

'Haute Goth': The Influence of the Gothic in Fashion

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Introduction

Within Fashion, there seems to be a resurgence in the fascination with all things gothic across the fashion landscape. From Haute Couture to Street Style, many new permutations and hybrids have appeared. These include the Health Goth, Ninja Goth and Pop Goth, to fashion designers such as Rick Owens and Alessandro Michele both being drawn to the darker side of our existence throughout their recent collections.

This chapter will propose that these new facets of the Gothic mode reflect its resilience and ability for adaptation from its origins in the early 18th Century continuing through history and into contemporary society. Throughout the subsequent centuries, these adaptations have in turn strengthened the core of the Gothic, yet simultaneously have stayed true to its origins. This discussion will explore how the emergence of gothic themes have shaped and inspired fashion creatives and designers in contemporary society examining street style, haute couture, themes within the traditional gothic mode and new representations of gothic influences in contemporary fashion.

Re-Emergence of the Gothic

Brigid Cherry states in 21st Century Gothic that we are experiencing a “temporal cusp”¹. This argues Cherry, is observed as being very similar to how gothic themes originated back in the early 18th Century. So, for us here in the 21st Century, are we again experiencing an influx of goth modes due to our current circumstances; politically, economically and socially? In the beginning, the gothic was borne out of a time of social, political and cultural instability. A fin de siècle mentality was prevalent with the time period with concerns and social anxiety a major factor of the time. Artworks and literature in particular sought to compound these notions as society of the time began to erode the traditional and began to question, for example, re-examining ideas surrounding race and gender roles. Therefore, due to our current contemporary climate, these conditions replicate those that happened in the 18th Century creating a resurgence in interest of the themes of the gothic. The origins of the Gothic resonate strongly throughout our own political and social climate, and so re-appear in their different guises in contemporary examples throughout film, literature and fashion.

In an era filled with scientific upheaval and religious uncertainty, Gothic themes of horror, the supernatural, and suspense provided a suitable arena in which these fears could be examined and explored. Edmund Burke's 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* Gothic set out to argue that the Gothic mode's intention was to give an experience of the sublime, yet simultaneously “shock” the audience out of their everyday lives and give them the possibility of things beyond reason and explanation.

Therefore, in drawing parallels between the origins of the Gothic in the 18th Century and the re-emergence of these themes within our 21st century contemporary society, I propose that

the reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, that the gothic is transitional. It allows for movements to be made within its own definition, both across disciplines and culture. This allows the gothic to create new modes by clashing different time periods, modes, dress, ancient and modern equivalents of the style. Secondly, the gothic is open to the notion of possibility. Underpinned by the ideas surrounding the uncanny and the other, it offers a wide range of tropes and motifs which are both simultaneously familiar but also frightening. For example, Bram Stoker's classic *Dracula* contrasts the new modern Victorian era of technology with the old ruins of Whitby Abbey. In contemporary society, the rise of augmented reality and the concerns around our increasingly technological age have developed the rise of the virtual influencer most notably with the AI creation Lil' Miquela. She and subsequent other creations have successfully managed to fool the Instagram generation simultaneously creating a sense of uncertainty and unease due to their human-like natures.

Gothic Aesthetics

The Gothic mode clearly has its own rich, visual vocabulary which has evolved from a set of narrative associations evoked initially by the rise of Gothic Literature. Gothic Literature became for many authors the playground of horror and terror, with Horace Walpole's classic *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Further to this the work of Edgar Allan Poe, HG Lovecraft and poet Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* helped to secure the Gothic mode and developed the aesthetic of the time. This in turn became emblematic of the subcultural style. All three writers used the tropes of dark colours and black clothing within their work and emphasised the themes of superstition, sorcery, witchcraft and the Occult.

Drawing parallels from Literature to Fashion, Catherine Spooner posits that the garments which have subsequently become synonymous with the gothic mode do emphasise many of the themes within Gothic Literature. Many of the characters' garments reflect the events and happenings which occur to the individuals within the novels. Themes such as imprisonment, haunting and madness are reflected within the vivid descriptions present within the books. For example, Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations* wandering throughout her home in her old and worn wedding dress and Elsa Schiaparelli's *Skeleton Dress* (1938). Gothic fashion is linked to a particular sensibility, a type of 'dark romanticism'. Catherine Spooner in *Fashioning the Gothic* (2012) argues that Gothic clothing as representing by "engaging generic demands", subtly altering according to context"². This supports the fact that detailed descriptions are hard to find within Gothic texts. This echoes the statement of Gothic clothing as both flexible and transient.

So how have these themes of Gothic dress been appropriated? Valerie Steele argues in *Gothic: Dark Glamour* (2008) that through the development of the mode, the gothic subculture has emerged and has helped to define the Gothic aesthetic across the decades. Steele defines this rise of the subculture as beginning with the "groups of young people who are in opposition to the dominant culture". Therefore, Steele states that the rise of the subculture allowed for the increase in expressions of individuality to emerge. Young people gathered to present their own personal reflection of the gothic mode. This was most notably through the emergence of the gothic music in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These goths were directly associated with the music of this era and their aesthetic reflected the

darker themes and sombre musical style, with dark and predominantly black clothing being synonymous with this era. The London Goth scene was the most important within this era through clubs such as The Bat Cave, which was founded in the early 1970s by Anna Goodman. In writer Nancy Kilpatrick's *The Goth Bible: A Compendium for the Darkly Inclined* (2004) she emphasised that by only dressing like a goth, it did not mean necessarily that you would be goth. Kilpatrick refers to these people as the "Bat babies", copying the aesthetic of the goth community but not reflecting the deep and complex set of values that the Goth youths of the time reflected.

This example of the "Bat babies" echoes Walter Benjamin's view of Fashion as death. According to Benjamin, the essence of fashion is fetishism, because sex appeal derives from the inorganic clothing and jewellery. Even the face is covered with cosmetics. Benjamin concludes that the living person becomes a kind of mannequin, a gaily decked-out corpse. In Benjamin's analysis, he proposes that there needs to be an inner belief which makes up part of the individual in order for them to be deemed a "Goth". Here, the clothing is not enough. There are many different permutations currently of the Gothic in contemporary street style, commercial fashion and haute couture. These individuals are not just people with "surface decorations" (as Benjamin would argue), they are individuals, expressing their creativity and celebrating their uniqueness. New permutations have developed within the last decade which celebrate these new and exciting hybrids.

Street Style Goths

The gothic subculture and style have been a major influence since the early 1970s. Themes of the dark and melancholic permeate through the street style goths from Japanese Goths to Steam Punk, with a new range of goths emerging within our ever-more connected contemporary world. Since the turn of the millennium, there is an increased influence surrounding the question of gender fluidity and bodily norms. The renewed pursuit of perfection via social media platforms such as Instagram has created a new wave of people wanting to reject these stereotypes and seeking out alternative means of expression. Therefore, the more traditional themes of the goth aesthetic are evolving, clashing wide ranging influences from across the globe and creating new and exciting street style looks.

The Pop Goth emerged from the resurgence of the 1990s styles through art, literature and fashion. Partly inspired by Grunge, it is characterised by a mix and match aesthetic. It borrows from the do-it-yourself culture, combining a huge array of different materials such as sequins, velvet and floral items combining these with accessories and graphic elements. This notion of recycling works two-fold by creating a new aesthetic from found items and updating the modes in which the Pop Goth is expressed for a potential new demographic. It combines pretty and macabre elements such as pastel coloured clothing with crucifixes and dark make-up. The wearers also take on the "death of goth", mourning more traditional garments associated with the gothic trends and yet simultaneously celebrating the "pop" culture references and "undead" status. The Pop goth mourns and celebrates simultaneously.

The Lolita Goth style originates from Japan's Harajuku district in Tokyo. This style borrows heavily from the goth movement fusing them with elements from Japanese culture. Many

permutations exist in this style from classic to steampunk. Overall it is primarily inspired by the aesthetic of the Rococo period and the Victorian period. It clashes the two styles together to create a new aesthetic. Beginning in the 1980s it has risen and evolved to create many different and varied facets from blouses and bows to Victorian petticoats and wide skirts. The term “Lolita” has many different connotations, but is probably most well-known from the infamous novel of the same name written by Vladimir Nabokov. In the case of the street-style Lolita, the reference is only made to the ‘child like’ qualities of the choice of clothing. Elegance is prioritised over any subsequent western connotations we may have misplaced. The Lolita Goths also undertake pastimes which reflect their style through the overtly feminine use of activities such as embroidery, sewing and baking³.

The Health Goth in contrast highlights the emergence of the importance of sportswear trends which have been steadily on the increase for the last decade. Aesthetically there is an emphasis on menswear and menswear inspired looks for women, but the clothing tends to be of high performance used by athletes and professionals within the sports arena. Initially spurred on by fitness and street goth fashions, the Health Goth has evolved over time to incorporate not only aesthetics through clothing and garments, but has embraced this through social media, blogging, Health Goth websites and fashion brands developing this mode through their online searches. Alexander Wang’s collaboration with H&M for example, allowed the reach of the Health Goth to penetrate into the mainstream with Adidas and Nike following with their own variations soon after. Wang’s 2014 H&M collection was unisex (reflecting the blurring of genders through clothing) and incorporated cut-out garments, figure-hugging body-con styles and artificial fabrics. Critics felt that the line was ‘too sporty’ but was quickly embraced by the emerging Health Goths. The success of the Health Goth demonstrates how what is deemed to be a ‘subculture’ can have the time to develop and evolve creatively. This emphasis on the sensitive nature of the gothic mode lends itself to the creation of Fashion and the influence of these themes on Fashion creatives alike.

Themes in Fashion

The Occult/Witchcraft

The Occult has been a major influence for fashion designer Dilara Findikoglu. She staged her first collection in Autumn/Winter 2017 which included her signature use of red and black with dead and decaying roses. She assimilates and evolves the themes of punk, gothic script, fetish and heavy metal.

Her Spring/Summer 2018 collection evoked these Occult references with dark glamour in her clothing and models punctuated with Occult motifs, pentagrams and one model decked out as the Devil. Press for the show highlighted Findikoglu as a “Satanist”. The show itself was held in Holborn St Andrews Church, adding to the gothic tone for the show. Applique illustrations were emblazoned across the garments and bedecked with jewels.

In September 2016, Vogue and W Magazine defined the Fashion Week as the “Season of the Witch”. Since this moment, themes of the Occult and Witchcraft has been increasingly present within catwalk collections such as Comme de Garçons SS 2016 “The Blue Witch”.

Following on from this, The Costume Institute paid tribute to Japanese Designer Rei Kawakubo and her anti-fashion pieces for Comme De Garçon. 120 pieces were displayed in the exhibit focusing on the designers' interest in the "interstitially" – the space between the boundaries. Kawakubo's "Blue Witch" marked a departure from her symbolic references such as blood and roses, to a new more optimistic view of the world. One of her reference points included the Celtic Witch, a symbol of patience and peace. Madsen (2015) states that the Blue Witch symbolises "a fairy godmother"⁴.

Preen's Spring/Summer 2017 collection continued to explore Occult themes primarily being inspired by the film British Horror classic, *The Wicker Man* (1973). The collection included lots of Occult symbolism through the prints and embellishments. Devore and sequined embroidery was present in many pieces from the collection. The pentagram motif became a particular focus of interest within the collection. Pentagrams were applied to many of the designs, featuring in embroidery and sequins. This symbol has a long history of association with Paganism and was a major influence due to designers Thornton and Bregazzi, as they grew up on the Isle of Man. Thea Bregazzi stated that Witchcraft was deemed to be a "normal" practice within her home town. Bregazzi added that she grew up on the Isle of Man surrounded by "Witchcraft and Pagans"⁵. The integration of this theme within the collection reflects a sense of nostalgia and her own use of personal memory.

Other elements which expressed these sensibilities included the styling, hair and make-up choices for the collection. Make-up artist Val Garland and florist Flora Starkey created looks with fresh flowers which were pressed to the models' lips, and fern leaves pressed onto their necks. This notion of fraying and decaying of flora and fauna became an integral part of the design process, with some garments being created where flowers were left to dissolve and change naturally throughout the materials of the collection.

Throughout the following Autumn/Winter 2018 collections, designers Alexander Wang and The Row both referenced Occult themes as part of their AW18 collections. References to recent Horror films such as *The Crucible* and *The Witch* were reflected in their choices of garments. Designers Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen for The Row referenced women's dress throughout American History from the pilgrims of New England to more contemporary example of women's uniforms. Pieces included full length dresses in white and black with nipped-in waists and tied aprons. This reflected the costumes present in Robert Egger's 2015 film *The Witch*. Set in 1603, it tells the story of a young girl accused of the practice of Witchcraft within her community. The clothing within the film was meticulously re-created by costume designer Linda Muir and served in some scenes to be the only "sense of order" within a scene. Muir also added elements such as the red cloak for the audience to make clear associations with the fairy-tale and myth surrounding the depiction of Witches. Sculptor Isamu Noguchi set the scene for the show by including his sculptures dotted around on the poured-concrete floor. The designers chose to collaborate with Noguchi to create a surreal, serene somewhat apocalyptic landscape.

The theme of Witchcraft reached its pinnacle in Spring/Summer 2019's Rick Owens collection, *Babel*. For the SS19 womenswear collection, Rick Owens created his own Coven which included his own burning pyre which occupied the centre of the catwalk. According to the show's notes, a coven of mountainous witches was depicted wearing long overcoats and

caged accessories which attempted to suck and hold in certain parts of the models' bodies. This collection referenced the creation of towers and monuments, reflecting Owens' own burning pyre which was present during the show. Owens made reference to both Tatlin's Tower and the Tower of Babel. Tatlin's Tower, or the project for the Monument to the Third International, was a design for a grand monumental building by the Russian artist and architect Vladimir Tatlin, that was never built. By referencing Tatlin's Tower, Owens draws on the sense of hope and celebration that this structure (although never constructed) created for the Russian people. In contrast to this sense of order, he also included another tower, the Tower of Babel. This Biblical reference, as told in Genesis 11:1-9 is an origin myth meant to explain why the world's peoples speak different languages. According to the story, a united humanity in the generations following the Great Flood, speaking a single language and migrating eastward, comes to the land of Shinar.

This inspiration through the construction of Towers evolves shape-making from the engorged and bulbous shapes of Rei Kawakubo's work for Comme de Garçon to a more angular set of forms. The shapes are predominantly geometric and are dominated by rectangles and triangular forms. Although the body is presented in a more angular and geometric manner, the garments do retain elements of the softness present in some of Kawakubo's forms and designs. Exaggerated arms and collars reflect these geometric and angular lines but are made in softer materials. Owen's design process evolves this aesthetic from the very heavy sculptural shapes to shapes which are now much looser in form for the Spring Summer 2019 collection. It is as if the internal structures of these geometric shapes are beginning to be broken down, creating in turn a sense of a more expressive exaggeration.

In terms of the material process and development of the designs, silken fringe was made by using rubberised elements to change it in the way in which it moved when a model walked whilst wearing the garment. Coloured rubber and lacquered denim was also used within the collection and emphasised the breaking down of the geometric forms. Caged elements appear to be bending with their own weight, softening the shapes and creating curves around the body. Owens describes the collection as "shredded", the geometric column forms of the dresses reflect back to Owens evocation of priestess or pagan vestments. This collection also notably sees a departure from Owens' signature use of black. The darker tones are interspersed with pastels such as pale blue and also olive green. This extension of the colour palette (something he had explored in his Spring/Summer 2017 collection) sees Owen begin to create his own signature aesthetic incorporating new approaches and materials within his designs.

Victoriana

The influence of the 19th Century has been a major part of the resurgence of the Gothic within fashion design, most notably with designers exploring darker and more melancholic themes within their work and collections. From Autumn/Winter 2015, the rise of Victoriana has been evident through a wide range of catwalk collections. Many designers have referenced 19th Century styles and have used these motifs within their collection's designs, styling, make-up and hair.

The Victorian influences in Rodarte's Autumn/Winter 2016 build on their already established aesthetic for the macabre. This collection presented a catwalk full of broken rubble punctuated by flowers, red and black roses. Models walked in their lace creations influenced by the Victorian's desire for high collars and ruffles. As a finale, models broke out of the rubble and through coffins littered through the catwalk.

Sarah Burton at Alexander McQueen was inspired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "Christabel", the models enclosed in deep pillowed outfits and walk as if they were still sleeping. For the Autumn/Winter 2016 collection Burton wanted to express the state between sleeping and dreaming, where reality is blurred.

This interest in the 19th Century Gothic has continued into the recent Spring/Summer 2019 catwalk shows. Ann Demeulemeester explored themes surrounding the uncanny with designer Sebastien Meunier becoming fascinated with the inspirational story of L'Inconnue, an unidentified young girl pulled out of the River Seine in Paris in the late 19th Century and who became the inspiration for many artists of the time. L'Inconnue de la Seine was fixed in time through the creation of her death mask when she was retrieved from the River Seine. It is claimed that she was a possible victim of suicide. A pathologist at the morgue became so enchanted by her face, he preserved her for eternity by casting her face. The general public became fascinated by the L'Inconnue, with the cast being reproduced and able to buy copies of the original and display it in their homes. It became an "object d'art" and a source of inspiration for literature and the Visual Arts. Boddaret (1993) discusses the writer and philosopher Albert Camus and his reaction to his first viewing of L'Inconnue⁶. He compared her expression to that of Leonardo Da Vinci's Mona Lisa. There is no doubt that L'Inconnue became endlessly intriguing and fascinating to both artists and the public alike within the Victorian era. There is also little doubt that Albert Camus' comparison to Da Vinci's masterpiece only helped to propel the myth surrounding the victim.

Through Sebastien Meunier's womenswear collection for Ann Demeulemeester, the Spring/Summer 2019 collection reflected his fascination with L'Inconnue expressing through the collection the melancholic and gothic themes within his work. Veils and heads were covered obscuring the individual and creating ambiguous shapes and patterns with the fabrics. Catherine Spooner suggests that the 'authentic self' is hidden beneath these veils. The clothing seeks to obscure, simultaneously closing off the body yet opening up the surfaces of the body⁷. This theme was also present in Ann Demeulemeester's Menswear collection. It again was influenced by the Gothic through the choice of Irish folk songs, genderless shapes and relaxed tailoring. Predominantly black in colour, the collection was interspersed with female models in white gowns which created an ethereal and uncanny feeling. Meunier also referenced artist Odile Redon's nightmarish depictions of ghouls creating a sense of tension and unrest within the collection.

The Victorian era also witnessed a rise in fantasy and fairy stories. These grew in number through the Victorian era offering a sense of escapism and novelty. These fairy-tale themes have been revisited and explored through recent fashion designers' work. The 'American Gothic' Autumn/Winter 2018 collection by Coach. This collection reflected feminine floral pieces which had a gothic fairy-tale element and a sense of melancholic. There are many references made to a handmade mentality and this is reflected through the craft-based

sentiment and whimsical elements present in the collection. The set reflected this theme and was staged in a dark wood filled with mist and fog. Cementing the fairy-tale, poisoned apples were carried by the models and eyes were placed around the set that followed the viewer around the room.

Ryan Lo's Spring/Summer 2019 collection. His work has been consistently underpinned by the desire to explore the romance of the fairy-tale. The Spring/Summer 2019 collection was titled 'Saturn Returns'. Themes of astrology, films including *The Wizard of Oz* and *Cinderella* and the character of Carrie Bradshaw were a major part of Lo's inspiration behind this collection. Pastel hues were most prevalent within the collection with tuille, crochet, jacquard, ribbons and feather evoking the themes of love and romance. Peter pan collars, Fairy Godmothers and even a knight in shining armour closed the show and reflected this search for love. Elements of the character of the Wicked Witch appeared thorough the inclusion of pointed hats and boots and props such as twisted broomsticks. The inspiration came from Full Metal Alchemist's *Sorcerer's Stone*, which the designer said made him come to a realisation, one that he doesn't want people to think is "shallow": "human beings are just dust in this massive universe"⁸.

The Horror Film:

The Horror film has been a source of inspiration for many fashion designers and collections through fashion. Alexander McQueen's Spring Summer 1995 collection referenced Hitchcock's classic *The Birds* (1963) and brand Undercover Spring/Summer collection which included twin models reminiscent of the Grady twins which Danny Torrance observes in Stanley Kubrick's classic *The Shining* (1980).

Both Miu Miu and Ulla Johnson explored the film creating looks inspired by Shelley Duvall's 1970s wardrobe. The check skirts and turtle necks made an appearance with an emphasis on the 70s colour palettes which featured in the film and the use of exaggerated cuts on the pinafore dresses with oversized 70s buttons.

Gareth Pugh referenced horror classic *The Wicker Man* (1973) for his Spring Summer 2015 show. He combined the influences of the film with iconic location Stonehenge manifesting in a range of looks which included long dresses, some included pentagram motifs and were belted with hessian. Hats obscured the faces of the models and one was presented with the head covered in a hessian sack creating a sense of tension and otherworldly.

Hellraiser (1987) became a fascination for designers Junya Wanatabe and Thom Browne. For Wanatabe's Spring Summer 2006 collection, models wore a range of oversized headpieces adorned with paper mohawks and spikes, reminiscent of the iconic character of Pinhead. Thom Browne's Autumn Winer 2012 Menswear collection also reflected the film with punk influenced garments and models also wearing masks made of tweed which were pierced with metal spikes.

For Spring/Summer 2018 collection, Raf Simons' themes for Calvin Klein was packed full of references to the horror film from *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) to the film *American Psycho* (2000). The signature themes of Americana were present within the collection, although this

particular season took a darker turn. These references drew from a wider context – Horror films including classics such as *Carrie* (1976) and *The Shining* (1980). Simons kept the classic 1950s influences through the collection's silhouettes but these were given a slasher edge. For example, a classic Macintosh raincoat was shown but with a twist – one mac included rivulets of red blood spatter, another a homage to Leather face's apron from *A Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). This continued with a blood-soaked *Carrie* and Andy Warhol's infamous Electric Chair prints (1964). Accessories included a set of high heels created from Jason Voorhees' infamous Hockey Mask.

Frankenstein

A seminal moment in the exploration of one of the most famous of Gothic themes was at Milan Fashion Week at Gucci's Autumn/Winter 2018 show. Creative Director Alessandro Michele, in reference to the show, was quoted as saying "We are all Doctor Frankenstein of our lives". Michele's aesthetic and influence draw from wide-ranging sources including history, art and literature, splicing them together to create his own "hybrid" looks. The act of cutting and re-forming the self through Fashion is reminiscent of Mary Shelley's creature in her novel *Frankenstein (1818)* and demonstrates how the themes of transformation continue to be relevant within today's society. "We are all the Dr. Frankenstein of our lives," said Michele with a shrug. "Inventing, assembling, experimenting" with identity as expressed through clothes, which "can accompany you while you develop an idea of yourself." We are all, he added, "hybrids" now⁹.

Designer Alessandro Michele was also inspired by the essay *Cyborg Manifesto (1984)* by author Donna Haraway. This essay explores the concept of the cyborg as a rejection of the boundaries we establish. This use of hybridity between the organism and the machine is used metaphorically to illustrate the breaching of our contemporary boundaries. She explores this notion through three areas: human and animal, animal-human and machine and thirdly, the physical and non-physical. Michele's collection included models walking with accessories including animals such as snakes and chameleons and in some cases, their own severed heads. Haraway states that evolution has allowed for the blurring of boundaries between the human and the animal with twentieth century machines creating ambiguity between the natural and artificial. The lines between reality have become blurred and have created new spaces in which to engage with this discourse. Michele's catwalk space reflected this blurring of boundaries through the creation of an operating theatre painted in medical hues of green and permeated with the sounds of hospital monitors.

Haraway describes the Cyborg as being "reassembled". The cyborg has no origin and no end. Frankenstein's monster is immortal, with no true genesis as he is assembled from a myriad of different people. Shelley's character of Victor Frankenstein who chooses to use a selection of different body parts in order to create his perfect specimen rather than choosing to revive a complete dead subject. Parallels can therefore be drawn between the idea of the assembled parts of a cyborg becoming manifest. But the Monster longs for a companion and a reason to live. He is somewhat out of time within the 19th century, more akin to Haraway's post-modern society. Criticises the more traditional notions of Feminism, particularly identity politics. The cyborg has no genesis, no beginning or end. Speaks of it as a "monster", the limits of community. The metaphor of the cyborg is used to urge beyond

beyond the limitations of the traditional notions of gender and politics. Alessandro Michele harnesses this hybridity creating a collection which engages the social issues of the contemporary fashion landscape.

Frankenstein has also appeared in the recent Autumn/Winter 2019 show for fashion house Prada. Frankenstein's monster appeared on women's pencil skirts and dismembered hands appeared on men's shirts. Other motifs synonymous with the classic story included lightning bolts and roses. The electrical motifs were also present through the use of fuzzy hats and jumpers reminiscent of static or the monster being awakened through an electric shock. The set included printed circuit boards and yellow flashing light bulbs.

It is clear that Gothic themes in fashion resonate through many creatives and their collections in the recent years. Back in 2008, Cintra Wilson claims in her article "Haute Goth" for the New York Times, that the visual aesthetic synonymous with the gothic (such as the use of black clothing) is continuing to play a part within fashion design just because it is so varied and diverse in its proposition¹⁰. Valerie Steele continues to support this view in her book *Dark Glamour* (2008). The diverse and evolutionary elements of the gothic support the more traditional modes but also allow for new contemporary hybrids to emerge. Fashion allows for this to take place as it is somewhat out of time. The transitional nature of fashion and its constant evolution allow for re-interpretation of themes with new hybrids appearing every season. Philosopher Walter Benjamin observes that death lies at the heart of fashion, because unlike the living and dying body, fashion is neither alive nor dead. Fashion also allows for possibility due to its ever-evolving nature and its need to embrace and inspire through new styles and modes of thinking. Our contemporary digital age also engages globally with traditional borders being slowly eroded and new and exciting identities emerging. This chapter examines a handful of the current influences such as Street Style, Occult, Victoriana, Fairytale, and literary classic Frankenstein, posing the question of the significance of the gothic and its place within contemporary society.

Theatricality, spectacle, darkness and the macabre are all evident in the recent collections with even Rei Kawakubo for Comme De Garçon examining the gothic within her Autumn/Winter 2019 collection. There seems to be little evidence of the gothic mode slowing down within fashion with new and exciting expressions of the theme evident in many current collections. The multi-faceted nature of the Gothic allows for the cross-pollination of ideas, thinking and philosophies. The gothic in fashion draws on the Punk mentality, but also on a vast array of historical literary, art and creative sources for its inspirations. The complex nature of the theme allows for endless interpretations and possibilities in fashion. Goodlad and Bibby suggest that the gothic clothing is an intrinsic part of fashion as it is this that gives it 'life'. Fashion therefore a place in which dialogues can be created and the norms are rejected as a place to explore and be free with ideas.

Notes

¹ Brigid Cherry (Ed) 21st Century Gothic Preface (England, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010)

² Catherine Spooner Fashioning the Gothic Body (England, Manchester University Press, 2012 p5)

³ Masafum Monden The Nationality of Lolita Fashion
[http://www.academia.edu/4825302/The Nationality of Lolita Fashion](http://www.academia.edu/4825302/The_Nationality_of_Lolita_Fashion) [Accessed November 5th 2018]

⁴ Anders Christian Madsen Paris Heals the World, ID Magazine, 4th October 2015 https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/9kygqe/paris-heals-the-world[Accessed October 21st 2018]

⁵ Thornton Bregazzi Vogue Online <https://www.vogue.co.uk/shows/spring-summer-2017-ready-to-wear/preen-by-thornton-bregazzi> [Accessed July 2018]

⁶ Boddaert Francois Petites Portes d'éternité: La Mort, la gloire et les litterateurs France, Breves Litterature, 1993

⁷ Catherine Spooner Fashioning Gothic Bodies, England, Manchester University Press 2012, p5)

⁸ Ryan Lo Interview Hunger Magazine Online <https://www.hungertv.com/editorial/ryan-lo-on-saturn-returns-his-bewitching-ss19-collection/>[Accessed November 5th 2018]

⁹ Alessandro Michele New York Times 22nd February 2018
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/22/style/gucci-alessandro-michele-milan-fashion-week.html> [Accessed March 4th 2018]

¹⁰ Wilson Cintra Haute Goth, You just can't kill it, New York Times, 17th September 2008
<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/18/fashion/18GOTH.html> [Accessed 18th September 2018]