, or charnel-house, at Warnham Church, and might sit there all night,

harrowed by fear, yet trembling with expectation, to see one of the spiritualized owners of the bones piled around him.

(TJ Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 1858)

A fellow student showed me some photographs in a book which I would rather never have seen. People, seeing my pictures, often think I must take pleasure in extreme cruelty ... These photos [of the torture of the Chinese Emperor's murderer in 1904] shocked me as nothing ever before. My friend was delighted ... Unnerved, with the hideous sequence of images still before my eyes, I went to my room. ... I was afraid to be alone. For a whole week I tried to stay awake for as long as I could. I dreaded falling asleep, because I was certain to dream about them. ...

Another source of fantasies was our cellar. Approached via an old and musty spiral staircase, it led into a vaulted corridor ... I saw only the locked door, which inspired in me the most sinister imaginings. In my dreams, however, these passages were open and led into a monstrous labyrinth, where all kinds of dangers lay in wait ... both attracting and intimidating me at the same time.

(HR Giger, *HR Giger ARh+*, 1991)

## 7. Acting Gothic

Visit London's Camden Market and you could be forgiven for thinking that something very sinister happened to Snow White in the woods. In their twos and threes, they shuffle aimlessly from stall to stall, paying scant attention to anything that does not gleam like a studded belt, sparkle like a bevy of bracelets or resemble a can of hairspray... Dressed in regulation leather, lace or PVC or a combination of all three, black of course, they congregate like mourners at the funeral of Dr Phibes. Cut-price jewellery lends a glow of iridescence, fishnets a hint of fleeting sensuality. It is a peep show for some, may be, but the overall air of impassive defiance is enough to unnerve Mr Jones into saving his customary wolf-whistles for more vulnerable looking victims. The black hair, white faces and blood-red lips are still there, but these Snow Whites are a little less demure and no longer believe in happy endings. The image echoes a world of make-believe: mystery, from the East with kohl-black eyes; magic, from precious stones and diamanté; signs and symbols that would make Aleister Crowley turn in his diabolic grave. Waiting for that handsome prince? I think not.

(Brian Johns (Mark Paytress), *Entranced - the Siouxsie & the Banshees Story*, 1989)

I am going out this evening in my cloak and Gondola - there are two nice Mrs Radcliffe words for you!

(Byron, 1816)

It should be rich and sombre, and the moon,  
Just in its mid-life in the midst of June,  
Should look thro' four large windows and display  
... A viol, bow strings torn, cross-wise upon  
A glorious folio of Anacreon;  
A skull upon a mat of roses lying,

Ink'd purple with a song concerning dying;  
 An hour-glass on the turn, amid the trails  
 Of passion-flower; - just in time there sails  
 A cloud across the moon, - the lights bring in!  
 ... The draperies are so, as tho' they had  
 Been made for Cleopatra's winding-sheet;  
 And opposite the stedfast eye doth meet  
 A spacious looking-glass, upon whose face  
 In letters raven-sombre, you may trace  
 Old 'Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin'.  
 Greek busts and statuary have ever been  
 Held, by the finest spirits, fitter far  
 Than vase grotesque and Siamesian jar;  
 Therefore 'tis sure a want of Attic taste  
 That I should rather love a Gothic waste  
 Of eyesight on cinque-coloured potter's clay,  
 Than on the marble fairness of old Greece.  
 My table-coverlits of Jason's fleece  
 And black Numidian sheep-wool should be wrought,  
 Gold, black, and heavy from the Lama brought.  
 My ebon sofas should delicious be  
 With down from Leda's cygnet progeny.  
 My pictures all Salvator's ...

(John Keats, from 'The Castle Builder')

Transgressive decoration of body surfaces ... registers dissent from god's arrangements for humankind; it expresses our self-disgust and death-wish; it recognises that demoralisation is one of the most effective modes of seduction; it declares that adult acts of self-reinvention are ultimate acts of freedom, certainly as enriching and liberating as searching for an inner self through anxious introspection, or seeking a heavily mediated identity based on childish experience.

(Richard Davenport-Hines, *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin*, 1998)

Rome, in the last week of February 1500, was in the throes of its Carnival ... the entire population, pilgrims and natives, had come to see the triumphal entry of the Pope's son into the Eternal City ... Down the street from the Porta del Popolo marched ... the city dignitaries and officials of the Roman Curia in their best robes, the cardinals in purple and ermine, with their numerous retainers spectacularly dressed, the ambassadors of every country in the Christian world ... But the people lining the streets had come to see the Duke, and at the first appearance of his train, excitement mounted ... First came his baggage wagons ... and the mules clad in his colours; behind them two heralds, one in the colours of France, the other emblazoned with Cesare's own arms. Then came a thousand infantry in full campaigning gear, and a hundred hand-picked grooms and mace-bearers of his personal guard with CESAR embroidered in letters of silver on their chests. Fifty gorgeously dressed gentlemen of his general staff preceded the cavalry, headed by Vitellozzo Vitelli. Then came Cesare

himself ... simply dressed in a robe of black velvet down to the knees, his only ornament the gold collar of the Order of St Michael. ... From now on, with a growing confidence in himself, he showed an increasing fondness for dressing in black, with its outward connotations of drama, its inward feeling of narcissism and introversion ...

(S Bradford, *Cesare Borgia*, 1976)

Everything in him was artificial and premeditated. It was all playing to the gallery, even if that consisted of just one person.

(Jules Levallois on Baudelaire)

Everything in black comes to my concerts. They think it's their job. But my brother and I, even at the age of 12, dressed like this. All my relatives in Sparta live in immaculate white houses, then they come out and it's black, black, black in the middle of the summer.

(Diamanda Galás interviewed in *Forced Exposure* 1.89)

## 8. Terrible Souls

Her heart rejoiced and her liver exulted ...  
Beneath her were heads like balls,  
Above her were hands like locusts.  
She plunged her knees into the blood of warriors,  
Her thighs into the blood of youths. ...  
While Anath walked along, lamenting  
The beauty of her brother (how fair!)  
The charm of her brother (how seemly!)  
She devoured his flesh without a knife  
And drank his blood without a cup.

(Ugaritic mythical texts of c.1300 BC quoted by WF Albright in  
*Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (1968))

Madam, though Venus govern your desires,  
Saturn is dominator over mine.  
What signifies my deadly-standing eye,  
My silence and my cloudy melancholy,  
My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls  
Even as an adder when she doth unroll  
To do some fatal execution?  
No, madam, these are no venereal signs.  
Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand,  
Blood and revenge are hammering in my head.

(Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*)

CLYTEMNESTRA: I said, not long since, many things to match the time;

All which, that time past, without shame I here unsay.  
 How else, when one prepares death for an enemy  
 Who seems a friend, - how else net round the deadly trap  
 High enough to forestall the victim's highest leap? ...  
 So falling he belched forth his life: with cough and retch  
 There spurted from him bloody foam in a fierce jet,  
 And spreading, spattered me with drops of crimson rain;  
 While I exulted as the sown cornfield exults  
 Drenched with the dew of heaven when buds burst forth in Spring.  
 So stands the case, elders of Argos. You may be  
 As you choose, glad or sorry; I am jubilant.  
 And, were it seemly over a dead man to pour  
 Thankoffering for safe journey, surely Justice here  
 Allows it, here demands it; so enriched a wine  
 Of wickedness this man stored in his house, and now  
 Returned, drains his own cursed cup to the last dregs.  
 CHORUS: The brute effrontery of your speech amazes us.  
 To boast so shamelessly over your husband's corpse!  
 CLYTEMNESTRA: You speak as to some thoughtless woman: you are wrong.  
 My pulse beats firm. I tell you what you already know.  
 (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* (trans. P Vellacott))

Come, you spirits  
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;  
 And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
 Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,  
 Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,  
 That no compunctious visitings of nature  
 Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between  
 Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,  
 And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,  
 Wherever in your sightless substances  
 You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,  
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark  
 To cry, 'Hold, hold'.

(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*)

## 9. Gothic Good & Evil

For years he was regarded as a man of unusual sanctity, dedicated to the furtherance of Presbyterianism ... He roamed round 17th-century Edinburgh in a long black cloak and carrying a staff. This staff was regarded as magical, or rather holy, and was reputed to be alive ... He was eventually arrested, tried, and sentenced to be strangled and burned outside the city boundaries. His sister was hanged on a gibbet in the Grassmarket. The infamous staff was burned alongside its master and was seen to writhe violently in the flames. ... Weir

said he had felt the Devil in his room in the dark; the sister confessed that she and her brother took rides in phantom coaches. Imps came and informed them of the outcome of the Battle of Worcester on the day that it occurred. ... A woman, ten feet tall, laughing insanely, emerged from the ground outside Major Weir's front door. Sometimes the street was full of eerie lights carried by ghostly figures. After the death of the Weirs the house was chiefly haunted by Major Weir. He used to arrive and depart on a headless horse surrounded by flames. Periodically Satan himself arrived in a coach and six ... An old soldier and his wife became tenants of the house, insisting that they were not afraid of ghosts and were delighted at the low rental. They remained in the place for one night. The ghost which frightened them off was a calf which emerged from the fireplace, walked to the bed, put its forefeet on it and stared at the terrified occupants. These days ... the ghosts are of Weir's sister, her face and hands blackened and distorted, as if by fire; of Weir without a head - and the eerie sound of the staff tap-tapping across the Grassmarket.

(John Harries, *The Ghost-Hunter's Road Book*, 1968)

[Dracula's] challenge is to the very idea of mortality itself. What he wants is the breakdown of the distinction between life and death, and the creation of a race of undead beings whose relationship to time, to nourishment and to daylight, mirrors his own. Like Satan, his real father, Dracula's argument is with God, and with the biological arrangements God made for humanity.

(Patrick McGrath interviewed in *Udolpho*, 1996)

Dost thou imagine, thou canst slide on blood,  
And not be tainted with a shameful fall?  
Or, like the black and melancholic yew-tree,  
Dost think to root thyself in dead men's graves,  
And yet to prosper?

(John Webster, *The White Devil*, 1612)

O Angel, the most brilliant and most wise,  
A God betrayed by fate, deprived of praise,  
*Satan, take pity on my misery!*  
O Prince of exile, you who have been wronged,  
Who, even conquered, rises yet more strong,  
*Satan, take pity on my misery!*  
Great king who knows the lore the earth imparts,  
Intimate healer of our anguished hearts,  
*Satan, take pity on my misery!*  
Who gives the prisoner his calm disdain,  
Who damns the crowds around the guillotine,  
*Satan, take pity on my misery!*  
Who, to console us in our fearful lot,  
Taught us the mysteries of shell and shot,  
*Satan, take pity on my misery!*  
Who sees that women's hearts and eyes sustain  
The love of rags, the cult of wounds and pain,

*Satan, take pity on my misery!*  
Staff of the exiles, the inventor's lamp,  
Confessor of the hanged, plotters and tramps,  
*Satan, take pity on my misery!*  
Adoptive father of those ostracised  
By God, and banished from his paradise,  
*Satan, take pity on my misery!*

(Charles Baudelaire, from 'Litanie de Satan',  
*Les Fleurs de Mal*, 1842-66 (trans.))

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him; and that through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection; for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The Collect for Easter Even from  
*The Book of Common Prayer* (1549/1662))

## 10. Death Instinct

To such an extent were Beauty and Death looked upon as sisters by the Romantics that they became fused into a sort of two-faced herm, filled with corruption and melancholy and fatal in its beauty - a beauty of which, the more bitter the taste, the more abundant the enjoyment.

(Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, 1951 English ed.)

I commend myself to a death of no importance,  
to the amputation of all seeking hands,  
pulling, grasping, with the might of nations,  
of sirens, in a never ending bloody bliss  
to the death of mere savagery  
and the birth of pearly, white terror.

Wild women with veins slashed and wombs spread,  
singing songs of the death instinct  
in voices yet unheard,  
praising nothing but the promise of Death on earth,  
laughing seas of grinning, red, red eyes,  
all washed ashore and devoured  
by hard and unseeing spiders.

I commend myself to a death beyond all hope of redemption,  
beyond the desire for forgetfulness,  
beyond the desire to feel all things at every moment,  
But to never forget,  
to kill for the sake of killing,

and, with a pure and most happy heart,  
extol and redeem Disease.

(Diamanda Galás, 1982)

Enter Lavinia, her hands cut off, her tongue cut out, and ravish'd.

(Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* (stage direction))

If wild my breast and sore my pride  
I bask in dreams of suicide;  
If cool my heart and high my head  
I think, 'How lucky are the dead!'

(Dorothy Parker , 'Rhyme against Living')

I never see that prettiest thing -  
A cherry bough gone white with Spring -  
But what I think, 'How gay 'twould be  
To hang me from a flowering tree'.

(Dorothy Parker , 'Cherry White')

Cold eyelids that hide like a jewel  
Hard eyes that grow soft for an hour;  
The heavy white limbs, and the cruel  
Red mouth like a venomous flower;  
When these are gone by with their glories,  
What shall rest of thee then, what remain,  
O mystic and sombre Dolores,  
Our Lady of Pain?

(Algernon Swinburne, from  
'Dolores: Notre-Dame des Sept Doleurs')

## 11. Gothic Places

The walls are covered in most places with grim visages sculpted in marble, whose mouths gape for accusations, and swallow every lie that malice and revenge can dictate. I wished for a few ears of the same kind, dispersed around the Doge's residence, to which one might apply one's own, and catch ... some little dialogue between the three Inquisitors, or debate in the Council of Ten. ... Sometimes, by way of clemency, it condemns its victims to perpetual imprisonment ... or generously sinks them into dungeons, deep under the canals ... so that, above and below, its majesty is contaminated by the abodes of punishment ... I left the courts, and stepping into my bark, was rowed down a canal over which the lofty vaults of the palace cast a tremendous shade. Beneath these fatal waters the dungeons ... are situated. There the wretches lie marking the sound of the oars, and counting the free passage of every gondola. Above, a marble bridge ... criminals are conducted over the arch to a cruel and mysterious death ... Horrors and dismal prospects haunted my fancy upon my return. I could not dine in peace, so strongly was my imagination affected; but snatching my pencil, I drew

chasms, and subterranean hollows, the domain of fear and torture, with chains, racks, wheels, and dreadful engines in the style of Piranesi.

(William Beckford, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts & Incidents*, 1783)

Statues of glass - all shivered - the long file

Of her dead Doges are declined to dust ...

(Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, 1812-16)

The Bodleian Library ... we assured one another, had been intended to be Hitler's Chancellery when he had conquered Britain. Beneath the Library, apparently, the stacks extended for untold miles in every direction, and each of the levels, named with letters of the alphabet, was more secret than the one above. The lowest, Level L, was profoundly sinister. It was occupied by a race of subhuman creatures, the secret of whose existence was only divulged to the vice-chancellor on his accession. However, there were forgotten shafts and lost passages through every part of the ground between the Clarendon Building and Palmer's Tower in Exeter College, and sometimes the creatures got out. You could hear them howling and scrabbling if you pressed your ear to the cellar wall under staircase 9. I did, and you can.

(Philip Pullman, 'Dreaming of Spires', *The Guardian* 27.7.02)

## 12. Danse Macabre

Offering [the readers of the *Sunday Express*] a chance to win the latest in 'interactive home-entertainment' the compiler of the quiz enquired:

Who wrote the original Frankenstein: a) Mary Shelley? b) Mary Quant? c) Mary, Mungo & Midge?

Of course I filled in b) and sent it off

(Jennie Gray, Gothic Society's *Ye Bloodie News* 1996)

How we used to laugh, at various things, which are grave in the Suburbs!

(Byron on Shelley, 1822)

Razors pain you  
Rivers are damp  
Acids stain you  
Drugs cause cramp  
Guns aren't lawful  
Nooses give  
Gas smells awful -  
You might as well live

(Dorothy Parker, 'Resumé')

'It says nothing about trains,' replied Flora with reserve. 'So far as I can make out, it appears to be some verses, with which I must confess I am not familiar, from the Old Testament.'

There is also a repetition of the assurance that there have always been Starkadders at Cold Comfort, though why it should be necessary to impress this upon me I am at a loss to imagine. ... I gather that it is from some member of the family who does not welcome the prospect of my visit. I can distinguish a reference, among other things, to vipers. I must say that I think it would have been more to the point to give a list of the trains; but I suppose it is a little illogical to expect such attention to petty details from a doomed family living in Sussex.'

(Stella Gibbons, *Cold Comfort Farm*, 1932)

I had written to Aunt Maud,  
Who was on a trip abroad,  
When I heard she'd died of cramp,  
Just too late to save the stamp.

(Harry Graham,  
*Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes*, 1910)

### 13. Melancholia

I'll not change life with any king,  
I ravisht am: can the world bring  
More joy, than still to laugh and smile,  
In pleasant toys time to beguile?  
Do not, O do not trouble me,  
So sweet content I feel and see.  
All my joys to this are folly,  
None so *divine* as melancholy.

I'll change my state with any wretch,  
Thou canst from gaol or dunghill fetch;  
My pain's past cure, another hell,  
I may not in this torment dwell!  
Now desperate I hate my life,  
Lend me a halter or a knife;  
All my griefs to this are jolly,  
Naught so *damn'd* as melancholy.

(Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621)

Of the great and magnificent constructions that once adorned that place, only scattered ruins remained ... All the windows were empty sockets whose slimy tears were rotting vines. Inside, the work of art, destroyed, became confused with the work of nature ... Along one stretch of wall I found a bookcase, still miraculously erect ... it was rotted by water and consumed by termites. In it there were still a few pages. Other remnants I found by rummaging in the ruins below. Mine was a poor harvest, but I spent a whole day reaping it, as if from those *disiecta membra* of the Library a message might reach me. Some fragments of parchment had faded, others permitted the glimpse of an image's shadow, or the ghost of

one or more words. At times I found pages where whole sentences were legible; more often, intact bindings, protected by what had once been metal studs ... Ghosts of books, apparently intact on the outside but consumed within; yet sometimes a half page had been saved, an *incipit* was discernible, a title. ... I had before me a kind of lesser library, a symbol of the greater, vanished one; a library made up of fragments, quotations, unfinished sentences, amputated stumps of books.

(Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 1980, Picador transl.)

O, let it be a night of lyric rain  
And singing breezes when my bell is tolled:  
I have so loved the rain that I would hold  
Last in my ears its friendly, dim refrain ...

(Dorothy Parker, 'Testament')

She dwells with Beauty - Beauty that must die;  
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips  
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,  
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:  
Ay, in the very temple of Delight  
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,  
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue  
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;  
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,  
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

(John Keats, 'Ode on Melancholy')

#### 14. Hysteria

I should like the fields tinged with red, the rivers yellow, and the trees painted blue. Nature has no imagination.

(Baudelaire)

If, then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall hereafter ascribe high qualities, though dark: weave round them tragic graces; if even the most mournful, perchance the most abased, among them all, shall at times lift himself to the exalted mounts; if I shall touch that workman's arm with some ethereal light; if I shall spread a rainbow over his disastrous set of sun; then against all mortal critics bear me out in it, thou just Spirit of Equality, which hast spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind! ... who didst not refuse to the swart convict Bunyan the pale, poetic pearl; Thou who didst clothe with doubly hammered gold the stumped and paupered arm of old Cervantes; Thou who didst pick up Andrew Jackson from the pebbles; who didst hurl him upon a war-horse; who didst thunder him higher than a throne ... bear me out in it, O God!

(Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, 1851)

Titus is seven: his confines, Gormenghast. Suckled on shadows; weaned, as it were, on webs of ritual: for his ears, echoes, for his eyes, a labyrinth of stone ...

Titus the seventy-seventh. Heir to a crumbling summit: to a sea of nettles: to an empire of red rust: to ritual's footprints ankle-deep in stone.

Gormenghast.

Withdrawn and ruinous it broods in umbra: the immemorial masonry: the towers, the tracts. Is all corroding? No. Through an avenue of spires a zephyr floats; a bird whistles; a freshet bears away from a choked river. Deep in a fist of stone a doll's hand wriggles, warm rebellious on the frozen palm. A shadow shifts its length. A spider stirs ...

*And darkness winds between the characters.*

(Mervyn Peake, *Gormenghast*, 1950)

I fear there is some maddening secret  
Hid in your words (and at each turn of thought  
Comes up a skull), like an anatomy  
Found in a weedy hole, 'mongst stones and roots  
And straggling reptiles, with his tongueless mouth  
Telling of murder.

(Thomas Lovell Beddoes, 'Anticipation of Evil Tidings')

On sweet young earth where the myrtle presses,  
Long we lay, when the May was new;  
The willow was winding the moon in her tresses,  
The bud of the rose was cold with dew.

And now on the brittle ground I'm lying,  
Screaming to die with the dead year's dead;  
The stem of the rose is black and drying,  
The willow is tossing the wind from her head.

(Dorothy Parker, 'The Willow')

Tran fell out of his binding straps and melted slowly into Jay's ribcage. A large, viscous, faintly iridescent stain ate up the concrete floor around them. Their eyes were black caverns. They gave birth to worms, generation after generation, until their bodies were covered as if in a living blanket. Soon they were picked clean, their bones an ivory sculpture-puzzle shining in the dark, waiting to tell their mute love story.

(Poppy Z Brite, *Exquisite Corpse*, 1996)

## 15. Gothic Atmosphere

Canidia, hair wild, little poison snakes  
Wound into her bedraggled locks, cries out  
For twigs from the death-omened cypress tree,  
Eggs and feathers of owls that screech at night,  
Smeared with blood of the stomach-heaving toad -

For certain herbs, sent from Turkey or from Spain,  
(Lands vicious with venom'd things), and for bones  
Snatched from the jaws of a starving bitch ...  
(Horace, 'Epode' V (my translation))

Through me is the way to the City of Woe:  
Through me the way into eternal pain:  
Through me the way among the lost below. ...  
Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.  
(Dante, *Inferno* Canto II)

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath ... Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light ... that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely discernible fissure ... I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder - there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters - and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the 'House of Usher'.

(Edgar Allan Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher*)

Few things are more awful than the striking of a great clock.  
(Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry ...*, 1796 ed.)

A barren detested vale you see it is:  
The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean,  
Overcome with moss and baleful mistletoe;  
Here never shines the sun; here nothing breeds,  
Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven.  
And when they show'd me this abhorred pit,  
They told me, here, at dead time of the night,  
A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes,  
Ten thousand swelling toads, as many urchins,  
Would make such fearful and confused cries  
As any mortal body hearing it  
Should straight fall mad or else die suddenly.  
No sooner had they told this hellish tale  
But straight they told me they would bind me here  
Unto the body of a dismal yew,  
And leave me to this miserable death.  
And then they call'd me foul adulteress,  
Lascivious Goth, and all the bitterest terms  
That ever ear did hear to such effect ...  
(Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*)

As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus ... waddling like an elephantine lizard

up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes, gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, indistinguishable in mire. Horses scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot-passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper ... Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great and dirty city ... The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction ... Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.

... This is the Court of Chancery; which has its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire; which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse, and its dead in every churchyard; which has its ruined suitor, with his slipshod heels and threadbare dress, borrowing and begging through the round of every man's acquaintance ... There is not an honourable man among its practitioners who would not give - who does not often give - the warning, 'Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!'

Jarndyce & Jarndyce drones on. This scarecrow of a suit has, in the course of time, become so complicated that no man alive knows what it means ... Innumerable children have been born into the cause; innumerable young people have married into it; innumerable old people have died out of it. Scores of persons have deliriously found themselves made parties in Jarndyce & Jarndyce, without knowing how or why; whole families have inherited legendary hatreds with the suit. ... There are not three Jarndyces left upon the earth perhaps, since old Tom Jarndyce in despair blew his brains out at a coffee-house in Chancery Lane; but Jarndyce & Jarndyce still drags its dreary length before the Court.

(Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, 1853)

## 16. The Powers of Horror

Back o'er her pillow sinks her blushing head,  
Her snow-white limbs hang helpless from the bed;  
While with quick sighs, and suffocative breath,  
Her interrupted heart-pulse swims in death.  
- Then shrieks of captur'd towns, and widow's tears,  
Pale lovers stretch'd upon their blood-stain'd biers, ...  
And stern-eyed Murderer with his knife behind,  
In dread succession agonize her mind. ...  
- On her fair bosom sits the Demon-Ape,  
Erect, and balances his bloated shape;  
Rolls in their marble orbs his Gorgon-eyes  
And drinks with leathern ears her tender cries.

(Erasmus Darwin on Fuseli's *Nightmare*,  
'The Loves of the Plants', 1789)

There was very little light in the bus. It was nearly dark. I leaned forward to aid my endeavour to discover what these little circles really were. They shifted their position a little as I did so. I began now to perceive an outline of something black, and I soon saw, with tolerable distinctness, the outline of a small black monkey, pushing its face forward in

mimicry to meet mine; those were its eyes, and I now dimly saw its teeth grinning at me. ... wishing to ascertain something of its temper, though not caring to entrust my fingers to it, I poked my umbrella softly towards it. It remained immovable - up to it - through it. ...

(Sheridan le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly*, 1872)

... having enjoyed monstrous things which, cherished in my imagination, have produced far more monstrous things in my soul; and now I must live with them in eternity.

(Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 1980, Picador transl.)

Van Helsing raised his lantern and drew the slide; by the concentrated light that fell on Lucy's face we could see that the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe ... Then her eyes ranged over us. Lucy's eyes in form and colour; but Lucy's eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew. ... As she looked, her eyes blazed with unholy light, and the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile. Oh God, how it made me shudder to see it! With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone. ... and with a languorous, voluptuous grace, said:- 'Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!'

(Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, 1897)

Its horror and its beauty are divine.  
Upon its lips and eyelids seems to lie  
Loveliness like a shadow, from which shine,  
Fiery and lurid, struggling underneath,  
The agonies of anguish and of death.

(Shelley, 'On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci', 1816)

Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her locks were yellow as gold;  
Her skin was white as leprosy,  
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,  
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

(Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner')

## 17. Cursed Books

The Renaissance knew of strange manners of poisoning - poisoning by a helmet and a lighted torch, by an embroidered glove and a jewelled fan, by a gilded pomander and by an amber chain. Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book. There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realise his conception of the beautiful.

(Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891)

It doesn't happen immediately. You'll finish and that will be that, until a moment will come, maybe in a month, maybe a year, maybe even several years. ... You will no longer be the person you believed you once were. You'll detect slow and subtle shifts going on all around you, more importantly shifts in you. Worse, you'll realise it's always been shifting, like a shimmer of sorts, a vast shimmer, only dark like a room. ... Even the hallways you've walked a hundred times will feel longer ... It will get so bad you'll be afraid to look away, you'll be afraid to sleep. ... You'll stand aside as a great complexity intrudes, tearing apart, piece by piece, all of your carefully conceived denials ... what is now, what will be, what has always come before, the creature you truly are, the creature we all are, buried in the nameless black of a name.

(Mark Z Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 2000)

I started up and flung the book into the fireplace; the volume struck the barred grate and fell open on the hearth in the firelight. If I had not caught a glimpse of the opening words in the second act I should never have finished it, but as I stooped to pick it up, my eyes became riveted to the open page, and with a cry of terror, or perhaps it was of joy so poignant that I suffered in every nerve, I snatched the thing out of the coals and crept shaking to my bedroom, where I read it and reread it, and wept and laughed and trembled with a horror which at times assails me yet. ... I pray God will curse the writer, as the writer has cursed the world ... a world which now trembles before *The King in Yellow*. ... It is well known how the book spread, like an infectious disease, from city to city, from continent to continent, barred out here, confiscated there, denounced by press and pulpit, censured even by the most advanced of literary anarchists. No definite principles had been violated in those wicked pages, no doctrine promulgated, no convictions outraged. It could not be judged by any known standard, yet, although it was acknowledged that the supreme note of art had been struck in *The King in Yellow*, all felt that human nature could not bear the strain, nor thrive on words in which the essence of purest poison lurked.

(Robert W Chambers, *The King in Yellow*, 1895)

- There's only one way you can see it and not die. You must copy it
  - and show it to someone else within a week.
    - What happens to them?
    - They must do the same.
      - It never ends.
- No, it goes on and on. But if you want to live, you'll do it.

(Dialogue from *Ringu* (1998), English transl.)

## 18. The Goal of Life is Death

This constitution [of the Universe] has been effected by forcing the originally and therefore normally One into the abnormal condition of Many ... An action of this character implies reaction. A diffusion from Unity ... involves a tendency to return into Unity - a tendency ineradicable until satisfied. ... The pleasure which we derive from any display of human ingenuity is in the ratio of the approach to this species of reciprocity. In the construction of

plot, for example, in fictitious literature ... The plots of God are perfect. The Universe is a plot of God.

(Edgar Allan Poe, *Eureka* (1838))

[The] final goal of all organic striving can be stated too. It would be counter to the conservative nature of instinct if the goal of life were a state never hitherto reached. It must rather be an ancient starting point, which the living being left long ago, and to which it harks back again by all the circuitous paths of development. If we may assume as an experience admitting of no exception that everything living dies from causes within itself, and returns to the inorganic, we can say '*The goal of all life is death*', and casting back, 'The inanimate was there before the animate'.

(Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1921)

The woman is perfected.

Her dead

Body wears the smile of accomplishment,

The illusion of a Greek necessity

Flows in the scrolls of her toga,

Her bare

Feet seem to be saying:

We have come so far, it is over.

Each dead child coiled, a white serpent,

One at each little

Pitcher of milk, now empty.

She has folded

Them back into her body as petals

Of a rose close when the garden

Stiffens and odours bleed

From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower.

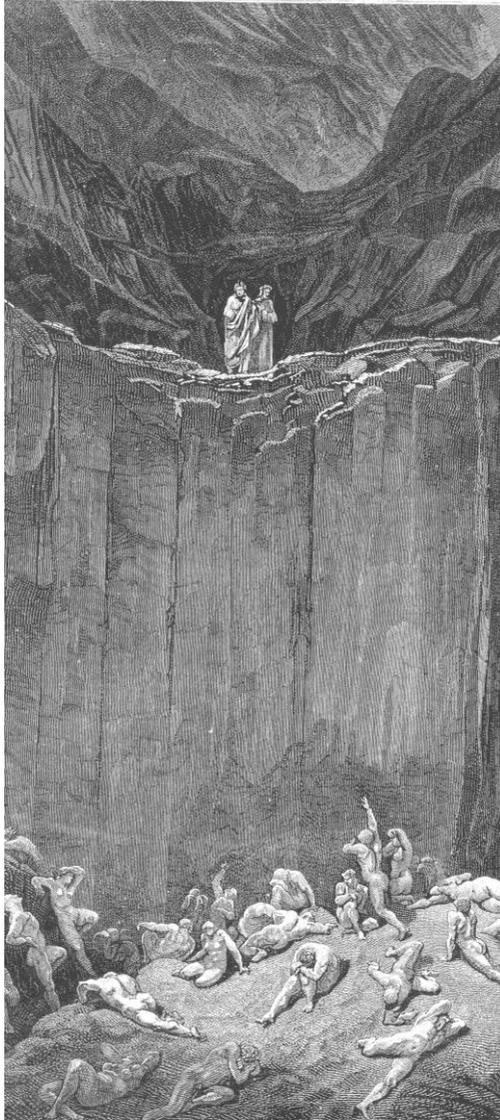
The moon has nothing to be sad about,

Staring from her hood of bone.

She is used to this sort of thing.

Her blacks crackle and drag.

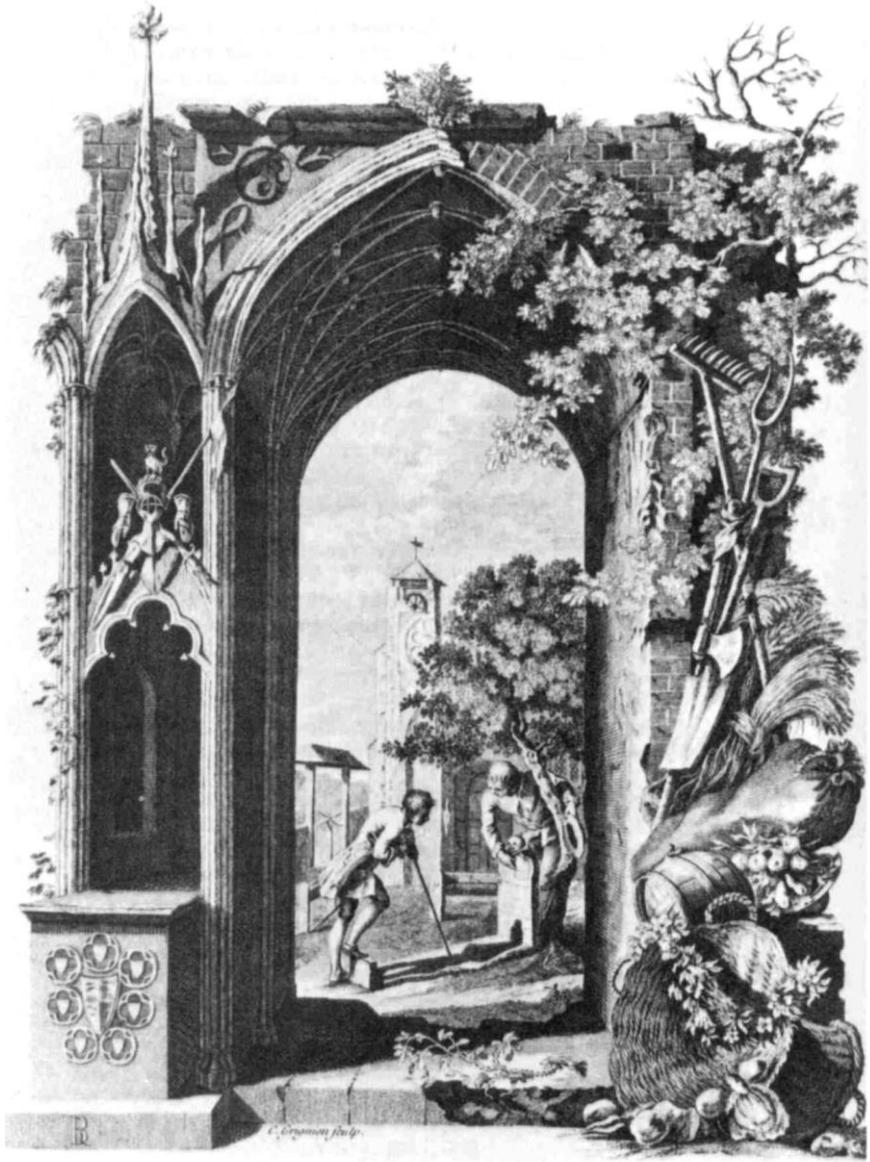
(Sylvia Plath, 'Edge', 1963)



Pl.I. Plate from Gustave Doré's illustrations for Dante's *Divine Comedy* – the tormented in the Inferno. Doré's nineteenth-century drawings for this medieval epic included plenty of black humour, but many are unbearably eloquent portraits of despair. Dante and Virgil move through colossal, dead landscapes, sundered from the damned by gulfs and chasms. 'Sublime' is the word Edmund Burke would have used.



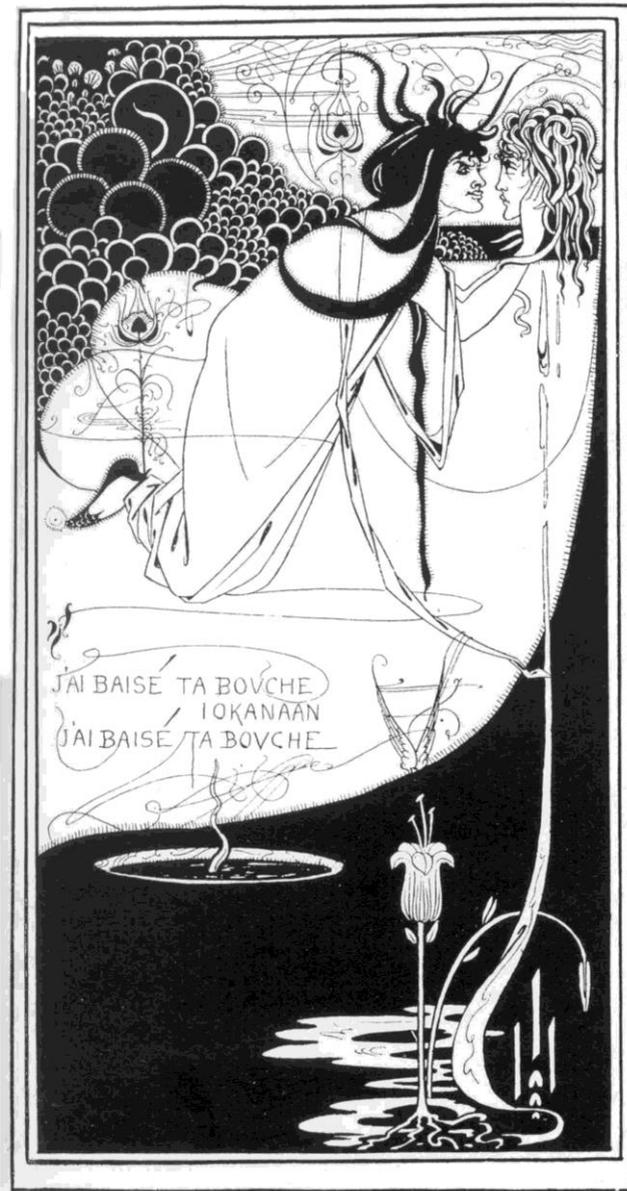
Pl. II. Memorial brass of Sir Ralph Hamsterley, Oddington Church, Oxfordshire, c.1510. Famously this is the most horrid of the 'cadaver' brasses which were fashionable in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century, at the same time as 'cadaver' tombs and similarly morbid funerary and religious art. The worms almost explode from the dead man's praying corpse. 'I was great in the world,' is the message of this image, 'And now I am merely food for foul things. Look to your souls'.



Pl. III. Frontispiece for Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, from R Bentley's *Designs for Ten Poems by Mr T Gray* (1753). This image displays almost the entire lexicon of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic – medieval ruins, fragments of a chivalric past, gravestones, twisted Salvatorian trees, and the triumph of encroaching nature. It was an potent and influential mix.



Pl. III. The memorial of Henry Fynes Esq., Wing Church, Buckinghamshire, 1758.  
Probably the work of Louis-Francois Roubiliac.



Pl. V. 'J'ai Baisé Ta Bouche Jokanaan', also known as 'The Climax', Aubrey Beardsley, 1893. This illustration for Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* was published in the first number of *The Studio* and won Beardsley the job of illustrating the whole work. *Salomé*, that iconic *femme fatale* for the Decadents, here resembles the Medusa, and unites eroticism and death in powerful tension. As a final statement of corrupt loveliness, flowers bloom out of the spilled blood of John the Baptist.



Pl. VI. Lulu (Louise Brooks) encounters Jack the Ripper (Gustav Deissl) in *Pandora's Box* (1929). Brooks herself commented 'She is about to receive the gift that has been her dream since childhood – death by a sexual maniac'. More obviously, this image, all shadows and staircases, is a fine summary of the visual system of expressionist cinema in its more realistic mood. The frame is organised around a colossal axis of symmetry moving up diagonally from left to right, forming an hysterically tense, stylised image.



Pl.VII. Dr Freud at his desk, 1938. The great explorer of the modern mind was in love with the dark places he discovered in it. To others, he justified rationally his passion for the archaic, his statuettes and artefacts, in terms of the power which primitive instincts still held over modern humans. They were a reminder of our perpetual slavery.



Pl.VIII. Siouxsie Sioux, 1993. It's all Cleopatra's fault, this, with the collaboration of Luisa Casati, Theda Bara and Sioux herself. The elements of modern Goth style are all present – the mingling of sexual and religious signals, the grandeur, exoticism, pretention and glamour. The mirror is a standard Gothic trope, hinting at ambiguity and double identities, themes Sioux's beloved Hitchcock would have appreciated. However, Sioux functions as more than simply 'the high priestess of Goth', but also as a refiner and interpreter – both her appearance and music transforming base cultural materials into Gothic forms.

## PART 4: MOPE'S PROGRESS - A GOTHIC STORY

I offer up this brief *histoire d'une âme* not because my own experience is remarkable, still less because it is typical. Instead I am prompted to consider my progress through Gothic towards the present because nobody (aside from Herr Giger's comments quoted above) has written down anything similar before.

My earliest memories are of darkness and rain. I can't be sure that I positively remember rain on the pram hood, or whether this 'memory' was actually produced by being *told* that I played with the rain on the canvas in front of me when sat in it. Either way, rain in the dark has always been my environment of comfort, my experience of home. It came as a delightful shock, years later, to find Dorothy Parker had had precisely similar feelings.

The dominant impression from my young childhood is one of a certain isolation. I have discovered more and more in common with my only sister as we grow older, but she was not born until I was 7; and, though I see now how my parents and teachers managed pretty well with the problem of an academic child stranded in an environment not equipped to cope with one, at the time only ignorant childish optimism shielded me from realising quite how odd my situation was.

Retreat into imagination established itself early and persisted. Sometimes other children were willing to be recruited into my fantasy worlds, but most of the time these were pursued through toys and books. I soon exhausted the possibilities of the children's section of the local library, and, in an act of understanding and support typical of the grown-ups who dealt with me, I was allowed adult reader's tickets. These were used to borrow books about dinosaurs, of course, which fed a sense of awe and a certain classificatory instinct, but also more unusual childhood interests: astronomy, human anatomy, sea creatures, and insects. Some of these later had practical expressions, such as the gift of a telescope, the intermittent keeping of a tank of seashore animals, the clumsy dissection of ants to see whether, as the books promised, their component parts could really carry on functioning when separated (not when you use a kitchen knife, they don't). My fascination with human biology had to be limited to buying a rubber skeleton at the Land's End gift shop one year.

My interest in ghosts and the world of the dead was shared with almost all kids, but most do not take it so wholeheartedly on board. Film and television were important in giving this morbid attraction visible shape: I saw *Carry on Screaming* and *The House in Nightmare Park* at far too young an age, and when the fortnightly comics featuring my adored Laurel & Hardy involved them in haunted houses it was a special thrill. In fact, I began to fill my own drawing books with cartoon adventures implicating Stan and Ollie in all the Gothic paraphernalia of staircases, trapdoors, coffins, cobwebs, thunderstorms and skeletons, writing and rewriting in an attempt to approach some Platonic ideal of the comic ghost story. Christmas brought boxed games such as *Scream Inn* and *Haunted House*, less to be played with as their devisers intended, but rather set up as an environment into which other toys (often, again, Laurel & Hardy) could be introduced and menaced by spooks and ghouls. I had to draw these myself, as the ones available to buy were never good enough.

Then I encountered a properly haunted landscape. Ancient Egypt gripped me with the outlandish variety of its gods, the morbid delicacy of its funerary practices, and the unimaginable antiquity of its past. One section of the library - left of the window facing the swing park, and towards the right hand of the shelf - contained several books I returned to again and again: their pictures of unwrapped mummies were both horrifying and delicious.

In Egypt, for a while, was my imaginary home, a place of grandeur and ruin and unmeasurable age.

History was an interest my parents could take an active part in encouraging. When I was little, and even when my sister was growing up, it was most unusual for working-class people to go out visiting old places, yet our Mum and Dad took us to abbeys, castles and ruins with a regularity that baffled our schoolmates. Deserted and lonely then, the same places are thronged with trippers today. Although when first taken to Salisbury Cathedral I was assaulted by the screaming terrors at its dizzying size and had to be left outside, I came to be fascinated by churches and the graveyards that surrounded them. These, in fact, were the paths down which God sent his dogs to hunt me to conversion at 25 (it could only ever have been the Church of England: in England, only the Anglican Church keeps and guards the signs and marks of antiquity). It was ecclesiastical buildings, too, that introduced me to the word *Gothic*, and for some time yet I would associate it only with the spiky bits on churches.

Throughout childhood and early adolescence I was pissily convinced that certain things were ‘silly’. These included fiction, fashion and pop music (I had no interest in sport, either, but that too closely resembled torture to be designated by so frivolous a word as ‘silly’). The objection to fiction buckled under the impact of *Doctor Who* and Susan Cooper’s *The Dark is Rising* sequence, which I accidentally discovered in the primary school library during my last months there. The other convictions took more shifting. At 15 I began to take notice of pop which bore allusive or oblique relationship to my ethical and political concerns on the one hand and, on the other, ambiguously gendered pop stars who provided an image of a feminised maleness which appealed to someone alienated from traditional masculine stereotypes.

My sister was much more interested in pop than me, and at 9 owned several hits compilations, one of which I decided to raid one afternoon. A single track immediately offered itself to my attention. It was the accompanying image that appealed first, quiet, insinuating, a pale woman in Cleopatra makeup, dreamily recumbent against a red background. This was Siouxsie Sioux, the track was ‘Cities in Dust’, and the encounter between us was unequal and decisive. The music’s shimmering exoticism and lascivious revelling in destruction took its time, but a few years later I went to college with a stack of taped Banshees albums courtesy of a schoolmate’s elder brother, and spent the whole time, according to one friend, playing ‘Hong Kong Garden’. His impression was incorrect, as I did alternate it with the *Carmina Burana*, whose Walkman Classic recording came back-to-back with *The Rite of Spring*, used in 1983 as a concert intro by – Siouxsie and the Banshees.

It is worth keeping in mind that I had no idea, still, that Gothic referred to anything beyond architecture: still less that Siouxsie’s look had helped to inspire an entire youth movement with the same label. I was being constantly and spontaneously drawn to images and experiences which bore a common stamp. My enthusiasms, so far as I was concerned, had no name and no unity. They were merely uncanny coincidences.

Until now I had thought no further of clothing or appearance than to ditch my juvenile jeans and trainers. As college approached, though, I inherited a plain black suit from a cousin and slowly my wardrobe became progressively more monochrome until only black, white and charcoal remained. ‘Do you never wear anything but black?’ a friend asked. I hadn’t thought of it. It wasn’t a deliberate choice, just an accident which had brought me an unexpected sense of ease and comfort. Black felt right.

The last link in the chain was sent to me by another friend late in 1990. It was Jennie Gray’s advert announcing the foundation of the Gothic Society, calling on the interest

(and cash) of all ‘lovers of the macabre and the darkly romantic, sages, prophets and gloomy luminaries’, with the final words underlined for my special attention. It would be 1994 until I got round to joining, but when *Udolpho* arrived on the doorstep I saw there was a word for the sweet disease I now realised I had always suffered from. It would be more years still before, late in the day, I encountered the Goth subculture (in fact, I’d encountered it repeatedly for years without realising what it was) and there remained many more discoveries and coincidences to enjoy, but from this point on a curious sense of belonging took over. *Das Unheimliche* was entirely familiar. The tomb doors were thrown open: their message was ‘you’re home’.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to the following for permission to quote from copyright works. Other quotes above I believe are out of copyright!

**Mute Song & Ms Diamanda Galás** for excerpts from interviews and the lyrics of ‘Wild Women With Steakknives’.

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**Mark Paytress & Omnibus Books** for an excerpt from *Entranced: the Siouxsie & the Banshees Story*.

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**Penguin Books** for an extract from *Cold Comfort Farm* by Stella Gibbons.

**Mr Nelson Jones** for directing my attention to the extract from Horace.

## PICTURE CREDITS

Pl.V by kind permission of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Pl.VII by kind permission of the Freud Museum, London.

Pl.VIII first appeared in the *Melody Maker* in 1993. The photographer was Tom Sheehan, but the magazine is of course now defunct and I have been unable to discover his whereabouts.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

This work makes no claims to academic status, but I hope it is at least intellectually respectable. I felt it extremely important to read the commentary which has developed the theory of Gothic since the Renaissance: from Vasari’s *Lives of the Artists* (in its 1965 Penguin edition), through Burke and Worringer to, naturally, Davenport-Hines’s *Gothic* (1998), which remains for the time being the cornerstone of modern genre analysis. It also strikes me that Mary Douglas’s anthropological classic *Purity and Danger* (1966) is useful for theorising morbidity and out-of-placedness. Other works are referred to throughout the text of *Exuviae*. The same applies to *most* of the actual *produce* of the Gothic temper cited

above, the novels, the films, the music, and the art – I think Brockden Brown and Hoffmann are the major gaps. There's a limit to how much lifespan you can waste.

Kenneth Clarke's *The Gothic Revival* (1964) is the key text for the rebirth of Gothic architecture and taste, while there are helpful passages in Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory* (1996) and Stuart Piggott's *Ruins in a Landscape* (1976).

The modern interest in Gothic literature was sparked off by David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* (1980), still the best introduction to the subject; Punter has also edited *A Companion to the Gothic* (2001), a guide to the whole Gothic Studies field. The late-Victorian mental landscape which revived Gothic horror is covered by D Jarrett's *The Sleep of Reason* (1988), and those horrors themselves in Christopher Fraying's *Nightmare: the Birth of Horror* (1996). Sources for film include Kevin Brownlow's *The Parade's Gone By* (1989); Lotte Eisner's *The Haunted Screen* (1994); R Newman, *The BFI Companion to Horror* (1996); A Silver & J Urbini, *Noir Style* (1999); and John Rigby, *English Gothic* (2002). Useful general works on relevant art include E Lucie-Smith & A Jacquot, *The Waking Dream* (1974), R Suchebe & M Weringer, *Painting of the Gothic Era* (1999), and K Clarke, *The Romantic Rebellion* (1973). Thames & Hudson's World of Art series was a solid standby in the form of A Martindale, *Gothic Art* (1988); H Read, *A Concise History of Modern Painting* (1988); W Kingham, *Romantic Art* (1988); E Lucie-Smith, *Eroticism in Western Art* (1972) and *Symbolist Art* (2001). C Grunenberg's *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Modern Art* (1997) describes a number of modern artworks as part of an exhibition held at the Chicago Institute of Art in 1997, along with some background articles, and emergences of Gothic in wider American culture are covered in M Edmundson, *Nightmare on Main Street* (1997). The Goth subculture is little covered as yet apart from Paul Hodkinson's *Goth: Style, Identity & Subculture* (2002), and a nice little section in the V&A's *Surfers, Soulies, Skinheads & Skaters* (1996), ed. by A de la Haye & C Dingwall. These will soon be joined by Catherine Spooner's *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (2004).

The World of Art series also provides help with various specific topics: WS Gibson, *Hieronymus Bosch* (1973); T Hilton, *The Pre-Raphaelites* (1987); and K Raine, *William Blake* (1977). The Taschen company's simple introductions to artists assisted with Ensor (U Becks-Malorny, 1999), Durer (J Burger, 2000), Munch (U Bischoff, 2000), Goya (EL Buchholz, 1999), Escher (1990), Piranesi (L Ficacci, 2001) and Giger (1996).

See also:

T Addams, *The World of Charles Addams* (2001); G Ashe, *The Hellfire Clubs* (2000) on de Sade; P Atterbury & C Wainwright, *Pugin: A Gothic Passion* (1994); J Aubrey, *Brief Lives* (1998), ed. R Barber; C Badcock, *Essential Freud* (1989); P Barber, *Vampires, Burial and Death* (1988); J Bret, *The Piaf Legend* (1988); S Calloway, *Aubrey Beardsley* (1998); R Cavendish, *A History of Magic* (1978); D Colvin, *Aubrey Beardsley, Slave to Beauty* (1998); JM Crook, *John Carter and the Mind of the Gothic Revival* (1995); M Crosland, *De Sade, the Passionate Philosopher* (1991); E Daniel, *The Art of Gormenghast* (2000); R Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (1988); A Eyles et al, *House of Horror* (1994); R Florescu, *In Search of Frankenstein* (1999); T Foote, *The World of Breughel* (1977); M Gilmore, *A World Away* (1983); H Haydon, *Holbein* (2001); RJ Heard & M Wilson, *Grand Guignol* (2002); R Holmes, *Shelley: the Pursuit* (1995); D Hoffman, *Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe* (1987); C Hole, *Witchcraft in Britain* (1980); P Humphreys, *The Films of Alfred Hitchcock* (1980); 'B Johns' (Mark Paytress), *Entranced: the Siouxsie & the Banshees Story* (1989); R Jaccard,

*Louise Brooks: Portrait of an Anti-Star* (1988); F King, *Magic, the Western Tradition* (1975); C Leatherdale, *Dracula, the Novel and the Legend* (1986); LA Marchand, *Byron* (1993); R Morse, *The Medieval Medea* (1998); B Paris, *Louise Brooks* (1990); R Passeron, *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Surrealism* (1988); M Paytress, *Siouxsie & the Banshees* (2003); J Richardson, *Baudelaire* (1994); P Russo, *Friedrich* (1999); S Ruthven, *Malleus Satani* (1994); E Showalter ed., *Daughters of Decadence* (1993); D Spoto, *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock* (1992); A Stassinopoulos, *Maria Callas* (1981); Tate Gallery, *Henry Fuseli* (1975); F Vermorel, *The Secret History of Kate Bush* (1982); M-H Wood, *Edvard Munch: the Frieze of Life* (1992); DB Wyndham-Lewis, *The World of Goya* (1968); M Yorke, *Mervyn Peake: My Eyes Mint Gold* (2000).



## The author

I studied Modern History at Balliol College, Oxford, and worked as a museum curator in Wimborne, Chatham, and High Wycombe. My other publications include *The Living Stream: Holy Wells in Historical Context* (1995); 'The Downland Parish: Gussage All Saints in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century' for the *Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch.Society* (1997); *High Wycombe Past* (2001); *Holy Wells of Bucks* (2003) and *Holy Wells of Kent* (2003). I am training for the Anglican priesthood.

San Giorgio and the Redemptore!  
This Gothic is a worn-out story.

*Arthur Hugh Clough*



