



# THE GOTHIC & ITS REVIVAL

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE  
ART@SHAFE.UK  
WWW.SHAFE.UK

Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare* (detail), 1781, Institute of Arts, Detroit

- I was going to talk about the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival movement but the more I thought about the word "Gothic" the more my thoughts expanded to cover a wide range of positive and negative meanings. So, I have expanded the talk to cover the history of Gothic.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic\\_art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_art)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic\\_Revival\\_architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_Revival_architecture)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic\\_architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_architecture)

## **REFERENCES AND COPYRIGHT**

- My talks and notes are produced with the assistance of AI systems such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini and Microsoft Bing.
- They are also based on information found on public websites such as Wikipedia, Tate, National Gallery, Louvre, The Met, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Khan Academy and the Art Story.
- If they use information from specific books, websites or articles these are referenced at the beginning of each talk and in the 'References' section of the relevant page. The talks that are inspired by an exhibition may use the booklets and books associated with the exhibition as a source of information.

- Where possible images and information are taken from Wikipedia under an [Attribution-Share Alike Creative Commons License](#).
- If I have forgotten to reference your work then please let me know and I will add a reference or delete the information.



Depiction of a Gothic warrior battling Roman cavalry, from the 3rd century Ludovisi Battle sarcophagus

Lincoln Cathedral, consecrated in 1091

Palace of Westminster

Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), *The Nightmare*, 1781, 101.6 cm × 127 cm, Institute of Arts, Detroit

*Apocalypse Now Redux*, which Francis Ford Coppola released in 2001, re-editing and extending his original 1979 movie

- The original meaning referred to the Goths, a Latin term for Germanic tribesmen. This is a depiction of a Gothic warrior battling Roman cavalry, from a 3rd century (Ludovisi Battle) sarcophagus. The Goths were ancient Germanic tribes that played a significant role in the sack of Rome in 410 CE and the subsequent fall of the Western Roman Empire.
- (CLICK) **Gothic architecture and art** was a term **applied in scorn by Italian Renaissance artists** to describe the "monstrous and barbarous" (Giorgio Vasari) architecture and art of the Medieval period. This is Lincoln Cathedral, consecrated in the 11th century.
- (CLICK) **Gothic Revival**. In the nineteenth century there was a revival of the Gothic style and it became a positive term in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain as it was seen to embody English history and noble virtues. This is the rebuilt Palace of Westminster.

- (CLICK) **Gothic Horror**. Over the centuries it has also had a **negative meaning** associated with **horror, witches and evil** which became a literary style with the **Gothic novel**.
- (CLICK) Finally, recently, Gothic horror combines the negative and the positive in the way it deals with dark and mysterious forces and themes of alienation, melancholy, and the nature of existence in music such as Black Sabbath and films such as *Apocalypse Now*.

## NOTES

- The Ostrogoths (eastern) and the Visigoths (western) are the two main branches of the Goths. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire the Visigothic Kingdom ruled parts of Gaul and Spain and the Ostrogothic Kingdom ruled Italy.
- The term "Goth" is derived from Late Latin Gothicus, from Gothi, the ancient Germanic people. The Goths are classified as a Germanic people in modern scholarship and are known for their significant historical and cultural impact. According to their own legends they originated from southern Scandinavia.
- "The **Gothic Revival** was a conscious movement that began in England to revive medieval Gothic forms, from the second half of the 18th century and throughout the 19th century. It was a response to the neoclassical styles prevalent at the time and drew its inspiration from medieval architecture. The movement encompassed not only architecture but also visual and decorative art, landscape design, and music, and it was seen as a quintessentially English style, adopted by both church and state as an expression of Englishness. The Gothic Revival was associated with a push for social and political freedom and was taken up by the Tractarians and others attempting to reinvigorate the 'true' English." (ChatGPT)
- Because of its early associations with barbarism, the term "Gothic" often carried negative connotations. This influenced its use in some literary styles like the Gothic novel, which explored themes of darkness, horror, and mystery.

## REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic\\_art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_art)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goths>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Nightmare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Nightmare)



Andrew Graham Dixon's TV programme ***The Art of Gothic: Britain's Midnight Hour*** dealt with many of the issues. He explores how a group of 19th-century architects and artists spurned the modern age and turned to Britain's medieval past to create iconic works and buildings.

- **Liberty Diversity Depravity.** In the middle of the 18th century - in England - an entirely surprising thing happened. Out of the **Age of Enlightenment** and Reason a **monster was born** - a Gothic obsession with monsters, ghouls, ghosts and things that go bump in the night. From restrained aristocratic beginnings to pornographic excesses, the Gothic revival came to influence popular art, architecture and literature.
- **The City and the Soul.** As the Industrial Revolution promised more and more inexplicable wonders of the modern world, Gothic art and literature became both backward and forward looking. In her novel ***Frankenstein***, Mary Shelley warned of the dangers of **how science could get out of control**, while Sir Giles Gilbert Scott used Gothic architecture to memorialise Prince Albert as a medieval hero. Meanwhile, poets indulged in hallucinatory drugs to reach new Gothic heights. Where would it all end?
- **Blood for Sale: Gothic Goes Global.** Gothic fantasy horror would be outstripped by real horror as the truth of **mechanised warfare** dawned on an innocent world in 1914. The language of Gothic would increasingly come to encapsulate the horrors of the 20th century - from Marx's analysis of 'vampiric' capitalism to Conrad's dark vision of imperialism and TS Eliot's image of *The Wasteland*, a Gothic narrative seemed to make more sense of the modern world more than any other.



West Front of Wells Cathedral, 13th-15th centuries

*The Lady and the Unicorn*, the title given to a series of six tapestries woven in Flanders, this one being called *À Mon Seul Désir*; late 15th century; wool and silk; 377 x 473 cm; Musée de Cluny (Paris)

- **Returning to Gothic art and architecture.** The word 'Gothic' was first used in a letter by **Raphael** (1483-1520) to **Pope Leo X** (1475-1521) to refer to the monstrous and barbarous art of the Medieval period. He claimed that the **pointed arches** of northern architecture were an **echo of the primitive huts the Germanic forest dwellers** formed by bending trees together.
- This is an illustration of the pointed arch from the west front of Wells Cathedral (built between the 13th and early 15th centuries). In fact, the pointed arch is an advance on the curved Roman arch as it supports a greater load.
- For the Italians, the word Gothic was a synonym for 'barbaric' as the Medieval period was associated with the **Sack of Rome by the Visigoths** (27 August, 410) followed by a thousand years of what was called '**The Dark Ages**'. The Italian Renaissance saw itself as **recreating the wonders and achievements of the classical world**. It was literally a rebirth and everything in between was simply barbarous.
- (CLICK) Tapestries like this and illuminated manuscripts from the late 15th century were unknown, disregarded or belittled.

## NOTES

- The word "Gothic" for art was initially used as a synonym for "Barbaric", and was therefore used pejoratively. Its critics saw this type of Medieval art as unrefined and too remote from the aesthetic proportions and shapes of Classical art. Renaissance authors believed that the Sack of Rome by the Gothic tribes in 410 had triggered the demise of the Classical world and all the values they held dear. In the 15th century, various Italian architects and writers complained that the new "barbarian" styles filtering down from north of the Alps posed a similar threat to the classical revival promoted by the early Renaissance.
- The "Gothic" qualifier for this art was first used in Raphael's letter to Pope Leo X c. 1518 and was subsequently popularised by the Italian artist and writer Giorgio Vasari, who used it as early as 1530, calling Gothic art a "monstrous and barbarous" "disorder". Raphael claimed that the pointed arches of northern architecture were an echo of the primitive huts the Germanic forest dwellers formed by bending trees together – a myth which would resurface much later in a more positive sense in the writings of the German Romantic movement. "Gothic art" was strongly criticized by French authors such as Boileau, La Bruyère, Rousseau, before becoming a recognised form of art, and the wording becoming fixed

## **REFERENCES**

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic\\_art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_art)



Lincoln Cathedral

Lincoln Cathedral, foundations laid 1072-92, finished 1092, destroyed by earthquake 1185, rebuilt 1192-1210 with pointed arches, flying buttresses and ribbed vaulting.

- This is Lincoln Cathedral, consecrated in 1091. The nineteenth century had a very different view from Italian Renaissance artists. The famous art critic **John Ruskin** wrote: **"I have always held... that the cathedral of Lincoln is out and out the most precious piece of architecture in the British Isles and roughly speaking worth any two other cathedrals we have"**.
- **In northern Europe** during the **late medieval period** people admired the 'Gothic' cathedrals as *opus modernum* ('modern work'). For them the cathedrals were God's work and an image of the Heavenly Jerusalem that they were privileged to build on earth with their soaring columns and spectacular stained glass.
- The medieval period was a time of profound change when merchants prospered and the first universities were founded and the papacy was at the height of its power.
- (CLICK) Nations were beginning to form and the greatest was France. France can be seen as the creator and innovator of Gothic architecture with its flying buttresses, seen here on the Chapter House of Lincoln Cathedral.
- (CLICK) The pointed windows and external flying buttresses are the technology that enabled light-filled soaring spaces to be created that could be filled with stained glass windows and ribbed vaulting. This is Lincoln Cathedral so-called



'crazy' ribbed vaulting, lit by the clerestory windows, at the top, above the triforium. This is St Hugh's Choir, one of the earliest examples of English Gothic style and is distinguished by the 'crazy vaults' I mentioned, the earliest example of a tierceron vault which three ribs springing from a pillar on one side and either side of a window on the other.

- I will be recording a separate talk on Gothic architecture.

## NOTES

- Giorgio Vasari *Lives of the most eminent architects, painters and sculptors* (1550): 'there is another sort of architectural work called German which is very different in its proportions and its decorations from both the antique and the modern. Its characteristics are not adopted these days by any of the leading architects, who consider them **monstrous and barbaric**, wholly ignorant of any accepted ideas of sense or order... This manner of building was **invented by the Goths**, who put up structures in this way after all the ancient buildings had been destroyed and **all the architects killed in the wars**. It was they who made vaults with pointed arches... and then filled up the whole of Italy with their accursed buildings.' Quoted in Chris Brooks (1999) *The Gothic Revival*.
- The Romanesque style of horizontal and gains its power from the earth, the arches are rounded like Roman arches. The Gothic style is vertical and gains its power from the way it reaches to the sky (heaven) and from the large windows and the light they allow to flood into the interior. It is also recognized by its pointed arches, flying buttresses and pointed spires, intricate sculptures and ribbed vaults. These features combine to allow more window area and therefore more light to enter.
- The clerestory as a way of admitting light goes back to the buildings of Ancient Egypt. During the Romanesque period (roughly 900-1200) the triforium was introduced below the clerestory and above the arcade. The triforium opens into the roof space of the angled roof above the arcades.
- English Gothic can be divided roughly into periods:
  - Early English (c. 1180–1275)
  - Decorated (c. 1275–1380)
  - Perpendicular (c. 1380–1520)
- But most cathedrals (except Salisbury) combine these styles as they were built over hundreds of years.

## **MICHAEL LEWIS, *THE GOTHIC REVIVAL*, WORLD OF ART SERIES, 2002**

- Professor Michael Lewis writes, '**The Gothic Revival is more than a fashion craze for pointed arches and pinnacles. During its years of greatest influence, it subjected every aspect of art, belief, society and labour to intense intellectual scrutiny, using the Middle Ages as a platform from which to judge the modern world.**' The craze for Gothic Revival architecture spread throughout continental Europe and the USA from the eighteenth century, and shaped the face of Victorian England. It soon outgrew its religious and historical beginnings and was adopted in many countries to serve political or nationalist purposes. Pugin and Barry were two of the many dazzling talents of the nineteenth century; they are associated with many of England's best-known buildings, most notably the Houses of Parliament. The Gothic style demonstrates energetically the confrontation of Western architecture with modernity, applying the inspiration of the medieval cathedral builders to the new engineering ideas of the industrial age.
- 18<sup>th</sup> century admired for its association with decay and melancholy, the early 19<sup>th</sup> century for its religious piety and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for its superb engineering.
- The Gothic originated in Ile-de-France around 1140. It started as a series of improvements on the prevailing Romanesque style including the pointed arch both for its versatility and its structural efficiency. The groin vault was replaced by the ribbed vault supported by external flying buttresses.
- If Gothic Revival is a self-conscious recreation of the original Gothic style then the first exponent was Christopher Wren and his restoration of Westminster Abbey followed by Nicholas Hawksmoor's two west towers. This continuation of the Gothic is sometimes called Gothic Survival as it survived the Renaissance dismissal of the Gothic. Vasari mocked it as the 'German style'.
- There was a new Georgian appetite for gloom, melancholy, horror and decay.
- Associationism not beauty was the route taken by 18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers to justify the Gothic style.

## **ANDREW GRAHAM DIXON – *THE ART OF GOTHIC***



- Gothic – what remains? cathedral, stained glass, pre-Reformation, vision of heaven and hell, rejected for three (two) centuries.
- Gothic revival, can be seen as a secret history of Britain during a period of intense change.
- Horace Walpole Otranto – the starting point and basis of all future Gothic novels – William Marshal translator of Onuphrio Muralto, a made up author, but why?
- Strawberry Hill, theatrical, recreation, pseudo stage set which he was proud to show visitors, 'rather unusual', 'a bit queer', different. He was homosexual, is this relevant?
- Age of Reason, classical, Greek and Roman basis of education and classical houses, such as Stowe, Lord Cobham, military hero turned politician, Gothic was the crumbling remains of British history, ruined abbeys, he built the Temple of Liberty (1741) very early Gothic. Horace Walpole remarked of it, "in the heretical corner of my heart I adore the Gothic Building, which, by some unusual inspiration, Gibbs has made pure and beautiful and venerable." Cobham was a Whig and equated the ancient British witan with the rule of Parliament rather than the monarchy.
- Sham ruins were built, follies, real ruins became appreciated, the Picturesque, guide books, cult of ruins, Tintern Abbey, Wordsworth, melancholy, nature
- Wild nature, cliffs, Gordale Scar
- Earl of Shaftesbury – end of civilization
- Salvator Rosa predate the Gothic revival - *Witches at their Incantation* (NG)
- Edmund Burke, Sublime, terror
- Turner, Hannibal, alpine terror
- Shakespeare was rediscovered as a route back to the medieval, magical, visionary, ghosts, witches, fates, fallen kings
- Thomas Parnell, poet, *Night Piece on Death*
- William Blake, *The Flea*
- Fuseli *Nightmare*, lots of interpretations over the years.
- James McPherson Osian, ghosts, witches
- Chatterton produced a forgery, curious blackened texts in British library, died aged 17, Henry Wallis, *Chatterton*, 1856.

- William Beckford inherited fortune, father was Lord Mayor, scandalised London, three day orgy on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, intrigued by the orient, wrote *Vathek* (a nasty caliph who killed 50 boys), built Fonthill Abbey
- Ann Radcliffe, Gothic novels became very popular especially read by breathless young women, heroines, Radcliffe made a fortune, Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* satirised her
- French Revolution fuelled horror, terror, blood and gore, Gilray
- Matthew Lewis – *The Monk*, based on gruesome stories, most shocking novel of 18<sup>th</sup> century England [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Monk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Monk)

Andrew-Graham Dixon, *The Art of Gothic* second and third programmes

- Wright of Derby, *Air Pump*
- Is God being killed by science?
- Wright of Derby *The Old Man and Death*,
- Wright of Derby factory with lights
- This was a time of the first manned flights in a balloon, the first steam locomotive, electricity and the spark of life. When Mary Shelley (1797-1851, née Godwin) was 17 she met Percy Bysshe Shelly. Her mother was Mary Wollstonecraft although she never met her.
- Wright of Derby *Dovedale* 1784
- Frankenstein terror of science that might run out of control. Seen here as William Blake painting of *The Flea* inspired by him seeing a flea through a microscope. Blake has turned observation and science into wonder and mystery.
- Mesmerism seemed very sinister as the person seemed to be entering another world.
- The Romantic poets and the Ancient Mariner.
- The 'old' gothic was all ruined castles but the 'new' Gothic concerned the mind, the self and drugs. Coleridge, Keats, Byron and de Quincey *Confessions of an Opium Eater*. Escaping unhappiness by turning to drugs.
- Vast spaces (Giovanni Battista Piranesi 1720-1778) were described by de Quincey and he spoke of seeming to have lived for 100 years in a single night.
- Turner *Rain, Steam and Speed* astonishing

- George Crookshanks, *March of Bricks and Mortar*
- There was a very rapid transition from the rural life to the industrial, which was a shock or trauma to society.
- The family was undermined. New form of literature developed such as the Penny Dreadful which included tales of Spring-heeled Jack and Sweeney Todd.
- Dickens produced urban Gothic for the middle classes in novels such as *Bleak House*. It is not Bleak House that is Gothic but the whole of London with its fogs, darkness and 'demons' such as the thief, the beggar and the poor. Tom All Alone's a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people. Dickens mentions spontaneous human combustion and the death of Lady Dedlock outside a cemetery.
- Luke Fildes, *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*, 1874
- Frank Holl, *Newgate, Committed for Trial*, 1878.
- John Martin *The Great Day of his Wrath* 1851 pantomime like gothic doom, the Last Judgement. 8 million people saw it around the world.
- People longed for an earlier age, the mediaeval became fashionable with its pageantry and colour. They wanted to return to a more spiritual world and escape to an idealised past. The movement was very conservative and is typified by Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* with its strict class hierarchy and its jousts. They were re-enacted by Earl Eglinton and 100,000 people arrived but it rained and was so wet the horses sank in the mud. However, it set a trend which still survives today.
- Augustus Pugin published *Contrasts* when he was 24. It rammed his arguments down readers throats and spelt out the modern city and its ills. He presented the city as vast, sprawling and impersonal in contrast with the mediaeval town which was tranquil and spiritual. It was very naive but caught the mood of time and people's fantasies of a mediaeval past.
- The Palace of Westminster burned down in 1834 and it was decided to rebuild it in the new Gothic style partly as classical was associated with revolutionary France. It was started in 1838 under the control of Pugin who was obsessive. It is a confusion of detail. He turned the House of Lords into a church. The problem is it induces a soporific state of indifference to the problems of the present, you lose yourself in a dream of the past.
- St Giles Church, Cheadle, Staffordshire 1840 has manic detail. Pugin worked so hard he drove himself mad and died aged 40.

- Victoria's Albert died in 1861 age 42. She became obsessed with death and wanted a memorial but many thought it was a waste of money. In the end it was built and became the apex of the Gothic movement. Gothic inspired railway stations, bridges, museums, schools and colleges.
- In 1885 Thomas Holloway with the architect Thomas Crosland built a lunatic asylum called Holloway Sanatorium. The writhing creatures inside suggest madness not hope. It is now Holloway College.
- All Gothic roads lead to Stoker's *Dracula*. *Das Kapital* can be seen as a Gothic in which consumers are the deluded victims mesmerised by capitalism and commodities are the fetishes of voodoo economics.
- William Morris was a revolutionary socialist. For him the Social Democratic Federation was not radical enough so he set up the Socialist League. He held public meetings and was appalled by the police brutality. He read *Das Kapital* and John Ruskin *The Nature of Gothic*. Morris tried to turn Ruskin's ideas about the mediaeval workmen into a modern business.
- Keeble College by the architect Butterfield was the last true Gothic building and this was the end of Gothic Revival buildings. It was cut off by the modern but many modern building designs incorporate Gothic elements.
- By coincidence another William Morris built cars in Cowley, Oxford in 1913, 15 years after the first Morris died
- 1890s cinema propelled Gothic around the world. In 1897 *Dracula* was written and inspired many movies such as *Nosferatu* and Hitchcock's *The Lodger* about a serial killer. Cinema is the ultimate Gothic haunted house of 'ghosts'. Hammer Films produced some of the most successful films made in Britain.
- Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness* 1899, a Gothic horror story told in the Thames estuary by Marlow. Kurtz was the Imperial vampire.
- Ruskin wrote about the grotesque. He wrote "Most men's minds are dim mirrors, in which all truth is seen, as St. Paul tells us, darkly; this is the fault most common and most fatal"
- In 1895 HG Wells wrote *The Time Machine*
- In the 1890s people's thoughts turned to degeneracy and the fin de siècle.
- World War 1 Paul Nash *We are Making a New World*
- *The Wasteland* by TS Eliot talks about a phantom London.

- Algernon Newton views of London
- Francis Bacon inspired by *The Wasteland* and by Gothic



The Dance of Death  
(1493) by Michael  
Wolgemut, from the  
Nuremberg Chronicle  
of Hartmann Schedel

*The Dance of Death* (1493) by Michael Wolgemut, from the Nuremberg Chronicle of Hartmann Schedel

- Let us switch to the darker ideas associated with the Gothic period.
- This is the Danse Macabre or Dance of Death. It was produced to remind everyone of the shortness of life and the vanity of earthly glories and riches. Typically, the dance featured a pope, an emperor, king, child and a labourer, everyone was equal before death.
- This Danse Macabre was reenacted at village pageants and at court masques, with people "**dressing up as corpses from various strata of society**".
- It is likely to have been a response to the many horrors of the 14th century such as the recurring famines, the Hundred Years' War in France, and, most of all, the Black Death which killed perhaps 50 million people, up to half the population of Europe. It shows just how terrible a pandemic can be and it brought about far-reaching economic and social changes.

## NOTES

- "The Nuremberg Chronicle is an illustrated encyclopaedia consisting of world historical accounts, as well as accounts told through biblical paraphrase. Subjects include human history in relation to the Bible, illustrated mythological creatures, and the histories of important Christian and secular cities from antiquity. Finished in 1493, it was originally written in Latin by **Hartmann Schedel**, and a German version was translated by Georg Alt. It is one of the



best-documented early printed books—an incunabulum—and one of the first to successfully integrate illustrations and text." (Wikipedia)

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danse\\_Macabre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danse_Macabre)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuremberg\\_Chronicle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuremberg_Chronicle)



Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), *Witches at their Incantations*, 1646, 72 x 132 cm, National Gallery

Hans Baldung (1484/5-1545), *New Year's Greeting with Three Witches*, 1514, black quill pen drawing, partly washed in gray, heightened in white, on brown primed paper, 30.9 x 21 cm, Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria

Hans Baldung (1484/5-1545), *New Year's Greeting with Three Witches*, 1514, black quill pen drawing, partly washed in gray, heightened in white, on brown primed paper, 30.9 x 21 cm, Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria

Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), *Witches at their Incantations*, 1646, 72 x 132 cm, National Gallery

- Many thought the Black Death was God's retribution on a sinful society and many feared the devil and those regarded as the devil's agents, witches. Ideas about black magic and witchcraft permeate all societies over all periods. In early modern Europe **one pivotal text** that shaped the witch-hunts was the ***Malleus Maleficarum***, or the ***Hammer of Witches***, a 1486 treatise that provided a framework for identifying, prosecuting, and punishing witches (written by the German Catholic clergyman Heinrich Kramer).
- Painted images of witches are rare but Hans Baldung, who was considered the most gifted student of Albrecht Dürer, was the first German artist to heavily incorporate witches and witchcraft and erotic themes into his artwork. The text at the bottom reads "DER COR CAPEN EIN GVT JAR" which means "to the cleric a good year" and refers to fact that the imagination of certain clergymen did not always turn to witches with moral disgust.
- (CLICK) This is a later painting called *Witches at their Incantations* by Salvator Rosa in 1646. He rarely painted the common religious subjects, unless they had a landscape element. He also produced battle scenes, allegories, many self portraits and, as here, scenes of witches and witchcraft.

- Rosa was reacting against the doctrine of ideal beauty by showing the monstrous, grotesque and deformed. This was a time when there was an interest in alchemy and sorcery.
- Spells are being cast in the centre, below a man hanged from a withered tree. The brightly illuminated foreground is contrasted with the nocturnal landscape behind. A giant skeleton that reminds us of a dinosaur but we don't know if he had seen such a skeleton? A naked witch in the centre is mixing a revolting soup, there is a knight with a flaming torch to the right, a figure covered in a shroud, a person being made to sign a document on the left and a witch cutting the toe off the hanged man.

## NOTES

- In the seventeenth century scenes of the occult were rare, though not unknown. Most witch art was produced in Northern Europe where there was a greater interest in everyday life. However, one exception was the Italian artist **Salvator Rosa** (1615-1673). During his years in Florence (1640-9) Rosa produced a number of **scenes of witchcraft**, of which this (signed) painting is the most ambitious surviving example. It may be the painting referred to in a letter by Rosa of 1666 as having been painted twenty years earlier and **one of his finest**, and it is probably contemporary with **one of Rosa's poems** entitled 'The Witch'. Rosa is reacting against the doctrine of ideal beauty by showing the monstrous, grotesque and deformed. There was an interest in alchemy and sorcery. We could compare the scene with Shakespeare's witches in *Macbeth*.
- It is a representation of an imagined witches' sabbath, a so-called black mass, an event that fascinated witchfinders in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- The last execution for witchcraft in **England** was in 1684, when Alice Molland was hanged in Exeter. James I's statute was repealed in 1736 by George II. In Scotland, the church outlawed witchcraft in 1563 and 1,500 people were executed, the last, Janet Horne, in 1722. Victoria Helen McCrae Duncan (1897–1956) was a Scottish medium best known as the last person to be imprisoned under the British Witchcraft Act of 1735 which made falsely claiming to procure spirits a crime.

## REFERENCES

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Witches\\_\(Hans\\_Baldung\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Witches_(Hans_Baldung))
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malleus\\_Maleficarum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malleus_Maleficarum)

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witchcraft>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvator\\_Rosa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvator_Rosa)
- <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/sep/11/salvator-rosa-paintings-james-hall>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2010/apr/13/salvator-rosa-art-witchcraft>
- [https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/32905/1/Stone\\_Linda\\_G\\_201206\\_PhD\\_thesis.pdf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/32905/1/Stone_Linda_G_201206_PhD_thesis.pdf) (PhD thesis, *Terrible Crimes and Wicked Pleasures: Witches in the Art of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* by Linda Gail Stone, 2012, discusses the symbolism in this painting, pp. 175-195)

William Hogarth (1697-1764),  
*Credulity, Superstition and  
Fanaticism*, 1762



William Hogarth (1697-1764), *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism*, 1762

- A hundred years later, by the eighteenth century witches were often treated as comic characters and used as symbols of irrationality and superstition.
- This is **William Hogarth's** (1697-1764) print, ***Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism*** (1762), an attack on all forms of irrational belief. It was at this time that the Halloween witch appeared in print with a pointed hat, broomstick and black cat which we see at the top held by a methodist minister. The last execution for witchcraft in **England** was in 1684, shortly before Hogarth was born, when Alice Molland was hanged in Exeter.
- Hogarth is lampooning the exaggerated emotion of the Methodist movement. **Sermons were so emotional** that members of the congregation sometimes tried to kill themselves afterwards and Methodists also **believed in witches and demons**. The **Muslim staring** through the window is **amazed** at the way the Christians are behaving. He represents the "rational, enlightened part of mankind looking down on Christian fanatics with surprise and disgust." [1]
- The various figures represent more than a dozen **reputed stories of witchcraft** or possession. Some in the congregation are gnawing at icons of Christ taking transubstantiation to an extreme. Below the pulpit an aristocrat pushes an icon of the **Cock Lane ghost** down the shirt of a young lady in the throes of **religious ecstasy**. A common accusation was that Methodists used religion to seduce female adherents who had been overcome with emotion. On the right is a thermometer above a brain measuring the temperature of her passion with

LUST highlighted.

- A **woman lies with rabbits running from under her skirt**, is a reference to **Mary Toft** from Godalming who, in 1726, was supposed to have given birth to a litter of 16 rabbits and a tabby cat. To the right a shoeblack vomits nails and pins, a reference to another well-known fraud, the boy of Bilson, who ate metal items.

## NOTES

- The print attacks all forms of irrational belief and it features the first 'Halloween witch' with a **pointed hat, broomstick** and black cat. It **lampoons** the exaggerated religious emotion of the **Methodist** movement. According to Hogarth enthusiastic Methodist religion was a **revival of Catholic superstition**. The **preacher** has a text open at a page that reads, 'I **speak as a fool**' (Corinthians 11:23) and he is wearing a **Harlequin jacket** under his robes. He is **holding a puppet of a devil** and of a witch. His wig is falling off to show a **Jesuit tonsure** beneath.
- The congregation is in various states of **ecstasy, grief and horror** and a **shoe-black vomits nails and pins** (the 'Boy of Bilston' another well-known fraud). John Wesley stands on the left pointing to the globe is a '**New and Correct Globe of Hell**' with a 'Molten Lead Lake' and a 'Horrid Zone'. Under a bucket is a copy of James I **Demonologia**.

## REFERENCES

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Credulity,\\_Superstition,\\_and\\_Fanaticism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Credulity,_Superstition,_and_Fanaticism)
- [1] [https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/8018/1/Krysmanski\\_We\\_See\\_a\\_Ghost\\_Hogarths\\_Sati\\_re\\_on\\_Methodists\\_and\\_Connoisseurs\\_2001.pdf](https://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/8018/1/Krysmanski_We_See_a_Ghost_Hogarths_Sati_re_on_Methodists_and_Connoisseurs_2001.pdf)





Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, 1768, 183 x 244 cm, National Gallery

Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797), *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, 1768, 183 x 244 cm, National Gallery

- The eighteenth century was the **Age of Enlightenment** when science slowly provided rational explanations for many phenomena **previously regarded as supernatural**.
- This is **Joseph Wright of Derby's** (1734-1797), *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*. The experiment is being conducted by a natural philosopher, a forerunner of a modern scientist, part showman and part knowledgeable lecturer. Such people were in demand, they toured the country and would present their experiments in the houses of the wealthy and in village halls.
- The unusual lighting and the strongly side-lit faces **suggest the supernatural** and this style has been **called Neo-Gothic**. It combines a fear of the unknown with the bright light of the Enlightenment.
- The experiment is a recreation of one of Robert Boyle's air pump experiments, in which a bird is deprived of air, before a varied group of onlookers. The group exhibits a variety of reactions, but for most of the audience scientific curiosity overcomes concern for the bird. The cockatoo was a **rare bird** at the time, **'and one whose life would never in reality have been risked in an experiment such as this'**. The central figure looks out of the picture as if inviting the viewer's participation in the outcome.
- This painting has become his best known work. One well-known art historian described it as **'one of the wholly original masterpieces of British art'**.

## NOTES

- In 1659 Robert Boyle commissioned an air pump (then called a pneumatic engine) which was so successful he donated it to the Royal Society and commissioned two more. There were only a handful of such pumps in existence at the time and Boyle's pumps were designed, built and operated by Robert Hooke as they were so temperamental. Boyle carried out 43 experiments of which two were on animals. One tested the ability of insects to fly in rarefied air and the other tested the ability of many different animals to survive with rarefied air. By 1768 air pumps were relatively common and were used by itinerant lecturers in natural philosophy who toured the country entertaining audiences in town halls and wealthy person's homes. One of the **best known was James Ferguson, a Scottish astronomer** who was probably a **friend of Wright**. Typically a small bladder was used to simulate the lungs as using a live animal was regarded as **'too shocking to every spectator who has the least degree of humanity'**. Wright shows a white cockatoo fluttering in panic and the lecturer looks out at the viewer as if to ask us to judge whether the pumping should continue, killing the bird, or whether the air should be replaced and the cockatoo saved. The boy on the right is either lowering the cage to replace the bird or raising the cage as he knows it will die. Alternatively, it has been suggested he is drawing the curtains to block out the full moon. In an earlier sketch the lecturer is reassuring the girls and the bird does survive. The cockatoo was a **rare bird** at the time, **'and one whose life would never in reality have been risked in an experiment such as this'**.
- The full moon could suggest the Lunar Society to his friends as it met every full moon.
- At the time, the *Gazetteer's* reviewer singled out Wright's handling of candlelight as evidence that 'Mr. Wright, of Derby, is **a very great and uncommon genius in a peculiar way**' (23 May 1768). The arrangement of figures has been linked to the last plate of Hogarth's *The Four Stages of Cruelty* showing the audience gathered around the dissection of the corpse. The painting has also been compared with Early Netherlandish paintings of the Holy Trinity which show the Holy Spirit as a dove, God the Father pointing and Christ gesturing in blessing to the viewer.
- Wright painted *Air Pump* **without a commission** and the picture was

purchased by **Dr Benjamin Bates**. An Aylesbury physician, patron of the arts and hedonist, Bates was a diehard member of the **Hellfire Club** who, despite his excesses, lived to be over 90. Wright's account book shows a number of prices for the painting: £200 is shown in one place and £210 in another, but Wright had written to Bates asking for **£130**, stating that the **low price 'might much injure me** in the future sale of my pictures, and when I send you a receipt for the money I shall acknowledge a greater sum.' Whether Bates ever paid the full amount is not recorded; Wright only notes in his account book that he received £30 in part payment.

- Wright worked in Liverpool between 1768 and 1771 and his main income was from portraiture. His portraits have an uningratiating realism far removed from the 'polite' portraiture of his contemporaries.
- Hellfire Clubs were established for 'persons of quality' who wished to engage in immoral activities. The most famous was set up by Sir Francis Dashwood and engaged in mock religious ceremonies, drinking, wenching and banqueting. It was a popular fashion at the time to ridicule religion and commit acts of blasphemy.

### **BIO:JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY**

- **Joseph Wright of Derby** has been described as 'the first professional painter to express the spirit of the industrial revolution' (Francis Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution*).
- He was the third of five children of a **solidly professional family in Derby** (his father was a lawyer) and he was educated at **Derby Grammar School** teaching himself to draw by **copying prints**. When he was 17 he went to London for two years and trained under **Thomas Hudson**, then the most highly reputed portraitist in London and master of Joshua Reynolds from 1740-44. He returned to Derby and painted portraits for three years before going back to London to complete his training.
- His colleagues believed that a career for an artist could only be found in London but Wright chose to **spend most of his life in Derby** among his friends and family and he received abundant commissions from Midlands society.
- **Early Portraits: 1760-1773. Portraits were to become the mainstay** of his career but he eventually found the greatest pleasure in landscape painting. Wright rarely flatters and some of his most sympathetic portraits are of children. It was at this time that he learned to concentrate on the

play of light over faces and objects.

- Wright was connected with but not a member of the **Lunar Society** as he lacked scientific knowledge but it meant that he socialised with some of the greatest minds of the industrial age. He exhibited at the Society of Artists and later at the Royal Academy. He was called Wright of Derby in 1768 to distinguish him from Richard Wright of Liverpool as first names were not used. Even though Richard Wright is now unknown the name has stuck until the present day.
- **Candlelight: 1765 onwards.** He exhibited about 35 pictures at the **Society of Artist** from 1765 onwards and about **half of them were 'candlelights'**, in which a hidden source of light illuminates the painting. They were known as '**fancy paintings**' in the late eighteenth century. They were **not initially dramatic scientific experiments** but included scenes such as this with girls dressing a kitten or boys blowing bladders. In these paintings Wright demonstrates his knowledge of the well-known technique of chiaroscuro, or more accurately **tenebrism**, a dramatic form of chiaroscuro. Wright was known for his attention to detail and precision in the representation of textiles, texture, and surfaces.
- **Four of these early candlelights were more elevated** of which **this** (*Three Persons Viewing the 'Gladiator' by Candlelight*) **is the first. All four made Wright's name.** This one includes three men, including Wright in profile, looking at a reproduction of the Borghese Gladiator a Hellenistic statue by Agasias of Ephesus. In Wright's time it was in the Borghese Collection but it was sold and is now in the Louvre. The original is 1.9 metres tall and is now thought to be a soldier not a gladiator.
- **Society of Artists: from 1769 to 1771** Wright served on the board of directors of the Society of Artists. He later exhibited at the Royal Academy but like Thomas Gainsborough he quarrelled over the hanging of his paintings and in a radical display of independence he withdrew them and **set up a one-man show at Covent Garden in 1785.** Gainsborough had withdrawn his work from the Royal Academy and display his work at Schomberg House, his home and studio in Pall Mall, the previous year.

## REFERENCES

- <https://artuk.org/discover/stories/joseph-wright-of-derby-the-everyday-the-epic-and-the-enlightenment>

Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797), *The Old Man and Death*, 1773, 101 × 127 cm, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art



Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797), *The Old Man and Death*, 1773, 101 × 127 cm, Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art (Hartford, Connecticut)

- When Wright went to **Italy in 1774** he left this Gothic painting to be exhibited at the Society of Artists but it **failed to sell**. Perhaps this story of an **old man suddenly accosted by a skeleton** in broad daylight was **too strange**, they would have said at the time **too 'Gothick' for polite audiences**.
- It is one of **Aesop's original fables** and tells how a poor woodman, overwhelmed by the burdens of age and work, **lays down his bundle of sticks and calls upon Death to ease his woes**. When Death duly arrives, armed with an arrow, the terrified **woodman politely asks him for help to pick up his bundle**. The artist has emphasised the old man's fear by having him shrink back into the shadows, extending his arm as though to push away the advancing skeleton. (Amina Wright, *Joseph Wright of Derby: Bath and Beyond*)
- The moral of the fable has been translated as:  
*Man any miseries will endure  
Rather than seek from death a cure.*

## NOTES

- There is a **smaller version** in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, which may have been commissioned by a collector who saw the original. See <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-old-man-and-death-98978>

## **REFERENCES**

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Old\\_Man\\_and\\_Death](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Old_Man_and_Death)





Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), *Portrait of a Young Woman*, 1781, on the reverse of *Nightmare*, Institute of Arts, Detroit



Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, 1781, 101.6 cm × 127 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts

Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), *The Nightmare*, 1781, 101.6 cm × 127 cm, Institute of Arts, Detroit

Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), *Portrait of a Young Woman*, 1781, on the reverse of *Nightmare*, Institute of Arts, Detroit. It has been suggested that this is a portrait of Anna Landholdt, the object of Fuseli's sexual desire.

- **The Romantic movement was partly a reaction against the strict rationality of Neo-Classical art** and the architectural movement associated with **Romanticism was the Gothic Revival but** Romanticism had a **darker side** associated with a **lack of restraint, violence, passion, ghosts and satanic practices** and that is shown here with *The Nightmare* painted in 1781 by Anglo-Swiss artist Henry Fuseli (1741–1825).
- Many contemporary critics found the work **scandalous** because of its sexual associations.
- (CLICK) This portrait of a woman is on the back and it has been suggested that the painting is autobiographical and represents **Fuseli's suppressed lust for Anna Landholdt**, a young woman he fell passionately in love with in 1779. Landholdt or Landolt was the niece of Fuseli's friend Felix Lavater and Fuseli wrote him a letter containing the passage, **'Last night I had her in bed with me, tossed my bedclothes hugger-mugger wound my hot and tight-clasped hands about her, fused her body and soul together with my own, poured into her my spirit, breath and strength. Anyone who touches her now commits adultery and incest! She is mine, and I am hers. And have her I**

**will.** However, the love was one-sided and came to nothing but it may have been the inspiration for the painting.

## NOTES

- It was exhibited in 1782 at the Royal Academy and 'excited ... an uncommon degree of interest' and it has remained his best known work ever since. The engraved version sold widely and the painting was parodied in political satire. Due to its fame, Fuseli painted at least three other versions of the painting.
- Interpretations of *The Nightmare* have varied widely. The canvas seems to portray simultaneously a dreaming woman and the content of her nightmare. The **incubus** and the **horse's head** refer to contemporary belief and **folklore about nightmares**, but have been ascribed more specific meanings by some theorists. Contemporary critics were taken aback by the **overt sexuality** of the painting, which has since been interpreted by some scholars as **anticipating Carl Jung's ideas** about the unconscious (some way Freud's ideas). Unlike Freud Jung believed the libido was not just sexual energy but a generalized psychic energy and that the psyche is made up of the ego, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is a uniquely Jungian idea. It is shared with other members of the human species and consists of latent memories from our ancestral and evolutionary past. 'The form of the world into which [a person] is born is already inborn in him, as a virtual image' as a result of evolution.
- An **incubus** is a **male demon** that according to legend **lies on sleeping women** in order to **engage in sexual activity**. Its female counterpart is a **succubus**. Her position was believed to encourage **nightmares** and the horse or mare reinforces this interpretation. The etymology of nightmare does not relate to horses but to Scandinavian mythology and **spirits sent to suffocate sleepers** and the early meaning of nightmare included the experience of having a **heavy weight on the chest** while asleep and a **feeling of dread**. The Old English word *mære* means incubus.
- Fuseli was an **ordained minister** and he painted other scenes involving sleep but his other paintings had biblical, mythological or literary references.
- The original painting sold for twenty guineas but the **engraving earned the publisher** more than **£500**. The engraving included a short poem by

Erasmus Darwin called 'Night-Mare'.

*So on his Nightmare through the evening fog  
Flits the squab Fiend o'er fen, and lake, and bog;  
Seeks some love-wilder'd maid with sleep oppress'd,  
Alights, and grinning sits upon her breast.*

- *The Nightmare* may have **influenced Mary Shelley** as the scene in ***Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*** (1818) when the **monster murders Frankenstein's wife** describes her thrown across a bed with her **head hanging down** and her pale distorted features half covered by hair. She would have known the painting as her **parents Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin were friends of Fuseli**.

### **BIO: FUSELI**

- **Henry Fuseli** (1741–1825) was a Swiss painter, draughtsman and writer on art who spent much of his life in Britain. Many of his works, such as *The Nightmare*, deal with supernatural subject-matter. He held the posts of Professor of Painting and Keeper at the **Royal Academy**. His style had a considerable influence on many younger British artists, including **William Blake**. Fuseli's father was a portrait painter and author and Fuseli was educated as a minister. He had to flee Switzerland after exposing a corrupt magistrate. He arrived in England in 1765 and supported himself by writing until he met Joshua Reynolds who convinced him to devote himself to art. Between 1770 and 1778 he studied art in Italy. In 1778 he married his 'true love' Sophia Rawlins and in 1779 he returned to England and joined the Royal Academy. The early feminist **Mary Wollstonecraft**, whose portrait he had painted, planned a trip with him to Paris, and **pursued him** determinedly, but after his wife's intervention the Fuseli's' door was closed to her forever. Fuseli later said '**I hate clever women. They are only troublesome**'. He became Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy and then Keeper and in this capacity he oversaw the School where Landseer, Turner, William Etty and Constable were taught. He was a well respected although eccentric teacher.



Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740-1812), *Coalbrookdale by Night*, 1801, Science Museum

Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740-1812), *Coalbrookdale by Night*, 1801, Science Museum

- The Industrial Revolution was the practical consequence of the advance of science and the Age of Enlightenment. However, it fused in the public mind with Romanticism as the marvels of industry seem combined with the fires of hell.
- The painting depicts the Madeley Wood (or Bedlam) Furnaces, which belonged to the **Coalbrookdale Company** from 1776 to 1796. The picture has come to symbolise the **birth of the Industrial Revolution in Ironbridge** (which is next to Coalbrookdale). It is held in the collections of the Science Museum in London. The blazing furnaces, the heat and the danger instil a sense of awe and terror and these feelings are associated with the Sublime.
- The Sublime is associated with Romanticism and was described in the eighteenth century by Edmund Burke who compared it with the beautiful. We appreciate the beautiful with our aesthetic sense and the sublime with our sense of awe and even terror. This painting shows the sublime feelings associated with the scale, noise and dangers associated with the production of iron. Wealthy tourists would visit the site to experience these feelings.

### **SUBLIME**

- **Edmund Burke's description of the sublime** was an important concept as it was **beyond reason** and this was in an **Age of Enlightenment** when everything

was subject to reason. It is when words fail us and involves **painting the unpaintable and a oneness with nature**. These days it is used to indicate a well executed performance, such as a good tennis shot or a delicious meal but in the eighteenth century it was **an aesthetic experience distinct from beauty**.

- The earliest writer about the sublime is **Longinus** (also called Pseudo-Longinus as his real name is unknown, he lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE and wrote **On the Sublime**) who saw it as an aspect of eloquence, the ability to uplift the soul of the audience and provide a sense of joy such they thought they had produced what they heard. Other examples are the Bible (Longinus used it to provide examples), Dante Alighieri's (1265–1321) *Divine Comedy* and John Milton's (1608-1674) *Paradise Lost*. The Romantic poets, such as William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) were very concerned with the sublime.
- **Modern theorists** such as Barbara Claire Freeman have distinguished between the **feminine sublime** involving feelings of awe, rapture and the spiritual and metaphysical infinity of nature and the **masculine sublime** concerned with terror and domination. This painting is an example of masculine sublime.
- In the latter half of the nineteenth century the **sublime was abandoned** by artists for reasons of taste, an interest in beauty and scientific realism. Some argue the **sublime has returned** in terms of the interest in horror and **horror films**.

## **NOTES**

- The name Bedlam Furnaces may have originated from a painting by John Sell Cotman titled *Bedlam Furnaces Near Irongate (sic), Shropshire*, 1803. It was intended as a metaphor as the place resembled a lunatic asylum like Bethlem Royal Hospital known as Bedlam.

## **REFERENCES**

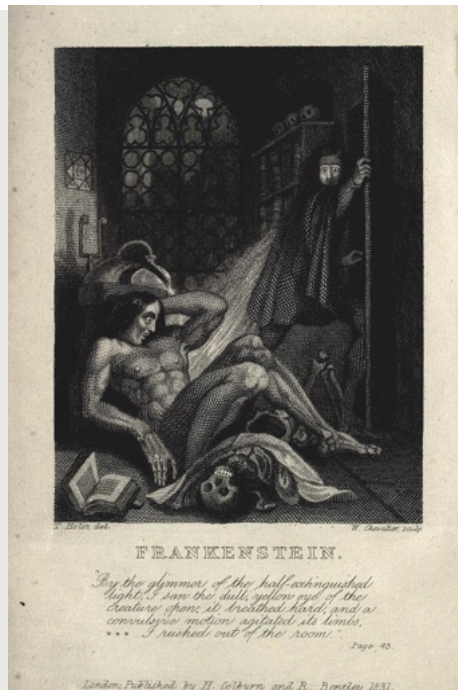
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coalbrookdale\\_by\\_Night](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coalbrookdale_by_Night)

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madeley\\_Wood\\_Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madeley_Wood_Company)



Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Theodor von Holst, 'frontplate', *Frankenstein*, engraving, 1831 edition



The earliest illustration of the Creature from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Theodor von Holst, 'frontplate', *Frankenstein*, engraving, 1831 edition

- We now come to Gothic horror as the inspiration for a new type of novel inspired by science but which makes clear the dangers of its uncontrolled pursuit. This is the earliest illustration of the Creature from **Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* by Theodor von Holst**.
- It was written in 1816, the '**Year Without a Summer**' when the world was locked in a long, cold winter caused by the eruption of **Mount Tambora** in 1815. Mary Shelley and her lover (and later husband) **Percy Bysshe Shelley** visited **Lord Byron at the Villa Diodati** by Lake Geneva in Switzerland 11 miles from Frankenstein Castle. The weather was consistently too cold and dreary to go outside so the group retired indoors. Sitting around a log fire they amused themselves by reading German ghost stories and Byron proposed that they "**each write a ghost story**". Unable to think of a story, Mary became anxious but one evening the discussions turned to the nature of the principle of life. "**Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated**", Mary noted, "**galvanism had given token of such things**". It was after midnight before they retired, and unable to sleep, she became possessed by her imagination as she beheld the grim terrors of her "**waking dream**".

## NOTES

- ***Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*** is a novel written by English



author **Mary Shelley** (1797–1851) that tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who creates a grotesque but intelligent creature in an unorthodox scientific experiment. Shelley started writing the story when she was 18, and the first edition of the novel was published anonymously in London on 1 January 1818, when she was 20.

- Shelley wrote the **first four chapters** in the weeks following the **suicide of her half-sister Fanny**. This was one of many personal tragedies that impacted Shelley's work. Shelley's first child died in infancy, and when she began composing *Frankenstein* in 1816, she was likely nursing her second child, who would also be dead by *Frankenstein's* publication.
- Byron managed to write just a fragment based on the vampire legends he heard while travelling the Balkans, and from this John Polidori created *The Vampyre* (1819), the progenitor of the romantic vampire literary genre.
- *Frankenstein* is infused with elements of the **Gothic novel and the Romantic movement**. At the same time, it is an early example of **science fiction**, arguably the first science fiction story as it is based on modern scientific experiments rather than fantasy. It has had a considerable influence in literature and popular culture and spawned a complete genre of horror stories, films and plays.
- 'Frankenstein' has often been used to refer to the monster, which, although erroneous is well-established and acceptable. In the novel, the monster is called "creature", "monster", "demon", "wretch", "abortion", "fiend" and "it".
- In Greek mythology, **Prometheus** is a Titan, culture hero who is credited with **the creation of man from clay**, and who defies the gods by **stealing fire and giving it to humanity**, an act that enabled progress and civilization. His punishment was to be **bound to a rock** where each day an **eagle**, the emblem of Zeus, was sent to **feed on his liver**, which would then grow back overnight to be eaten again the next day
- In the Western classical tradition, Prometheus became a figure who **represented human striving**, particularly the **quest for scientific knowledge**, and the risk of overreaching or **unintended consequences**. In particular, he was regarded in the Romantic era as embodying the **lone genius** whose efforts to improve human existence could also **result in tragedy**.

## REFERENCES

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankenstein>

William Blake (1757-1827),  
*The Ghost of a Flea*, c. 1819-20,  
tempera with gold on mahogany,  
21.4 x 16.2 cm



William Blake (1757-1827), *The Ghost of a Flea*, c. 1819-20, tempera heightened with gold on mahogany, 21.4 x 16.2 cm

- This is *The Ghost of a Flea* by William Blake.
- His friend, **John Varley** was a water-colourist, landscape designer and astrologer whom Blake met towards the end of his life. Varley **encouraged Blake to sketch portraits of the people who populated his visions**, and in all there are between **forty or fifty drawings of such 'visionary heads'**. Many of these depict historical characters, such as kings and queens, but the most popular has always been the flea, which exists both as a simple sketch and as this elaborate painting.
- **Blake claimed that, while he was sketching the flea**, it had explained to him that **fleas were inhabited by the souls of bloodthirsty men**. These bloodthirsty men were confined to the bodies of small insects, because if they were the size of horses, they would drink so much blood that most of the country would be depopulated.
- The flea's bloodthirsty nature can be seen in its tongue, darting eagerly from its mouth, and the cup (for blood-drinking) that it is carrying.

## NOTES

- **The poor quality of this picture** is due to Blake painting it in what he called 'fresco' (tempera), which has cracked and dulled with age. The influence of Michelangelo (1475–1564), a Renaissance artist whom Blake admired, can be

seen in the highly defined musculature of the flea's burly body

## **REFERENCES**

- <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/blake-the-ghost-of-a-flea-n05889>



Strawberry Hill House, Twickenham, originally built in 1749

### Strawberry Hill House, Twickenham, 1749

- I now look briefly now at the original inspiration for this talk, **Gothic Revival architecture**, the architecture of the Romantic movement. It began in the eighteenth century and this building Strawberry Hill House influenced the development of the style.
- The Gothic Revival was seen as a way to **break free from the dominant Neoclassical style**, which was based on Greek and Roman architectural forms. It also revived what **was regarded as a golden age of faith and craftsmanship** associated with the Middle Ages and it was thought to express **romantic ideals connected with Medieval knights**.
- Strawberry Hill House was one of the first examples of this Gothic Revival with its **pointed arches, crenelations, decorative patterns, finials** (an ornament at the apex of a roof or corner), lancet windows, hood mouldings above the windows with label stops, the cranked termination of the hood mould over the window.
- It was built by the writer and politician Horace Walpole (1717-1797) who wrote the **first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto***, which launched the genre and influenced countless writers. He championed medieval and Gothic art which shaped the tastes of many British intellectuals, artists and collectors.

### GOTHIC REVIVAL

- **Gothic Revival** is an architectural movement that began in the late 1740s in

England. Its popularity grew rapidly in the early 19th century, when many intellectuals began to see the beauty of medieval Gothic architecture, in contrast to the neoclassical styles prevalent at the time.

- A highly influential milestone in **Gothic Revival architecture**, built in **1749 by Horace Walpole** (1717–1797). It set the "**Strawberry Hill Gothic**" style.
- In the mid-18th century, with the **rise of Romanticism**, an increased **interest and awareness of the Middle Ages** among some influential connoisseurs created a more appreciative approach to selected **medieval arts**, beginning with **church architecture**, the tomb monuments of royal and noble personages, stained glass, and **late Gothic illuminated manuscripts**. Other Gothic arts, such as tapestries and metalwork, continued to be disregarded as barbaric and crude, however Sentimental and nationalist associations with historical figures were as strong in this early revival as purely aesthetic concerns. Gothic architecture emerged in France in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century and spread and developed until the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. The term 'Gothic' was originally pejorative and referred to the destruction of Rome by Gothic tribes in 410 and the end of Classical art.
- **The Gothic Revival** in the fine and decorative arts did not take place **until about 1830 and lasted until about 1900**. Gothic Revival was one of the **most influential styles of the 19th century**. Designs were based on forms and patterns used in the Middle Ages. Serious study was combined with a more fanciful, romantic vision of Medieval chivalry and romance. A wide range of religious, civic and domestic buildings were built and furnished in the Gothic Revival style including **The Palace of Westminster** (1837-67), **Charles Barry and A. W. N. Pugin**, All Saints' Church, Margaret Street, London (designed by William Butterfield and constructed from 1850 to 1859), **St. Pancras Station** (designed by **George Gilbert Scott** and built between 1866 and 1876).

## NOTES

- The **Middle Ages** (or **Medieval period**) lasted from the time the Roman's left England, about 450 to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the Tudor period. It is divided into the Early (5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century, the **Dark Ages**, ending with Charlemagne and his Carolingian Empire), High (1000 to 1250, first universities, Catholic church at the peak of its power, Crusades) and Late Middle Ages ending about 1500.



- Key figures in the development and promotion of the Gothic Revival style were:

### **Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812 - 1852)**

- The writings of A.W.N. Pugin, particularly *Contrasts* (1836) and *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1842), had a major influence on the style and theory of the Gothic Revival. Pugin organised the Medieval Court display at the Great Exhibition of 1851.

### **John Ruskin (1819 - 1900)**

- John Ruskin was the most influential art critic of his day. His interest in Medieval architecture was aroused by travels in Europe. Two of his most important books, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (three volumes, 1851-1853), had an enormous impact on the Gothic Revival.

### **William Burges (1827 - 1881)**

- William Burges was one of the most original and exuberant designers of the 19th century. His work drew on a number of sources, including the arts of the Middle Ages, the Islamic world and East Asia. Burges created two of the most opulent Gothic Revival buildings in Britain, Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch (near Cardiff).

### **Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828 –1882)**

- Dante Gabriel Rossetti was a British poet, illustrator, painter and translator. He founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 with William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais. Rossetti was later to be the main inspiration for a second generation of artists and writers influenced by the movement, most notably William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. His work also influenced the European Symbolists and was a major precursor of the Aesthetic movement.

### **William Morris (1834 –1896)**

- William Morris was an English textile designer, poet, novelist, translator, and socialist activist with a deep interest in the medieval period. Associated with the British Arts and Crafts Movement, he was a major contributor to the revival of traditional British textile arts and methods of production.



The Gothic Temple or Temple of Liberty, 1748, Stowe House

### The Temple of Liberty, 1748, Stowe House

- This is another example of early Gothic architecture. It is the **Gothic Temple**, also known as the **Temple of Liberty**, one of the buildings in the garden of Stowe House. Overall, the gardens were intended to make a political statement. Many of the temples and monuments in the garden celebrate the political ideas of his political party, the **Whigs**, who favoured a **strong Parliament rather than absolute royal power**, religious tolerance, free speech, the rule of law, expanding voting rights, reduction of taxes and the abolition of slavery. The architecture is Gothic as the Whigs associated **this style with freedom and ancient English liberties**.

### NOTES

- **Richard Temple** (1675-1749) later **Viscount Cobham** had a country estate called Stowe House. He employed garden designers including **Charles Bridgeman, Sir John Vanbrugh, James Gibbs, William Kent and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown** to name a few
- It was designed by **James Gibbs** and **completed about 1748**. It is triangular and has a five-sided tower at each corner. One tower is two storeys higher and the other two have lanterns on their roofs.
- It was dedicated to the 'Liberty of our Ancestors'. One commentator wrote, "**to the Whigs, Saxon and Gothic were interchangeably associated with freedom and ancient English liberties: trial by jury** (erroneously thought to

have been founded by King Alfred at a moot on Salisbury Plain), **Magna Carta**, [and] **parliamentary representation, all the things which the Civil War and Glorious Revolution had protected from the wiles of Stuart would-be absolutism, and to the preservation of which Lord Cobham and his 'Patriots' were seriously devoted"** (page 102, *Temples of Delight: Stowe Landscape Gardens*, John Martin Robinson)

- It is now available as a holiday let for about £2,000 (July 2024) for three nights for four people. So you can stay in a genuine early Gothic Revival building.
- Other buildings in the garden include:
  - **The Queen's Temple** originally designed by **William Gibbs** in 1742 and was then called the **Lady's Temple**. This was designed **for Lady Cobham to entertain her friends**. But the building was **extensively remodelled** in 1772-4 to give it a neo-classical form. The architect was probably Thomas Pitt, the portico is based on the Maison Carrée. Further alterations were made in 1790 by Vincenzo Valdrè to commemorate George III recovering from madness with the help of **Queen Charlotte** after whom the building was renamed. The main floor is raised up on a podium, the main facade consists of a portico of four fluted Composite columns, these are approached by a balustraded flight of steps the width of the portico.
  - **The Cobham Monument**, to the south of the Grecian Valley is the tallest structure in the gardens rising 104 feet (32 m). Built 1747-49 of stone, probably designed by Brown. It consists of a square plinth with corner buttresses surmounted by Coade stone (an artificial stone invented by Eleanor Coade) lions holding shields added in 1778. The column itself is octagonal with a single flute on each face, with a moulded Doric capital and base. On which is a small belvedere of eight arches with a dome supporting the sculpture of Lord Cobham.
  - **The Palladian Bridge** is a copy of the bridge at Wilton House. The main difference is that the Stowe version is designed to be used by horse-drawn carriages so is set lower with shallow ramps instead of steps on the approach. It was completed in 1738 probably under the direction of James Gibbs. Above the central arch this consists of colonnades of four full and two half columns of unfluted Roman Ionic order. It originally crossed a stream that emptied from the Octagon

Lake, and when the lake was enlarged and deepened, made more natural in shape in 1752, this part of the stream became a branch of the lake.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stowe\\_House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stowe_House)



The Palace of Westminster, originally built 1016, rebuilt 1840-76

The Palace of Westminster, originally built 1016, rebuilt 1840-76

- The **Palace of Westminster burned down in 1834** and there followed an intensive debate on whether the new building should be in the classical or the Gothic style.
- A Gothic Revival had started and public buildings were being designed in the Gothic style. There were several reasons:
  - **A new interest in the medieval period** related to Gothic tales and romance such as those by Sir Walter Scott.
  - **An interest in the picturesque** as a new Romantic aesthetic associated with medieval ruins and castles.
  - The writings of the respected art critic **John Ruskin** associated medieval craftsmanship with a morally superior way of life and the classical with symmetry, repetition and a slave-based economy.
- In the end it was thought that **Gothic was more true to the history of England.**
- The decision to rebuild the Palace of Westminster in Gothic Revival style was heavily promoted by **Augustus Pugin** (1812-1852).
- Sir **Charles Barry's** (1795-1860) collaborative design for the Palace of Westminster uses the Perpendicular Gothic style, which was popular during the 15th century and returned during the Gothic revival of the 19th century. Barry was a classical architect, but he was aided by the Gothic architect Augustus

Pugin. Westminster Hall, which was built in the 11th century and survived the fire of 1834, was incorporated in Barry's design.

- **Pugin was displeased** with the result of the work, especially with the symmetrical layout designed by Barry; he famously remarked, '**All Grecian, sir; Tudor details on a classic body**'. Neo-Gothic architecture was focused on Romantic ideas that harked back to what was believed to be the **creativity and individual free work of the medieval craftsman** compared with the rigid symmetry of classical architecture.

## NOTES

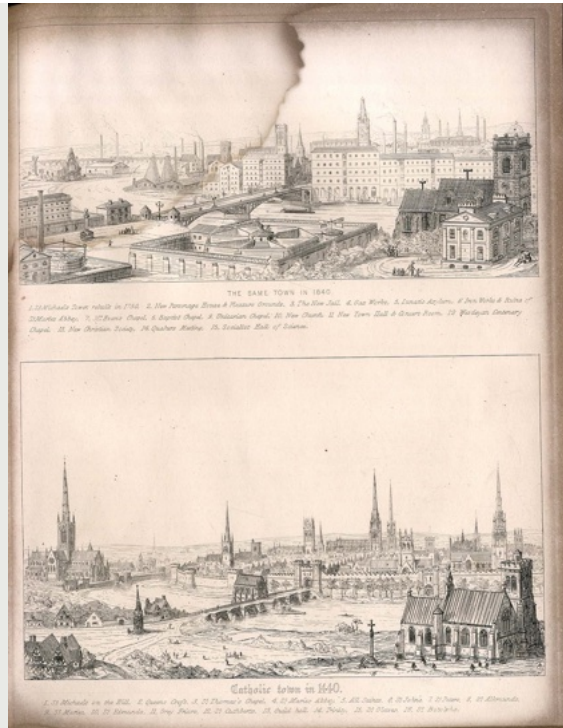
- The Palace of Westminster has three towers the largest of which is the Victoria Tower (renamed in tribute to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee) at 323 feet. At the north end is the more famous **Elizabeth Tower** (previously known as the Clock Tower or St. Stephens Tower, it was renamed in 2012 to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Elizabeth II). It is commonly known as Big Ben and is 315/6 feet high. The clock was built by Edward John Dent and is accurate to a second. It has four 23 feet faces and the minute hand is 14 feet long. Elizabeth Tower was designed by Augustus Pugin and built after his death. The largest bell is officially called The Great Bell of Westminster and generally as Big Ben.
- In 1852 aged 40 Pugin was travelling by train when he suffered a complete breakdown from overwork and was unable to speak or recognise anyone. He lived in an asylum for four months and was taken home and recovered slightly but died the same year in Ramsgate. Some suggest he died from hyperthyroidism and others from syphilis. His death certificate says he died from 'convulsions followed by a coma'.

## REFERENCES

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace\\_of\\_Westminster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace_of_Westminster)



Augustus Pugin (1812-1852), *Contrasts: Or, A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day. Shewing the Present Decay of Taste*, 1836



Augustus Pugin (1812-1852), *Contrasts: Or, A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day. Shewing the Present Decay of Taste*, 1836

- **Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin** (1812-1852), wrote a book called *Contrasts* in which he argued for the **revival of the medieval Gothic style**, and also "**a return to the faith and the social structures of the Middle Ages**". This plate contrasts 1840 England with the 15<sup>th</sup> century equivalent.
- He claimed the Gothic style was more moral and to make the point he shows how open fields and churches have been replaced by factories, pollution and prisons.
- The building in the foreground at the top is a **panopticon**. It was a prison designed by **Jeremy Bentham** (1748-1832) that allowed a single watchman to see all the prisoners at once without them being able to tell if they are watched. The watchman was in a room in the centre and the prisoners in cells around the outside of the inner circle and the cells were open to the watchman in the centre.
- No panopticon was built but a marshy site on which **Tate Britain** now stands was selected and purchased but in the end it owed little to Bentham's ideas.

## NOTES

- The Victorians had a romanticised view of the Middle Ages.
- 1440 in England was towards the **end of the Hundred Years War** (1337-1453)

with France and England was losing most of her French territories. It was about a hundred years after the Black Death had killed about a third to a half of everyone in Europe including wiping out many villages.

- Henry VI was king from 1421-1471. His **periods of insanity** and his inherent benevolence eventually required his **wife, Margaret of Anjou**, to **assume control** of his kingdom, which contributed to his own downfall, the **collapse of the House of Lancaster**, and the rise of the House of York. This conflict, called the **War of the Roses**, took place between 1455 to 1487 although it has been argued that the war had little impact on the lives of ordinary people.

### PANOPTICON

- Design by philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Allows a single watchman to observe all the inmates of an institution without them being able to tell if they are watched. Panoptes from Greek mythology was a giant with 100 eyes. Its use as a prison was the most widely understood.
- Bentham called it a '**mill for grinding rogues honest**'.
- Bentham tried to build a panopticon but every site was rejected by others who did not want a prison. A marshy site at Millbank, Westminster was found but it was never built in Bentham's lifetime. William Williams built a prison on the site but it owed little to the panopticon design. It opened in 1816.
- The panopticon was very difficult to achieve with nineteenth century materials and it has only been possible recently with CCTV.

### BIO:PUGIN

- **Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin** was the son of a French draughtsman who had fled the French Revolution to England. He married in three times and had a daughter by his first wife, who died in childbirth, six children by his second wife and a son by his third wife. He married his third wife in 1848 and died in 1852.
- V&A: 'A leading figure in the reform movement was the architect and designer A.W.N. Pugin (1812-52), an ardent campaigner for the **Gothic style**. He claimed this as the **true British style**, and promoted it on moral as well as aesthetic grounds. In the design of wallpapers he too **deplored the false illusion of depth** and the **use of trompe l'oeil shadows**, and argued instead for **flat patterns** composed of simple forms which would

confirm the wall as a flat surface rather than disguising or contradicting it. Pugin was one of the first to promote the idea of '**honesty**' and '**propriety**' in ornament and design, thus enlisting **ornament as a moral influence in society**. He practised what he preached, designing wallpapers with flat, formalised geometric patterns such as fleurs-de-lis, quatrefoils, heraldic motifs, and flower and foliage forms adapted from medieval art, architecture and textiles, printed in the rich colours of a 'medieval' palette. Such papers, each designed specifically for its setting, were used throughout the New Palace of Westminster and in his domestic projects.'

- Pugin visited Italy in **1847**; his experience there confirmed his **dislike of Renaissance and Baroque architecture**, but he found much to admire in the medieval art of northern Italy.
- In **1852** on the train to London he suffered a **total breakdown** and was confined in a private asylum then transferred to Royal Bethlem Hospital, known as Bedlam. He was removed to a private house and recovered enough to recognise his wife who took him back to **Ramsgate where he died**. He may have died of syphilis at the age of 40 and may also have suffered from hyperthyroidism which causes exaggerated appetite, perspiration, and restlessness.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy\\_Bentham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremy_Bentham)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panopticon>



Photographer Séraphin-Médéric Mieusement (1840–1905), Eglise Saint-Denis-de-l'Estrée, May 1883  
Constructed between 1855 and 1860,



Interior of Église Saint-Denis-de-l'Estrée

Photographer Séraphin-Médéric Mieusement (1840–1905), Eglise Saint-Denis-de-l'Estrée, May 1883

Interior of Église Saint-Denis-de-l'Estrée (Saint-Denis)

- The **Gothic Revival became a standard architectural style through most of the nineteenth century in England**. It did not catch on on the Continent to the same extent although the French architect **Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc** (pronounced 'uk-gen Emmanuel vee-oh-lay le duke') praised the Gothic style and incorporated Gothic elements in his buildings and restorations although often adding his own interpretations to the original designs.
- Église Saint-Denis-de-l'Estrée (Saint-Denis) was constructed between 1855 and 1860 and is a bold Gothic Revival style with tall windows, pointed arches, and intricate stonework.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Église\\_Saint-Denis-de-l'Estrée](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Église_Saint-Denis-de-l'Estrée)

<https://uk.tourisme93.com/saint-denis-estree.html>



Richard Upjohn,  
Trinity Church, New  
York City, 1840



James Renwick Jr., St.  
Patrick's Cathedral,  
New York City, 1859–79

Richard Upjohn, Trinity Church, New York City, 1840

James Renwick Jr., St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York City, 1859–79

- The first **Gothic Revival building in the US** was **Richard Upjohn's** early success with his **Trinity Church** in New York City led to many commissions for churches, houses and offices. He was so wedded to the idea that the Gothic style was the true representation of his Christian belief that **he refused to design** a church for the Unitarians as he considered them anti-Christian.
- In the 1850s **James Renwick Jr.** was the most famous architect in New York City and although he had no formal training he was a prolific builder. He designed hospitals, houses and apartments but his most well known building is **St. Patrick's Cathedral**, the largest Gothic Revival Catholic cathedral in North America. Work was halted in the early 1860s during the American Civil War; the cathedral was completed in 1878 and dedicated on May 25, 1879.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugène\\_Viollet-le-Duc](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugène_Viollet-le-Duc)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Upjohn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Upjohn)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity\\_Church\\_\(Manhattan\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_Church_(Manhattan))

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Renwick\\_Jr.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Renwick_Jr.)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St.\\_Patrick's\\_Cathedral\\_\(Midtown\\_Manhattan\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Patrick's_Cathedral_(Midtown_Manhattan))

<https://nypost.com/2018/06/06/the-secret-legacy-of-the-architect-behind-st->

[patricks/](#)



Earliest illustration of Count Dracula 1901, approved by Bram Stoker. *Dracula* was first published in 1897



Earliest illustration of Count Dracula 1901, approved by Bram Stoker. *Dracula* was first published in 1897.

- **By the 1890s the Gothic Revival movement had been replaced by Arts & Crafts. Many people's thoughts turned to degeneracy and the fin de siècle.**
- One of those people was Bram **Stoker who was a business manager** for the Lyceum Theatre in London, where he **supplemented his income by writing a large number of sensational novels.** His **most successful** was the vampire tale ***Dracula*** published on 26 May 1897. Parts of it are set around the town of **Whitby**, where he spent summer holidays.
- Before writing *Dracula*, Stoker spent **seven years researching European folklore** and stories of vampires, being most influenced by Emily Gerard's 1885 essay "Transylvania Superstitions" which includes content about a vampire myth. *Dracula* was not the first vampire myth, in fact 26 years previously a novel was published about a **lesbian vampire** and the first mention in English literature was exactly 100 years before Stoker's version.

## NOTES

- Throughout the **1880s and 1890s**, authors such as H. Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, and H. G. Wells wrote many tales in which fantastic creatures **threatened the British Empire.** **Invasion literature was at a peak**, and Stoker's formula was very familiar by 1897 to readers of fantastic adventure stories, of an invasion of England by

continental European influences. Victorian readers enjoyed *Dracula* as a good adventure story like many others, but it did not reach its legendary status until later in the 20th century when film versions began to appear.

- Shakespearean actor and friend of Stoker's Sir **Henry Irving** was a possible real-life **inspiration** for the character of Dracula. The role was tailor-made to his dramatic presence, gentlemanly mannerisms, and affinity for playing villain roles. Irving, however, never agreed to play the part on stage.
- Although a widely known vampire novel, ***Dracula* was not the first**. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published *The Bride of Corinth* in 1797, although does not involve blood sucking, and in 1871 Sheridan Le Fanu published *Carmilla* about a lesbian vampire. The first mention of vampires in English literature appears in Robert Southey's monumental oriental epic poem *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1797), where Thalaba's deceased beloved turns into a vampire.
- Some historians are convinced that a historic figure, Vlad III Dracula, often called **Vlad the Impaler, was the model** for Stoker's Count although there is **no supporting evidence**.



Paul Nash, *We are Making a New World*, 1918, Imperial War Museum

Paul Nash (1889-1946), *We are Making a New World*, 1918, Imperial War Museum

- **Gothic horror collided with reality with the First World War.** One of the artists to respond was Paul Nash who with the ironic title *We are Making a New World* shows a wood turned into a waste land.
- Shortly after the war, in 1922, T. S. Eliot published the long poem *The Wasteland* (1922). The first section, 'The Burial of the Dead', introduces the themes of disillusionment and despair and it starts with the famous phrase '**April is the cruellest month**'.
- Perhaps Nash's first major painting and his **most famous work**, it has been described as **one of the best British paintings of the 20th century**, and has been **compared to Picasso's *Guernica***.

## NOTES

- In six weeks on the Western Front, Nash completed what he called "**fifty drawings of muddy places**". When he returned to England, he started to develop these drawings into finished pieces and began working flat-out to have enough pictures ready for a one-man show in May 1918.
- *We Are Making a New World*, 1918, by Paul Nash. Following a successful exhibition of his war drawings in London in July 1917, Nash was commissioned as an official war artist. **This work is one of the most memorable images of the First World War.**

- *We are Making a New World* is a 1918 oil-on-canvas painting by Paul Nash. The optimistic title contrasts with Nash's depiction of a scarred landscape created by the First World War, with shell-holes, mounds of earth, and leafless tree trunks.
- One modern critic, writing in 1994, likened it to a '**nuclear winter**' whilst one of the first people to see it in 1918, Arthur Lee, the official censor responsible for the British war artists, thought it was a '**joke**' at the **expense of the public** and the art establishment.
- When the war ended Nash was determined to continue his career as an artist but struggled with periodic **bouts of depression and money worries**.

## **REFERENCES**

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Nash\\_\(artist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Nash_(artist))
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We\\_Are\\_Making\\_a\\_New\\_World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We_Are_Making_a_New_World)



Grant Wood (1891-1942), *American Gothic*,  
1930, 78 × 65.3 cm,  
Art Institute of Chicago

Grant Wood (1891-1942), *American Gothic*, 1930, 78 × 65.3 cm, Art Institute of Chicago

- I thought I would mention ***American Gothic*** by Grant Wood.
- In 1930 Grant Wood, an American artist with European training, was being driven around Eldon, Iowa when he noticed a **Gothic window in a flimsy frame house**. Wood "thought it a form of **borrowed pretentiousness**, a structural absurdity, to put a Gothic-style window in such a flimsy frame house".
- He used his **sister Nan** as model **and his dentist** Dr Byron McKeeby. Nan was embarrassed by the implication that she was the wife of a man twice her age and told friends that Wood had seen it as **father and daughter** which he later confirmed in a letter.
- The key elements of the picture reflect the emphasis Gothic places on the vertical, such as the man's long face, the Gothic window, the tines of the pitchfork which reflect the stitching on the man's overalls.

## NOTES

- It is one of the best known American paintings but at the time only one third prize at the Art Institute of Chicago, one critic called it a 'comic valentine'. Iowans were furious at one they considered as making fun of 'pinched, grim-faced, puritanical Bible-thumpers' and although Wood denied it was a caricature it is now seen as **a satire of small-town rural life**. The curtains

upstairs and own are closed which is a mourning custom in Victorian America and the woman has a black dress beneath her apron and has a look of grieving so some have seen it as a memento mori, a reminder of death. It has been suggested the man is a spiritual presence and is the father she mourns.

- Another interpretation is that it depicts the **steadfast American pioneering spirit** facing the realities of the Great Depression, a reading that agrees with Wood's rejecting the Bohemian art of his youth and of the East Coast and aligning himself with Midwestern painters.

## **REFERENCES**

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Gothic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Gothic)





Keith Macmillan (1934-2012),  
Black Sabbath album cover,  
1970

Keith Macmillan (1934-2012), Black Sabbath album cover, 1970

- I finish with **Modern "Gothic" and this Black Sabbath album cover** that was released in 1970. It was their debut album and it received negative reviews by critics but was a commercial success.
- Keith Macmillan, aka Keef, designed and photographed the cover. The mysterious woman was Louisa Livingstone, a 18 or 19 year-old model. The building is a 15th-century watermill at Mapledurham in Oxfordshire.
- The spooky, eerie feeling was achieved by the selection of the location and the use of Kodak infrared aerochrome film, designed for aerial photographs. Macmillan said he did "**a little bit of tweaking in the chemistry to get that slightly dark, surrealistic, evil kind of feeling to it.**"

## NOTES

- The model appeared on other album covers, worked in the theatre, television and films and now lives in Europe making electronic music.
- Black Sabbath were an English rock band formed in Birmingham in 1968. They are often cited as pioneers of heavy metal music. The band helped define the genre with their first three albums **Black Sabbath** (1970), *Paranoid* (1970) and *Master of Reality* (1971).

## REFERENCES

<https://www.stereogum.com/2073675/black-sabbath-debut-album-50->

[anniversary-cover/news/](#)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_Sabbath](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sabbath)



## THE GOTHIC & ITS REVIVAL

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE  
ART@SHAFE.UK  
WWW.SHAFE.UK

Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare* (detail), 1781, Institute of Arts, Detroit

- I hope you found something to appeal in the Gothic and its Revival. My intention was to show how those ancient Germanic tribes, the Goths, have cast their spell over the whole of Western art.
- Thank you for watching and I hope to bring you another chunk of Western art soon.