

## Making monsters: Gothic Processes and Metaphors in Contemporary Art

### Lecture

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### 1. Endless varieties of Gothic

'There is a lot of **second-rate work** these days that illustrates Goth motifs, **wearing gloom on its sleeves with big winks for everyone.**' – Ralph Rugoff, *frieze*, 2004<sup>1</sup>

#### a dark strain of contemporary art

gothic-themed **exhibitions**<sup>2</sup> and **publications**<sup>3</sup> in the US and the UK, and a March 2009 **auction** at Sotheby's,

- 1) spooky motifs such as skulls, bones, tombstones, shrouds, devils;
- 13) references to horror film; atmospheric, often elaborate interiors suggestive of a haunted house;
- 16) knights; castles; pointed arches, stained glass and other medieval or Shakespearean motifs;
- 2) Goth subculture;
- 3) adolescence, often evoked in labour-intensive, obsessive and overwrought ('psychedelic') drawings;
- 4) monstrous combinations of human and animal forms, or the organic and the inorganic, in 'Frankensteinian' creations;
- 5) mirrors, masks and doubles;
- 6) references to 19<sup>th</sup> century gothic novelists, particularly Edgar Allan Poe;
- 7) evocations of death, decay and nostalgia;
- 8) blood; matted hair; dissections; amputations and prosthetics;
- 9) exotic settings and details, tending towards a Victorian, Egyptian or Orientalist flavour;
- 10) erotica obliquely suggestive of sado-masochism, often in illustration and cartoon;
- 11) demonic children and children/doll/animal hybrids;
- 12) demonic animals, particularly bats, leopards, rats; flies and insects, sometimes dead or dying;
- 14) texts in gothic typeface;
- 15) ruins; desolate or dream landscapes; phantom cities;
- 17) shadowy or clouded images and projections; night scenes;
- 18) a predominance of the colour black

from medieval architecture to 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century literature, from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century B-films to late 20<sup>th</sup> century goth subcultural style

### 2. What Gothic has become/what gothic could be

#### vaguerly and anachronism.

historically rich and potent term, which **only returned meaningfully - late 1990s**, will lapse into **an art purely of motif**

'**Candygothic**', a set of instable if recognizable 'gothic' triggers which play to a niche audience and corresponding market?

signs of '**otherness**' (sub-cultural fashion; a generic preference for the disturbing and violent over the life-affirming; distant times, people and places, etc.)

*frieze* 2003

'Too many young artists today simply regurgitate a slew of diluted Pop-Goth signifiers, filling graduate studios with a plethora of skulls and spider's webs, vampires and fake blood, zombie heads, eyeball sculptures and ninth-generation variations of old Bauhaus videos. Thus defanged, Goth has never been more tiresome.' [...]

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Rugoff, 'Anthony Burdin', *frieze*, issue 87, Nov-Dec 2004, [http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/meg\\_cranston/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/meg_cranston/), accessed 5 April 2009

<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> Among these: 'Nightwood', Rhodes+Mann Gallery, London, 2003; 'All the Pretty Corpses', The Renaissance Society, Chicago, 2005; 'I see a darkness. . .', Blum & Poe Gallery, New York, 2007; 'Spectre vs. Rector', The Residence Gallery, London, 2007; 'Gothic', Fieldgate Gallery, London, 2008; 'A Gothic Story', Shoreditch Town Hall, London, 2008; 'Through a Glass Darkly', Kenny Schacter ROVE projects, London, 2008; 'You Dig the Tunnel, I'll Hide the Soil', White Cube and Shoreditch Town Hall, London, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Francesca Gavin, *Hell Bound: New Gothic Art* (London: Laurence King), 2008 and my own *Gothic: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Gilda Williams (London: MIT Press and Whitechapel), 2007.

'In the past artists and writers were the necessary voices urgently articulating these truths and struggling to understand them. With this in mind, is it too much to ask where are the de Sades and Goyas, the Poes and Artauds, of today?'<sup>4</sup>

- interface between life and death
- the role of science and religion in determining the conditions of life
- the effects of patriarchy and the domination of women and other oppressed groups
- the legacy of slavery
- the limits of pain and pleasure
- how humankind defines monstrosity and Otherness
- and the psychology and lingering effects of dysfunctional families and an unhappy childhood

contemporary gothic art **express or expand meaningfully** this set of themes?

**anemic** evocation of the weird and the deathly, **relinquishing the genuinely destabilizing power**

### 3. How can we define Gothic?

parallel investigation into the **literary, architectural and art historical** understanding of this term

- originates in architecture history
- renewed definition via the arts and primarily the '**literature of terror**' invented in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and later developments
- is revived again through Victorian Gothic Revival architecture
- today used interdisciplinarily to denote a 'dark' strain of art, literature, film, fashion and music.

an '**accident of etymology**?'.<sup>5</sup>

Literary theorists, Varma, 'gothic spirit' Linda Bayer-Berenbaum writing in 1982, the two principal disciplines of gothic share numerous essential qualities. restless energy; enquiry into the unknown; intertwining motifs; nervousness; the supernatural; excess<sup>6</sup>.

Gothic novels set in **gothic abbeys and cathedrals**

**Horace Walpole**: wrote gothic novel, built gothic architecture

**3a Chris Baldick's - 1992** 'Introduction' to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*- most valid and resilient.<sup>7</sup>

'[The Gothic] should combine a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce a sickening descent into disintegration'<sup>8</sup>

history, claustrophobia and disintegration –  
Andy Warhol's *Electric Chair* and Louise Bourgeois' *Cells*

### **3b: curiosities about gothic**

**Gothic: can easily accommodate bad art** (Sedgwick: gothic novels not worth reading) (**Rotten Tomatoes**)

**Easily slips into parody**: Jane Austen parodies - comical *Northanger Abbey* (1818), via the 17 year-old protagonist, Catherine Morland's

<sup>4</sup> Charles LaBelle, 'I see a Darkness ...', Blum & Poe, Los Angeles', *frieze*, issue 76, June-July-August 2003, 116.

<sup>5</sup> Linda Bayer-Berenbaum, 'The Relationship of Gothic Art to Gothic Literature' in *The Gothic Imagination: Expansion in Gothic Literature and Art* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses), 1982, 51.

Linda Bayer-Berenbaum, *ibid.*, 47-71.

<sup>7</sup> Spooner calls Baldick's 'the most satisfactory definition of literary Gothic' (Spooner, *op. cit.* 18) while for curator Christoph Grunenberg it provides the parameters in his examination of gothic contemporary art as defining 'a true Gothic work', *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late Twentieth Century Art* (Boston: ICA), 1997, 195.

<sup>8</sup> Baldick, *op. cit.*, xiii.

**continual disappointment** with what she has determined gothic ought to be. Arriving at the medieval abbey - how 'distressing' the difference is to her.<sup>9</sup>

medieval period and, by extension, the Gothic, to give way to **contradictory forms**

Gothic: slippery, anything that makes you '**feel gothicky**' (Alexandra Warwick)

Catherine Spooner : **antithetical moments and ideas** in culture.

*'[Gothic] can be progressive or conservative, nostalgic or modern, political or apolitical, feminine or masculine, erudite or trashy, transcendently spiritual or doggedly material, sinister or silly. It is difficult to say what contemporary Gothic "is" of even what it is like, since it does all these things so well.'*<sup>10</sup>

Jerrold Hogle: Gothic is always fake; no 'authentic gothic' 'revival of something that never happened'

You always choose gothic, adopt gothic: unlike abject, uncanny which happen to you (share supernatural, no 'surprise ending' – return of the Unfamiliar – also NOT automata, built like a robot, but not one

(gothic monsters can talk, gothic monster dress well – zombies?) seductiveness

### **3c. Bad Gothic/good gothic**

Modern architects and historians- **self-conscious, derivative Victorian Gothic** architecture (bad Gothic) and the far superior, structurally daring and spiritually uplifting **Gothic cathedrals of the 11-15th centuries (good Gothic)**

If '**bad**' contemporary gothic -e **contradictory** motifs - what is its counterpart, '**good**' contemporary gothic?

shift from '**bad**' (anti-modern) to '**good**' (contemporary)

constant '**good gothic/bad gothic**' dualism: purposeful gothic/sensationalist gothic; transgressive gothic/harmless gothic; honest gothic/artificial gothic; pure gothic/corrupted gothic, and so forth (barbaric gothic/classical)

Vasari/Ruskin; medieval architecture/revival architecture

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### **4. Gothic as an antidote to modernism**

*'Return of death'*

*'It only makes sense that artists are channeling a more intense aura: 9/11, the war in Iraq, the turbulent global economy and the recent SARS viral outbreak in Hong Kong have all left society and culture in a paranoid state' (Michael Cohen, 'The New Gothic', Flash Art, 2003)<sup>11</sup>*

I find this an **inadequate** explanation from the extreme volte-face - from Greenberg's derogatory attitude toward gothic, and the art world's interest today (despite some continued reservations) in, the Gothic. end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Martin Myrone offer **exactly the opposite reason** for its popularity:

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<sup>9</sup> Jane Austen (1818): 'The windows, to which she looked with peculiar dependence, from having heard the general talk of his preserving them in their Gothic form with reverential care, were less what her fancy had portrayed. To be sure, the pointed arch was preserved – the form of them was Gothic – they might be even casements – but every pane was so large, so clear, so light! To an imagination which had hoped for the smallest divisions, and the heaviest stone-work, the painted glass, dirt and cobwebs, the difference was very distressing.' *Northanger Abbey*, cited in Myrone, *The Gothic Reader*, op. cit., 221.

<sup>10</sup> Spooner, op. cit., (PAGE?)

<sup>11</sup> Michael Cohen, 'New Gothic: Scary Monsters and Super Creeps', *Flash Art International* (July-Sept 2003), 108-110, reprinted in Williams, op. cit., 45,

it was **the removal of death – not its proximity** --, i.e., the end of public executions and the transferral of the site (sight) of death from the home to hospitals and other institutions that prompted the imaging of death in popular art forms over two centuries ago.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Move away from modernism signaled by return to gothic

main theme: **'the persistence of the past, and the fear and anxiety this produces'**

broadly at its meaning (**historically and cross-disciplinarily**) beyond motif and concentrating instead on the **system of themes and processes** of Gothic/gothic art and literature

contemporary (post-1960) art has – **on a par with film and literature** -- adopted and updated

**Contemporary artists use Gothic constantly:**

certain **art forms** also have permitted

- artists whose work is not ordinarily framed in this manner
- **haunted places** (Gregor Schneider, Jane and Louise Wilson)
- **labyrinths and prisons** (Mike Nelson, Janet Cardiff)
- **shadows and spectres** (Andy Warhol, Gregory Crewdson)
- ominous **fragments of text** and disembodied **voices** (Douglas Gordon, Raymond Pettibon)
- **fragmented bodies** (Paul Thek, Louise Bourgeois, (David Hammons,)
- **family secrets** and the crisis of patriarchy (Charles Ray, Louise Bourgeois)
- the **modern imaging of death**

the **making of monsters**

**ruins**, which signal our relationship to the remnants the past (Rachel Whiteread, Tacita Dean)

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- the regular **appropriation of often violent imagery** from the mass media
- the establishment of **installation art** and its recurring use to create **'haunted' sites**
- a return to **figuration** particularly from the 1980s, and the potential for these figures to be **distorted to monstrosity**
- and **moving images or audioworks** which enables extensive **storytelling**
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## 6. One meaning, lost forever:

*Ruskin's social conception of Gothic architecture* as overcoming divisions of artistic labour

**John Ruskin's** - the most enduring – (September 2008, of his book *The Nature of Gothic* (1851-53), artist **Meg Cranston's** most influential, 'classic' texts.<sup>13</sup>)

overcome the limitations of motif - **not characterized by mere form** (pointed arches, flying buttresses, stained glass, etc.).

'come together so as to have **life**.'<sup>14</sup>

appreciation of **'the labour of inferior minds'**

connectedness between **man and his handiwork** and a leveling of society that is absent, in the modern world.<sup>15</sup>

socially equalizing and **self-sacrificing value** (Marxism anti-gothic literature)

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<sup>12</sup> Myrone, *Gothic Nightmares*, op. cit., 36.

<sup>13</sup> Meg Cranston, 'I have always loved Ruskin's writing but thought students wouldn't be able to relate. They get into the idea that Ruskin's socialism was related to his enthusiasm for the Gothic. Gothic cathedrals suddenly seem intriguing.', *frieze*, issue 117, Sept 2008, [http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/meg\\_cranston/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/meg_cranston/), accessed 5 April 2009.

<sup>14</sup> John Ruskin, 'The Nature of Gothic', from *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53), reprinted in *The Genius of John Ruskin*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998, 'It is not enough that it has the Form, if it have not also the power and life. It is not enough that it has the Power, if it have not the form'., PAGE?

<sup>15</sup> Ruskin, *ibid.*, 176 ff.

ignore Ruskin's central argument - socially and artistically significant interpretation

1919 the Bauhaus artist **Lyonel Feininger** - roughly executed, 'Germanic' woodcut titled *Cathedral of the Future* - spires and flying buttresses, - stylized village Gothic church.

return of the **work values**, the artistic and community sensibility - spiritual fulfillment symbolized - modest Gothic church.

## 7. History of the term Gothic – medieval-19<sup>th</sup> c.

exclusively meant for art historians Western visual art and architecture produced between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries

The '**Goth**' tribes – actually divided into Visigoths and Ostrogoths – randomly named during the Renaissance  
all the invading tribes into the Roman Empire: **the Huns, the Vandals, the Anglo-Saxons, the Lombards, the Celts,** and others.

Coined during the **Renaissance for a long-unnamed style**  
**pejorative meaning 'barbaric'**.

Giorgio Vasari (although some earlier uses are found in the writings of Filarete [1460-64] and Raphael [1518-19]<sup>16</sup>)

lien to Italy and Greco-Roman origins – all that was **monstrous, corrupt and 'goffa'** (awkward) in non-classical art.

Gothic emerging simultaneously as **both a historical (Gothic = 'medieval') / descriptive (Gothic = 'barbaric'** 'awkward') term

Martin Myrone writes in the 2006 catalogue *Gothic Nightmares*.

an analogous move? - i.e., that the re-emergence - **distancing in the contemporary from the predominance of modernism/**

18<sup>th</sup> century gothic as

= a historically, cultural and formal **alternative** - classicism.

around the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century the term - associated with a **fictionalized revisitation** of the Middle Ages

the novels and architecture of **Horace Walpole** (1717-1797) (amateur)

the wealthy and privileged son of **Sir Robert Walpole**, long-time Whig prime minister (from 1721-42)

In contrast with the **later 19<sup>th</sup> century claims by Pugin** et al.

**moral purity** and a corresponding - **archaeologically**-driven accuracy

associated **more with emotion and pleasure** than with reason

Walpole's - **anti-intellectual**, purely emotional spirit of Gothic, reiterated by Ruskin in the 1830s, Coleridge in the 1930s,<sup>17</sup> and art critics to the present-day<sup>18</sup> –

shifting the term '**from an adjective of opprobrium into an epithet of praise**'<sup>19</sup> –

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<sup>16</sup> De Beer, op. cit., 145 ff.

<sup>17</sup> S.T. Coleridge (1936): "The Greek art is beautiful, when I enter a Greek church, my eye is charmed, and my mind elated; I feel exalted and proud that I am a man. But the Gothic art is sublime. On entering a Gothic cathedral, I am filled with devotion and with awe", from *General Character of the Gothic Literature and Art* (cited in Devendra Varma, *The Gothic Flame, Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England: Its Origins, Efflorescence, Disintegration, and Residuary Influences* (New York: Russell & Russell), 1957, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Gilda Williams (2007): "'Gothic' in contemporary art is more atmospheric than neatly defined, [g]enerally anti-intellectual and unscientific...", in *The Gothic* (London: MIT Press and the Whitechapel), 2007, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Varma, op. cit., 13.

a **mythical, uncorrupted** original state

a specifically **English and German** political identity.<sup>20</sup>

A return to the linear severity of the '**Old German**' or Dureresque print

a **mystical, national authenticity**, - Casper David Friedrich's *The Cross upon the Mountain or Tetschen Altarpiece* (1808)

**Goethe's** well-known promotion - **indigenous, Germanic** art forms -- Gothic architecture - a symbol of **national resistance** in the post-Napoleonic era.<sup>21</sup>

**nationalist sentiment** - refusal of Southern European classical culture as pre-eminent.

places and periods other than the classical, literalized in Thomas Cole's painting *The Architect's Dream* (1840) - of Gothic, Egyptian, Grecian, and Moorish structures – alongside a Greek temple.

*Sturm and Drang*, - Swiss-born, London-based artist **Henry Fuseli**, most often seen as the **painterly parallel** to English literary

shadowy, claustrophobic works such as *The Nightmare (1781-82)* and *The Three Witches (c. 1793)*

Fuseli admired medieval Gothic cultures,<sup>22</sup> - **scorned the gothic novelists** - overly detached issues of their day,<sup>23</sup>

literary sources instead in the **Greek playwrights and Shakespeare**.<sup>24</sup>

Myrone, what actually **unites Gothic forms in art and literature** - not their shared atmosphere or ghostly motifs, - relationship to their **wide audience**

shared meaning and purpose - not in the superficial similarities of motif,

by the **1830s**, with the art of Constable, Ingres, Delacroix et al., **Fuseli's art - outworn, overblown and decadent;**

taste for medievalism in the visual arts - illustrative, congenial art of the **pre-Raphaelites**

**Revivalist architecture** - Britain, Germany, France and the United States into - the 20<sup>th</sup> century

In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural historians **Viollet-le Duc** (1814-79) - A.W. N. **Pugin** (1812-52) and John **Ruskin** (1819-1900)

### 7a. Gothic in the 20<sup>th</sup> c. (Vanitas)

**Catherine Spooner ; is it a revival?**

*Rebecca* (Daphne Du Maurier, 1933) Hitchcock, year?

*Nosferatu*, F.W. Murnau, 1922; *Dracula*, Tod Browning, 1931; *Frankenstein*, James Whale, 1931

*Psycho*, 1960

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<sup>20</sup> David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Malden, MA, Oxford, and Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell), 2004, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew Craske, *Art in Europe 1700-1830: A History of the Visual Arts in an Era of Unprecedented Urban Economic Growth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1997, 97-98.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Fuseli (1788-1818): 'We are more impressed by Gothic than by Greek mythology, because the bands are not yet rent which tie us to its magic; he has a powerful hold on us who holds by our superstition or by a theory of honour', *Aphorisms on Art*, no. 105, reprinted in Martin Myrone, ed. and Frayling, *The Gothic Reader*, op. cit., 197.

<sup>23</sup> AUTHOR?, 'Invented Plots: The Enchanted Puppets and Fairy Doubles of Henry Fuseli', in *Gothic Nightmares*, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Myrone, 'Gothic Gloomth', in *Gothic Nightmares*, op. cit., 101.

**historical low-point, 1960s**, *The Mistress of Mellyn* (Victoria Holt, 1962<sup>25</sup>)

horror B-films exemplified *House of Wax* (1953)

'Hammer Horror', low-budget horror films and their endless sequels (*The Curse of Frankenstein*, 1957; *Dracula*, 1958; *The Mummy*, 1959; *The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb*, 1964, *ad infinitum*)

bad gothic, at its baddest.

review of Edith Birkhead's survey *The Tale of Terror* (1921) - **Virginia Woolf** - the only defensible understanding of gothic fiction- Freudian **psychoanalysis**, brimming with symbolic traumas, complexes and sado-masochistic behaviours -reduce the text to a symptom.

Summers' above-mentioned *The Gothic Quest* a **defense of a fading tradition**.

During the early 20th century 'Gothic' and '**Gothic Revival**' **heavily negative** associations

-narrative excess

clinging to the past / modernism's clean, futuristic optimism.

1924, Virginia **Woolf** - 'on or about December, 1910, human character changed',<sup>26</sup> 'Gothic Romance'

an epistemological break - **shackles of the Victorian period**- replaced with an improved social and cultural milieu: the Modern.

Gothic and Modernism are generally considered **incompatible**, antithetical –

One is **forward-looking**, the other nostalgic of the past

one **rationalist**, the other emotional

one prides itself on straightforward **functionality** while the other is prone to decorative excess and drama.

**modern** International Style, into a **unanimously reviled** building style.

**Frank Lloyd Wright** admired - an 'organic' architecture, given the column's slender, stem-like columns and 'skin and bones' construction

The Italian Futurist poet **Filippo Marinetti** - his speech to the English: (1912-revised 1915)

Even **Kenneth Clark**, - expert and supporter of the Gothic Revival, - 1928 Introduction to *The Gothic Revival* woefully apologizing - a style of such candid distaste.

1948 Erwin **Panofsky**

*'[T]he panoply of shafts, ribs, buttresses, tracery, pinnacles, and crockets was a self-analysis and self-explication of architecture [intended to make us] re-experience the very processes of architectural composition.'*<sup>27</sup>

bears witness to the logic of its own construction

**Meyer Schapiro** had, in 1931, brilliantly assessed the early Gothic (1100 AD) sculpture adorning the abbey of Moissac

Modernist values.

*'A new sphere of artistic creation without religious content and imbued with values of spontaneity, individual fantasy, delight in color and movement, and the expression of feelings [...] anticipate modern art.'*<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See Anne Williams, 'Edifying Narratives: The Gothic Novel, 1764-1997' 151-118, in Christoph Grunenberg, ed., *Gothic* op. cit. The page numbers of this catalogue are in reverse numerical order.

<sup>26</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'Gothic Romance' and 'Character in Fiction' (GW: WHICH?), in Andrew McNeillie, ed., *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 3, 1919-1924 (London: The Hogarth Press), 1988, 421, cited in Catherine Spooner, 'Gothic in the Twentieth Century', in Spooner, Catherine and Emma McEvoy, *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* (London and New York: Routledge), 2007, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, 1951, 59. (GW to ch.)

**good Gothic**/'bad Gothic' pattern ;

'good' Gothic that is uncorrupted, as honest in its building methods as it was pious in its intent

'bad' Gothic -- over-decorated, undisciplined, materialistic --decadent qualities that Walpole had admired.

Clement Greenberg

*Jackson Pollock, Gothic, 1944*

used **disparagingly, as Greenberg** did in his description of late **Pollock**

Mondrian: shed the brambles of gothic'

Chris Baldick, writing in 1992, - antithetical positioning of gothic against Modernism - continues the gothic's perpetual positioning in **terms of opposition** -

of the **enlightened**, the rational - which from its literary inception, 'hold the pejorative sense of Gothic in its place.'<sup>29</sup>

a shorthand - **all that is retrograde and stifling** about pre-modernist art.

nothing worse, **an artist today still working in the spirit of gothic**

T.J Clark writes in 1994, '*the gothic was 'the opposite of what Greenberg considered the real strengths of the modern tradition'*<sup>30</sup>. Gothic was an insult, an accusation of anti-modernity and false depth

20<sup>th</sup> century Russian filmmaker Sergei M. **Eisenstein** many decades later - its counter-cultural, evocative powers.<sup>31</sup>

exceptions, (**Andre Breton's** claiming of Horace Walpole as a Surrealist precursor)

Clement Greenberg's dismissal of the movement - representing **all that was retrograde and abhorrent in Surrealist art.**

well into the 1970s-80s - '**Western medieval**'; that is, 'gothic' was a **historical rather than a descriptive** term, as today.

medieval architecture (i.e., the soaring **verticality** of the old cathedrals and the coloured patterning of **stained glass**) - by association the mystical **gravitas** of medieval cathedrals

today, heavily reliant on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, (i.e., having to do with **death, ghosts, monsters**, etc.) - not into play

a 1958 essay **Rodin Cathedral** (1908), depicting tall, vertical, praying hands, - 'evocation of the great Gothic naves of northern France'.<sup>32</sup>

**Rouault's** parallels with the Gothic -black outlined and strongly coloured compositions' resemblance to stained glass windows - a craft the artist had mastered himself

1933, Rouault's figures are compared with early **Gothic gargoyles** - albeit with the addition of modern 'interest in the struggle within ourselves' -

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<sup>28</sup> Meyer Schapiro, doctoral dissertation, partially published in *The Art Bulletin*, 1931, reprinted in *Romanesque Art. Selected Papers* (New York: George Braziller) 1977), PAGE?

<sup>29</sup> Chris Baldick, 'Introduction', *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (Oxford University Press), 1992, xii.

<sup>30</sup> T.J. Clark, 'In Defense of Abstract Expressionism', in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 1999, 316. Revised from an earlier version which first appeared in *October* 69 Summer 1994, 22-48 (33). 'Gothick' is spelled 'Gothic', in the *October* article.

<sup>31</sup> Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein, 'Gothic (and Gogol)', first published in 1964, in *Critica d'Arte*, No. 7, vol. 50 (Oct-Dec 1985), 30-8.

<sup>32</sup> Albert Elsen, 'The Humanism of Rodin and Lipchitz', *College Art Journal*, vol. 17, no. 3, Spring 1958, 248: 'Rodin's *Cathedral*, a sculpture of two hands clasped in a gesture of prayer may have been simultaneously an evocation of the great Gothic naves of Northern France or of his visits to the forests of Belgium.'

Clement **Greenberg's 1965 - Anthony Caro** as related to the English Perpendicular Gothic,<sup>33</sup>

Lawrence **Alloway's - 1975 of Caro as Picturesque**, citing the 18<sup>th</sup> century writings of William Gilpin

**German nationalist spirit** - ('Germanic' in the writings of Vasari). (**Feininger**)

1929, the Modernist art collector and critic Wilhelm **Uhde praised Picasso** - embodying the ideal, modern manifestation of the German and Gothic soul

Well into the 1970s and 80s, modernist German artists such **Ernst Barlach and Max Beckmann** -Germanic gothicism.<sup>34</sup>

For Donald Kuspit - 1995, **Georg Baselitz** shares Uhde's notion of a mystical, healing role - gothic.

Joseph Beuys - Roberta Smith's 1988 discussion of **Beuys's work Felt Suit** (1970), - compares to both animal skin and a businessman's grey flannel suit before claiming that *Felt Suit*

*'... is also deeply Gothic, suggesting both a suit of armor and human husk: in other words, an ancient system of protection and a soul beyond need of protection.'*<sup>35</sup>

Kuspit or Smith's notion of gothic -**nationalistically-driven, ancient, emotional** art form rooted in a mythological past

contrasts with Christoph Grunenberg's definition -, just two years after Kuspit's article, in his **1997 'Gothic'** catalogue, - to do mostly with **terror literature, violence, and horror film**.<sup>36</sup>

Jake and Dinos Chapman, Cathy de Moncheaux, Damien Hirst and Sue Williams that 'gothic' begins to find regular usage in art periodicals

contemporary gothic art - **shed this nationalistic, nostalgic and 'primitive'**

### **7b. Return of Gothic, late 20th c.**

films within the horror genre such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1973), *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980, based on the novel by Stephen King, 1977) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991) - **cultural stock goes up**

artist **Mike Kelley's Urban Gothic** in 1985, a fictional Blade Runner-esque account of a kind of post-apocalyptic city<sup>37</sup>.

**Jeff Wall** discussed Dan Graham's mirrored pavilion, not as these works usually had been, in terms of its modernist glass-and-steel resonance but as an 'abandoned crypt of Gothic tales',

*Modern Painters'* editor and founder, **Peter Fuller** (1947-90) - his **neo-conservative** attitude towards contemporary art,

at odds with established art publishing and American academia - the title for his magazine a phrase from Ruskin

<sup>33</sup> Clement Greenberg (1965): 'Caro's roots in English art tradition - roots that go back literally to Perpendicular Gothic - become more evident the longer one looks.' In 'Contemporary Sculpture: Anthony Caro', *Arts Yearbook 8*, 1965; *Studio International*, September 1967 (unrevised), *Anthony Caro*, Kroller-Muller State Museum, Otterlo, Holland, 1967; *Anthony Caro*, ed. Richard Whelan, 1974, reprinted in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4, Modernism with a Vengeance 1957-1969*, ed. John O'Brian, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 1993, 207.

<sup>34</sup> See A. Werner, 'Barlach: Modern Gothic Master', *National Sculpture Review*, vol. 26, no. 4, Winter 1977-78, 20-21; De Francia, P., Max Beckmann: 'A Homer in Concierge's Lodge', *Fine Art Letter*, vol. 3, May 1981; G. Metken, 'Beckmann: Personal Experience of the Tragic', *Beaux Arts Magazine*, no. 11, Mar 1984, 46-53.

<sup>35</sup> Roberta Smith, 'Joseph Beuys as Teacher and Artist', *New York Times*, November 25, 1988, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/11/25/arts/review-art-joseph-beuys-as-teacher-and-artist.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed 21 April 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Christoph Grunenberg, ed., *Gothic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press), 1997.

<sup>37</sup> Mike Kelley, 'Urban Gothic', *Spectacle* No. 3, 1985, reprinted in Kelley, *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003), 4-7, and excerpted in Williams, Gilda, *The Gothic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press/Whitechapel), 2007, 36-37.

Goth **subcultural motifs** (skulls, daggers, tombstones, demon dolls)

**Gothic TV** (*Six Feet Under*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, et al.) To these I might also add other possibilities:

at the end of the 1990s - return as a positive, descriptive term for art –

Christoph Grunenberg (Gordon, etc.) identifies - Bruce Conner and West Coast hyperrealist Paul Thek as examples of the sporadic eruptions of gothic in the 1960s<sup>38</sup>.

at the time they were **not framed at the time in these terms**.

shed certain qualities (for example, as a signifier of **English or German nationalism**), and gained others (**subcultural capital**)

shift from 'bad' (**anti-modern**) to 'good' (**contemporary**)

In the 1990s Margaret Cohen - '**Gothic Marxism**' to unite Breton's fantasy-inspired uses of Marxism with Walter Benjamin's 'efforts to appropriate Freud's seminal twentieth-century exploration of the irrational for Marxist thought'.<sup>39</sup>

(Jacques Derrida)

Nicolas Bourriaud - '**Alter-modernity**', a strain of 21<sup>st</sup> century artistic discussion

processes such as **fragmentation, storytelling and the imaging of the ruins** of postmodernism

## 8. Warhol – a gothic reading Gothic= medieval; gothic=literature

### 8a. Danse macabre – 1. prevalence of death

The outbreaks of Black Death, famine, Hundred Years War from the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century - perpetual presence of death; this conventionally provides the backdrop for the prevalence of the *danses macabres*

*'I guess it was the big crash picture, the front page of a newspaper: 129 Die. I was also painting the Marilyns. I realized that everything I was doing must have been Death. It was Christmas or Labor Day – a holiday – and every time you turned on the radio they said something like "4 million are going to die." That started it.'*<sup>40</sup>

### 2, Death at any moment

Surprise - **accident**

### 3. Socially equalizing (everyone dies)

*'My death series was divided into two parts, the first one famous deaths and second on people nobody ever heard of, and I thought that people should think about them sometimes: the girl who jumped off the Empire State Building or the ladies who ate the poisoned tunafish and people getting killed in car crashes.'*

*'What's great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too. [...].'*<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Grunenberg, op. cit.. PAGE? Conner's 'disjunctive, decaying, soiled sculpture' and Thek's 'displays of repulsiveness, assemblages of bloody chunks of meat in glass and steel cubes' are given the gothic qualities Grunenberg describes in contemporary art in his catalogue.

<sup>39</sup> Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993, 2. (CH?))

<sup>40</sup> Andy Warhol, in (Swenson?)

<sup>41</sup> Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy*, op cit., 96.

The sequence of works from the year 1962-63 suggests a parallel Warholian message: 'The President can die, Liz Taylor can die, and *just think*, you can die too.'

### 8b. Blurring

The imagery of the gothic abounds with such blurring, confusing distinctions between figure and ground.

**the ruin**, which is both the object in the landscape and the landscape itself

**the ghost**, who also occupies a contradictory figure-and-ground position literally staged in the spectral photography of the mid-19th century.

unusual choice of imagery in Andy Warhol's *Death and Disaster* series, particularly the car crashes and the race riots

imaging death Warhol untypically selected semi-indecipherable and indistinct images, rendered more illegible through multiple overlapping silkscreens

contrast with the solid, unambiguous outlines of the *Campbell's Soup Cans*, the portraits and almost all the rest of his art

not abstraction

### 8c. Skin Drella

Subsequent theorists - surface-based re-reading - **Judith Halberstam's** *Skin Shows: Gothic Horrors and the Technology of Monsters* (1995)

all signs of monstrosity – Dracula's pallor; Frankenstein loose yellow complexion; Dr. Jeckyll's darkening visage in his transformation into Mr Hyde; the gruesome garment stitched from human flesh in *The Silence of Lambs*

*"I'm ready to apply the **flesh-coloured acne-pimple** medication that doesn't resemble any human flesh I've ever seen, though it does come pretty close to mine ... So now the pimple's covered. But am I covered? I have to look in the mirror for some more clues. Nothing is missing. It's all there. The affectless gaze. The diffracted grace ..."*

analogous emphasis on surface in his art: 'If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, **just look at the surface**: of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it.'<sup>42</sup>

His identity lies on his skin, just as his art remains on the surface. This is the very **opposite of Pollock's** emotionally fraught, deeply human layering of paint on canvas, Greenberg's Modernist ideal.

### 8d. Dorian Grey

of *I thought I was too small for Drexel Burnham*, a 1986  
Oscar Wilde's gothic novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

**double self-portrait** we see in the foreground the everyday 'human' Warhol – small, youthful, and unthreatening, poised shyly on the edge of a chair and able to speak **the lingua franca** of capitalism behind him a gigantic, demonic canvas visage – deathly, skull-like, stunned and toothless in a spiky fright wig.

scarred painted image behind Warhol betrays his allegedly damaged soul -- or at least his **on-canvas performance** of the monstrous Pop artist.

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<sup>42</sup> Gretchen Berg, 'Andy Warhol: My True Story', originally published in *The East Village Other*, summer 1966. Reprinted in Kenneth Goldsmith, *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews 1962-1987* (New York: Carroll & Graf), 2004. Recent research into the original tapes from this interview reveal that much of this often-cited quote were spoken by the interviewer herself, although Warhol agreed with her words, approved the text and keenly admired the resulting interview text, in which Berg's voice is made to vanish altogether. See Matt Wrbcian, 'The True Story of "My True Story"', in *Andy Warhol: A Guide to 706 Items in 2 Hours and 56 Minutes*, op. cit., 00:56:00-00:57:00.