

The Gothic

- **Gothic fiction** (sometimes referred to as **Gothic horror**) is a genre of literature that combines elements of both horror and romance. As a genre, it is generally believed to have been invented by the English author Horace Walpole, with his 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*.

The Gothic

- Prominent features of Gothic fiction include terror (both psychological and physical), mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses and Gothic architecture, castles, darkness, death, decay, doubles, madness, secrets, and hereditary curses.

The Gothic

- By creating worlds where tragedy and repressed behaviours come to the forefront, gothic writers explore the psychology of human existence.
- In Poe's fiction, the human mind in itself is a dark, gloomy place where strange things happen, especially in the imagination.

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- **Gothic architecture** - a style of architecture developed in northern France that spread throughout Europe between the 12th and 16th centuries; characterized by slender vertical piers and counterbalancing buttresses and by vaulting and pointed arches.

Exeter Cathedral, 1320



The Gothic

- The earliest Gothic art was on the walls of Cathedrals and abbeys. Christian art was often typological in nature, showing the stories of the New Testament and the Old Testament side by side.
- Saints' lives were often depicted.
- Images of the Virgin Mary changed from the Byzantine iconic form to a more human and affectionate mother, cuddling her infant, swaying from her hip, and showing the refined manners of a well-born aristocratic courtly lady.

Giotto, “Badia Alterpiece,” 1330



Jan van Eyck, “The Virgin and Child in Church” 1439



Hieronymus Bosch. *Christ Carrying the Cross*. 1490.



19th Century Gothic

- The predecessors to modern horror, gothic fiction used ghost stories, madness, vampires, and perversity to develop a *pleasant* sense of fear in the reader.
- In other words, the reader enjoys being afraid, as gothic characters include a hero beset by mysterious or threatening forces that we may identify with, or learn from.

19th Century Gothic

- In other words, the reader enjoys being afraid, as gothic characters include a hero beset by mysterious or threatening forces that we may identify with, or learn from.
- The gothic presents readers with an opportunity to vicariously experience horrifying realities.
- By creating worlds where tragedy and repressed behaviors come to the forefront, gothic writers explore the psychology of human existence, and the nature of good and evil.

John Hamilton Mortimer (1740-1779): "Carrion Crows hovering over a Skeleton on a Seashore", 1824.



The Gothic

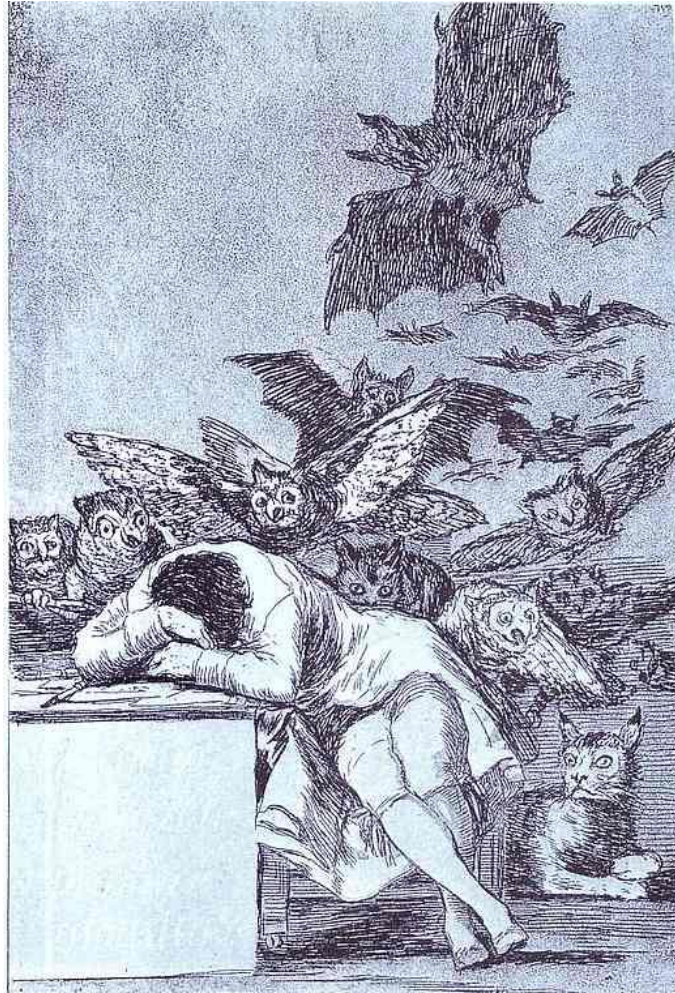
Illustration from Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1930



**Henry Fuseli's "The Nightmare"
1782**



Goya, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, 1799



Goya, *Satan Devouring One of His Children*, 1820



Piranesi, *The Imaginary Prisons*, 1799





The Southern Gothic

- By the 20th century, the domination of northern ideals and values had infiltrated through to southern society and their own regional identity and values were being replaced.
- The decaying, crumbling landscape of the post-Civil War era became the backdrop for tales of human indecency and horror, all the while presenting the supposed righteous and chivalric values of the Old South.
- It is a dying way of life, yet some Southerners do anything to hold on to it.

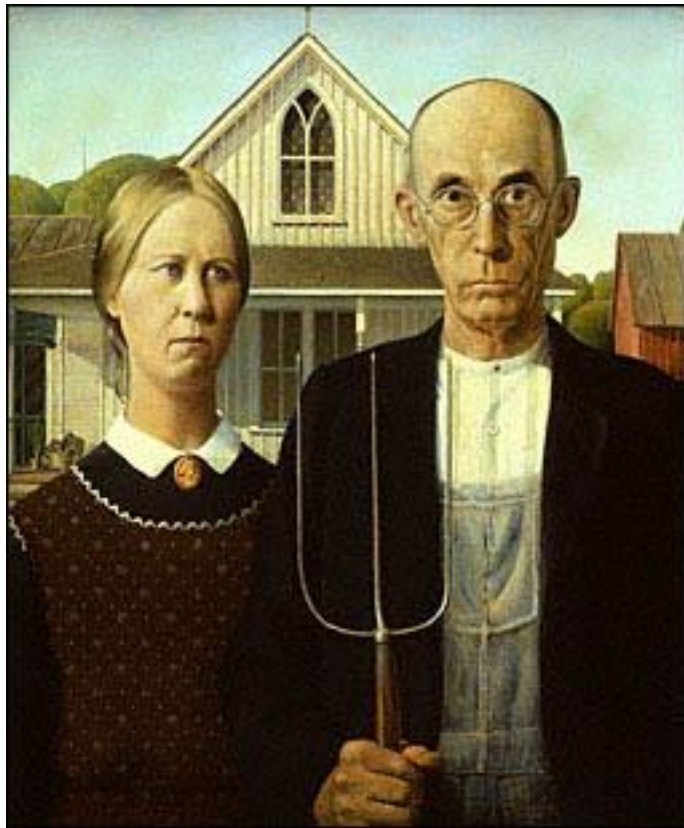
The Grotesque

- The **grotesque**, one of the key components of Southern Gothic writing, portrays deeply flawed characters, decayed, claustrophobic settings, or sinister events, often linking them to racism, poverty, or violence.
- Though grotesque characters or situations can sometimes be violent and hard to read about, the grotesque can comment on unpleasant aspects of society, especially the decay and deterioration of the South's traditions and identity.

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- Grotesque characters are often vile, ugly, violent crippled (physically and/or emotionally), and immoral, yet even as we are repulsed by them, we are also moved to pity and sympathy for characters such as Miss Emily.

Grant Wood, "American Gothic," 1930



Maggie Taylor, "Southern Gothic," 2002







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Gordon Parks, "American Gothic," 1942

