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Gothic Culture as Catharsis

From the Emergence of an Artistic Genre to the Construction of a Sociocultural Identity

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Abstract

The Gothic is an artistic tradition that has prevailed in Western culture for more than 250 years. Emerging in eighteenth-century literature and spreading to different mediums, the Gothic aesthetic developed around the exploration of time, terror, taboos, and anxieties. In fact, the Gothic mode allows the interpretation of fear in specific contexts, and through various forms of art. Gothic culture relies on catharsis, the purgation of negative emotions through art, and this aspect is a propelling force in the creation of Gothic works. As an inspired and constantly renewing genre, the Gothic transcends time and is disseminated in different cultures and art forms. It directly impacts the audience's minds as it provides closure on shared historical issues such as wars, political changes, or social progress. In postmodern societies, postpunk Goth music continued Gothic cathartic expressions and engaged listeners in the scene's lifestyle. This subcultural movement led audiences to participate through a redefinition and affirmation of their tastes and practices. As a cathartic sociocultural identity, Goth offers a way for people attracted to it to better understand their sense of self. This thesis will explore the numerous instances of catharsis emanating from the Gothic aesthetic in literature, theatre, visual arts, cinema, television, videogames, and music. Finally, it will demonstrate how the Goth sociocultural identity stems from these instances, as a contemporary actualization of the genre's functions.

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Introduction

What comes to mind when evoking the word "Gothic" is a specific atmosphere, set between darkness and melancholy, beauty and death, monsters and ghosts. Gothic and its history cover a long period of time, and its cultural tradition began 250 years ago. Originally, the word designated the language of the Goths, an ancient Germanic tribe. Later, it came to correspond to an artistic genre spread in all mediums before referring to the persons participating in a specific (sub)cultural community. While the characteristics of the Gothic mentioned above are what is most likely to capture our imagination, they are but the stereotyped result of a Western cultural evolution, built up by different scholars, writers, and artists who all wanted to metaphorize the gloom of their world. The Gothic remains an important genre in our modern times, yet it keeps on recalling the past, whether by the medieval settings often employed, or because of the old-fashioned charm its characters exude.

The word "Gothic" hints at several ideas, the first of which dates to the language of the Goths, as mentioned already. The Goths were an ancient Germanic people who came from North-Eastern Europe. After expanding their territory further south, they reached the gates of the Roman Empire. A series of conflicts, known as the Gothic Wars, followed their encounter between the years 249 and 554 CE. If these events did not directly cause the fall of the Roman Empire (476 CE), they nonetheless played an important part in the process and impacted the vision Westerners had of the Goths. Etymologically, the word "Goth" (*Gutthiuda* in the Gothic language) simply meant "the Gothic people". But due to the often brutal contact with other peoples, the word entered other languages (Greek *Gothoi*, Latin *Gothi*, Old English *Gota*), and it started to convey the idea of barbaric invaders (*Etymology Online*).

During the Middle Ages (fifth century CE to fifteenth century CE), the advent of Christianity in Western Europe led to an important development of places of worship in populated areas. Many churches and cathedrals were erected, in different architectural styles, such as the "Roman" which opposed the "Gothic" style. One of the first attested occurrences of the word "Gothic" to refer to this kind of architecture is found in a seventh-century CE *Life* of Saint Ouen written in Latin, used to describe the eponymous church built in Rouen, France: "Ecclesia porro in qua sanctum corpus conditum est miro fertur opere constructa artificibus *Gothis* ab antiquissimo Hlotario Francorum rege" (De Beer 144, emphasis mine). De Beer explains that here, *Gothis* signifies that the workforce employed to build the church were not Roman masons but "indigenous". He continues recounting the other occurrences of the terms

"Goth" and "Gothic" during the Medieval era, which were notably used by François Rabelais in 1532 to mean "abuse". The dichotomy between "Roman" and "Gothic" spread amongst writers and scholars and came to indicate all opposition between barbaric and civilized, "Gothic" thus representing metonymically the *gente barbara* (145).

This association of meaning passed on to the Renaissance (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) when Italian art historians used the term as an aesthetic label to describe in retrospect the "castellated" architectural style of the Middle Ages (Hogle 16). Besides, the meaning extended to all medieval lifestyles in general, so that the term referred to architecture as well as a way of living. If the word already had a negative connotation, it was now systematically used in a strongly pejorative way, as to make a clear distinction between modern or advanced ideas versus archaic, outdated, and primitive mores.

Because little was known about the Middle Ages during the following centuries, historians and thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries) used the word "Gothic" as a generic adjective to describe anything from the past. This was a time of great changes in Western European societies, in matters concerning politics and economics, but also philosophy, culture, and arts. Before delving into the emergence of the Gothic as a literary genre, it is important to mention the architectural movement known as the Gothic Revival, which came out in England in the 1740s and continued throughout the nineteenth century. In rethinking Catholicism, Protestant England saw the need to stand out from conformist beliefs conveyed throughout the rest of Europe and assign more positive values to the Middle Ages. This revival was the result of deep philosophical considerations and shifts in the ways of organizing society so that it materialized in an architectural renewal of places of worship based on a Medieval aesthetic.

During the following centuries, a new literary form marked Europe with a change in the writing of fictitious prose narratives: the novel. The literary Gothic expanded through the novel and offered artists and their audiences symbolic tools to represent and interpret their world, and all the themes and images attached to it formed a specific cultural tradition. Later, in postmodern societies, the rise of subcultural communities based on specific musical genres led people who connected with these to redefine their socio-cultural identity, as was the case within the Goth movement. But studying Goth/ic is not only about studying a "genre" or a "scene"; rather, it entails the study of a perspective, of a human point of view about a given time and place, which is translated into words, sounds, pictures, and even outfits. If Gothic fiction gained such importance, it is not only because it is a genre that made history, but also

because of the messages it conveys through the stories it tells. It is a distinctive feature of mankind to tell stories and to consume them, and the need for fiction—whether it be based on reality or fantasy—is as old as the primitive cave paintings from prehistorical times. Telling a story is a way for human beings to leave a mark, to create a legacy that will recall their journey on Earth. Whether the story is vocal, pictorial, or written, if it passes on to the next generation, it will be remembered. As much as we are able to forget events, some stories will never be forgotten, as they transcend time and transmit knowledge. What we humans are not capable of forgetting or ignoring, we build a story on, which crystallizes our emotions, thoughts, and memories.

The deep psychological impact that stories have on our minds is best represented by one of the sharpest feelings one can experience, if not the biggest drive of all our actions, which is fear. As H.P. Lovecraft wrote in the introduction to "Supernatural Horror in Literature" in 1927, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (423). Indeed fear, especially fear of the unknown, is undeniably part of every human being's personal development, for it is fear that teaches us lessons. As children, we are afraid of the dark, or of being abandoned; when we grow up, our fears multiply and extend to every aspect of our lives. We must learn how to overcome them and be stronger versions of ourselves. Since the dawn of civilization, fear of the unknown has arguably been the greatest source of inspiration to create stories and to share them. Because we are fascinated by what scares us, we try to explain the unexplainable, and we somehow manage to quiet our fears by retelling them. It is this fear of the unknown which has led to the creation of all the legends, mythologies, sagas, and other tales that we keep on telling today. Astrology, arts, philosophy, science, and even religion, all these fields of cultural creations arose because of fear of the unknown. We seek to understand the world we live in, and thus we try to describe it—sometimes through fantasy—to prove to ourselves that reason is stronger than fear.

Thus, there is a cathartic force in fictional stories that enables us to conquer reality. Catharsis is a mental process defined as "the purification or purgation of the emotions (especially pity and fear) primarily through art" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). The term was first theorized by Aristotle in a philosophical treatise focused on literary theory, *Poetics*, circa 335 BC, in which he examined the impacts of tragedy on the audience. He highlighted the fact that artistic representations—most often, during Classical Antiquity, plays—of specific emotions (e.g. pity and fear) provide alleviation of these same emotions. That is to say, the

fictive portrayal of fear triggers in audiences a way to free themselves from its negative repercussions in everyday life. Therefore, not only is catharsis an important part of storytelling, but it is even more important to the Gothic genre, which relies primarily on fear. If fear-related fiction existed long before the Gothic emerged, it is nonetheless through it that several creatures and monsters became definite—and cathartic—representations of human concerns. Gothic fiction creates narrative patterns to overcome fears, and this is one of the reasons why the genre expands in all artistic mediums and persists to this day. Fear is as eternal as imagination is in the human mind, and because new generations keep coming as time goes on, our long-lasting fears need to be declared, represented, and told. Besides, new generations raise new concerns in an ever-changing world, so there is a constant need for new stories to be told in order to overcome new contextual fears.

To study the Gothic is to study a perspective, and indeed, perspectives keep on evolving, just as much as stories keep being told and retold. Consequently, the need for the Gothic is permanent, not only because of the emotions it allows the storyteller to convey, but because it purges both the creator and the audience through catharsis. The impact it had in eighteenth-century Europe determined the longevity of the genre since it is an ever-renewable source of inspiration. Moreover, adaptation plays an important part in Gothic fiction, as most of the key creations of the genre find roots in ancient mythology (for instance, the myth of Prometheus in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 1818), in medieval mysteries (for example, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764) or even in historical figures (such as Vlad the Impaler in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, 1897). In the same vein, the works cited also influenced the next storytellers who adapted them in other Gothic art forms. More than retelling a story, adaptation is a process in which an artist reappropriates existing material and recasts it, sometimes in a new medium. Thus, storytellers give another perspective as a result of their understanding of the source material. While most of the first Gothic creations were not considered adaptations per se, they nonetheless became part of a cultural canon by defining the characteristics of the genre. Whether narratives were original or retold, Gothic fiction expanded in Europe and worldwide in the nineteenth century. During the twentieth century, the genre became an effective storytelling tool, with its distinguishing aesthetic, codes, and patterns. Hence, without finding a specifically delimited "Gothic theatre" or "Gothic cinema", we find a multitude of artistic creations that borrow these same codes and patterns, as well as rely on the power of catharsis to establish new cultural genres and talk about modern anxieties or, in the case of science-fiction, future anxieties.

In the second half of the twentieth century, after the Second World War, every political and social fear started being translated into the arts and disseminated through the mass-production and mass-consumption of cultural creations. For many people in search of meaning and identity, claiming affiliation to a certain culture meant taking a stand on a given topic. In these times of globalization and worldwide communication, instant and constant incentives to conform to norms have endangered the individuals' sense of identity, and many have sought a way to define their individuality by choosing a culture they related to. Along with the increasing popularity of horror movies and with the commercial success of punk and postpunk music, a specific mindset correlated to these genres, and the persons who connected to these the most embodied its visual style in everyday life. The rise of subcultures thus permitted the emergence of the Goth movement, in which values such as non-conformity, tolerance of differences, promotion of human rights, and the exploration of a meaningful socio-cultural identity are reflected in a specific attire and unique lifestyle. From performative acts of fashion to immersive participation in concerts and events, through the cathartic embodiment and revindication of diversity, the Goth movement signified the postmodern transgression of society and a contemporary continuation of the Gothic tradition.

As the Goth subculture expanded and gained importance in the 1980s, scholars sought to understand it and looked for its roots in the Gothic arts. Similarly, in 1980, David Punter published the first critical work to focus solely on Gothic literature, its history, themes, meanings, and perpetuation. The Gothic became a relevant academic field of study, and many anthologies and scholarly works were published, the latest being the extensive two-volume *Cambridge History of the Gothic* in 2020. As a Goth myself whose style has most often been criticized and rejected by my father, my schoolmates, my professors, and strangers in France, my thesis represents for me my cathartic fight for difference and tolerance. I thus focused on the cathartic power of the Gothic. I will demonstrate that this aspect is at the heart of the genre's different instances in arts and that it explains how the Gothics manifest in fiction and reality. It is the genre's strong cathartic power that led to the aestheticization of fear and terror in all artistic fields, and which is now expressed in the "Goth" socio-cultural identity. The first part will delve into the literary tradition and its many instances through time. Then, the second part will explore the pictorial manifestations of the Gothic in different visual mediums. Lastly, the third part will present, examine, and analyze the Goth (sub)culture in its music, dress style, events, and representations in media.

I. The Gothic Literary Tradition: Words Creating Worlds

After the introductory account of the origins and evolution of the word "Gothic", it is now time to focus on literature since it is through this medium that the term was reinvented as a genre. During the Age of Enlightenment, and specifically the Romantic Era, there was an evolution in prose writing, that distinguished between different kinds of romance and eventually led to the rise of the novel. One important attempt at theorizing this new genre can be found in Clara Reeve's *The Progress of Romance*, published in 1785. In a passage recounting the history of prose fiction, Reeve wrote, "The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things. — The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written" (111 qtd. in Brown 252). The development of a new narrative form is closely linked to the emergence of Gothic fiction, a term applied to this context retrospectively by scholars and literary critics (Punter 1).

"A New Kind of Romance", Between Supernatural and Sublime

Reeve's distinction was introduced twenty years before by Horace Walpole, who is often considered the initiator of the Gothic novel. Walpole was an English writer, art historian, and antiquarian who was fascinated by the Middle Ages and the Gothic architectural aesthetic. In 1749, he had the Strawberry Hill House built in Twickenham, intending to erect a fake Gothic castle based on medieval architecture. Corresponding to the Gothic Revival in architecture, this event marks the starting point in the chronology proposed by Hogle in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (xvii). Besides, Walpole published anonymously *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. It was considered the first Gothic novel by scholars in the twentieth century (Hume 290; Punter 43; Botting 10), owing to Walpole's critical explanation of his text's genre. In the preface to the first edition, the unknown prefacer claims that this manuscript was originally written in 1529, but that the story depicted in it took place between 1095 and 1243. In addition to praising the prose quality of the alleged author, the prefacer presents the important topics introduced in the text: medieval drama, supernatural occurrences, horror, and suspense. While Walpole masked his identity at first, dreading negative criticism that could have ruined his reputation, he acknowledged the authorship in the preface to the second edition given the favorable reception of the first one. He added the subtitle "A Gothic Story",

hence making it the first Gothic text mentioned as such. He also evoked his considerations and intentions in the writing of his novel, thereby setting the first rules of the Gothic tradition:

> It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life. But if, in the latter species, Nature has cramped imagination, she did but take her revenge, having been totally excluded from old romances. The actions, sentiments, and conversations, of the heroes and heroines of ancient days, were as unnatural as the machines employed to put them in motion. (102)
>
> […] I might have pleaded that, having created a new species of romance, I was at liberty to lay down what rules I thought fit for the conduct of it. (106)

In this passage, the distinction between Romance and Novel which Reeve used in her *Progress* appears. Yet, Walpole mentions that his work is at the crossroads of the two, "blending" in a new "hybrid" form of fiction (Botting 9). Walpole's main concern is "invention", which he uses to reconcile nature ("modern") and imagination ("ancient"). While the medieval setting of the story conveys an "ancient" tone—a feudal castle in distant times —, nature is reinvented in Walpole's imagination through a series of weird and unexplainable phenomena. Deepening this idea, *Otranto* proposed a renewal of the medieval romance by implementing supernatural horror, while calling on the realism of eighteenth-century novels (Botting 2). Gothic fiction is thus built upon a historical distancing from the time of the occurrence of events, and the cultural difference vis-à-vis contemporary literary canon. The dividing line between history and reality becomes more obscure, allowing superstition and fantasy to take part in the process of storytelling, just as Walpole's first preface showed. Therefore, the Gothic narrative becomes a new fictive space serving the writer's imagination, making way for the (re)invention of romanticized emotions. The first forms of Gothic fiction emphasize the human spectrum of emotions, in line with the popularity of sentimentalist literature from the second half of the eighteenth-century, the rise of the novel, and new realism (Punter 20). But Walpole accentuated what particularly drives readers to feel *fear* by instigating terror and horror. While the guards in *Otranto* are petrified by the mystical appearance of a giant helmet in the court of the castle, *fear* reaches the reader who is confronted with the characters' horror before the grandeur of the event. To induce this

sentiment, Walpole relied on unexplained supernatural occurrences which distorts the perception of reality and provokes excessive sensibility (Punter 67).

The settlement of the supernatural in Gothic novels allows the exploration of newly, or recently, (re)established notions of narration, beauty, and fear. It involves the use of the sublime, according to Edmond Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* published in 1757. Burke's *Enquiry* is an important treatise considering all aspects of human life, including all five senses, the body, the mind, emotions, and social interactions. In addition to dealing with passions and sensations, it also gives an account of the eighteenth-century state of science, art, culture, beliefs, and society. Above all, Burke elaborates on the notion of the sublime, which has a considerable place in the Gothic and participates greatly in the establishment of its aesthetics (Hume 285; Punter 39; Botting 55; Hogle 29). In Burke's examination, the sublime is the force invoked to give power to a word or an idea, which then submerges individuals in an overwhelming emotion:

> 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; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (36)

Consequently, Gothic fiction is the perfect place for the sublime to thrive; "the source of the sublime" being given power through words which are "conversant about terrible objects". It is employed to bring terror to the reader, drawing a line between fascination and disgust, while still calling on the magnificent, between pain and pleasure. Pointing at dissimulated passions, words directly affect the readers' minds by filling them with imaginative material rendered as pictures and emotions. The sublime typically calls on catharsis as defined by Aristotle, in that it relies on the release of strong emotions through the readers' experience of fear. Therefore, the sublime gains power through the more impactful image it conveys, stimulating the ideas of vastness, profusion, grandeur, and magnificence, and thus leading to the aestheticization of awe and excess. This is expressed in Gothic writing by the use of superlatives and adjectives calling on an exuberant vocabulary, as in the first chapter of *Otranto*. In the scene depicting the fall of a disproportioned helmet crushing Manfred's son to death, the object is described as "[enormous], a hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being" and "stupendous" (110), which reveals the uniqueness and surprise of the event. Manfred remains speechless before "the horror of the spectacle", also referred to as "the tremendous phenomenon" and "the miracle of the helmet" (110), thus denoting the sensational and almost

divine character of this anomaly. The sublimised writing of an incredible event therefore gives the reader the terrible emotion which Burke described. The role of the supernatural in *Otranto* is to amplify, magnify, make the description of nature "super", that is to say, "larger, more effective, more powerful, or more successful than usual" as the definition of the prefix suggests (*Cambridge Dictionary*). The sublime impacts readers because they identify with the characters experiencing the supernatural. Sublimised terror forces us to reconsider our insignificance and weakness before such events: we become aware of our size and our very own "sense of self" is challenged (Botting 26). In the human reaction to the depiction of 'horror', terror thus allows the "subjective elevation" of the self. This is where the process correlates with catharsis, as the purification of emotions—fear in particular—is emphasized by the sublime. Since Gothic narratives provoke terror in the readers' minds, they are drawn to transcend this emotion by reassessing their own selves in the face of horror, thus leaving them with pleasure (Hogle 17).

Yet, at the time of his *Enquiry*, Burke opposed the feeling of terror to the feeling of pleasure, but the forthcoming popularity of Gothic narratives defies this idea. The two rather connect in a link of cause/consequence, which has been drawn in 1773 by Anna Letitia and John Aikin in "On The Pleasure Derived From Objects of Terror". Their essay is of importance at the time of the emergence of the Gothic as a new form of fiction, and the cathartic relation between terror and pleasure explains why it became so popular. The Aikins suggest that the stimulation of terror in works of fiction, from Greek and Roman tragedies to Shakespeare's plays, reveals audiences' tendency to find pleasure in witnessing disasters. This morbid curiosity, or voyeurism, is what catches an audience and makes them "enjoy" the misery suffered by someone else. Individuals tend to choose going through painful and suspenseful experiences to get excitement and surprise out of it, rather than staying frustrated in inactivity: "We rather chuse to suffer the smart pang of a violent emotion than the uneasy craving of an unsatisfied desire". This highlights the cathartic power of Gothic narratives on their audience, where using appalling images brings satisfaction and pleasure. The Aikins reckon that they can find interest in "[their] modern novels" when terror is invoked, despite the dullness of some of them. As E.J. Clery developed in *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (1995), the Aikins extended Burke's sublime to "the supernatural sublime" by applying the notion specifically to "health-giving tale[s] of terror" (82). They go on by arguing that the experience of pleasure is proportional to the depiction of horror, that is to say, readers find more pleasure in more horrible depictions. Moreover, Walpole's *Otranto* is referred to as "a

very spirited modern attempt upon the same plan of mixed terror, adapted to the model of Gothic romance", thus reiterating Walpole's reflection in his second preface on the interweaving of natural and supernatural occurrences. As an example, they provide a short narrative, *Sir Bertrand, A Fragment*, which illustrates this effect by telling part of the story of a lonely rider seeking shelter in the obscurity of a gloomy night. The text resumes elements of narration present in Walpole, such as an ancient mansion in ruins or giant statues in motion, but also invests in themes proper to the Gothic narrative, such as the bell toll, the coffin, or the woman in a black veil. This fragment, along with asserting the conventions of the Gothic aesthetic and putting forth cathartic pleasure, establishes the legitimacy of this form of fiction against the realistic novels of the eighteenth century.

Literary Canon, Uses of Gothic Fiction and Critiques

With Gothic tropes now set up, Walpole did manage to "lay down what rules [he] thought fit for the conduct" of his "new species of Romance" (106). But as the high canon of literature was challenged by Gothic fiction, considered "low", critics of the time stood against it. Indeed, if popular reading audiences found the Gothic attractive (Gamer 24), the often-negative reviews prevented it from reaching the rank of a proper literary genre. While the first edition of *Otranto* was praised in the critical journal *The Monthly Review*, Walpole's work was given bad press after the second edition came out (Clery 53). The *Review* critique affirmed that Gothic fiction defies eighteenth-century England's strict moral conventions. Walpole brought a "gross and unenlightened age" in the present, making him an "advocate for re-establishing the barbarous superstition of Gothic devilism!" in the eyes of reactionary authorities (in Clery 53). But this shattering of the traditional forms of literature nonetheless became an inherent feature of the Gothic. It also gave way to Romantic writers to draw from this narrative form to attract a larger audience, while not acknowledging it for fear of criticism (Gamer 7). This distancing from the mode initiated by Walpole is present in the work of Clara Reeve and her *Champion of Virtue* first published anonymously in 1777 and reissued in 1778 as *The Old English Baron, A Gothic Story*. In the preface added for the revised edition, she explained that her story is designed as "the literary offspring of *The Castle of Otranto*", where she attempted to render it morally acceptable and commercially viable (Clery 86). Indeed, Reeve took into consideration "the business of Romance" which is to "excite the attention" on the one hand, and to aim towards a "useful, or at least happy, end" on the other hand (84). She recognized Walpole's narrative and descriptive skills in the conduct of his story, but she

decried his use of the supernatural, deemed too far-fetched and grotesque in the overstepping of the "verge of probability". Intending to correct Walpole rather than drawing inspiration from him, in her preface, Reeve proposed a lighter version of the Gothic narrative in which the supernatural is reduced "within the limits of credibility". The plot remains essentially identical, with the intrigue of a righteous heir claiming back his property stolen by an oppressive baron. The so-called haunting of the east aisle of the Castle of Lovel only takes place in the protagonist's imagination, in dreamed visions, footsteps, and flashing lights, so that sublime terror is avoided. In the middle of the book, the murdered father's body is found, and the re-establishment of order and etiquette trumps the supernatural. In doing so, Reeve ensured the good reception of her novel without pushing the boundaries of accepted literary standards. Moreover, she made possible the commercial success of her work, which obtained positive press reviews. *The Old English Baron* nonetheless marked a milestone in the history of Gothic fiction, as it gave way for its writing and publishing in the burgeoning novel industry. Reeve finished legitimizing romance writing by her remarks in her 1785 history of prose fiction, *The Progress of Romance*, as discussed at the beginning of this section.

While history was constantly redefined retrospectively in Gothic narratives through the lens of eighteenth-century mores, an event changed the face of Europe and inspired a great propelling force in literature. As part of Hogle's chronology, the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789 marked a threat to the established order. It brutally challenged the monarchical system and revealed the political significance of terror (Botting 40). The people's insurgency against the ruling authority caught scholars' attention across Europe and was echoed in the existing press of neighboring countries. The event has been related and commented on in English in the years, if not the months, after the outbreak of the Revolution, notably by Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Romantic figures like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge also expressed support for revolutionaries, which was echoed still in Coleridge's quite Gothic poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1834). The outreach of the Revolution invaded every aspect of various European societies and cultures at the end of the eighteenth century, and writers drew inspiration from this event to produce Gothic narratives. Indeed, the Revolution, which would not come to an end before the beginning of the nineteenth century, was in essence, of a Gothic nature (Botting 86): while antiquated societal structures crumbled (Storming of the Bastille) and figures of usurped authority were guillotined after a period called the Reign of Terror (1793-1794), the signs of an ancient society were overthrown by advanced contemporary views. These main events

resemble Gothic narrative devices in the way eighteenth-century authors wrote about the past (often medieval) with a certain historical distance, to set their political views in obscure times. Therefore, the English understanding of the Revolution interweaved in the writing of Gothic fiction, relying on its cathartic force to word social and political anxieties, in speaking the unspeakable, and pointing at the social meaning of the opposition between *ancient régime* and new order.

From this point, the literary Gothic enters a period that modern critics have called "the decade of Gothic fiction" (Botting 62), the "effulgence" (Miles 41), or the "first peak" (Punter 54). A flourishing number of novels were published (about 220 between 1770 and 1800, Miles 43) featuring elements attached to Gothic topoi in terms of setting (castles in ruins, convents, forests, mountains), time (the Middle-Ages, the night, the 'past' historically speaking), supernatural and/or mysterious figures (ghosts, sorcerers, monks) and themes (prophecies, ancient ways, oppression). It is during this period that the most influential writers composed works which participated in establishing the Gothic literary tradition, amongst them Ann Radcliffe with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and William Godwin with *The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, both in 1794, and Matthew Lewis with *The Monk* in 1796. Moreover, these novels enjoyed considerable public success, and their impact was recognized by critics and reviewers as the sales they occasioned would make them best-sellers, anachronistically speaking (Longueil qtd. in Gamer 48). Besides, Gothic novels circulated increasingly throughout Europe and were translated into different languages, so that the trend took an international dimension as writers kept influencing each other. Two ensuing tendencies participated in further developments of the Gothic aesthetic, namely the "Radcliffe School of Terror" and "The German School of Horror", as titled by Norton in *Gothic Readings, The First Wave, 1764-1840* (vii). The first trend relies on the characters' superstitious imagination to explain supernatural occurrences, clarifying them in the manner of Radcliffe in *Udolpho* as "imagined terrors" (Botting 76). The second trend draws on Goethe's and Schiller's German Romanticism to paint emotions and horror with excess while concealing any explanation to supernatural occurrences, as Lewis did in *The Monk*. Similarly, a notable number of other Gothic literary works were produced at the time, such as poetry in the vein of the Graveyard School of poets with the works of Charlotte Smith and Nathan Drake, as well as numerous theories and reviews focused on the genre (Norton v).

Along with the development of Gothic drama on stage, which will be explored in the next part, the trend kept growing in popularity but was still criticized by many prominent

figures of Romanticism. Indeed, the end of the eighteenth century saw the establishment of Romanticism in literature, notably with the publication of William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads, With Other Few Poems* in 1798. The two poets sought to reject the Gothic vogue of supernatural terror, judged wanton, and too "low" (Gamer 15). While still using aspects of the Gothic, their focus was "to teach [readers] to distinguish between popular supernaturalism and poetic naturalism" (14). In the advertisement of *Lyrical Ballads*, the authors explained that their poems intended to experiment with the "language of conversation" (ii), as opposed to the language of poetry. With it, they wanted to show that even with the use of "low" language (prose), poetic pleasure can be reached without falling back on the "gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers" (ii-iii) found in Gothic writings. The Gothic was more strongly rejected in review magazines, as an anonymous letter addressed to the editor of the *Monthly Magazine* in 1797 significantly impacted the political categorization of novels in the age of Romanticism. The critic, in his satire entitled "The Terrorist System of Novel-Writing", disliked the fact that writers no longer seek to depict human life and manners but fall back on trying to frighten readers more than anything else. The reviewer links the eccentricity of Gothic narratives to dig ever further into the gruesome with the horrible events caused during the French Revolution. He accuses them of copying Robespierre and his "system of terror" to "[teach novelists] that *fear* is the only passion they ought to cultivate" (in Norton 300). Going on, he mocks Gothic writing by providing a list of repetitive elements of storytelling that can ensure the success of any novel. With this text, the Gothic was more and more ridiculed by critics through satirical formulas and recipes of the kind (Clery 147), or spoofed by other novelists themselves—the most noteworthy parody being Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (started in 1798 but published posthumously in 1817).

The Gothic's success was starting to overshadow the high standards of literature, but the coexistence of the movement alongside Romanticism played an important part in the literary distancing from neoclassicism, as Hume puts it in "Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel" (1969). Though the two movements are related chronologically, there are nonetheless subtle points in which they differ. Both feature deep philosophical involvements in the exploration of individuals' "internal mental processes" (288), but Romanticism tends to seek answers in nature about imaginative questions asked by religious matters, while the Gothic experiments with the limits of reason and explores the world's mysteries. Hume concludes that Romanticism pursues the "existence of higher

answers", and in that way varies from the Gothic's "unresolvable moral and emotional ambiguity" (290). In sum, the Gothic resonated in Romantic writings but remained a literature of excess and imagination based on supernatural terror and Burke's sublime, while standards of the beautiful were most often pursued in other artistic movements. More than a strict exclusion between the two, the Gothic and Romanticism's coexistence allowed a revision of literary standards (Gamer, in Hogle 102).

Despite its detractors, the Gothic stayed put at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Its codes fuelled authors' imagination with inspiration for new stories, and while new challenges to every aspect of the existing order in England and Europe interrogated the very foundation of societies, the need for cathartic representations grew. Political questions were re-examined through better social outlooks, with, for example, the ban on slave-trade (but not slave-owning) that came to pass in England in 1807 and France in 1815. Broadly speaking, the scientific paradigm was also redefining the concept of "life" and its origin, under a more philosophical scope, influenced by the works of Erasmus Darwin and Luigi Galvani. In addition to the importance given to lyric expressions in Romanticism, an emphasis on the individual occurred in the literary and artistic spheres. Gothic writings thus examined the sense of self and other(s) in a self-conscious and cathartic way (Punter 85). It is in this context that *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* was published in 1818, anonymously at first, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. In the preface to the first edition, written from her point of view by her husband Percy Shelley, the author acknowledges inspiration from the works of Darwin to "preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature" while trying to keep the mere "series of supernatural terrors" away (49). It is additionally mentioned that *Frankenstein* is, in design, a combination of the greatest writings from *The Iliad* to Shakespeare's plays, through Milton's *Paradise Lost*. It is also specified that the text is the result of a "playful desire of imitation" (50) of German ghost stories and legends, initiated by friends (including Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Polidori) challenging each other to write a story based on supernatural occurrences.

In doing so, the author avoids the possible critiques against yet another text in the Gothic vein. However, *Frankenstein* became very influential in the Gothic tradition, as it brought a greater symbolic and metaphorical degree in psychological and philosophical questionings, against the hitherto focus on romance narratives (Gamer, in Hogle 100). Frankenstein's nameless Creature is reflective of the construction of the novel, in being the product of a mind (the book for the author/the result of an experiment for the scientist) left to

fend for itself in a hostile world. *Frankenstein* addresses many points which, at the center of the Creature's mental processes, lead readers to muse about their interpretation of them. The individual is brought to the fore as a complex and dual being, building his or her identity between good and evil, humanity and monstrosity, life and death, natural and artificial, body and mind. At the end of *Frankenstein*, there is no longer a clear distinction between opposed concepts. In the unraveling of the narrative, the Creature as the hero of the novel was also a victim—as an inhuman product of an experiment—and a villain—as the killer of his creator's relatives (Botting 101). In sum, the powers shaping identity are "beyond any human control" (140), so much so that the disintegration of subjectivity becomes a Gothic trope, terror now existing in the passions and violence of our minds, more than in a sublimated nature. The need for the cathartic expression of such passions and violence thus becomes inevitable, necessary, and meaningful. The impact of Shelley's oeuvre was such that it became part of the Gothic mythology, and it survives to this day thanks to its continuations in other artistic and cultural media, as will be discussed later. With *Frankenstein*, the existing bestiary of the Gothic extended to human-like figures of monsters, vagabonds, keepers of forbidden knowledge, vampires, and so on. They became prominent symbols of the aesthetic (Punter 87) as living embodiments of a condensed set of fears and anxieties surrounding individuality.

Another result of the friends' challenge in which Shelley participated is John Polidori's novella *The Vampyre*, published in 1819 under Byron's name. Although the literary figure of the vampire had already been present before this text, notably in John Stagg's poem *The Vampyre* in 1810, Polidori's work knew a considerable success and inspired several imitations (Norton 161), until the most famous of them all appeared in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*. Yet, Polidori's *The Vampyre* already introduced the figure of a Gothic villain based on elements of the Byronian hero tormented by inner struggles, as in Byron's closet drama *Manfred*: *A Dramatic Poem*, written between 1816 and 1817. These works, along with *Frankenstein*, consolidated the need to provide catharsis for the endangered sense of identity. The year 1820 saw the end of the Gothic's golden age with the publication of Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Hogle xx). The novel reflects the author's questioning of religion while drawing on the myth of the Wandering Jew who, having mocked Jesus on his way to crucifixion, and thus acted against God, is doomed to eternal life. *Melmoth* is characterized by intensive descriptions of the character's emotions and passions, which are echoing Maturin's inner struggles. Once more, the Gothic aesthetic allows both the exploration of the writer's mental processes and sense of self, while releasing them through

catharsis, thus mixing reality and fiction. This way, catharsis operates both for the author and the readers who are confronted with their own excesses and transgressions, and the corruptions of social and religious institutions (Botting 107).

Expansion of the Gothic

From the mid-nineteenth century, as evoked above, the grand Gothic of Radcliffe and Lewis was on the decline. But if supernatural horror, which contributed to the trend of Gothic novel writing from Walpole to Maturin, ran out of steam, the Gothic tradition was already well entrenched. Indeed, the wide diffusion and real public success of these texts made the Gothic a hybrid form, which, by "incorporating and transforming other literary forms as well as developing and changing its conventions in relation to newer modes of writing", would not only survive over time but disseminate worldwide and keep evolving (Botting 14). As significant continuations developed in Ireland and Scotland (Punter 105), but also France with the *roman frénétique* ("frantic novel"), and Germany, following the *Ritter-, Räuber-* and *Schauerroman* ("knights, robbers and horror novels", Hale 66), the rise of American Gothic induced a decisive evolution in the tradition. The fairly recent history of the United States, as compared to the European one, pushed American writers to adapt their writing to their geographical and political contexts. If at first, their literature was mostly determined by the British one, there was a subsequent resetting influenced by Gothic fiction. As Leslie Fiedler posits in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, the Gothic participated in the development of the American novel. American fiction, in its stammering debut, was possessed by "images of alienation, flight and abysmal fears" (126) as there was an apparent "failure of love" compared to European prose writings. The people who left the old continent for America, in hope of establishing new societies far from the evil weight of their past, were confronted with the realization that evil is intrinsically human. Since the U.S. was founded on the genocide of indigenous people and the dominance over slaves, writers could only turn to "fables of loneliness and terror" (127). In this vein, the first American Gothic novel, *Wieland, or The Transformation: An American Tale*, was written as early as 1798 by Charles Brockden Brown. Brown is often thought of as having started the tradition of fiction in the U.S., as well as fixing the Gothic form (130). Wieland's Gothic specificity lies in the relocation of mystery (Botting 117) from the supernatural to the natural, or human to superhuman. Brown thus set the tone for forthcoming American Gothic fiction and tales of horror: since "the change of

myth involves a profound change of meaning" (Fiedler 147), he readapted the questions of suspicion, authority, and family to the context of the disillusioned myth of "the new world".

Later, while still etched by the influence of European Romanticism and German folktales, Washington Irving's popular works marked a milestone in the rise of American fiction, especially with the publication of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle" between 1819 and 1820. The first short story adheres to the Gothic tradition of Radcliffe, with sophisticated writing, superstitions from the past, and supernatural occurrences explained at the end. The second one introduces the idea of the double and the interpretation of identity in a new and changing age. The impact of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" in the Gothic movement mostly manifested later through its adaptation to new mediums. Yet, the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was deeply influenced by Brown, notably with *The Scarlett Letter: A Romance* (1850), narrowed down the scope of the American Gothic. The story, set in the Massachusetts Bay Colony during the second half of the seventeenth century, recounts the struggles of Hester Prynne to live in a community where she is forced to wear the letter *A* as a punishment for adultery. With this novel, Hawthorne explored the short history of the U.S. through the excess of puritanism in society and the weighing memory of Salem's witch trials (Botting 114). The Gothic became American in how the author painted his "repugnance at his ancestors' crimes" (Savoy 178), and how these events cast a hideous shadow in the birth of a nation. All the above-mentioned writings eventually led to the advent of American Gothic, embodied by the works of Edgar Allan Poe.

Well versed in the British and Romantic literary traditions, Poe brought to the fore much deeper, darker, and tormented concerns in his writings constituted mainly of poems, tales, and short stories. He also theorized on literature and his own texts in a few essays towards the end of his life. Pondering on his purpose as a writer in *The Poetic Principle* (1850), he conveyed the idea that this principle "is always found in *an elevating excitement of the soul*" (906). This idea recalls Burke's and the Aikins' concepts of the sublime and the cathartic pleasure of horror. Poe's theme of focus was mainly death and its entailments, such as murder ("The Murders in the Rue Morgue" in 1841, laying the premises of the detective story), disease (allegory of the plague in "The Masque of The Red Death", 1842), being buried alive (suggested in "The Tell-Tale Heart", 1843) or the return of the dead (Madeline in "The Fall of the House of Usher", 1839). Following Fiedler's idea of the "failure of love", Poe sought refuge in fictive death in his tales, which echoed his destructive drive and alcoholism during his life. He centered his writings on evoking macabre and grotesque

thoughts relaying what he called the "terror […] of the soul" (qtd. in Norton 102) to represent the collapse of sanity and the disease of the mind (Botting 120). Poe's more subjective than objective Gothic power through first-person narratives relied on individuals' implication in the macabre. In fact, Poe dragged everyone down with him, leading to "gather the writer and the reader together into the spiral of the drive toward death" (Savoy 184). With his excessive imagination and symbolic darkness, Poe introduced new Gothic tropes that greatly influenced not only other writers in the development of morbid psychology (Norton 102) but also the whole Gothic tradition beyond the literary medium and up to this day.

Thereupon, the well-established Gothic aesthetic, or elements of Gothicism (Hume 282), were employed by many authors in various countries to express a set of different ideas about themselves or their environment. In France, it manifested in Theophile Gautier's vampire tale *La Morte Amoureuse* (1836) and Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-43), which led way to the "Urban Gothic". It was also present in England during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), in the "Victorian Gothic" trend between 1830 and 1880 (Milbank 145). Gothicism can be discerned, to cite a few, in W.M. Reynolds' *The Mysteries of London* (1844-1856), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (both in 1847). Besides, the figure of the vampire settled on the front of the scene with Thomas Peckett's *Varney the Vampire or The Feast of Blood* (serialized between 1845 and 1847), symbolically in *Wuthering Heights* with the Gothic house vampirizing the protagonists (Milbank 160), and later with Le Fanu's female vampire tale *Carmilla* (1870). Victorian Gothic differed from the Radcliffian and Lewisian tradition in that the literature of this era expressly mirrored public concerns about the changing domestic, industrial, and urban contexts (Botting 123). In depicting the social reality with a more naturalistic than sublime effect, Gothic forms and settings evolved from a romanticized feudal past with its aristocratic evildoers, to the darkness of the city's backstreets where sly criminals operate. Between the 1860s and the 1870s, there was nonetheless a surge of popularity for the ghost story and the sensation novel, which employed suspense and mystery to depict horrific crimes, and reached a large audience (Punter 188). Novelists also relied on Gothic tropes of entrapment and internal conflict to represent the characters' mental repression due to the materialization of society and culture, threatening the home and community (Botting 123) and thus painting "the mind as a haunted house" in an "equally haunted society" (Milbank 164). Here again, the different employs of the Gothic aesthetic allowed cathartic relief for the changing Victorian

society, offering symbolic representations to interpret and understand anxieties linked to progress.

In parallel, socio-political conceptions in Western societies were challenged by important and complex events that Hogle included in his chronology of the Gothic (xvii-xxii). A brief review of these events is necessary as they impacted storytellers and audiences, and were echoed in Gothic writings. In short, the American Civil War (1861-1865) led to the abolition of slavery and brought many discussions in the international literary sphere about "race" relations. In addition, scientific and philosophical advancements also revealed a disparate understanding of the human and nature, and the living and dead, through Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), and Swedenborg and Kant's transcendentalism. Translated into the naturalization of the supernatural in Gothic fiction and novels (Milbank 163), the accelerated debate on evolution generated new anxieties around metaphysical issues. These considerations intensified towards the end of the century, a period called *fin de siècle* during which writers relied once again on the Gothic's cathartic power to word concerns of decadence and degeneracy. As a matter of fact, sexual liberation and "deviances" were a serious threat to conservative societies' mores, provoked by the rights of divorce granted to women in France and Britain in 1884, or in the fact that homosexuality was more actively prosecuted (adoption of the Labouchère Amendment in 1885). Moreover, Darwin's works linked the human to the animal, and the repression of bestiality was symptomatic of the fear of devolution (Hurley 196). On this account, "individual moral degeneration" would lead to "alienation and cultural corruption" (Botting 137), thus inducing the human body to lose control of its identity. Science and psychology helped to identify and classify deviant behaviors, and in this way reunited with a reaffirmation of religious values and morals. In this context, *fin de siècle* writers produced impactful and cathartic novels where central figures such as the (evil) double or *doppelgänger,* and the vampire, embodied the dichotomies in human nature (Botting 137).

With this historical background, three major texts participated in the reassertion of the Gothic power at the end of the nineteenth century: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1898). *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* focused on the instability of the protagonist's identity, oscillating between a respected scientist by day and controlled by his beast-like double by night, which was reminiscent of Shelley's exploration of the role of science and the theme of Gothic decay (Botting 139). The decaying, being that of the body

and society, is at the center of *Dorian Gray*, where the double portrait of the main character symbolizes the loss of control evoked by Hurley. The more powerful reiteration of Gothic themes can undoubtedly be seen in *Dracula*, which reconnects with the Romance of the previous century. The vampire replaces the aristocratic hero-villain as the main figure of the narrative, the setting calls on the past with its Eastern Europe sublime focusing on landscapes and old castle, and supernatural occurrences are manifold (shapeshifting, flight, and immortality). Nonetheless, *Dracula* represents best the *fin de siècle* anxiety in the sexual symbolism of the blood-sucking vampire. It intertwines excessive desire with horror, and the fear of the liberated New Woman is conquered at the end of the book by the restoration of masculine, bourgeois, and familial values (Botting 149). With *Dracula*, the vampire becomes a concept of importance in the following century, as a representation of taboos and the unconscious, and the blurring of delimitations (Punter 21). In creating monsters, and usually in destroying them at the end of the narrative, Gothic at the turn of the twentieth century played a decisive role in the apprehension of historical and sociological anxieties. These novels were directly addressed to the reader to generate a profound cathartic experience (Hurley 198), in that the exacerbated representation of the "bad" *other* allowed a better familiarization with the *self*. The value given to images of the self and other is even more relevant at the time, considering the popularisation and diffusion of cinema (developed further in the next section) after the Lumière brothers' breakthrough in 1895, and the repercussions of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical works. All these cultural and social shifts converged towards the modernist era, where Gothic transformed and adapted to the radical changes of the Western world.

Twentieth-Century Gothic

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Gothic writers still carried *fin de siècle* concerns. Yet, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 cast a terrible shadow upon Western nations and its cultural impact from Europe to America was determining. The use of chemical weapons, the images of the "Gueules Cassées" ("broken faces" of French veterans who were facially disfigured after the conflict), and the estimated 40 million deaths left a deep trauma in modern societies. The conflict generated newer and greater anxieties and, echoing the violent nature of the French Revolution, revealed once more the Gothic nature of history itself (Riquelme 25). The painful narrative of war fed through to culture and literature, and the Gothic disseminated widely as an experience of its memory, for the need to cathartically

respond to the "historical cataclysm" was critical (26). New Gothic figures emerged as a direct answer, such as the living-dead, or dead-living soldiers in Wilfred Owen's 1919 war poem "Strange Meeting", which participated in shaping the *zombie* topos. Not only did the Gothic translate the horrors of modernity, but it also explored the mental suffering of individuals. With Sigmund Freud's psychological insight on literature in his 1919 essay "The Uncanny", new keys to the understanding of the Gothic developed. The uncanny, as defined in *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, is "a kind of disturbing strangeness evoked in some kinds of horror story and related fiction". Freud defines it as a feeling which belongs to "all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror" (1), which recalls Burke's sublime. It coincides with the idea of a double, of a projected self in a situation where the uncanny occurs when one is confronted with the awareness of death and the sense of helplessness or of inescapable fate. Along these lines, the Gothic produces the uncanny in that it paints anxieties upon repressed emotions. Fictive representations of what cannot be found in real life, like supernatural occurrences or doppelgänger figures, go beyond the limits of imagination and therefore deliver an even more powerful uncanny feeling (18). In fact, the uncanny in Gothic fiction serves the cathartic relief of these repressed emotions, for the writer gives them to the reader to analyze at a safe distance. Considering Freud's works, Modernist Gothic focuses deeper on the intrinsic experience of the protagonists, or "the psychic life that for Freud defines the human condition" (Bruhm 261). For example, Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, published in 1916, presents a textbook example of an individual's (un)consciousness, where the literal transformation of the body accentuates the disturbed psychology of the character and renders an uncanny version of the alienated self. This Freudian theme, although already introduced in *fin de siècle* Gothic, became symptomatic of twentieth-century Modernism, and positioned at the center of various artistic mediums.

In literature, the "continuing coincidence" between Gothic and Modernism (Riquelme 23), and between Modern authors influencing each other, led to the development of psychological horror narratives supported by the use of literary devices such as the stream of consciousness. In the UK, it has been fully explored in James Joyce's writings, especially in his best-known *Ulysses* (1922). Similarly, Virginia Woolf heavily relied on this technique in her—Gothic at times—works about different themes, such as WWI and its effects in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) or witchcraft in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). In the U.S., influenced by the works of Ambrose Bierce and his memories of the American Civil War, stream of

consciousness narratives gained importance with the rise of Southern Gothic and William Faulkner's writings such as in *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932) or *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). While the above-mentioned authors knew considerable success during their lifetime, it is not the case for their contemporary, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, whose later recognition and influence on the Gothic movement are of key significance. Disregarded by critics of his time and bound to publish in close amateur press circles or pulp fiction magazines, his cultural legacy still lives on today. In his development of the cosmic horror genre, Lovecraft explored in his short stories the depths of human fears and anxieties—or mostly his own—which dealt with dark cults, forbidden knowledge, the unfathomable mystery of the cosmos, and the impossible creatures reigning over it. In *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopaedia of Our Worst Nightmares*, S.T. Joshi links cosmic horror back to the sublime, supernatural horror in the Gothic classics, Romanticism, Poe's works, and even posits its presence in Shelley and Blackwood (87). With *The Call of Cthulhu* (1926), Lovecraft initiated the creation of an extended mythology called "The Cthulhu Mythos" by his successors (102). It features a pantheon of gods (like Nyarlathotep or Yog-Sothoth), lore and literature (notably the *Necronomicon*, written by the "Mad Arab" Abdul Alhazred), and geography and nomenclature (such as Arkham city, home of Miskatonic university). These elements will be continued in the second half of the twentieth century by other writers but also in cinema, music, visual arts, and popular culture.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of World War II (1939-1945) changed the face of the world another time. The horrors produced on the battlefield or in extermination camps were yet again terribly disturbing, and the need for cathartic fiction was once more reflected in artistic productions. The sense of repetitive history after WWI left a deep trauma in every people's mind, and the event caused a cultural break in the Modernist movement (Riquelme 22). Although *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* addresses the ambiguity of the term in its definition (201), "Postmodern" writing was less Gothic in essence since other genres gained popularity, such as fantasy, weird-, crime- or science-fiction. The roots of science-fiction (SF), if present to some extent in Poe or Lovecraft, are found in the nineteenth century, from Shelley's *Frankenstein* to H.G. Wells' *The War of The Worlds* (1897). But the genre expanded and became more legitimate in the 1950s and the 1960s with writers such as Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, or Arthur C. Clarke. Gothic and SF are related by the implication of science in the "loss of human identity and the alienation of the self" (Botting 157). The two differ in that the expression of cultural anxieties, hitherto located in the past or

the present for the Gothic, are transposed to the future in SF. Nonetheless, the "strangely mutated life-forms and alien invaders from other and future worlds" (156) still connect to the horrors and terrors of Gothic creatures in their metaphorical and cathartic symbolism: machines, cyborgs, and extra-terrestrial beings take over the representative roles of monsters, vampires, and ghosts.

In a few words, Postmodernist writings echoed the major changes that occurred at the time: while technology and capitalism became systematic and defined Western societies, the proliferation of different cultural mediums and propagation of direct media changed the diffusion of information. Narrative forms—including the Gothic—became more and more hybrid, mixed, and ambivalent (Botting 169). In addition, the heritage of Freud's psychoanalytical works took a greater place in individuals, communities, and cultures, so that interpretations and understandings of one's psyche, or "internal life", settled at the heart of Gothic narratives (Bruhm 262). The expression of the Gothic evolved in that way during the second half of the twentieth century and flourished mainly in the U.S. before reaching Europe, as the horror genre gained extensive popularity. Expanding as a cross-mediatic trend, most of the postmodern Gothic works were adapted into films a few years only after their print release, as was the case with bestsellers authors like Stephen King, Anne Rice, and Thomas Harris. King's *The Shining* (1977) is a good example of postmodernist Gothic, in both its placement of Freudian's psychological concepts such as the Oedipus complex and in the actualization of older Gothic tropes in an American context: the remote Overlook hotel functions as a haunted house, with its terrible past troubling the present; the alcoholic and violent Jack Torrance represents the tyrannical and oppressive father; Danny's visions of ghosts and mindreading ability display the use of the supernatural. Besides, the writing of *The Shining* was, for King, a cathartic process as he was struggling with alcoholism at that time. Throughout Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* series (1976-2018), the vampire figure returns to the front stage in a contemporary world. Starting with *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), Louis de la Pointe du Lac retells his 200-years-long life to a present-day reporter, depicting his relationships and voyages over time. Rice's novels revived the codes of Gothic Romance from her American point of view through the presence of Romantic—and romanticized—figures of the "Old World". Harris' *Red Dragon* (1981) and its continuations were apparently less Gothic than *The Shining* or *Interview* since they derived more from detective fiction and thrillers, but the figure of the serial killer is a contemporary version of the Gothic hero-villain monster. Indeed, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, introduced in this novel but coming back in *The Silence*

of the Lambs (1988), *Hannibal* (1999), and *Hannibal Rising* (2006), became a "cultural icon" like the ghost, the monstrous creature, or the vampire (Wagner 473). Lecter is an educated psychiatrist from an aristocratic Lithuanian family, who became a serial killer and cannibal after witnessing his sister being murdered and eaten by WWII deserters. The construction of Lecter's persona is essentially Gothic in its foreign and mysterious origins, calling on Count Dracula's background, but also contemporary as the serial-killer figure—and term—were established as such by the FBI's psychological research in the 1970s (475).

The writings of the three authors mentioned above have helped to place horror fiction in the second part of the twentieth century as a full-blown and extremely popular genre, first through contemporary transformations of the Gothic (Punter 145) and second in answering the audience's deep craving for such Gothic fictions (Bruhm 268). On the one hand, Gothic narratives of terror and horror became central to the internalization and expression of Freudian traumas, owing to the cathartic power of traditional Gothic fiction. On the other hand, they evolved in this context as a reflection of all kinds of losses: in death, war, love, but also in collective and personal histories, the loss of values, order, and identity. The wording of traumatic experiences thus puts memory as the main material of the Gothic (Punter 179). Indeed, the Gothic provides representative symbols for our anxieties and operates between the recollection and the reconstruction of these fears, so that readers can acknowledge, discuss, and eventually defeat them. It is thanks to catharsis that Gothic narratives are so popular and constantly continued, for the artists' and audiences' need to be confronted with and to confront past traumas corresponds to a Freudian repetitive-compulsive behavior (Bruhm 272). But the Gothic places us at a safe distance from these traumas, and via fictive and fanciful characters, the reader finds comfort in horror, by consuming the trauma of an "other" (273).

Although Gothic narratives tend to repeat themselves and the trend is often considered to have ended in the last decade of the twentieth century with Coppola's film adaptation of *Dracula* (Botting 177), the Gothic nonetheless survives in the twenty-first century. The adaptations of the classics, on screen or elsewhere, testify of the public's demand for repetition in the representation of Gothic tropes, so that its continuation is assured. Now completely part of pop culture productions, many Gothic narratives are indeed retold in lighter and teenager-friendly forms, like, for example, with the successful vampire-romance novels of the *Twilight* saga (2005-2008) by Stephanie Meyer, adapted in five films from 2008 to 2012. In parallel, "neo-Gothic" authors (Howells 110) produced works of fiction set in modern times, in which the Gothic aesthetic was less evident, but its essence present in the

transgression of oppression and expression of repressed history. Moreover, the neo-Gothic, or "urban horror" (Cooper 6) thrived in other literary forms such as comic books or graphic novels, in which authors relied on Gothic narrative devices to stylize excess and awe (Round 347).

Yet, Gothic is not only about a retelling, because the movement's expansion gives way to new authors to express new ideas, thus reviving endlessly its own codes and forms. The power of the Gothic, with its specific imagery, and bestiary, also lies in its cultural impact in the last 250 years since Walpole's *Otranto*. What keeps fuelling the Gothic are the different experiences expressed through it, operating for the writer and the audience, as the purgation of their negative emotions. If the literary Gothic permitted the establishment of an artistic genre focused on the exploration, depiction, and cathartic relief of fears, it owes its longevity to other artists' multiple appropriations and adaptations in diverse mediums. Above all, this reveals Jacques Derrida's first law of genre, which is to deviate and make new. In other words, there is no genre—or law—without the possibility to transgress already established genres, and the Gothic, in transgressing the canons of eighteenth-century literature, *became* a genre, and a transgressive genre. In defying the artistic classification of genres, the Gothic became *the* aesthetic of such transgression(s), and with it, numerous images attached to it came to signify specific concepts, which then served the cathartic relief of negative emotions. Yet this far outreach of the Gothic and its durability would not have been possible without the dissemination of its imagery in other mediums, whether they emerged in other literary forms, theatre, cinema, television, or videogames. In fact, the transgression of mediums propelled the Gothic in all artistic spheres, and with it, its cathartic power.

II. Gothic Images: "Show, Don't Tell"

As the common adage says, "a picture is worth a thousand words". When it comes to Gothic images, examples are manifold in the diverse fields of architecture, theatre and performing arts, painting and pictorial arts, photography, cinema and audio-visual fictions, and videogames. *The Cambridge Dictionary* defines an image as "a picture in your mind or an idea of how someone or something is". More than bearing the same etymological root, the image is closely linked with imagination, "the ability to form pictures in the mind" (*Cambridge Dictionary*). Thus, the power of the image is to fix a concept to a certain representation, in which words gain strength as they are put into motion. As mentioned in the introduction, the first attributes granted to "Gothic" reflected a barbarous and uncivilized image, which anchored in the collective imaginary as a negative mental picture. With time and through the development of an artistic aesthetic, the image of the Gothic evolved alongside the words conveyed in literature, both influencing the other. Using again the chronology proposed by Hogle (xvii), the starting point of the Gothic movement is situated in 1750 with the construction of Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill, in connection with Gothic Revival architecture. Indeed, Strawberry Hill represents the materialization of an image of the past, a concrete illustration of how imagined words could bring to life an idea of the Gothic.

When tracing back the evolution of the Gothic image, it is necessary to understand its primary connection with theatrical art. In fact, theatre gives movement to a set of words that become living images. The study of theatre dates to Antiquity, and the key concepts introduced by Marvin Carlson in *Theories of the Theatre* (1993) point out Aristotle's *Poetics*. For Aristotle, the first purpose of theatre, in the most praised form of tragedy, is to achieve *katharsis*. But to carry out the purgation of the passions, Aristotle invokes another central notion in his definition of tragedy, which is:

> an imitation of a noble and complete action, having the proper magnitude; it employs language that has been artistically enhanced by each of the kinds of linguistic adornments, applied separately in the various parts of the play; it is presented in dramatic, not narrative form, and achieves, through the representation of pitiable and fearful incidents, the catharsis of such pitiable and fearful incidents.
>
> (Aristotle, qtd. in Carlson 17)

Mimesis, or imitation, is for Aristotle, the basis of art. Artists draw on reality ("the realm of pure "Ideas") and seek to copy it in order to exalt it, to reach an ideal representation (Carlson 17). *Katharsis,* or purgation, then operates as a sort of vaccine ("homeopathic medicine") for the audience through the instillation of imitated emotions (18). Yet, these notions imply a paradox in that the audience enjoys the representation of such terrible emotions, whereas the actual experience of these emotions would be too upsetting in the reality. If Aristotle noted this paradox in tragedies, Sarah E. Worth has extended it to fiction in general in her 2000 article "Aristotle, Thought and Mimesis: Our Response to Fiction". She addresses how cathartic images in fiction have a healthy effect (334), given the fact that audiences dealing with represented emotions is the basis to learn how to deal with them in a reality-based context. Spectators do not believe that the actions staged are "real actions", but they are nonetheless not denying fiction because the emotions prompted by these actions *are* real (333). Instead, catharsis operates by the imagination of such emotions, and especially fear, when the audience recognizes that this could happen at some point in real life. The definition of fear given by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, being "a pain or mental disturbance due to a mental picture/impression (*phantasia*) of some destructive or painful event in the future" (20-22, qtd. in Worth 337), does rely on the concepts of image and imagination. The projection of fear by referring to it through mimetic images therefore purges the audience from its experience and, at the same time, leaves them with the satisfaction of overcoming it.

This principle, at the heart of any cathartic artistic experience, is produced through what was later theorized as the "willing suspension of disbelief". Samuel T. Coleridge first coined the term in 1817 while discussing artistic pleasure in *Biographia Literaria*. During the Romantic Era, Gothic literature enjoyed considerable success, and Romantics considered how certain emotions in artistic works affected the audiences' minds. Commenting on the elaboration of *Lyrical Ballads* he wrote with Wordsworth, Coleridge explained how the supernatural could be used to reach poetic pleasure:

> My endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. (6)

To him, the use of supernatural devices in poetry does not need to correspond to a supposed reality, as long as they can affect readers interestingly enough to reach a "dramatic faith" (5). That is to say, readers accept to disbelieve what they are presented as fictional truths because

their beliefs lie in the reality of their emotions (the "poetic faith") vis-à-vis the pleasure they get from reading poetry. If Coleridge mostly addressed the principle of willing suspension of disbelief as a poetic property, he nonetheless extended the possibility of the "communication of pleasure" to different art forms like novels and romances (9). Suspension of disbelief is a key concept in the understanding of Gothic images' power and success, and its scope in the enjoyment of fictive works extends to all artistic mediums. For example, Clery in *Rise of Supernatural Fiction* applied the concept to theatrical productions of the eighteenth century. As changes occurred in the practices of theatre at that time, the production of "enthusiastic Terror" (Dennis 361, qtd. in Clery 33) in plays staging ghosts enjoyed great success thanks to the audiences' suspension of disbelief. First, the ghost produced a pleasurable effect because audiences appreciated dramatic artifices and spectacle. Second, terror still operated because audiences' disbelief was suspended enough to react "as if" it was real (35). This refers to Worth's comments on Aristotle's definition of fear and of the effects of theatre, which, in link with the definitions of *image* and *imagination*, participate in the recognition of theatre as a place for cathartic images. These concepts and definitions will be useful in discussing further below the different applications of Gothic images in other artistic mediums.

Theatre and Performing Arts

With this in mind, let us now dwell on Gothic theatrical images, and how they came into play during the Age of Enlightenment. As mentioned in the first part, Gothic novels emerged in European societies in the context of redefining socio-political aspects, as well as with the development of cultural and artistic movements such as Romanticism. In the first place, the British cultural landscape of the eighteenth-century was deeply marked by the prominent presence of Shakespeare's writings. As Anne Williams states in her 2020 essay "Shakespeare's Gothic Transmigrations*",* this increasing presence is the result of the revival of theatres during the Restoration Era from 1660 to 1764 (141). After the reopening of theatres in 1660, few original plays were produced, and instead, playwrights explored Shakespeare's most prevalent works. His plays flourished in print and representation, as theatrical staging at this time answered the political context in which national identity was revaluated, and a new governmental settlement established (143). Interestingly, Williams notes that "the once dead author miraculously rose again" so much so that his presence literally "haunted" almost every production of the eighteenth-century (142). This idea is also expressed by Michael Chemers in his 2017 essay "Later Classicism in the Drama: How

Shakespeare's Ghosts Came to Haunt the Eighteenth-Century" (in Keilen & Moschovakis 245). But more than using the Gothic trope of the haunting ghost, Williams also notices the Gothic nature of Shakespeare himself. Indeed, the author was essentially Gothic in the uncivilized and barbarous sense, not only because he staged ghosts, witches, and other characters stemming from medieval imaginary and supernatural imageries proper to the Gothic, but because his plays did not follow the classical conventions of theatre such as the unity of time, place, and action (146). Calling on Derrida's law of genre, which is to deviate from rules and offer novelty, Shakespeare in his time was retrospectively a transgressive Gothic artist. It is during the eighteenth century that his reputation thus became one of an artistic genius whose plays knew effective commercial successes, and which many authors praised and read thoroughly.

This is the case of Horace Walpole, who claimed affiliation with the Shakespearean heritage and did not hide his inspiration in the making of "a new species of Romance" (Walpole 106). Indeed, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) openly bear many resemblances to *Hamlet* (1609), a play which greatly impacted Walpole and which he discussed the most in his correspondence (Williams 149). The armored ghost in *Otranto* undeniably recalls the ghost of old Hamlet, but the closet drama *The Mysterious Mother* is written in the style of Shakespeare since Walpole's appropriated "his precursor's tragic genre, poetic technique and literary conventions" (157). As a matter of fact, Walpole's close personal reading of Shakespeare resonated greatly with his own fears and concerns, notably the one of illegitimacy because of his mother's extra-marital affair (153). He identified with the horrors experienced by the characters in Shakespeare's plays, and through an internalization and retrospective work, "turned the mirror inwards" (148) and gave birth to his own stories of tormented families. In other words, Shakespeare's works provided catharsis for Walpole, who in turn and by means of his imagination, released his emotions through images in his creations that delivered catharsis for his readers. For him, family and self were like haunted houses, where past secrets continued to inhabit the present. His use of symbolic images such as medieval castles and supernatural phenomena in a distant time led to the establishment of the first Gothic archetypes. As Williams cleverly puts it: "Walpole's invention of 'Gothic Story' was one aspect of his lifelong project to create an identity for himself" (159). This left such a deep impact on his contemporaries that not only did Walpole lead the way to the Gothic novel with *Otranto*, as expressed in the first part, but he also asserted the substance of Gothic drama through *The Mysterious Mother*.

Gothic plays enjoyed incredible success in the eighteenth century, and although the term "Gothic drama" is not particularly used by critics to define a specific genre, Paula R. Backscheider nonetheless uses it in her 2020 essay "In Their Blood: The Eighteenth-Century Gothic Stage" (200). Focusing on the practical development of Gothic plays in context, Backscheider sets the starting point of her study in 1756 when John Home's *Douglas* was first performed. The plot revolves around Norval, the child of an illicit wedding abandoned by his mother, who comes back years later to claim his birthright and thus threatens the legitimacy of the lord's heir. The play explores the characters' tortured consciousnesses in an intertwining of deep-buried family secrets and ends with the terrible deaths of most of the characters, either by suicide or murder. Set during the deep of winter in a castle, the play already captured elements that were the basis for Gothic drama, such as "the medieval gloom of castles", "a cliff above a stormy sea", "threatening nights", and plot devices just mentioned (Backscheider 202). While the Church cried out against the play, it was nonetheless appraised by the public as it exploited the spectacular rendering of evil (203). In addition, the opening lines of *Douglas* encompass the tendency which will define Gothic drama, where the physical setting merges with emotional wor(l)ds on stage: "Ye woods and wilds, whose melancholy gloom / Accords with my soul's sadness" (Home 7 qtd. in Backscheider 201). Gothic drama, in using the theatrical resources already found in existing genres such as tragedy, melodrama, or farce, went on establishing its own conventions in the exploration of the depths of human evil.

During the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the Gothic proliferated on stage, and Backscheider evokes three major plays of that time which asserted its conventions, namely Robert Jephson's *The Count of Narbonne* (1781), John O'Keeffe's *The Castle of Andalusia* (1782), and Richard Cumberland's *The Carmelite* (1784). Comparatively, Gothic plays and novels responded to one another and evolved together as a shaping aesthetic, where the authors' imaginations resonated with playwrights' scenic images. In fact, *The Count of Narbonne* was an adaptation of *Otranto* which drew on *The Mysterious Mother*, and which Walpole himself helped producing. Similarly, Radcliffe used Home's play as a source for her 1789 novel *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, and in 1797, *The Italian* was adapted to the stage by James Boaden under the name *The Italian Monk.* Not only does this testify to the Gothic's importance in the cultural landscape of that time, but it also sheds light on how it became a tradition. Theatre participated in the construction of the "Gothic experience" (Backscheider 213) through the specific use of spectacular tools (i.e. what makes a spectacle).

Scenic devices and stage machinery developed to represent the images of the Gothic, with the use of traps to make ghosts appear or disappear; painted representations and sweeping landscapes of graveyards and forests; specific lighting and pyrotechnics to stage night, flashes of lightning and shadows; music and sounds to recreate waterfalls, avalanches, and bells tolling (212-213). All these parameters engaged in the elaboration of the Gothic drama's scenery, or as Backscheider notes: "in creating the Gothic atmosphere and enhancing the characters' emotional states" (213), thus bringing the audience closer into the play.

Through the connection and immersion in "the evil that the audiences feared was in every human heart" (216), the Gothic drama thus drew nearer to the Aristotelian experience of cathartic theatre (221). Gothic playwrights employed *mimesis* no longer to copy the reality but to signify and magnify the sublime and ideal representations of fear and pity achieved through *katharsis*. The cathartic words conveyed in literature were brought to life on stage and settled the Gothic drama as a legitimate and powerful form of art, because "from [the] static image [...] came the activation of the potential for moving dramatisation" (216). Here, "moving" refers both to mobility in space, and signifies the affecting or exciting degree of Gothic drama, thus uniting the physical and emotional realms as evoked above. The deep cathartic captivation of these plays not only assured the prosperity of Gothic art in making it a commercial success for mass entertainment, but it also announced its establishment as a tradition and ensured its continuation. Throughout the nineteenth century, Gothic images kept flourishing on stage whether through the production of original creations like Maturin's *Bertram* in 1816, or through many adaptations of Gothic novels, the most noteworthy example being Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* staged by different playwrights in 1823, 1826, and 1887. New figures also emerged, such as the vampire, which was first staged in 1820 by James Robinson Planché in *The Vampire*. Its pictorial representations multiplied as it became a traditional Gothic figure, like the image on the cover of Rymer and Prest's *Varney the Vampire* in 1845, up until the publication of Bram Stoker's well-known *Dracula* in 1897.

Pictorial Arts and Early Photography

In parallel with the stage and the novel, the Gothic image also took shape in pictorial arts at the end of the eighteenth century, as noted by Martin Myrone in his 2020 essay "Gothic Art and Gothic Culture in the Romantic Era", dealing with paintings, drawings, and engravings. At this time came a shift in the place of pictorial arts and the status of artists, who claimed

cultural prestige and legitimacy for their works. If at first the majority of images produced, especially in drawings and engravings, mostly served a commissioned illustrating purpose, the development of the Gothic aesthetic through this medium called on the autonomisation of Art (417). Artists produced more and more images with supernatural and sublime contents "that were overtly Gothic in character", which they relied on to make a name and gain artistic independence (415). In addition, Gothic visual arts drew public and critical attention to "visual extravagance", "literary populism", and "cultural canonicity". As seen in William Blake's precursory works, the Gothic aesthetics' sources are found in the imageries of Greek tragedies, Shakespeare's plays, or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but they took another dimension with the works of Henry Fuseli. In 1782, Fuseli exhibited at the Royal Academy of London a 101.6 cm × 127 cm oil on canvas entitled *The Nightmare*. It showed a woman lying on her back in a dislocated position, seemingly in a deep sleep, with a demon-like figure of an incubus sitting on her chest and a frenzied-looking mare in the obscure background. The picture caused virulent reactions from the audience and critics, and even Walpole qualified it as "shocking" (418). The lack of an apparent source from the literature, or any reference to a known scene, did not justify the supernatural extent of *The Nightmare* and let it open for interpretation. Fuseli fuelled the mystery around his composition as he concealed his inspirations, and it seemed that the canvas was the sole projection of the artist's imagination. In doing so, Fuseli injected into visual arts the possibility of creating an image just for the image's sake, thus dispelling conventions and the prescribed "purpose" of art (424), decades before *l'art pour l'art* philosophy ("art for art's sake"). Artists could set *mimesis* aside and focus individually on *katharsis* as a drive for their own fantasies and emotions. It made way for the sublime, the dream, and the supernatural image to function *as* art, and it testified a modern point of view in which artistic autonomy and commercial viability became possible. It happened in the same vein as any Gothic productions of that time in terms of "sensationalism, consumerism and the disruption of the hierarchies of genre, taste and value" (422). Despite the critics and the caricatures, *The Nightmare* greatly impacted the market and the collective imagery (and imaginary), and it was copied, engraved, referred to, and reproduced by Fuseli himself and other artists up to this day.

As explored in the first part, the Gothic continued to evolve in style and substance, through its dissemination in Europe or the USA and the extension of its cathartic meanings to the changing social, political, and cultural contexts. In addition, the nineteenth century saw the emergence of new pictorial mediums that would revolutionize arts and culture:

photography and cinema. Interestingly, their history connects with the production of Gothic images. In her discussion of the origins of cinema, Professor Élodie Tamayo pointed out the importance of the first "optical spectacles" throughout the eighteenth century, which featured the live animation of ghosts, spectrums, or devils. First, the magic lantern (*lanternes de la peur* in French, "lanterns of fear"), invented by Christiaan Huygens in 1656, set elements from medieval imagery in motion, such as the *danse macabre*, by projecting light through superposed and painted glass plates. Second, with Robertson's "fantascope" device in 1798, consisting of one or several magic lanterns that projected light on smoke, the showing of animated images became a real spectacle in the vein of Gothic drama as evoked above. These spectacles, called *phantasmagories*, or "l'art de faire apparaître les fantômes en public" ("the art to make ghosts appear in public", Tamayo, translation mine) as the etymology of the word signifies, were intended to stage the supernatural and to provoke fear and horror in the spectators. Borrowing from the Gothic and Romantic literary traditions, phantasmagories aimed at setting up an artistic medium (in the literal sense of an oracle, a clairvoyant) between the audience and the images projected, thus linking closer the individuals to their own experience of fear—and therefore, its catharsis. Indeed, as with the effects of willing suspension of disbelief in Gothic texts discussed earlier, these spectacles enhanced the exposure to terror to the point where "fictional ghosts [were] rendered real in the minds of the audience" (Clery 33). The success of these events was considerable at this time in France, England, and Germany, and it announced the advent of ever more realistic images displayed in photographs and movies.

Later in the eighteenth century, a patent was filed in Paris for the daguerreotype in 1839, one of the first photographic devices to allow the almost perfect representation of reality. As indicated by Professor Camporesi in his lecture on the creation of photography, this new medium emerged in a changing scientific paradigm, and a strong value of truth was attributed to the photograph-image. Its first uses were primarily to document the real, and at the time of the Gothic Revival in architecture, photography played an important part in studying and promoting the movement. In the review of the 2010 exhibition *Gargoyles and Shadows: Gothic Architecture and 19th-Century Photography*, Peter Davey notes that only the photographs taken could "magnificently capture the atmosphere of Gothic buildings", as opposed to painted or drawn depictions. Emphasizing the fact that "photography and ruins might have been invented for each other", this type of representation accentuated the important presence of Gothic images in the nineteenth century. Such pictures would allow

people unable to see such architecture in person to nonetheless grasp the sublime grandeur of Gothic buildings. Another primary use of photography at its beginnings was portraiture and the fact that the Gothic and its images circulated increasingly at this time might explain the trend of post-mortem photography in Victorian England.

In her 2006 article "Taken From Life: Post-Mortem Portraiture in Britain 1860-1910", Audrey Linkman notes that such a practice revealed a contemporary change in the people's attitude towards death (311). While painters aimed at representing an idealized portrait of a person that emphasized their virtues and concealed their faults, idealization was less possible in technical terms with photography. Rather than crudely showing a dead person, photographers attempted to cheat death by trying to reproduce the appearance of sleep. Post-mortem photography was a means for families to keep a living memory of their deceased relative while coping with the mourning process (343). Indeed, "by portraying the dead as beautiful and presenting death as serene and untroubled sleep, post-mortem portraits were intended to ease the pain of loss and bring solace and comfort to the bereaved" (347). Given the effects of mimetic images discussed above, post-mortem photography undoubtedly provided a cathartic effect for the mourners. Although the practice did not necessarily bear an artistic intention, and viewers of such photographs did not suspend disbelief of their loss, the direct confrontation with a symbolic representation of death triggered emotions in a way that provided closure. The fact that Linkman indicates that the purpose of this practice was "to act as a palliative" (335) refers to the very first therapeutic sense of catharsis evoked by Carlson, that is to say, a medicinal process through which terrible emotions are purged. Just as with the evolution of Gothic culture in its representations of death and its connection with the living, photography intensified the blurring between the two realms until then confined in a material/immaterial dichotomy. While post-mortem photography was not that much of a common phenomenon, another cultural activity of the nineteenth century mixed religious beliefs with the use of science and photography to produce material images of the immaterial world.

The rise of spiritualism and its popularity throughout this century became characteristic of Victorian England, and it was equally important in the rest of Europe and the USA. Spiritualism fascinated many people; it was practiced during "seances" that gathered nobles, scholars, and doctors, and organizations were established such as the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB) in 1872. Within the specificities of mediumship emerged spirit photography, a practice which Arthur Conan Doyle, a member of the SAGB,

qualified as “a very true branch of psychic science” in his 1926 *History of Spiritualism* (148). Spirit photography consisted of accidental and inexplicable apparitions of dead persons in photographs, which were referred to as “extras” or “supernormal pictures” (143). Despite the many frauds and other charlatans which used spirit photography to make money at the expense of gullible onlookers, the practice deeply marked the collective unconscious. Photographing the invisible greatly impacted the public and popular culture during the nineteenth century, notably in Gothic productions discussed in the first part (i.e. the rise of SF). Whether these pictures of the immaterial realm were real or not, the practice participated in greater scientific knowledge, like with the first photographs of planets or microbes. In this view, greater concerns emerged about modernization and industrialization, as Jennifer Tucker notes in her 2006 book exploring the relationship between science and photography, *Nature Exposed: Photography as an Eyewitness in Victorian Science*. The increased circulation of images revealed, “a broader cultural anxiety about the materialism of the living world and the nature of the relation between the living and nonliving world” (161). In this context of scientific ambivalence, the Gothic movement permitted the internalization of such concerns. Indeed, the fears of individuals regarding the changing society and their identities within it could be expelled (Botting 88), whether through words or images, but always in a cathartic way. To put it differently, producing Gothic material in the nineteenth century and especially in Victorian England was a way for artists to expose, and for audiences to interpret, the transformations of their environment. After all, “in the popular imagination the Victorian is in many ways *the* Gothic period, with its elaborate cult of death and mourning, its fascination with ghosts, spiritualism and the occult” (Warwick 29). But *fin-de-siècle* innovation was moving full speed ahead, and if photography had fewer means to employ suspension of disbelief to provide cathartic fiction, it acted as a transition until yet another new medium became a revolutionary phenomenon in the production of images and continuations of the Gothic.

Gothic Horror in Audio-Visual Works of Fiction

At the dawn of the twentieth century, scientific research and technological advances in photographic apparatuses led to the creation of devices capable of capturing images in motion. While Edison filed a patent in the U.S. in 1891 for his kinetograph and kinetoscope, the Lumière brothers first introduced paid film shows to the public in 1895 (Tamayo). Cinema

was born, and if the first films intended to demonstrate a reproduction of real-life events by sole means of mimesis (cf. *vues Lumière*, short depictive films), it did not take long for filmmakers to appropriate the medium and use it for fiction. In "Cinema of the Gothic Extreme", Elisabeth Bronfen designates Georges Méliès as a pioneer in this field (107), who brought storytelling into films and participated greatly in the technical development of special effects. Owing to the traditions of *phantasmagories*, supernatural theatre, and spirit photography (Tamayo; Bronfen 107), Méliès' fantastic films made way for the flourishing of narrative genres on screen. Arising from the modernist transformations of the Gothic, as evoked in the first part, SF, fantasy, and horror in film originated in Méliès' movies such as *Le Voyage Dans la Lune* (1902) or *Le Manoir du Diable* (1896, *The Haunted Castle* or *The Devil's Castle* in English). If the latter did not especially intend to provoke fear in the audience, its aesthetic crystallized many Gothic devices and archetypes as images on screen. As Stephen Prince noted in *The Horror Film* in 1993, *Le Manoir du Diable* as the first horror film sets the genre as the basis of cinema and shows its importance at the outset of the medium's history (1). Thereupon, cinema became "the natural successor" of the Gothic literary tradition and the one medium to emphasize it over "the affective power of the cinematic image" (Bronfen 107). Essentially, in a much more profound manner than photography or phantasmagories, cinema *is* Gothic. The projection of images on a white screen in a dark room takes on an air of ghostly apparitions from the past, in that the characters and their world are not in the "here and now" of the screening room. The audience chooses to believe in the projection, in "a shared experience of ghost-seeing" (Bronfen 107), and whether the film draws on Gothic material or not, both the medium and the material enact a "gesture of haunting" (108). The screen becomes a mirror where the reminiscence of other realities takes place and where doubles and monsters exist.

Yet, while there is no Gothic cinematographic genre per se, it is through the many film adaptations of classic Gothic novels, but also with original horror stories and new depictions of the supernatural, that Gothic fiction persists to this day (Botting 102). With film, the functions of the image and imagination, willing suspension of disbelief, and representation and identification transcend *mimesis* and provide even greater *katharsis* for the audience. Indeed, the force of the cinematic image is to allow the complete immersion into fictive worlds hitherto contained within our reality, in the total blurring of this reality's boundaries. Christophe Gauld in "Fiction et Identification: de la Narratologie à la Sémiotique Contemporaine" demonstrates how all the mechanisms involved in movie production

participate in implicating the audience to a degree which "nous mettent dans cet état « d'acceptation » du film et de son univers" ("puts us [the audience] into a state of 'accepting' the movie and its universe", 3, translation mine). The characteristics of filmic space, image, time, editing, music, lighting, and so on, all combine to increase the intensity of the narrative scene, so that "nous en oublirions nous trouver dans un monde fictif" ("we forget that we are in a fictive world", 5, translation mine) because our disbelief is fully suspended. It thus triggers and exacerbates empathic identification with the characters and their emotions, especially the "passion douloureuse" ("painful passion") which is "embellie et adoucie" ("embellished and soften"), so much so that "[elle] nous fourn[i] un réel plaisir, ou au moins un soulagement agréable" ("it gives us a real pleasure, or at least a pleasurable relief", 7, translation mine). Cinematographic productions thus provide cathartic relief and deliver pleasure, operating adequately in the manner depicted by Aristotle (8).

When it comes to the use of Gothic themes and images, cinema ultimately actualizes the concepts of the sublime and uncanny, discussed in the first part. Indeed, while Burke focused on the cathartic effects of the sublime in tragedy, in which "the nearer it [tragedy] approaches the reality, and the further it removes us from all idea of fiction, the more perfect is its power" (47), the same can be said of cinema. The movie does not "approach" reality but *becomes* reality by projecting directly into the spectators' minds the graphic illustrations of the sublime. Similarly, while Freud pointed at literature as the "fertile province" for the uncanny (18), the same applies to movies. Because this feeling appears when "reality-testing" occurs, when something odd and unfamiliar shakes our sense of the ordinary, the strong overstepping of the real and fictive boundaries brought in by movies reveals the very uncanniness of the medium itself (Bronfen 108). Therefore, cinema is indeed the most efficient medium in which the Gothic thrives, because film permits modern concerns to be worded (or rather, "imaged") in an absolute, ever more cathartic manner:

> Gothic film should thus not be thought of as a medium of representation, but as a medium through which things are allowed to pass, from the past into the present, from death into life, from the beyond to here and back again. This understanding of film as a medium of passage suggests that it is a social technology for working through shared anxieties about the realm of the unrepresentable; indeed, film has proven to be the most effective social technology in the twentieth century for fielding the Gothic. (Kavka 228)

The enormous success of movies that "fielded" the Gothic reveals why horror or science-fiction films operate as a "social technology". To expel common traumas left by the violent setbacks of the twentieth century, the cinematic Gothic serves as a compass to embody the limits of western societies and to guide their people through specific dreads (Bruhm 260). Both the storytellers and their audiences crave such depictions of the horrid since the need to purge our dreams and nightmares is common to all of us.

The construction of the Gothic in film is connected to the diverse manners in which horror took place in the world and how artists expressed it. From the beginning of the twentieth century, a few movies borrowed Gothic tropes and archetypes to create original characters and plots. Louis Feuillade's serial films *Les Vampires*, directed between 1915 and 1916, and featuring Musidora as Irma Vep (an anagram of "vampire"), helped to popularise Gothic figures and *femmes fatales* in the burgeoning industry (Tamayo). Yet, the Gothic truly became cinematic at the end of WWI with the rise of German expressionism. Throughout his lecture on Gothic cinema(s), Professor Michel Etcheverry pointed out the importance of the movement in the establishment of a specific cinematography. Stemming from the Expressionist school of painting and the English tradition of Gothic literature (in novels and plays), German silent movies of the 1920s were characterized by an aesthetic of distortion, as illustrated in Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. The movie focuses on a young man retelling the story of his encounter with the evil Dr. Caligari, whose somnambulist companion Cesare wakes up to kill people. While the plot reminds us of Frankenstein's scientist/creature relation, the visualization focused on materializing a nightmarish reality and on illustrating figuratively psychotic delusions (Etcheverry). The sets were painted like expressionist canvas, where perspectives disrupted the vanishing point of the image. There were no straight lines but only oblique and twisted shapes. The actors' make-up and the lighting were used to accentuate shadows and reinforce the black-and-white rendering in film. Moreover, Heidi Kaye mentions in "Gothic in Film" that the somnambulist Cesare embodies the common soldier who "sleepwalks" into war and mechanically executes orders to kill people while being an emblem of the "walking dead" himself among all the other soldiers (241). The movie intended to stylize and absolve the topics of fear, death, and madness it addressed, in the way in which WW1 physically impacted reality and deformed landscapes or mutilated people (Etcheverry). In the light of the medium's power to produce cathartic images, "the collective shock of World War I was successfully refigured in Gothic film narratives" (Bronfen 111). In like manner, Murnau's uncredited adaptation of *Dracula* in *Nosferatu* (1922) used

expressionist images to create diseased landscapes and grotesque characters that reflected the foreign threat on German soil and the rise of anti-Semitism at that time (Kaye 242). With the extreme materialization of Germany's anxieties during the Weimar Republic in expressionist films, resorting to the Gothic aesthetic became synonymous with the establishment of horror cinema.

Another key point in the development of the Gothic on screen and in horror movies is the large number of adaptations based on Gothic classics. Major works that helped to popularise the horror genre were based on important Gothic novels of the nineteenth century, especially Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula.* Most movies adapting or retelling these texts were based on their stage adaptations, in that cinema of the early twentieth century and theatre had the sense of spectacle in common (Kaye 239). Because the monstrous images of nineteenth-century creatures had already greatly impacted audiences, the presence of such figures on screen became more effective symbolic representations of contemporary concerns. In this manner, the manifold *Frankenstein* adaptations went on to represent Depression-era concerns in James Whale's 1931 version (Kaye 243), moral corruption in the several continuations of the Hammer Film Productions between 1957 and 1974, or the rise of feminism in Kenneth Branagh's 1994 movie (246). In the same way, the figure of the vampire has been employed to embody the evolving understanding of sexuality and the fear of its liberation throughout the twentieth century. Because of the strong restrictions and censorship codes in American film productions of this time (the Code Hays from 1934 to 1968, Tamayo), Browning's 1931 movie avoided addressing the highly sexual content of the original text. If the Hammer's versions addressed the topic and offered sexualized images, they were nonetheless given through a moralistic approach because sexual expression was essentially evil and punished at the end (Kaye 245). Eventually, in Coppola's 1992 adaptation, the rise of feminism at this time is reflected and the villain is no longer sexuality but its repression since the film emphasizes romance and better representations of women (248). Given these points, these film adaptations reveal the durability and adaptability of the classic Gothic tales, in which monsters, creators, or victims are "sufficiently malleable in their indefiniteness to allow them to convey ongoing human concerns and tensions" (250). Cathartic images are always needed to provide storytellers with artistic material (in texts or films) and audiences with interpretative understandings of their world.

With the gothicization of cinema in terms of aesthetics and content, the horror movie settled as a prevalent and popular genre in the second half of the twentieth century. Once

again, major historical events in this context awoke the need to produce cathartic fiction. The impact of World War II on Western societies and the menace of a potential total atomic destruction during the Cold War led to national and international tensions and great anxiety among the populations. In addition, the spread and reception of Freud's psychoanalytical theories were also linked to the development of the horror film (Punter 97). It manifested at first in *film noir* in the U.S., as Professor Thomas Pillard explains in his lecture on Hollywood cinema of the 40s and 50s. With the presence of German filmmakers who fled Nazi Germany and the influence of the Southern Gothic literature, movies produced in Hollywood encapsulated socio-political pessimism and the conviction of communism in the context of the Cold War. As a result, *films noirs* transcribed this general somber mood in dramatic plots revolving around crimes, psychopathologies, men going through an identity crisis, and *femmes fatales*. A bleak and crepuscular aesthetic was characteristically employed (Pillard), with an expressionist touch in the manipulation of space and shadows, like in the murder scene of *The Night of the Hunter* (1955) or the Hollywood productions of Alfred Hitchcock like *Psycho* (1960). Thereupon, filmmakers went on to develop the Gothic sensibility, present until now in *films noirs*, to its postmodern version (Bronfen 107).

Taking Gothic cinema to new extremes, a specific type of horror emerged to deal with the increasing uneasiness around the world's conflicts in terms of violence, technology, and deception. Initiated in George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), the horror movie took an acutely graphic turn in the blunt display of gore. The extreme death-drive content is not only shown in unconcealed scenes in which zombies devour people alive, but also in the way the characters' survival instinct makes them shoot the zombies without hesitation (Bronfen 118). If critics and self-righteous people greatly cried out against this movie deemed too shocking, it enjoyed considerable audience success and led to several continuations. Similarly, the trend of slasher movies, characterized by human monsters seeking to massacre young persons, gained more and more success thanks to John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) or Wes Craven's *Scream* (1996). Such movies became cross-mediatic franchises (continued in merchandise, TV shows, and videogames) and sequels keep being produced regularly, with releases announced for both titles in 2022. In such movies, the plain representation of the unspeakable (Kavka 226) and the audience's fascination with them indicate the modern transformations of the Gothic in film. The Gothic no longer suggests horrors but displays them in contemporary times and places, sometimes on the verge of grotesquery, but always in a theatrical mise-en-scène proper to the Gothic's sense of spectacle (Punter 112). Because

audiences are now used to the horror movies' mechanisms, it seems that entertainment took over cathartic relief. But if the horror genre still plays an important part in the film industry today, it is nonetheless thanks to other mediums that the Gothic could renew itself.

Gothic Images Relocated

Throughout the twentieth century, the demand for Gothic material and its successful materializations in horror movies propelled the genre to the heart of popular culture. Yet, if going to the movies remains a collective and external activity (going out of our homes to sit in the dark with strangers), the Gothic at the end of the century disseminates in mediums consumed at home. American TV series at this time became an important cultural product of post-modern societies. The production of soap operas flourished and reached large audiences as they were broadcasted all over the Western world. In "Gothic Television", Eddie Robson notes that Gothic soap operas, such as *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971), or more comic soaps like *The Addams Family* (1964-1966), showed that the Gothic was as present at home as well as in movie theatres (244). Robson adds that television offered better possibilities for the Gothic to thrive since the episodic format allowed an embedment of parallel narratives that was a plot characteristic in the first Gothic novels (249). As a matter of fact, "television soap opera provides the twentieth-century equivalent of Gothic novels" (Davenport-Hines in Robson 244) in the use on the long run of Gothic archetypes and in the exploration of their fictional depths. But it is during the 90s that the "potential for a distinctive kind of Gothic" (Bronfen 249) truly took place on television, with series like *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991), *The X-Files* (1993-2002), and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003).

In the same manner that Walpole created "a new kind of romance", David Lynch and Mark Frost created this "distinctive kind of Gothic" with *Twin Peaks*: domestic Gothic. In "Dreams, Nightmares and Haunted Houses: Televisual Horror as Domestic Imagery", Ruth Griffin explains that domestic Gothic is deeply linked to our conception of what "home" is. In the place we have built (mentally or physically) for safety, familiarity, and intimacy, in opposition to the outside world, television is the object that reminds us of reality by haunting the domestic space and the mind (89). Therefore, the "domestically oriented horror narratives" in TV series watched in the privacy and comfort of our homes challenge this conception of home and become a threat (89). In *Twin Peaks*, FBI agent Dale Cooper comes to the eponymous small town to investigate the brutal murder of beloved high schooler Laura

Palmer. As the investigation goes on, several mysterious events happen at the same time as the Twin Peaks community proves to be the home of horrors involving rape, prostitution, drugs, and abuse, but also hides deeper secrets like the existence of extra-dimensional realms and evil entities. Lenora Ledwon in "Twin Peaks and the Television Gothic" explains that the series focuses on standard Gothic devices such as the doppelgänger, the family enigma, or the difficult narrative system (261). Yet, Lynch domesticates these devices and slowly puts them in the "normal" setting of the soap opera, a small-town American community in contemporary times. While Agent Cooper unravel the mysteries around Twin Peaks, and more and more disturbing events take place, the "abnormal" takes over the viewers' home through television, until the Gothic becomes the norm (263).

Lynch's television Gothic not only challenged the distinction between the normal and abnormal but came to threaten the border between the domestic and the uncanny. Indeed, *Twin Peaks* embodies Freud's uncanny or *unheimlich*, literally meaning 'un-homely', in the way that the TV series format brings home "the uncanny/*unheimlich* contained within the familiar/*heimlich* of the home" (Lewdon 263). Viewers witness the "domestic gone horribly wrong" in dysfunctional families where father figures (Leland Palmer, Ben Horne) act monstrously to daughter figures (Laura Palmer, Audrey Horne) in incestuous and murderous impulses (264). While early Gothic fiction distanced such horrors in the medieval past, *Twin Peaks* drags it back to the here-and-now, to the at-home. The modern standards of normality supposedly carried out by the domesticity of the televisual object sink into the uncanny until the ordinary becomes Gothic. Because Laura's body is found right from the beginning, and the event takes place in the opening scene, the Gothic is immediate (265). All in all, *Twin Peaks* achieved Bronfen's "potential for a distinctive kind of Gothic" in broadcasting it directly at home. Domestic Gothic TV series confront viewers more directly with modern representations of repressed desires and anxieties, and the need to expiate them through catharsis becomes immediate too. Televisual images rely more importantly on *mimesis* in their attempt to be "normal" reflections of reality, and the identificatory process at work in movies is exacerbated by this domestic media. Unlike cinema, the possibility of an infinite timeline and multiple narratives offered by the TV series format allowed the Gothic to find its place in contemporary society and to keep renewing itself. The placement of the Gothic in this space increases the cathartic pleasure to the point that TV shows enjoyed enormous success and led the genre to consolidate its central position in popular culture and mainstream entertainment (Cooper 90, Spooner 25). In addition to the rapid and wide diffusion of TV

shows throughout the world, it is with TV shows like *The Walking Dead* (2010—), *American Horror Story* (2011—), or more recently *Dark* (2020), that the Gothic in all its facets keeps haunting our screens and our minds up to this day.

Furthermore, technological evolution at the end of the twentieth century and in the first two decades of the twenty-first century led to the emergence of yet a new medium through which to tell stories. From the first gaming devices in the 70s to the ninth console generation which appeared in 2020 with the release of the PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X, through the development of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR), the videogame has become the number one cultural product of our recent times. Whether we play at home on a computer or a TV screen, or anywhere on handheld consoles and even smartphones, storytellers found a new significant way to create fiction. Gothic in videogames was present right from the start, and of course, Gothic classics have been adapted to this medium, for example, with the figure of Dracula in the *Castlevania* series (Konami, 1986-2019). With what Jason Whittaker in "Gothic and New Media" called "the gaming revolution" in the late 90s, and through the release of games like *Doom* (id Software, 1993) or *Resident Evil* (Capcom, 1996), a more adult content developed based on the Gothic images deployed in horror films (272). Indeed, these videogames are bound to the tradition of horror movies in their borrowing of supernatural horrors and depiction of gore. *Doom* is a first-player shooter (FPS) game in which a space marine simply called "Doomguy" fights demons and gruesome aliens (the chainsaw being the most iconic weapon of the game) while industrial heavy metal music plays in the background. *Resident Evil* is a survival horror game in which characters must survive the outbreak of zombies and mutated monsters created by the pharmaceutical company Umbrella Corporation. However, unlike the effects of movie watching discussed earlier, the videogame medium pushes further the realization of catharsis.

The very principle of videogames is to implicate players *within* the narrative of the fiction told by having them control their in-game character through different choices and actions. Michael Hancock in "Doppelgamers: Video Games and Gothic Choice" explains the extent to which game playing is based on the idea of doubling, in the sense of "the gothic double, or doppelgänger" (167). Because of the players' implication in the game, a strong identification with the digital avatar occurs and leads to a blurring between subject and object (168). It implies that players are drawn to think of their avatar as "an extension of self" and "an object to manage". This specific relationship stems from the effective immersion achieved by the videogame medium. In addition to the identification with the avatar, the "ever more

credible" (Van Elferen 146) visualization of virtual worlds allowed by constantly evolving technologies participates in making videogames' narratives deeply engaging. It materializes in terms of computer-generated graphic designs coming closer and closer to a lifelike representation of reality, as well as proficient artificial intelligence (AI) with which in-game characters are coded so that they act, react, and interact like real persons. Coupled with the length of the narrative available for play, the game's durability—counted in hours of gameplay (about 20 hours to beat *Doom Eternal* released in 2020, and 10 hours for *Resident Evil 7: Biohazard* released in 2017)—helps keeping players engaged in the long run. All these elements participate in building the players' total immersion in the medium, which thus outlasts the audience's involvement in film.

Yet, "[a] videogame is more than a story" (Hancock 175), and there is more to horror games than shooting monsters. The widespread popularity of such games today, and their constant criticism in mainstream media, recalls the apparition of Gothic novels in the eighteenth century (Botting 280-1). Both fictional forms employ sensationalism and tropes of the horrible to create stories, but there is a greater emotional response at play in videogames. Richard Rouse III in "Match Made in Hell: The Inevitable Success of the Horror Genre in Video Games" explains why videogame is the best medium to explore Gothic horrors. First, Rouse suggests that the medium is ideal to display horror because players immerse in a familiar world they recognize and can connect to their reality (17). But the fact that these worlds "have been invaded by some evil force" makes them "fantastic and special", and therefore the experience of a realistic altered world brings players into an "uncanny valley" (18). Indeed, the content of horror games presents uncanny depictions of common elements with uneasy twists, like a marine (common figure) fighting demons in space (uneasy setting) in *Doom*.

Beyond the uncanny content of videogames, the fact that players mostly use this medium at home calls on the uncanniness of the domestic object (the computer or the console) also effective in Gothic television. Yet, while TV shows offer an already fixed narrative weave, the horror videogame lets players fill in the blanks with their imagination in a "far more disturbing way" through the choices they make in the game (Rouse 17). Thus, horror games explore key emotions that developers seek to trigger in players, especially tension and fear (20). Rouse puts forward the fact that horror games are best at provoking these emotions because of the players' total immersion in the narrative. Life-threatening experiences depicted in films or TV shows happen to other persons, and the audiences' response is determined by

the degree to which they identify with these persons through empathy. But in immersive videogames, avatars are extensions of players who "project [themselves] into the experience" in a more intense way, so that tension and fear directly impact them (20). The stake for players is to see their avatar die and to have to replay a part of the game to progress in the narrative, whereas in a movie or series the plot goes on anyway. Going again over a part where tension and fear were intense, but eventually managing to clear it thus provokes satisfaction and even pride for the player who overcame these emotions. For this reason, horror videogames achieve catharsis more efficiently than any other medium, in that individuals are no longer just witnessing horrible images to purge. Instead, videogames transcend common representations of negative emotions in works of fiction and offer players a chance to actively participate in their conquest, thus totally relying on the mimetic involvement necessary to catharsis. After finishing a horror game, players find themselves back in the safe environment of their bedrooms or living rooms, and the pleasure and satisfaction they draw from the experience of a Gothic world are supreme.

In summary, the transpositions and continuations of the Gothic literary tradition in other mediums that employ the use of images gave the genre a set of specific dimensions proper to each art. In theatre, painting, photography, cinema, television, or videogames, whether the story told is an adaptation of a classic text or an original work of fiction, narratives rely on Gothic archetypes to illustrate cultural and societal concerns. Images are words in motion, and the pictorial strength of representation allows all kinds of artists to appropriate the Gothic aesthetic and thus reach broader audiences. The popularity of Gothic plays, movies, TV series, or videogames, ever since eighteenth-century literature, shows the durability and adaptability of the genre through time. The invention of new mediums coincided with the anxieties of modernity, driven by philosophical revaluations stemming from the Romantic Era, Freud's psychological questionings, shifts in scientific and technological paradigms, or social overturning in Western societies. For more than 250 years, Gothic fiction and its visualizations served the cathartic examination and understanding of these anxieties deeply grounded in reality. Indeed, from Aristotle's first definition of *katharsis*, tragedy relied on *mimesis*—the anchor point to reality—to provide an exploration of negative emotions. Audiences, fond of cultural entertainment, tacitly agree to watch reenactments of their contemporary reality which evolved through the Gothic in sublime, supernatural, uncanny, and fictive images. By means of suspension of disbelief, the Gothic

world can display a less “realistic” reality, but audiences nonetheless always connect to the real world through the emotions depicted. Gothic images transcend reality and fiction, and with the mutations of arts and of consciousnesses throughout time, the cathartic power of art extended to all mediums. In fact, Gothic *is* a medium (i.e. a mediator) between fiction and reality, and being so, even “a mode of unofficial history” as Punter put it in *The Literature of Terror: The Modern Gothic* (187). Gothic works tell the stories of uncertainty in specific socio-politic, scientific, and technological contexts, in a manner that makes them available for questioning and provide audiences with closure. Therefore, it appears that individuals, whether they are artists, storytellers, or part of an audience, have internalized the Gothic forms of fiction as a popular and pleasurable way to confront past horrors, present taboos, and future apprehensions. The relationship between Gothic fiction and reality became so intertwined that its aesthetic is instantly recognizable and the meaning of its images accepted. A ghost portrays the haunting of the past, a vampire symbolizes repressed excess and sexuality, and a zombie embodies scientific setbacks. It shows that the Gothic imagery and imaginary are more than resources to produce popular culture but are actual parts of how societies and individuals’ identities evolve. Today, in a world where globalized communication and instant consumption of works of fiction can render culture and arts flat and meaningless, the Gothic still find ways to appeal to individuals’ concerns. If this is less evident than it was with the first Gothic novels, because of the internalization of Gothic tropes and folklore, the strength and reach of the genre and its aesthetic come to and from individuals themselves, in music and the Goth subculture.

III. From Gothic to Goth: Music, Lifestyle, and Identity

In the previous parts, the focus has been on the spread of the Gothic tradition through all kinds of artistic and cultural mediums since the emergence of the genre during the eighteenth century. Yet, the medium of music has been set aside. While there are as many sonic expressions of Gothic music as there are different textual and visual manifestations of the genre, the importance of this medium in the development of the "Goth" subcultural identity is crucial. To understand how the Goth movement, which started in the 1980s and is still going strong forty years later, can be perceived as a modern continuation of the Gothic tradition, we must begin by acknowledging the evolution of a specific musical genre and delve into socio-cultural considerations. From the exploration of sonic instances in Gothic literature, theatre, cinema, television, and videogames, to the advent of a postmodern scene, music stands at the heart of a participatory experience between the artists and their audiences. Whether the listener simply listens or engage with the music through dancing, the medium offers an immersion into a realm of emotions where, as we will see, cathartic relief and pleasure are transcribed uniquely and intensely. While music has been a central topic of study for thinkers and scholars since Antiquity, its link with literature resides in the sonic qualities of words. A poem's construction can be thought musical vis-à-vis rhyming and metrics, and most often literature grants words emotions that music awakens. Edgar Allan Poe's reflection on music in his 1844 *Marginalia* refers to the Gothic sublime:

> When music affects us to tears, seemingly causeless, we weep not, as Gravina supposes, from 'excess of pleasure'; but through excess of an impatient, petulant sorrow that, as mere mortals, we are as yet in no condition to banquet upon those supernal ecstasies of which the music affords us merely a suggestive and indefinite glimpse. (485-86)

Here, Poe extends the discussion of Giovanni Vincenzo Gravina in *Della Ragio Poetica* (1708) on the paradoxical cathartic pleasure in arts through which an audience enjoys the experience of painful emotions. Music "affects us to tears" when it raises feelings of sadness or pain, in the same way that Burke's sublime in tragedy appeals to fear and pain. The grandeur of its divine ("supernal") and transcendental nature ("ecstasies") reflects our own diminished scale of existence (Burke 66). Music offers humans a direct yet mystic glance at the sacred and eternal.

How the Gothic Sounds

From the beginning of Gothic literature, musicality, in the description of sounds and noise, or the use of silence, has been employed to reinforce the effects of the genre's tropes. Isabella Van Elferen in *Gothic Music: Sounds of the Uncanny* observes that the role of music and sounds is to heighten narratives in their different expressions through all mediums (3). If in literature, the author can only rely on words to signify music and sound, their presence is nonetheless essential to the construction of an atmosphere. Indeed, whether it is in poetry or prose, the over-stylization of repetition and excess (13) proper to the Gothic relies on sonic impressions. Loud tramping, distant shouting, echoing voices, howling wind, rolling thunder, sudden creaks, crashing waves, and so on, all participate in the creation of literary soundscapes (19). Similarly, elaborate descriptions of silence as a complete lack of sound reinforce Gothic tensions in signifying the "unnatural probability" of such an "unhomely" experience, thus indicating uncanny absences. In like manner, human sounds are most often disembodied in that they are perceived without their physical source, which thus indicates a supernatural and/or ghostly presence (21). Whether silence is disrupted by sounds, or music abruptly stops, characters *hear* before they *see*. The play on the "in/audible" to signal the "in/visible" is central to the exploitation of Gothic devices (24). Elferen explains that music and sound in literary Gothic operate on four levels: first, they express the presence of ghosts; second, they make time and reality overlap in the haunting of places and minds; third, their stylization questions the boundaries of mediation; which fourth, engages readers in a liturgic transgression of the medium and its message (32-3). Overall, music and sound in Gothic literature give another dimension to the text. Their virtuality enhances a certain Gothic/ghostly doubling and distancing that corresponds to the implicit suggestion of terror provoked in the genre's pioneer novels. Yet, in other artistic mediums, a shift from *perceiving* to *hearing* occurs so that audiences participate more significantly in the descent into Gothic worlds.

The audio-visual continuations of the Gothic in plays, films, and TV shows, called for different manners to include and perform music and sounds. On stage, as explained in the previous part, eighteenth-century Gothic drama employed theatrical resources already found in other genres. It went on to develop its own scenic devices to deepen emotions and create the Gothic atmosphere. More than an accompanying

tool, music orchestrated by respected composers enriched Gothic narratives to reach a "quality and variety [that] would become an essential part of the Gothic, even in the most serious and tragic of plots" (Backscheider 208). Gothic music in plays permitted the sonic setting of the soundscapes worded in literature as a resource which was then greatly developed in cinema and television. More directly and visually, cinema resorts to an ultimate combination of words, images, and sounds, which increases the intensity of the dramatic narrative scene and the audience's proximity to the characters and actions (Gauld 3). In films related to the Gothic, or in horror movies, "sound and music are crucial for experiences of cinematic uncanniness, terror and horror" (Van Elferen 37). In both the scoring of a movie (or underscoring in the case of silent films) and the diegetic music and sounds (as part of the scene), the effects of the Gothic are once again emphasized through sonic expressions. In practice, they are mainly carried out by symphonic orchestras, in which string and brass instruments, and percussions and keyboards (classical piano or synthesizer), are conducted to produce specific reactions in the audience. The main characteristics are, amongst others, dissonance and atonality (disruptive and disturbing sounds); diminished and augmented intervals (exceeding harmonic norms); chromaticism (notes contrasting with the diatonic scale); fast crescendos or slow diminuendos (dynamic changes), and pianissimo against fortissimo (Van Elferen 69).

For example, the iconic music of the shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) participated in making it an unforgettable classic in the history of cinema. Composer Bernard Herrmann's original score is characterized by a series of dissonant and high-pitched glissandos (glide) on a violin before the rest of the string instruments join, repeat the pattern with a diminuendo, and change to low-pitched notes. The score's expressivity and symbolism (in *Psycho*, the high-pitched violin echoes the actress' cries) are always crucial to the building of tension and the communication of Gothic terror, which, in turn, amplify the audience's reactions and lead to cathartic relief. As Van Elferen notes, it is much less scary to watch a horror movie without sound (37). Moreover, some scores impact the audience so much that people recognize a film's music without having seen it. It is also the case for Gothic TV shows' scores, for example, the famous *X-Files'* theme, since they employ the same resources as film music. However, they differ in that the repetitive and serial format of TV shows, as challenges to the domestic space, provides a deeper intrusion

of the music's ghostly effects into the audiences' minds (Van Elferen 79). Indeed, the uncanny sounds of Gothic television engage viewers in their own haunting by taking part in a weekly transgression of space and time.

Given the Gothic potential of videogames, music and sounds are equally important in this medium as they are in other audio-visual productions, if not even more so. Accordingly, the deep and immersive experience of game playing is once again permitted by sound design. Whether players themselves trigger specific sounds, like right-clicking to shoot a weapon or hitting a designated key to perform a certain action, or distinct music starts playing to indicate the beginning of a fight sequence, participation in videogames relies heavily on "sonic clues" (Van Elferen 105). In his 2018 online article "The Evolution of Audio in Videogames", Daniel Scarratt insists on the importance of sound in videogames to "create tension, add emotion, build immersion". In the first Gothic or horror videogames, limited technological possibilities in the creation of efficient soundscapes forced sound designers to restrict their 8-bits music to resemble melodies already considered "scary", notably in horror films. Scarratt uses the example of *Castlevania II: Simon's Quest*'s theme "Bloody Tears" (Konami, 1987) which is based upon the main melody of Bach's *Toccata & Fugue in D minor*. It is interesting to note that *Castlevania* is an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and its score a digital adaptation of a baroque piece made famous for its uses in horror films, notably at first in a 1931 adaptation of Stevenson's Gothic classic *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. These cross-references emphasize the inherently Gothic aspects of continuation and intertextuality since the genre always renews itself through time and mediums, music included.

As technology allowed a more realistic development of videogames, so did the design of music and sounds in the possibility to use "real" instruments and recordings of "real-world" sounds. Scarratt refers to the sound design of *Resident Evil 7: Biohazard* (Capcom, 2017) as "dark, scary, atmospheric" and places its quality on an equal footing with horror movies' soundscapes. The sound design team for *Resident Evil 7* has worked on several aspects to produce the "sound of horror", which focused on enhancing the creepy mood of the game by using a blend of realistic, dramatic, and "horror" sounds while playing on pacing and silences. They also relied on paracusia (auditory hallucination) to create an immersive sense of the traumatic, thus building a dynamic and interactive soundscape. The notion of dynamism and interactivity is also at the heart of *Doom* (id Software, 2016), which original soundtrack is orchestrated by Mick Gordon. His music is a mix of industrial and progressive/heavy metal, with distorted and compressed low-pitched guitar riffs, sine waves

and white noise produced on a synthesizer, digitalized sounds of chainsaws, and deep and powerful drumbeats at a very fast tempo of 176 BPM (beats per minute). The music is synchronized with in-game actions such as fight sequences, and its main role is to galvanize players who then find themselves entirely absorbed and motivated to participate in the game's actions (Gordon). The *Doom* soundtrack was even awarded the Best Music award during the 2017 BAFTA Games Awards. Above all, music and audio in videogames not only allow immersion but also "strengthens [the] gaming virtual reality" (Van Elferen 108) and becomes an essential "partner" (107) for players to progress in the narrative. Audio is one of the resources available for game designers to use the medium for a deeply cathartic experience, in which players and their virtual doppelgängers listen to the scary but necessary manifestations of Gothic sounds. If it is less scary to watch a horror film without sound, it is impossible to play a horror videogame without it.

As can be seen, music and the Gothic have been intrinsically linked together since the beginning of the tradition. Textual mentions of sound and music in literature participated in the establishment of the over-stylized aspect of the Gothic, in which ghosts' voices come to haunt readers beyond words. As an accompaniment, Gothic music in such narratives gives audiences information that would not be available in words or images (Van Elferen 4). While audio is not often consciously perceived, since it is always admitted as an evident part of *audio*-visual works, the uncanniness of its nature highlights its spectrality and Gothic-ness. It adds layers of meaning to the narrative and, by capturing individuals' primal sense of hearing (5), immerses them in the experience of tension and fear and thus paves the way to cathartic relief and pleasure. Yet, this is not the only element to consider when it comes to studying Gothic music. The medium of music, as an art form that is independent of other forms of textual or visual narration, has also been invested by the Gothic, where audiences listen consciously to its uncanny sounds. In the postmodern era, music became an important part of society and its diversified genres came to haunt people in their intimacy and daily life. The following parts will focus on the emergence of Goth music, and the (cathartic) role it played in the development of an identity for listeners who define themselves as "Goths". From socio-cultural considerations to psychological and developmental perspectives, the Goth subculture or scene proves to be a modern and unique extension of the Gothic movement with music at its core. Personal interviews conducted in Iceland with four persons who do not know each other but all identify as Goth will illustrate the points made.

The Postmodern Goth Invasion

In August 1979, an English band named Bauhaus released a single with a 9 minutes 36 seconds long song entitled "Bela Lugosi's Dead". With dub-influenced guitar sounds, a muffled and slow drumbeat, and a deep-toned and reverberated voice, the song's lyrics pay a tribute to actor Bela Lugosi who played Count Dracula in the 1931 film. The single's sleeve cover is a still from the 1926 movie *The Sorrows of Satan*, and the music's video clip relies heavily on vampire imagery, with closes-up on the singer's distorted expressions, *femmes fatales,* and dancing silhouettes. With "Bela Lugosi's Dead", Bauhaus marked the advent of Goth music. Their legacy has been echoed in other bands in the genre like The Cure or Siouxsie and the Banshees, and it was a key influence for many bands worldwide in other musical genres such as industrial (Nine Inch Nails, USA); thrash metal (Sepultura, Brazil), or trip-hop (Massive Attack, UK). From its emergence, Goth music clearly stemmed from the Gothic tradition, in borrowing elements of its aesthetics developed in literature, visual arts, and films (Hodkinson 260), and in giving a sound to the themes of transgression, excess, nostalgia, decadence, macabre, sublime, and the uncanny. Andi Harriman and Marloes Bontje's *Some Wear Leather, Some Wear Lace,* a compendium of postpunk and Goth, explores the roots of Goth music in the 1980s. The authors place Bauhaus as the beginning of the movement and call the band "the true grandfather of the scene" (22). In fact, "Bela Lugosi's Dead" was to Goth music what *The Castle of Otranto* was to the Gothic novel: a "new kind of romance" in the terms of Walpole and a new kind of sound in the case of Bauhaus.

Beforehand, music diversity in the 70s was popularised by rock'n'roll, glam rock, punk, and widespread genres like funk and disco. The post-punk/goth genre (the term 'Goth' came to use in the early 80s, Harriman and Bontje 8) started as a darker and yet more romantic hybrid style. Adopting the "raw power" of punk and appropriating new digital instruments like keyboards and drum machines, postpunk/goth differentiated itself from any genre in its search for musical revolution and meaning (14). In practical terms, the typical postpunk/goth music deploys all the possibilities of blending the sounds of traditional instruments with computer-generated or altered sounds. Guitar pedals and synthesizers are extensively used to produce echoes, dubs, delays, reverberation, and distortion; deep and resounding bass lines are put to the forefront, and the whole is supported by rousing rhythms and repetitive drumbeats (Van Elferen 144). As the genre mushroomed and attracted broader audiences, its worldwide presence in the music industry extended and subcategories started to

form. Developing the rock and punk sensibility, metal music emerged as a distinct genre focusing on more extensive uses of traditional instruments with pioneer band Black Sabbath. As technology improved greatly, some bands experimented more with computers to make music, thus leading way to industrial music and EBM (for Electronic Body Music) with the decisive acts of bands like Einstürzende Neubauten (Germany) or Skinny Puppy (Canada). Yet, what remained at the heart of all these bands and genres was their common penchant for melancholy (Harriman and Botje 27). Moreover, the particularity of postpunk and its derivatives is that they relied heavily on a specific visualization, employing dramaticism in their stage presence (10), with "visual hero" David Bowie as the "true inspiration to portray and define the burgeoning dramatic elements of Goth" (14). Goth artists would not only make music but *perform* it, and the impact they had on their audiences was inspiring to the point that listeners wanted to *become* Goth.

The emergence of subcultures in the Western world after WWII was a response from youth persons to postmodern societal, political, economic, technological, and cultural changes. In *Subcultures: The Basics*, Ross Haenfler notes the divergence of views in the sociological understanding of the subculture concept. The first studies proposed in the 70s dwelled mainly on social status, but later insights from scholars associating with a particular subculture focused on participant-based interviews in the 90s. For better clarity, the current analysis will use ideas from each school of thought. At first, sociologists identified a growing responsibility gap between adults who had lived through the war and young people who evolved in an ever-modernizing world. With better access to education, increasing exposure to popular culture, and alternative ideas driven by the expanding film, music, and television industries, as well as more disposable income and greater leisure time (7), youths would seek to define their place and identity in a time of transition. It translated in these youths' fashion styles and lifestyles, often associated with a specific music genre in which the notions of "spectacular" and "ritual" demonstrated a form of symbolic resistance against the norms established by authorities (parents, governments) while the media disapproved of such practices (9). However, later studies showed that subcultures should not be regarded as homogeneous "blocks" of youth people divisible in subgroups (15). Rather, subcultural movements involve a diverse range of individuals with distinct subjectivities, who share interests and tastes beyond age and social class (14). Subcultures are not objective and delineated phenomena. Instead, all the concepts evoked above continuously overlap, and Haenfler's suggests the following definition of a subculture: "A relatively diffuse social

network having a shared identity, distinctive meanings around certain ideas, practices, and objects, and a sense of marginalization from or resistance to a perceived "conventional" society" (12). Keeping this definition in mind, the Goth movement, often referred to as a "scene" ("a particular area of activity and all the people or things connected with it", *Cambridge Dictionary*), is a subculture in which participants develop unique artistic tastes while uniting in the way they define themselves. Goths consume similar items of clothing and cultural products, and they are perceived as different and outcasts from people outside the scene.

Most Goths find themselves attracted to the scene through the music and its visual aspects in their teenage years. They still identify as such as adults since involvement in a subculture bears a "transformative potential" that helps kids in search of "non-normative values" in a "meaningful community" (Haenfler 24). Subcultural participation thus allows them to assert their personality in a moment of their lives when they can feel "like aliens among their peers". It appears that this shift in individuals' lives is not acknowledged as an informed decision of "going Goth" overnight, but rather is the result of a self-questioning and a better understanding of their own feelings and tastes. When asked why and when they started to be drawn to the Goth subculture, my interviewees recall this moment in their lives when they felt a need to find their own identity. Rex, a thirty-four-year-old cis female musician and writer originally from Montréal, Québec, but living in Reykjavík, Iceland, said:

> When I was around 13, almost 14, I started discovering music that was darker, I started discovering The Cure, which is my favorite band still […] and then I just sort of started wearing all black and dying my hair and I found out all about Goth and I realized "this is my world", "this is what I connect to". […] I would say this is when I really, chose the lifestyle. But in a way, I feel like it chose me.

Hafey, a twenty-four-year-old Icelandic cis woman working in a fabrication laboratory, originally from a small town in North Iceland but now living in the capital, remembered:

> I always tried to fit in as a kid and early teenager. But I never liked it, so I just started dressing the way I wanted to, and the way I felt good in. [...] But when I moved to Reykjavík and really started to experiment with what I wanted to look like, it became very clear that I am a Goth.

Forty-eight-year-old cis man who goes by the pseudonym Skuggavera ("shadow being", translation his), and who is a professor of Computer Science from Reykjavík, explained:

> Growing up I just always felt like I was a little different from my parents … I listened to melancholic music, but I didn't know there was a particular type of Gothic music. […] In grad school [in the U.S.], there was another student who looked and acted like incredibly drawn to [Goth], we became immediately friends. Then, I was just, "wow", I found myself. It was just so emotional.

Similarly, artist and designer Minuit ("midnight"), a twenty-seven-year-old cis woman from Rennes, France, who lives between her home city and Reykjavík, told me:

> Ça fait très longtemps, je devais avoir 10-11 ans. Il y a eu un moment dans ma vie où je me suis sentie perdue, où je me suis sentie seule, où je me suis sentie incomprise […]. Il y a quelque chose en moi qui voulait s'exprimer, et j'ai décidé de le laisser faire. Je m'orientais de plus en plus vers un style que j'avais vu sur internet, que j'avais vu dans les magazines, et entendu à la télé dans des clips d'Evanescence ou de t.A.t.u.
>
> ("it's been a long time, I must have been 10 or 11 years old. There was a time in my life when I felt lost, when I felt alone, when I felt misunderstood […]. There was something in me that wanted to express itself, and I decided to let it out. I was heading more and more towards a style that I had seen on the internet, in magazines or heard in TV videoclips", translation mine).

More than being testimonies of participants in a subculture, these words show that each Goth is different, and all have a story to tell. Goths' individual styles are performative acts of their identity and become symbolic self-representations of their personal journey (Van Elferen 130). Identifying as Goth has nothing to do with social background, age, or career; it is an expression of the self through an attachment to a scene's music.

Goth's Sonic and Visual Modes

The impact of Goth music in the early lives of people associating with this scene is a determining aspect of their personal development. Music can be a cathartic way to liberate one's emotions; an expression of the artist's sadness, fear, anger, or frustration that resonates in the listener's mind. In developmental psychology, music has been studied as a development resource in teenage years, as Dave Miranda exposed in his article "The Role of Music in Adolescent Development: Much More Than the Same Old Song". Contemporary

understandings of the biological and psychological effects of music demonstrate the emotional experience through which the act of listening to songs triggers pleasurable neurotransmitters and regulates stress hormones (6). Emotions conveyed in music are particularly significant in adolescent development as teenagers live a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, and they dedicate a lot of their time listening to music (10). Miranda notes that the "transaction between music and adolescence" influences the major areas of development that are "aesthetics; identity; socialization; emotion regulation and coping; personality and motivation; gender roles; and positive youth development" (10-11). Listening to music leads teenagers to understand aesthetics and arts, and define their tastes while developing their social image and cultural identity in tandem with music media characters (11). Social bonding also operates between people liking the same music (6), and it offers a way to relieve loneliness (12). Indeed, music grants teenagers a distraction from negative emotions like worries and stress, and they use it as a coping mechanism to find comfort and acceptance (13). As a fulfillment of emotional needs and enjoyment, music participates in defining the personality and in motivating the marking of social identity, while delineating—or not—different gender roles and music tastes (13-14). At last, all these effects suggest that teenagers' well-being can be boosted depending on how they experience emotions conveyed through music (15). Thus, this highlights the cathartic power of music in terms of the purgation of negative emotions and pleasure derived from it as exposed throughout this thesis.

When it comes to music associated with a particular subculture, like in the Goth scene, all these effects seem to generate a more powerful significance. Goths give great importance to their music as the first component of their identity. For example, Rex places her "Gothdom" in the way she perceives the world, which can be in her style of dress, but mostly in the music she listens to. While Minuit remembers discovering the Goth aesthetic through its music, she acknowledges how listening to it generally makes her feel good. Hafey too recognizes that she experiences herself as Goth because she "relates" to its music, and Skuggavera explains that he is mostly interested in the music and dancing. In addition, the fact that the movement goes counter to mainstream culture adds a unique sense of belonging to something special. At the heart of the experience of Goth music are club dancing and going to gigs and festivals. Indeed, the actual characteristics of Goth, in its visual and sonic aspects, originated in the specific atmosphere relayed in the first Goth clubs, the most famous of them being The Batcave in London (Harriman and Botje 34). Tricia Henry Young posits in "Dancing on Bela Lugosi's Grave: The Politics and Aesthetics of Gothic Club Dancing" that

partaking in the practices of a Goth club or concert reflects "the desire to transcend mainstream sensibilities and the ennui of everyday life" (78). Dancing is a process through which Goths find a powerful way to express themselves, communicate with one another, cultivate their group identity, and most importantly, release the pressure valve as "disillusioned youth" (92). More precisely, the corporal practices of Goth are a direct response to music. In wanting to express themselves and resemble both their peers and Goth artists, taking time to dress up (with long black dresses or leather trousers, for example) and putting on elaborate make-up (for instance, intense black eyeliners and blood-red lipstick) plays a crucial role in Goth club dancing. Goth melodies provide a soundtrack for physical participation in the transcendence of self, time, and place (Van Elferen 171). Listening and dancing to music enhance immersion in another reality, like a ceremonial and ritualistic enactment (Van Elferen 171) where Goths fully engage in the cathartic release of their emotions.

Having defined the Goth movement as a subculture in link with its music where individuals find meaning for their identity, let us turn to some of its visual components. As Catherine Spooner notes in her 2012 essay about Goth culture, the diversity in tastes and preferences of Goths makes it a dynamic subculture which is above all defined by how non-Goths perceive it. "Gothdom" (Rex) is often directly recognized as such because of the "coherent visual style" of its participants (Spooner 350), but each individual has their own way of performing their Goth identity, and sometimes, identit*ies*. Spooner argues that it stems from an "imaginative identification and self-dramatization" of personae exposed in the texts and images of Gothic narratives (351). Yet Goth goes beyond Gothic in the way the persons appropriate their style, to the point that the Goth body becomes a medium (Van Elferen 131). Within the subculture, there are countless subcategories of Goth styles, as listed in Sabrina Newman's thesis "The Evolution of the Perceptions of the Goth Subculture". Trad Goth, Cybergoth, Victorian Goth, Steampunk, Tribal Goth, Medieval Goth, J-Goth, Gothic Lolita, Pastel Goth, or Casual Goth (18-23) are but a few trends amongst many more. What is important to realize is that no style is fixed permanently and that any Goth can take items of their liking in different trends, and create their own. In fact, "Goth itself cannot be reduced to the sum of its representations" (Spooner 356). In other words, Goth does not entail the sole embodiment of its attached texts and images, but it is rather constituted of a combination of all kinds of individuals' practices and identities "existing in different social, geographic and

cultural contexts"[1]. What Goths have in common is an intention to express a sense of darkness and the macabre, and redefine the conventional ideas of beauty through extravagance or androgyny (Harriman and Botje 124). It does not necessarily consist of wearing black only, since Cybergoths set themselves apart in their use of neon colors, and there even is a trend called "White Goth" which stands out by all-white outfits. Spooner associates this sense of darkness and the macabre to a practice of "embracing beauty in decay" (350), and my interviewees did recognize this element. Rex, who used to identify with "cheap" Victorian Goth and now to Casual Goth, said that her Goth style is about "making light of the dark". Minuit also brought this idea up when she told me that "plus on accepte notre noirceur, plus notre lumière est grande" ("the more we accept our darkness, the greater our light is", translation mine).

Thus, Goths' "coherent visual style" (Spooner 350) has a communicative role in which they express the meaning of their identity and share it with the rest of the world. In "Fashion Statements: Communication and Culture", Malcolm Barnard indicates that in modern, Western culture, fashion's communicative function is linked to the fact that people understand that clothes are meaningful (23). Fashion is a cultural phenomenon, and culture, in this case, corresponds to the "shared meanings and the communication and understanding of those meanings" (24). These meanings are linked to shared cultural values and ideas that, in turn, are reproduced through the people's interaction between these and the visual appearance of specific items of clothing. Moreover, fashion constructs people as "members (and/or non-members) of cultural groups", and with Goth, as members of a *sub*cultural group. Goth fashion communicates one's affiliation with the scene, and Goths inject in their clothes the meaning of their subcultural identity as a different way to interact with the world's prevailing culture. The subculture presents a fluidity and activity that transcends the way it is represented

[1] To remain in my thesis' main focus, which was to explain and explore cathartic relief through the different artistic manifestations and cultural expressions of the Gothic tradition and Goth subculture, I use the generic terms "people" and "individuals" when dealing with sociological aspects. Rather than consciously leaving BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) and LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Genderqueer, Queer, Intersexed, Agender, Asexual and Ally) persons aside, I preferred not to appropriate their voices and make anthropological statements or gender studies claims, which would be outside my field of study. In addition, there is a paucity of academic sources examining inclusivity in the Goth scene from a non-Western perspective, but it is worth mentioning Brazilian journalist Lidia Zuin's article retrieved from lidiazuin.medium.com/black-goth-black-people-and-the-goth-subculture-6dcab9313351, and web publisher Nadya Lev's one retrieved from coilhouse.net/2012/09/i-am-so-goth-i-was-born-black/. Personally, I have always witnessed great openness and tolerance in the scene, especially here in Iceland. Most of the sources I used in my research addressed the Goth and queer topics as definitional elements. To me, this lens can reduce sexual orientation and gender identity as determining elements for an individual's cultural and artistic tastes. Nonetheless, Dunja Brill's *Goth Culture, Gender, Identity and Style* examines these topics through a wide range of methods and sources.

by Goth artists and Goth participants. Whether Goths "go full out" (Hafey; Skuggavera) at events or wear more casual outfits at home (Rex), their visual style helps them represent their personality rather than define it.

"Goth-ito", Ergo Sum

Until now, the characteristic features of Goth, and the reasons and effects of its practices have been exposed. Let us now delve into the reality of what being Goth is, from perspectives within and outside the scene. As evoked above, the Goth scene generates a feeling of belonging for its participants, and more often, creates a sense of family where acceptance of sexuality, gender, appearance, and general tolerance is translated into the Goth lifestyle (Harriman and Botje 34). Goth is a state of mind, a way of perceiving the world that is shared by people acknowledging each other as part of the same community (each of my interviewees mentioned "community" several times). Belonging to this community does not exclusively mean listening to the same music and wearing similar outfits, as the diversity of musical and dress genres demonstrates, but it rather entails recognition of what *is* Goth and Gothic and what is not. In fact, Goths hold an impressive and thorough knowledge of the Gothic history and cultural canons, which constitutes what Sarah Thornton calls "subcultural capital" (in Van Elferen 130). If they do not automatically and particularly like all elements of their subcultural capital, Goths nonetheless recognize them as landmarks in the development of the community. For example, Rex cites Poe, the Brontë sisters, and *Twin Peaks*; Hafey mentions the movie *The Crow* as a "Goth classic"; Skuggavera finds "Gothic art" in Victorian paintings; Minuit refers to the incredible beauty of German expressionist cinema as a founding element. Goth culture, like the Gothic tradition, carries the legacy of its past artifacts and relies on their cultural meaning (Spooner 352). Moreover, these artifacts keep invoking one another in a cross-referentiality that constitutes the memory (and memories) of the Gothic. Paul Hodkinson in "Gothic Music and Subculture" points out that such artifacts are inherent to the scene's "internal consistency" and "external distinctiveness" (261). That is to say, the Goth subcultural capital is constituted of "tell-tale signifiers" taken from the Gothic tradition, which contribute to the scene's social and cultural delimitation. Yet, each Goth individually interprets and uses these cultural artifacts in a different way (265). In his other work, *Goth: Identity, Style, and Subculture*, Hodkinson reveals that some artifacts have become commodities. They reflect in Goths' personal consumption of their favorite accessories, records, fanzines, posters, and more (83), and their obtention and display is a key

to their own Goth identity (150). Furthermore, participation in social events is a way for Goths to find a site for "collective enjoyment of shared tastes", in which "individual attachment and commitment to the subculture" is increased by the establishment of friendships and relationships with other Goths (107).

Since the emergence of the movement in the 1980s, Goth instances and artifacts multiplied and are easier to access thanks to the numerous dedicated magazines, shops, clubs, websites, forums, festivals, and so on. The ultimate consecration of Goth culture occurred with the creation of the Wave Gotik Treffen festival in 1992 (WGT, "new wave Gothic meeting", translation Harriman and Botje 100). Liisa Ladouceur in her *Encyclopedia Gothica*, reveals that WGT, the world's biggest Goth festival, gathers about 20000 Goths every year for four days of "all night dancing and all-day shopping". Among countless band performances (278 in 2011, WGT's website), WGT also programs lectures, conferences, picnics, graveyard visits, film screenings, poetry recitation, theatre plays, operas, and more, all about as diverse a theme as the Goth culture and the Gothic encapsulates. WGT attracts Goths from all over the world, and for some, traveling to this event constitutes a real pilgrimage (Ladouceur). Besides, DJ Cruel Britannia and Martin Oldgoth declared in 2011 the date of May 22nd as the official "World Goth Day", and many celebrations take place everywhere in the world during this occasion. After all, Goths take pride in their identity, but the way they can be perceived by non-Goths sometimes shows another reality.

From outside the scene, some detractors have painted the Goth subculture as a negative, eccentric, and even dangerous movement. The role of media in the public condemnation of Goths has led some people to judge their appearance and tastes as abnormal at first, even though this has changed in recent years. Several stereotypes are thus anchored in the collective imaginary, which recalls the harsh opinion associated with the word "Gothic" when first used in arts. "Weirdoes", "freaks", "Satanists", "depressed", "junkies", "Nazis", and even "dirty Goth" are but too common insults that most Goths have heard at least once, and sometimes on a daily basis at school, on the street, at their workplace, or even within their families. Rex remembers getting judgments and being mocked at school in Montréal, while her father disapproved of her identity because he "thought [she] was putting a target on [her] back for being bullied". In my case, in provincial France, I have been denied access by "adults" to the school cafeteria or class because of my men's leather jacket or my ripped jeans, and I was constantly insulted and harassed by other students during middle school and high school. Unfortunately, experiencing rejection, isolation, and bullying is a part of many

Goths' lives and, in some extreme cases, can lead to physical attacks and even murder. Such stigmas originated in the amalgamated representation in the media of killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, responsible for the Columbine High School massacre in Denver, USA, in 1999 (Newman 8; Spooner 354; Hodkinson 113). The American media conveyed the idea that the two gunmen's interests in horror videogames and films, metal and industrial music, and unclaimed affiliation with the Goth movement were accountable for their troubled personalities (Haenfler 102). Quickly, as the Columbine tragedy got global media coverage, a direct link between Goth culture and violence spread and led to moral panic. The general public's fear and fierce blaming of participants in the subculture caused the setting and solidification of the stereotypes evoked above, some of which are still popular twenty years later.

Hitherto, the movement had an underground quality that made Goths feel safe to be themselves, but the sudden and brutal increase of cultural visibility initiated a shift from the private sphere to public discrimination where Goths had to dispel accusations and justify themselves (Spooner 355). The misrepresentation of Goths as abnormal and deviant persons is what caused the death of Sophie Lancaster in August 2007, after being inhumanly stamped to death by a group of teenagers while trying to protect her boyfriend, Robert Maltby, from their kicks. The young Goth couple was assaulted in the local park of their hometown after the teenagers insulted and teased them until they deliberately attacked them because of their looks (Newman 10). While two of the attackers were found guilty of murder, and three others were charged with grievous bodily harm with intent, Sophie's murder was the event that led to considering prejudice against members of a specific subculture a hate crime. Along with the S.O.P.H.I.E prevention campaigns ("Stamp Out Prejudice, Hatred, and Intolerance Everywhere") and the many calls for tolerance and demystification of the Goth movement, education about discrimination and a better understanding of the subculture rose in society (Ladouceur). Nonetheless, if more tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences seem apparent in recent years, the representation of Goths in other mediums is still strongly stereotyped and often mocked.

Up to this day, it appears that Goth is no longer a subculture per se but rather one aspect of mainstream culture. The borrowing of elements from Goth aesthetics by popular music media characters for just one video clip or concert, like Britney Spears' leather and spiky jacket in "Till the Worlds Ends" (2011) or Billie Eilish's Gothic demonic wings in "all the good girls go to hell" (2019), questions the place of the movement in the current society.

While most Goths object to the over-popularisation of their aesthetic as merely a fashionable style, some others believe that it helps to reinforce a better image of their culture (Rex). In any case, Goths recognize that there is still an "underground culture", as a completely separated entity from the "trend Goth" (Hafey). For example, in Iceland, the band Hatari relies heavily on Goth and fetish imagery in their industrial-inspired songs, while its members do not identify as Goths, but their increasing success since their participation in the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest brought media attention to their performances which are deemed shocking. Nonetheless, even if the band now has a massive fanbase in Iceland and all over the world, it does not make Goth a mainstream culture because "it's not like it made everyone Goth just because it had some Goth elements" (Skuggavera). What can be distressing for Goths who built their identity thanks to the subculture they associated with is to no longer be able to claim their difference if the meaning associated with their style and music becomes à la mode. Because Goth is deeply attached to the significance of its symbols as an embodiment of the participants' experiences and emotions, it appears that in the globalized and normalized mainstream culture, "on perd le sens des choses" ("we lose the meaning of things", translation mine, Minuit).

Furthermore, the depiction of Goths in movies or TV shows does not seem to confer characters depth and relevance, but still heavily relies on clichés of "weirdness" and "difference". For example, in a 2009 episode of the American sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*, characters Rajesh Koothrappali and Howard Wolowitz go to a Goth club to try and "have hot sex with some freaky girl with their business pierced" (5'39"). Not only is this reductive of both women and Goth women, but the way the characters dress up, as if they were going to a carnival, suggests that Goth outfits are simply costumes. This reveals that the showrunners do not know much about Goth, but rather use its aesthetics to convey a stereotype of loose sexuality in members of the subculture. In more extreme cases, as in the French TV talk-show "C'est mon choix" ("it's my choice", translation mine), people rally against what they consider not normal in a modern witch trial. In an episode posted on YouTube in December 2015, entitled "Gothique, punk, rock… et si vous adoptiez un look plus classique?" ("what if you would adopt a more classical look", translation mine), presenter Évelyne Thomas confronts guests identifying as cybergoth and metalheads on their appearances which are considered too extreme. Throughout the show, the presenter and audience judge and mock participants by urging them to make efforts because "vous voudriez qu'on vous accepte tels que vous êtes mais vous ne faites rien pour rentrer dans la norme" ("you want to be accepted

as you are but you do not do anything to fit the norm", Thomas, 28'12, translation mine). At the end of the episode, a "stylist" crew dresses them in less daring outfits, removing their piercings, hiding their tattoos with make-up, making the man wear tuxedos and women, dresses. But during the reveal, all participants feel bad when looking at their image in the mirror. One even bursts into tears, and when asked why she did it, she says that it was "pour montrer au final que les gens qui se déguisent, c'est pas forcément ceux qu'on croit, et que la sincérité envers les autres c'est aussi être soi-même" ("to show that, in the end, people who dress up are not the ones we think they are, and that sincerity towards others is also being yourself", 49'40, translation mine). In the end, Goths will still have to fight for their right to be different and for tolerance, but people in need of affirmation and acceptance will still be able to find meaning and express their true selves through this subculture.

The Goth movement has become a global phenomenon that still attracts many youths and prevails amongst many adults who rejected their peers' "it's just a phase" comments. In fact, after forty years of existence, Goth is "the only youth subculture to sustain a dynamic scene on an international scale over such a long period" (Spooner 351). Expressed by the importance of music in the postmodern redefinitions of meanings and identities in Western societies, Goth survives as the contemporary embodiment of anxieties hitherto worded in the Gothic tradition. While the growing range of complex and multivalent meanings expanded as Goth/ic culture gained ground (Spooner 352), the numerous venues and clubs around the world have become "refuges" where the subculture can thrive (Harriman and Botje 108). From the U.K. to the U.S., throughout Scandinavia, Europe, and even Japan, individuals have found in the Goth scene a way to cope with their fears and pains, and expel negative emotions. Rather than running away from the darkness they see in the world, Goths choose to embody it through a performative identity that empirically actualizes cathartic pleasure. Gothic texts, visual narratives, and songs have become manifestos of freedom, and Goths stand out from the crowd to dance to the rhythms of positive (r)evolutions. As Oscar Wilde, a writer in the vein of the Gothic tradition and a man ahead of his time in his queerness and style, wrote in *De Profundis,* "Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation" (63). In the Goth scene, each of us explores our own opinions and finds what truly moves us against any mainstream prefabricated ideas. In other words, as it is often simplified on the internet: "be yourself, everyone is already taken".

Conclusion

Since the emergence of the Gothic as a literary genre in the late eighteenth century, the resultant artistic codes and specific aesthetics have permitted a translation of anxieties that arose in different times and contexts. In providing symbolic materializations of the artists' and their audiences' concerns, their expression in Gothic novels, poems, paintings, plays, movies, TV shows, videogames, and music, demonstrates the genre's unique representational and cathartic power. Moreover, the musical recasting of such Gothic expressions has led to the development of the Goth subcultural scene in which participants construct a meaningful socio-cultural identity. In essence, the depiction of fears grants the ability to overcome them, and the tendency of the Gothic to renew itself and to offer cathartic experiences in different contexts explains its popularity and longevity. While audiences temporarily agree to suspend their disbelief and dive into the realms of terror and horrors, they come out of it with a better understanding of their own fears in an entertaining and pleasurable manner. As a processing tool of society's challenges through artistic means of expression, Gothic catharsis proves to be a rich and relevant medium to apprehend the Western world's transformations.

Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* settled the literary Gothic genre's main focuses and concepts. From castles in sublimised distant ages and far-off lands to the uncanny alienation of times to come, through the births of supernatural creatures, Gothic texts started a tradition of transgressing words to suggest transcending worlds and vice versa. In signifying the returns of repressed dreads, and the placement of ourselves vis-à-vis them, the (re)writing of dysfunctional families, haunted houses, unexplained deaths, and monsters, participated in the formation of the specific Gothic imagery and bestiary. Being used differently by writers inclined to the Gothic's folklore, each fictive element echoes aspects or events of the reality in which they were produced. Moreover, not only did they mark their time, but they also became inherent in the Gothic culture. As arts diversified and new visual mediums appeared, the Gothic tradition expanded and renewed itself, always reaching broader audiences. The advent of Gothic drama and phantasmagories actualized the images of terror and conferred upon them more direct and vivid corporeality, which engaged spectators in intense participations with the narratives, and made catharsis more available, almost inevitable.

Throughout the twentieth century, innovations in the Gothic answered the rapid progress of technologies and the development of popular art forms in film, television, and computer. From then on, no distinct "Gothic genre" could be delimited, but rather, a multitude

of subgenres spread out in which Gothic instances, themes, and images, underlined contextual fears and anxieties. Films noirs, horror cinema, science-fiction, mystery, psychological dramas, and survival videogames, amongst others, offered audiences ever-growing experiences of immersion—and catharsis—in Gothic fictive worlds. Furthermore, the postmodern (re)consideration of the individuals' place in society increased the questioning of personality and identity. As the link between musical and cultural tastes, and personal beliefs and lifestyle, mattered more in a person's existence, the redefinition of the self could be achieved by participation in subcultural scenes. In the case of Goth music, the heritage of the Gothic tradition was transposed into reality through the artists' unique sonic and visual acts. The influence they wielded on their listeners drove them to reassess the significance of their own distinctiveness, which thereupon was reinterpreted via the development of performative identities. The process in which one comes to engage in experimentations and affirmations of one's values corresponds to the ultimate stage of catharsis. When we have overcome our deepest despairs, doubts, and traumas, we can proudly display in our personal style dark but more beautiful markers of successful empowerment.

Altogether, Gothic art and Goth culture are mediums themselves in which the dusks of the world are constantly renegotiated, knowing that at the crack of dawn, what has not killed us, made us stronger.

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