

Manifesting the Gothic:
Reflections on Fashion and Visual Culture

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Abstract

The gothic has been a continual presence within the west since its establishment during the eighteenth-century. Throughout the subsequent centuries, it has become more prominent, evolving beyond an exclusively literary phenomenon to embrace diverse cultural forms. To reflect this, this thesis offers a new articulation: 'gothic as mode'. This concept is a way in which to express a narrative or element of storytelling that has the ability to permeate through mediums, styles and timeframes. The gothic and its extension into fashion and visual culture is under-theorised. The work submitted for this PhD by Published Work seeks to redress this balance, focusing on its significance. This contribution spans a timeline predominantly from the nineteen eighties to the present day. This collection of publications – one performance, three book chapters and one co-authored book chapter – identifies the importance of fashion and visual culture in enabling the gothic to manifest as an interdisciplinary space. Fashion and visual culture are presented as catalysts, and this work proposes that both are also places of expansion in the twenty-first century. The gothic presents itself as an active, multi-faceted mode of expression, mediated through fashion and visual culture.

The concept of gothic as mode is presented in this thesis in two ways:

1. The activation of the **gothic as mode** through fashion and visual culture in a **transformative way**.
2. The exploration of fashion and visual culture as sites of gothic **transgression**.

The theatrical nature of the gothic lends itself to exploration of fashion and the ways in which this has helped to develop the construction of the gothic narrative. From explorations of themes of the macabre and melancholic in fashion to the presentation of the construction of self through costume and film, this PhD by Published Work explores the importance of fashion and visual culture to the gothic establishing a space in which new dialogues actively manifest.

1 Introduction

The gothic can be problematic and difficult to define, due to its unruly nature. Definitions vary greatly over time, reflecting how this concept has evolved, spawning an ever-expanding usage and terminology. For the purposes of this thesis, definitions of key terms are provided by the author for the reader to help navigate the different elements of the Gothic/Goth/gothic mode from the eighteenth century to the present.

Gothic:

The term Gothic is capitalised in this thesis as a genre synonymous with the canonical literary term that rose in popularity during the eighteenth century specifically within Great Britain (Smith, 2013, p.2, Byron and Townsend, 2020, p. 323). In support of this definition, Fred Botting's (1995) *Gothic (The New Critical Idiom)* is arguably the definitive text within the field. This book offers an overview from an academic perspective and defines Gothic's development through a literary tradition established in the eighteenth century and continuing into the present day.

Goth:

The term Goth is capitalised in this context as a form defined by its association with the subcultural movement and music scene appearing at the beginning of the nineteen eighties. The dynamic characteristics of Goth are given their fullest explanation in the works of Spooner (2006) and Hodkinson (2002). The subculture began with a specific aesthetic and musical taste which has over time has evolved identified in examples such as *Lolita Goth* (Ishikawa, 2007). The prevalence and persistence of Goth is linked to the societal developments that have contributed to new iterations. It is not solely an aesthetic, but more 'a state of mind' (Godman, 2024, p.271).

gothic as mode:

This new term gothic as mode (which is developed through this thesis), is defined by the author as a new approach. It is a way in which to express a narrative or element of storytelling that has the ability to permeate through mediums, styles and timeframes.

1.1 Gothic as a Concept

‘We live in Gothic times’

Angela Carter (1976, p.122).

As resonant as ever, this statement illustrates how gothic is a presence in our contemporary times, as well as establishing its significance through history. Carter’s declaration is over forty years old but still has resonance as it shapes culture by offering insights and critiques of the different eras and fields within which it has been located. It is expressed through a wide range of mediums from literature to film, and increasingly within under-examined academic contexts such as fashion and visual culture.

From the perspective of both a fashion practitioner and academic, this work highlights the author’s passion for the field of fashion through their own experiences both creatively and academically. A gothic narrative has always been a presence in Richards’ work from undergraduate BA (Hons) studies on the Gothic literary tradition, its evolution into Horror films of the nineteen thirties, through to Masters Studies interrogating themes of haunting and melancholy. Alongside these academic approaches, there is an established mode of working with Goth communities, designers, and artists which have contributed to this PhD study. This work adopts an interdisciplinary approach which weaves the gothic as mode through the publications that are presented alongside this thesis. This unique perspective is presented through a fashion lens allowing for valuable insights to be presented as new opportunities for future study.

Fashion can be expressed through design, dress, society, economics and sustainable practices, ever evolving and renewing itself. Black *et al.* (2013) discuss the potential of fashion research as an interdisciplinary space which has been able to ‘overcome its limits’ (Black *et al.*, 2013, p.29). They argue that there is a need for research to

engage in an attempt to create 'new connections' for fashion studies (Black *et al.*, 2013, p.30). Fashion is an interdisciplinary space. Through the development of the field of fashion studies, which has spurred its academic study, the potential for fashion to embrace new perspectives and reflect contemporary times has increased.

Paulicelli, Manlow and Wissinger (2021) identify fashion as a lens through which to gain new understanding. They claim that fashion studies has 'risen in both popular and academic interest during the last two decades' (Paulicelli, Manlow, and Wissinger 2021, p.37). This thesis contributes to the growth of fashion studies as a way in which to frame the world through a fashion lens. This allows for an enhanced understanding of the importance of the field both in popular culture and academically.

Visual culture, by extension, expands these practices and offers locations for the still and moving image to be representative of a specific time or place. It can be a cultural or artistic response, either contextualising an event or critiquing it. Granata (2012) supports the importance of visual culture and the study of moving images within a fashion context. Granata argues that the study of film is significant to fashion studies as it offers 'a similar order to the garments themselves' (Granata, 2012, p.72). Granata adds that fashion studies is 'emergent' (Granata, 2012, p.67). Granata's observation highlights the links between fashion and film by comparing it to the development of film studies in the nineteen eighties. This supports this thesis as it establishes visual culture's significance in contemporary academic discourse from a fashion perspective. Kavka (2024) reinforces this view and explores the potential for fashion and film to be analysed conjointly to support fashion analysis. Kavka explains how film can create 'a kaleidoscopic surface(s)' (Kavka, 2024, p.29), allowing for new ways in which to configure the body as both a material and medial object. Taking on board Granata and Kavka's methodologies, this thesis positions visual culture as an important component for discussion of both fashion and goth as mode. It supports the idea that fashion is an interdisciplinary area of study within which image and film in particular offer a major contribution to the field.

The gothic as mode is presented in this thesis as an interdisciplinary space both historical and universal, simultaneously incorporating the fields of fashion and visual culture. It is an ambiguous, messy and multi-faceted physical and psychological space, conventionally eliciting images of horror, spectres, elements of the macabre or darkness, but the prevalence and persistence has not been sustained on chills alone. The phenomenon of the gothic is not as superficial as it may appear in contemporary fashion collections and films and the continual relevance (cultural as much as commercial) of the gothic as a mode, hints at something more dynamic that permits exploration of contemporary misgivings about a rapidly changing present. This thesis and accompanying published works are an exploration of the continual manifestation and presence of the gothic as mode within fashion and visual culture. Although the gothic is an active space, particularly in terms of literary work, this contribution aims to highlight the importance of fashion and visual culture within the gothic discourse as a space of growth.

This thesis is accompanied by five published works: one performance, three book chapters and one co-authored book chapter. Collectively these works present the importance of fashion and visual culture within explorations of the gothic. Thematically the work identifies the significance of transformation and transgression through explorations of fashion designers, subcultural styles and identity. This work put forward for the PhD by Published Work presents a combination of fashion, visual culture and the gothic to create a space in which new dialogues can manifest. By investigating historical, thematic and theoretical understandings of the gothic through the aesthetics and cultural values present, this work conceives of it as a place to be free, where perceptions of people's (clothed) identities can be critiqued and reimagined.

This thesis makes a contribution to knowledge by proposing a new framework for the gothic – gothic as mode - evidenced through the fields of fashion and visual culture. This work proposes that the gothic mode's resilience and adaptability are the reasons why it has continued to be important within twenty-first century fashion and visual culture. It expands the area of the gothic to explore the possibilities and iterations present within clothing, identity and perceptions of what

Goth fashion can mean within society. This research defines the interdisciplinary nature of the gothic mode with a focus on fashion and visual culture and its relationship to the construction of identity. The research provides a bridge to connect what have tended to be separate strands of discussion. Within Gothic Studies, these strands work together within the mode of intersectionality and drawing on explorations of embodiment, culture, identity, and self-expression. The work introduces a new point of view by building on the work of scholars in the field, from Julia Kristeva (1982) and Barbara Creed (1993) to more contemporary academics, including Catherine Spooner (2006) and Brigid Cherry (2010). This work benefits academics in the field of Gothic Studies, but also in the field of fashion studies. This desire to deepen understanding within the field is a positive addition and this thesis seeks to expand the field of fashion as a way of creating new knowledge and renewed questioning about cultural practices. It also has the potential for non-academic audiences to engage with a gothic discourse and develop their understanding of this field. This work is interdisciplinary and attempts to carve out new and exciting possibilities for the study of fashion and visual culture by engaging with gothic as mode. The hope for this work is that its accessibility will draw new researchers and scholars to the opportunities that the intersection of this research can offer.

The origins of the gothic within the west are challenging to navigate, appearing in many manifestations throughout history. This includes fourth-century Germanic tribes, twelfth-century architectural styles, and its alignment with eighteenth-century literature. The potential of the gothic was apparent from its inception during the eighteenth-century. There is clear evidence of a literary and visual synthesis of the Gothic taking place in this period, particularly with the publication of Horace Walpole's seminal text, *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764-5). Walpole's work was considered to be the first Gothic novel in the English language, and his pioneering text proposed the strange and fantastical, a 'horror' story as a legitimate form. On publication of the book, Walpole claimed it was a translation of a long-lost medieval manuscript. Inspired by Walpole's idea, many authors used this motif to frame their own narratives, as observed in William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786).

The Castle of Otranto was accompanied by a set of engravings that visualised key moments within the story. This influenced many of the visual tropes that contemporary artists created as an aesthetic for definitions of the Gothic that still resonate today. These include ghostly apparitions, hidden identities, death, dying and themes of the macabre. Figure 1 depicts one of these supernatural occurrences in the story where the apparition of a skeleton appears as an omen representing the Manfred family curse. This example presents the gothic as mode, establishing an interdisciplinary space connecting both literature and art which would continue over time and into the present day.



Figure 1: Unknown Artist (1764-5) *The Castle of Otranto* engraving (detail).

The Gothic as a literary and visual mode of expression continued to develop throughout the eighteenth-century, 'flourishing' throughout Britain (Bloom, 2010, p.37) and spreading into Europe and beyond. An important example of this Gothic expansion is presented in Swiss artist Henry Fuseli's iconic work *The Nightmare* (1781). This work visualised the Gothic through the exploration of the unconscious, arguably prefiguring the development of the psychological space that the Gothic demonstrates in the nineteenth-century. Botting (2013) explores this idea in the charting the expansion of the origins of the Gothic to reflect not only the literary tradition but the increasingly expansive use of gothic as a mode. Botting addresses its development through new technologies which emerge through the nineteenth

and twentieth centuries including film, photography and digital media (Botting, (2013, p.3).

Figure 2 visualises the development of the gothic from the author's perspective. Here gothic is established as a mode to reflect the cultural effects of emerging technologies and the impact of these over time. It identifies the establishment of gothic as mode as it rises in prominence throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries aided by the invention of new technologies and opportunities for exploration through these mediums.

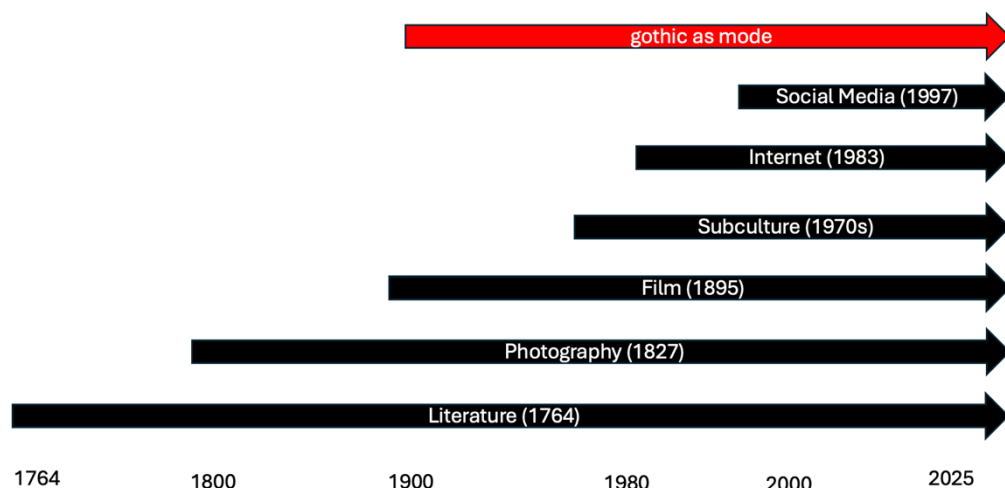


Figure 2: Richards, J. (2025) Timeline of Gothic/Goth/gothic as mode.

This literary and visual synthesis of gothic as mode establishes it as a critical space. Byron and Townsend (2020) explore the translation of gothic tropes into photography, fashion, cinema and onwards into the digital age, which they argue has been 'generally fluent, even effortless', (Byron and Townsend, 2020, p. 323).

As both a psychological and physical space, the gothic as mode is also an arena where people can reflect their self and their social identities. Franck (2020) confirms Byron

and Townsend's approach by highlighting the Gothic's effectiveness as a visual communicator through its ability to 'insinuate itself into the human psyche' (Franck, 2020, p.243). This potential is fundamental to the mode's continuing relevance in subsequent centuries and into the present day.

This adaptability of the gothic as a space to explore the self and identity is most evident within Goth subcultures. The dynamic characteristics present within the gothic have found their fullest explanation in the works of academics such as Catherine Spooner (2006) and Paul Hodkinson (2002). Hodkinson (2002) examines the sustained presence of the gothic mode within popular culture as it approaches the twenty-first century. Hodkinson emphasises the ability to facilitate the fashioning of identities which is also present in the work of Spooner (2006). Spooner identifies how literary texts, particularly from the eighteenth-century, such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), reflect pertinent social themes. Spooner's examination of these themes is particularly important to this thesis as it develops the idea that the gothic is a reflection on the 'nature of self' (Spooner, 2006, p.8). The locating of fashion and wider themes of visual culture are central to this discussion, as Spooner identifies three specific themes: the construction of identities, the monstrous and the Other. The Other is a term used to define the concept of self, of human identity and consciousness. The existence of the Other 'allows for recognition of the self' (Kristeva, 1982, p.1). Explorations of the Other and the abject as a presence in contemporary society are analysed through the medium of film with a focus on examinations of transgression. The shaping of self and identity are explored through the work of fashion designers including Alexander McQueen. Spooner also offers insights into the evolving nature of the Goth subculture and its influence on contemporary *haute couture* and catwalk shows. These themes offer readings of the examination of self and how the gothic is a space of discovery in the present.

This thesis positions the gothic as mode as an active space demonstrating its proliferation and appearance across the fields of fashion and visual culture. This work underscores the reach of the gothic within contemporary culture, ever expanding and embracing new variations and interpretations of gothic themes. Cherry, Howell

and Ruddell (2010) expand the post-millennial gothic mode emphasising new themes, iterations and revisions of the literary Gothic mode presented within the eighteenth-century. Importantly, Cherry, Howell and Ruddell (2010) locate fashion and visual culture within these discussions by identifying the potential within these fields. The multi-layered and interdisciplinary landscape of the gothic mode identify fashion and visual cultures as spaces of expansion in the twenty-first century. This is of particular significance as the development of this area of research expands the gothic. In the preface of Cherry, Howell and Ruddell (2010) Catherine Spooner introduces the idea of the 'temporal cusp'. This is essentially a moment in our contemporary times that draws parallels back to those experienced when the literary mode of the Gothic was created back in the eighteenth-century. Spooner states that within the twenty-first century the gothic is alive and well, observing it as a 'dominant mode' (Spooner 2010, p.9), which is key to the gothic's continued relevance and its ability to adapt. The gothic cusp represents a transitional phase that offers opportunities to the transformative and transgressive aspects of the gothic mode. Miles (1995) and Spooner (2007) both identify this cusp and discuss its recurrence throughout history. The gothic mode is therefore a clearly established presence within the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This thesis proposes that fashion and visual culture are new locations in which to explore the gothic within the twenty-first century.

Contemporary Gothic Studies

Within contemporary academic Gothic Studies scholars emphasise the concepts of hauntology and spectrality. Berthin (2010) highlights how spectrality has become a major part of contemporary cultural discourse. Wrethred (2023) develops this idea through the theoretical context of hauntology as an active space. Both works support the fact that the gothic is a returning and persistent presence within our contemporary culture. This echoes Spooner (2006) notion of the temporal cusp and provides contemporary discourse to support the emphasis of self within these discussions. Mulvey Roberts (2016) supports the presence of self and the body within the gothic as a marker of monstrosity. Mulvey Roberts identifies real-life

examples of horror in parallel with those depicted through literature and visual culture seeking to expand the parameters of the gothic mode.

Aldana-Reyes (2020) discusses this expansion and the re-location of the body in contemporary discourse as a site for the exploration of the gothic mode, focusing on the transformation and transgression of the physical state. Here Aldana-Reyes examines Barbara Creed's (1993) definition of the 'Monstrous Feminine' arguing that the corporeal is positioned as a site of disgust, anxiety and fear. The themes of transformation and transgression are developed from the work of Moers (1976) who coined the term 'The Female Gothic' (Moers, 1976, p.77). Moers argues that interest in the nineteenth-century Gothic body was a major influence on contemporary writers such as Ann Radcliffe and the Bronte Sisters, with the corporeal becoming a location for developing themes of identity and gender that have continued to grow into the twenty-first century. For Mulvey Roberts (2016) and Aldana-Reyes (2020), the discussion of visual culture is an important presence through the locating of film. This is a key medium in showing the corporeal as a site of both transformation and transgression.

Fashion as Gothic Discourse

Fashion has continued to evolve as an academic field. Once 'relegated to art, anthropology and dress studies' (Hancock, Johnson Woods and Karaminas, 2013, p.12), fashion is now located within a wider cultural framework that includes film, theatre and economics.

However, it is important to note that there is an ambiguity of fashion as an academic discipline. Black *et al.* (2013) argue that fashion has been difficult to navigate due to its lack of a perceived intellectual framework. Fashion studies has an absence of a singular set of ideas in which it can be defined, with claims that change has been slow to occur as the value of this type of study has been challenged, due to its perceived lack of academic rigour. Wilson (2020) echoes this by identifying the ways in which fashion is not taken seriously and has to

‘repeatedly justify itself’ (Wilson, 2020, p.45). Although these are initially perceived as challenges to the study of fashion there is growing interest in the field. Barnard (2020) alludes to this when discussing the work of Gilles Lipovetsky where he claims that ‘fashion needs new impetus’ (Barnard, 2020, p.59). Ultimately, what is important is the desire to expand the field is a positive addition and this thesis is a way of expanding the field to create new knowledge and renewed questioning.

This interdisciplinary expansion parallels the expansion of Gothic Studies in the twenty-first century. The gothic locates deeper meanings as an attempt to develop its own set of values. Fashion has expanded and diversified through inclusion, such as challenging established definitions of beauty, consideration of materials and impact on the environment of the industry manufacturing processes. Connectivity is therefore highlighted in both fashion and the gothic as they have become key components of visual culture. They underline their value and possibilities through the extension beyond the more traditional and recognisable forms of fashion. Petrov and Whitehead (2017) provide a bridge between how horror is fashioned visually, symbolically and materially through fashion and costume. Their work identifies examples that span film, literature and the Halloween tradition of fancy dress. Fashion has been identified by scholars as a place for discourse historically, but since the new Millennium, this space has become more engaged in a critical analysis of these iterations which makes connections between the late twentieth-century and the present day. This emphasis on subversion and expression through fashion is evidenced in Steele and Park (2008) which fully embraces the elements of horror and the macabre, exploring the gothic mode through history and the importance of the Goth subculture. It draws on the rich visual elements whilst engaging with the field of fashion. This work was pioneering at the time as it highlighted the desire for the engagement within the gothic. It fuelled this research because it located fashion centre stage as a driver for change which offered potential growth in the gothic as studied academically. The book reflects the growing interest in the gothic and relates to Spooner (2004). This was formative to this thesis and subsequent publications as it was the first to make a link between the examination of the construction of the Gothic body in literature and its expansion as a gothic mode into film. It focuses on

the development of these fields by examining historically specific items of fashion. Including detailed analysis of the role in which fashion plays in the construction of the gothic. For example, it discusses of the importance of veils, masks and disguises. It also highlights specifically fashion discourses that span historical fashion from the chemise of Marie-Antoinette to discussions of the subcultural Goth style. Goth fashion therefore has a transformative ability which continues to be as a space in which to construct identities.

The Gothic and Goth subcultures are connected in myriad ways. Subcultural interest reflects establishing the 'consciousness of otherness' in the formation of subcultures as a point of difference (Gelder & Thornton, 1997, p.5). Subcultural activities are specific to their location or territory, and they may value specific 'material artefacts'. This emphasis on materiality aligns with the importance of fashion and visual culture within this thesis as it supports the idea of fashion and visual culture as fundamentals in the construction of the subcultural identity. Goth fashion becomes a place where the body can be articulated in diverse ways: it can define sensibilities, monstrosity, or the grotesque by reinforcing and reappraising dominant attitudes and behaviours. In his work on subculture and style, Hebdige (1979) offered a space for the discussion of style within a visual culture context exploring how clothing can reflect meaning. Hebdige (1979) examination of Cyberpunk, in particular, reflects how it began as a literary movement but grew into a way to articulate the postmodern condition becoming its own literal manifestation. This aligns the trajectory of the gothic mode especially echoing the origins of the Gothic literary tradition of the eighteenth-century and how this evolved into the establishment of the Goth subculture in the twentieth century. Approaching the twenty-first century, subcultural scholarship developed from an understanding of fixed subcultures towards identity as fluid. Bennet (1999) discusses how subcultures are 'fluid rather than fixed' (Bennet, 1999, p.598). This concept favours the multiplicity of individual identities over the collective as a representation of the postmodern condition. It signals the importance of the alternative, as Spracklen and Spracklen (2018) identify as a 'liquid and transient identity' as presented in the twenty-first century (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018, p.11). Bauman (2012) also identifies this phenomenon through his definition of

'Liquid Modernity'. Bauman emphasises the impermanent state of the current society emphasising the mobility and ever-changing present. The metaphor of liquidity is the most effective because it is the essence of the world in which we live in emphasising its mutability (Bauman, 2012, p.14). This idea is articulated through this thesis particularly in relation to the construction of identities and subsequent observation of relationships Bauman proposes exist in contemporary society.

The gothic's increasingly fluid state is supported by Hodkinson (2002) as he observed a 'crumbling' of boundaries in relation to the construction of the gothic identity. He claims that this has created more opportunities to embrace gothic sensibilities. Hodkinson proposes these exist in 'different types of make-up, clothing, sounds and accessories' (Hodkinson, 2002, p.38). The gothic offers unlimited possibilities in the construction of the Goth identity, creating a 'pick and mix of artefacts' where everything is available, and the only limits are the individual's imagination (Hodkinson, 2002, p.38). This work reflects the importance of the construction of the Goth identity within the twenty-first century and the idea of the gothic mode as both a resilient and adaptable space. This fluid nature is also embraced by Godman (2024). In the introduction of the book and throughout its text, Godman's writings identify the difficulties with definitions of what the Gothic/Goth/gothic mode can be, stating that 'Goth or goth can mean different things to different people' (Godman, 2024, p.11). This interchangeable nature of the Gothic/Goth/gothic mode could be perceived as problematic, but for this thesis, the ambiguity of these definitions allows for flexibility, shifting and changing in response to our current times or new interpretations of past iterations. Godman identifies the wide spectrum of approaches to these definitions describing how the mode's 'fluidity' can manifest in different ways throughout different times and lives (Godman, 2024, p.15).

Weinstock (2024) echoes this sentiment positioning the gothic as a presence within our increasingly complex twenty-first century culture. Weinstock argues that it is presently experienced within a 'post-subcultural landscape' (Weinstock, 2024, p.33). This post-subcultural landscape has enabled the gothic to be an increasing influence

within the twenty-first century as Weinstock questions what it means to be 'Goth or goth-coded' (Weinstock, 2024, p.12). From this perspective, there is a shift away from the specificity of the Goth subculture codes of fashion. But as Spooner (2017) asserts, it is still key that fashion and the importance of clothing within these discussions offers 'life'. The presence of fashion therefore functions as a 'discursive mechanism' (Spooner, 2017, p.16) in the production of the gothic as mode today.

1.2 Gothic, Fashion and Identity

Hebdige (1979) defines the semiotic conceptualisation of Punk by applying it to the notion of subcultural style and its positioning within culture. Punk was deemed to be the pinnacle of all the subcultures by Hebdige because it was able to 'detach itself from moralised forms' (Hebdige, 1979, p.19). Notably, Hebdige is later rejected by scholars within the field such as Muggleton (2002) and Spracklen and Spracklen (2018). Collectively they emphasise a shift away from Hebdige's defined subcultures and the idea of fixed identity. By the late nineteen nineties, noughties and into the twenty-first century, the fixing of group or collective identity is diminished. Here, the emergence of the term 'fluidity' is presented within the discussion of identity.

The fluidity of the gothic is defined through the notion of alternativity. Within the twenty-first century, this idea is identified in Winge (2018), stating that from a historical perspective the importance of being alternative was a key component in the creation of the Goth subculture. Muggleton (2002) is key to this discussion as it offers new ways of understanding subcultures within a contemporary landscape. Muggleton (2002) proposes that subcultures do not always exist in opposition to a mainstream culture, but as an alternative. There is a fluidity present in our post subcultural world that embraces new identities and styles, that are celebratory reflecting a more marginalised and combative subculture. The potency of fashion is paramount to the subcultural individual (Winge 2018), and this continues to resonate long after the establishment of the subculture. In this context, fashion, and by

extension visual culture, can be powerful visual tools in the construction of the collective identity of the gothic, specifically within the Goth subculture. At this point it is also important to state how individuals within the subculture identify themselves. The terms 'gothic' and 'Goth' are used interchangeably within the subculture itself. Brill (2008) discusses this at length through interviews with members of the subculture. Members refer to themselves, their community, scene or music using these specific definitions with both terms 'present within the British Gothic communities' (Brill, 2008, p.4). The performative qualities of Goth are also constituents in definitions of the subculture. Fans of Goth music may adopt elements of the Goth aesthetic, but they take on these elements to help them construct their own individual identities. Black clothing may be a staple in the construction of the Goth aesthetic, but this could be adapted by the individual in the form of black band t-shirts or theatrical frilly shirts. The melodramatic performances and subsequent aesthetics that fans observed through bands such as *Bauhaus* or *Siouxsie and the Banshees* could be easily adopted by the community who align themselves by using 'connotations of gothic and Goth style' (Brill, 2008, p.4). Although it has evolved throughout the subsequent decades from the nineteen eighties to the present, the core of the Goth subculture is characterised by an interest in dark and macabre themes. The Goth subculture emerged in the late nineteen seventies from the aftermath of Punk establishing itself in the early nineteen eighties, it highlighted 'the aesthetic desire for black clothing, melancholy and imagery associated with death, dying and the undead' (Edwards & Monnet, 2013, p.3). From its origins the Goth subcultural style has evolved and diversified. The rise in electronic music during the nineteen nineties saw a shift to more fetish style Goth expressed through PVC, rubber and piercings (Brill, 2008, p.4) (Figure 3).

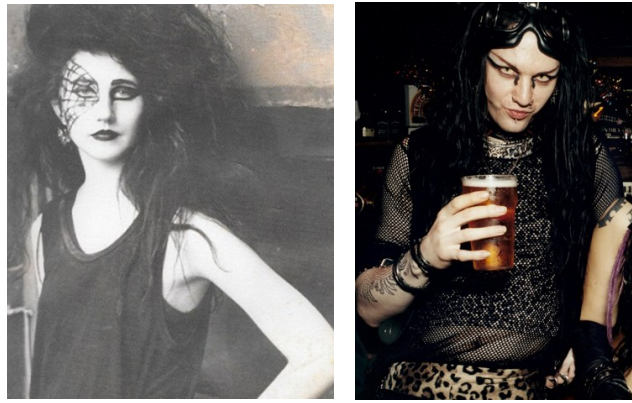


Figure 3: 80s & 90s Goth, Nowthisisgothictumblr & Rebecca Lewis (no year)
Museum of Youth & Culture.

These two images demonstrate the juxtaposition present within the Goth subculture. On the one hand, there is a traditional mode, aligned with historical periods like the Victorian era. On the other hand, the Goth subculture cultivates the importance of 'individualism' that manifests itself in a 'radicalised claim to self-realisation' (Schmidt Neumann-Braun 2008, p.316). The Goth subculture has so many facets and permutations it has shaped and morphed its influence and expansion within fashion. In the twenty-first century it appears through *Pop Goth* (people who tend to dress Goth when it is deemed fashionable to do so in the present day), *Health Goth* (aligned with an early noughties sportswear aesthetic and a tendency for monochrome clothing), *Lolita Goth* (a nineties Japanese Goth movement which emphasise an elegant monochromatic style), and within themes such as *Dark Academia* (an online subculture which emerged in two thousand and fifteen which is characterised by a love of Gothic architecture and the academic study of literature). Alongside these examples, the Goth community create, select, combine, and display their identities through their fashion and visual style. This spectrum of the construction of the Goth identity within the community allows members to create different iterations of themselves. More creative looks are embraced when preparing for an important event. For the annual *Whitby Goth Festival (1994-present)*, or the *Gothic Styles (2017)* catwalk show, a member of the community may express a more transgressive version of themselves (Figure 4). In everyday life, a toned-down version of this may be more

appropriate, as demonstrated in *Corporate Goth* (which emphasises the alterative community's workwear aesthetic) (Brill, 2008, p.11).



Figure 4: Brian Legard (2024), Whitby Gothic Festival and @edward.ironstone (2024) #corporate goth.

1.3 The Future of the Gothic

The expansion of Goth and its associated subcultural groups develop this fluid space within twenty-first century culture. As Brill (2008) observes, it also maps the potential for both alternativity and transgressive agency. Goth has become increasingly fluid, having become 'a fashion choice' (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018, p.156). This 'gothness' is now embraced in more mainstream ways that enable anyone the freedom to embrace it. Being alternative is just one more 'fashion and identity choice' in our postmodern fluid society (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018, p.161). Although this could be read as detrimental to the community, Gander (2018) argues that Goth has survived because it has become 'fully established in the mainstream' (Gander 2018, p.175). This is echoed by Godman (2024) who identifies how Goth has remained relevant longer than other subcultures. Godman argues that it is because it is not just an aesthetic choice, but more 'a state of mind' (Godman, 2024, p. 271).

Goth therefore is active not just perceived an extension of the subculture but has been incorporated into everyday life. This is supported by scholars such as Martin (2002). Highlighting the phenomenon of Goth as a whole, and its ability to 'reinterpret and reflect the times in which we live' (Martin, 2002, p.33).

As a consequence of the Goth subculture openly embracing mainstream culture, new spaces are evolving. Outside of the subculture itself, exciting possibilities and iterations are available in which it can flourish. Fashion has become one of these active spaces where goth as mode appears, where new dialogues can be created and where stereotypical norms are critiqued. These spaces are openly embraced as a transformative and transgressive spaces to play and be free with ideas that can shape people's identities. Goodlad and Bibby (2007) highlight the growth of the Goth in the nineteen eighties as it began to evolve and take on what they identify as 'mainstream diffusion' (Goodlad and Bibby, 2007, p.8). This book is particularly important as one of the first publications to identify what they perceive as the proposed cultural phenomenon that is Goth, arguing that it has been haunting post-modern culture and society. Their book is also relevant to Gothic Studies as it is one of the first to identify the potential of the goth mode at an academic level.

This thesis and the associated publications contribute to the location of gothic as mode through fashion and visual culture, manifesting in the construction of identity, transformation and transgression. Goodlad and Bibby (2007) examinations interrogate many facets of Goth, from its associations with themes of melancholy to gender and construction of identity. Ultimately, they suggest that Goth clothing is an intrinsic part of fashion as it gives it life. This establishment of self within these discussions is key to this research as it extends the manifestation of the gothic as mode through fashion and visual culture. The intersections of these two fields alongside Gothic Studies highlight the opportunities for collaboration and expansion within these fields.

2 PhD by Published Work

This PhD by Published Work includes a selection of recent publications and creative work between 2017 and 2024. The five works have been selected from a larger body of research work undertaken within the fields of fashion and visual culture. The works collectively explore gothic as mode thorough a personal, interdisciplinary and methodological research journey. These five works – one performance, three book chapters and one co-authored book chapter – establish a new framework that expands the gothic within the intersection of the fields of Fashion Studies and Gothic Studies. The publications offer new spaces for dialogue and approaches to these fields that demonstrate both an ongoing engagement with academic scholarship and the potential for these emerging fields of study. The publications are organised thematically in Table 1, spanning a timeframe from 2017 to 2024. Further supporting materials for the works and full commentaries of the contributions can be found in the Appendices (pages 66-74).

Publication Type:	Publication No:	Year of Publication:	Reference:	Contribution to Publication:
Practice-Based Work	1	2017	Richards, J (2017) Gothic Styles: Gothic Festival 5, Manchester Centre for Gothic Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester (Various locations)	Co-Convenor Academic Lead Show Producer Gothic Styles Catwalk Show
Book Chapter	4	2020	Richards, J (2020) 'The Influence of the Genre in High Fashion' In Bloom, C <i>The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic</i> , Palgrave Macmillan, pp.1063-1074. ISBN: 978-3-030-33135-1	Sole Author

Book Chapter	2	2018	Richards, J (2018) 'Transcending the Traditional: Fashion as Performance' In Carlotto, F & McCreesh, N (Eds) <i>Engaging with Fashion: Perspectives on Communication, Education and Business</i> . Brill Publishers, pp.249-257. ISBN: 978-90-04-38243-5	Sole Author
Book Chapter	3	2019	Richards, J (2019) 'Mirror Mirror on the Wall, Who is the Ugliest of them all? The Elderly as Other in Countess Dracula' In Bowdoin Van Riper, A & Miller, C <i>Elder Horror: Essays on Film's Frightening Images of Aging</i> , McFarland, pp.119-129. ISBN: 978-1-4766-7537-4	Sole Author
Book Chapter	5	2024	Ollett, R & Richards, J (2024) "'You're a dangerous Girl": The Fashioning of Satanic Liberation in <i>The VVitch</i> (2015), <i>The Neon Demon</i> (2017), and <i>Midsommar</i> (2020)' In Cocoran, M & (Ed) <i>Satanism and Feminism in Popular Culture</i> . Amsterdam University Press.	Co-Authored

Table 1: Selected publications submitted for PhD by Published Works.

3 Key Themes

The set of five works put forward for this thesis locates fashion and visual culture through the gothic as mode with an emphasis on two key themes: **transformation and transgression** (Figure 5). Figure 5 demonstrates the mapping of these themes against the following discussion of the individual works.

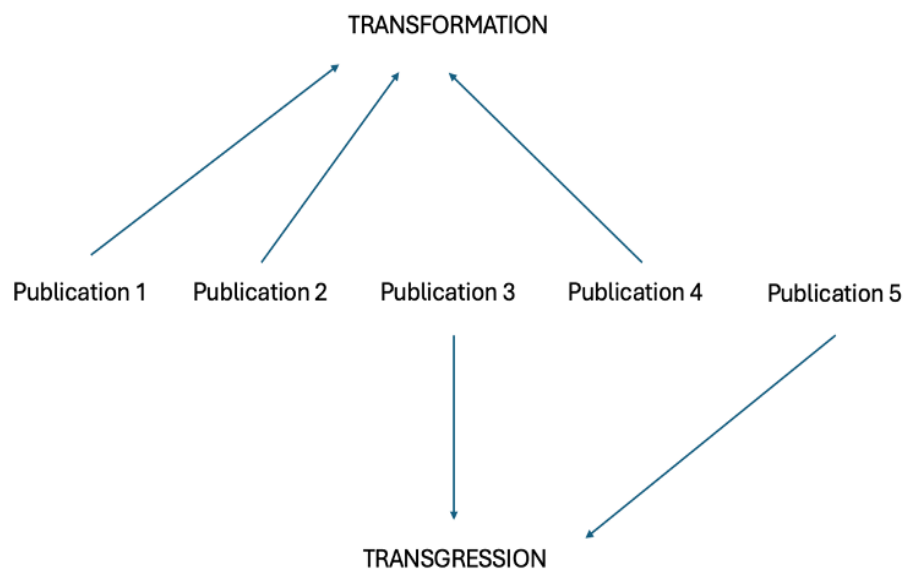


Figure 5: Richards, J (2025) Mapping of Publications against key themes of Transformation and Transgression.

3.1 Transformation

At its core the gothic is fundamentally transformative. This positioning is established through the evidence of its many iterations and formations. Williams (1995) suggests the gothic has an ability to mutate, blurring perception and evolving to reflect different realities. Transformation is a key component within the literary tradition of the Gothic, where it refers to the shift and change where themes, forms and settings of the genre are malleable. This fluidity is fundamental to the societal adaptability of

the gothic as mode. For example, in conjunction with the development of psychology in the late nineteenth century, where we see the emergence of 'The Female Gothic' (Moers 1976).

This transformative quality has continued into the twentieth century into the realms of fashion, film and visual culture. As identified in Figure 2, the gothic as mode has evolved and transformed due to the development of new technologies in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Physical transformations, monsters and the evolution of new forms of expression are now active and present. McCarthy (2020) explores the 'visuality of Gothic horror' as it was expressed through 'a continual process of mutation thus expanding its possibilities and development (McCarthy, 2020, p.342).

In terms of fashion, an example of this would be Elsa Schiaparelli's *Skeleton Dress* (1938), developing the transformative mobility of the gothic in the twentieth century. The black crepe gown included three-dimensional elements of padding to emulate human bones. This characteristic of transformative fashion developed and allowed the gothic mode to remain fluid. Consequently, it has been perceived as relevant across different historical periods. Botting (2013) explains the transformations of the Gothic throughout history, highlighting the development from literature to visual culture. Transformation is about going beyond – in gothic terms, beyond an existing form, whilst establishing new spaces in which to thrive. It is both malleable and flexible, evolving through new iterations and manifestations. This fluidity, particularly within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, enables it to be always present, expanding its range and iterations through the subsequent transformative identities that people can create. The gothic can be argued to be a much more fluid space as identified by Godman (2024), Spracklen and Spracklen (2018) and Martin (2002). They highlight the importance of the 'liquid identity' as a place for the gothic to flourish in the twenty-first century. The theme of Transformation appears within **Publications 1, 2 and 4.**

3.2 Discussion of Publications 1,2 and 4.

The Goth subculture offers potential for further readings of its transformative nature. Subcultures challenge the status quo, they are proactive and disruptive in their ideologies (Ulusoy, 2016, p.24). They disrupt music, literature, art, fashion and style. As a mode, gothic offers ways to construct and create our identities within the postmodern and fluid society. As Kilpatrick (2005) states:

Goth is a state of mind.... a way of being that embraces what the normal world shuns, a lean towards and an obsession with all subjects dark and grim, a view of life that incorporates the world of the night as well as the world of the day. The gothically inclined make room for the *noir* in a global culture that favours white and prefers its dark sanitized. (Nancy Kilpatrick, 2005, p.1.)

The transformative and fluidic nature of the gothic as mode allows for self-identification to flourish because it is so malleable. Hodkinson (2002) states that the expression and commitment of the Goth visual style is a primary component of the establishment of the Goth sense of self (Hodkinson, 2002, p.71). There is a level of commitment required to sustain the construction of Goth identities and this in turn creates a sense of confidence, empowering individuals and strengthening their bond as part of the Goth community. Spracklen and Spracklen (2018) argue that Goth has survived because it has embraced change. It is a 'site for communicative alternativity' (Spracklen and Spracklen, 2018, p.175). It openly welcomes Goth individuals or individuals wanting to identify with Goth themes as an expression of their identity. The Goth community celebrates the fashioning of identity. It draws on a deep and broad history of inspirations allowing the community to develop their own unique manifestations of the Goth and through these their own ways of wearing and styling fashion.

Most subcultures value the self-fashioning of identity. However, the Goth subculture draws on a wide range of dark and macabre themes that potentially span a long history and allow a community to develop their own manifestations. Therefore, Goth

is a way of fashioning identities which Hodkinson (2002) identifies. It was directly associated with the emergence of the Punk scene in the late nineteen seventies, expanding into their own subculture and music scene in the nineteen eighties. Their preferred 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 early nineteen eighties through clubs like *The Bat Cave*. Figure 6 represents two different approaches to Gothic style present in the nineteen eighties. Nik Fiend, on the left of the image, is more aligned with the traditional associations Hodkinson identifies. Olli Wisdom's style, by contrast, is more casual, he is wearing a waistcoat and striped shirt. Yet Goth is still present through the choice of white over exaggerated and theatrical makeup.



Figure 6: Mick Mercer (1982) *Nik Fiend and Olli Wisdom (founder of the Batcave)*.

Hodkinson (2002) anticipated that as the twenty-first century approached, there was a 'crumbling' of boundaries that could be detrimental to the Goth subculture. This concern is somewhat unfounded as the publications put forward in this thesis observe the positive effects that this opening up of the Goth space can have. For example, the *Gothic Styles* catwalk show (**Publication 1**) embraced many approaches including new iterations of the style. These included 'Alternative' (clothing which goes against the mainstream fashion trends), *Cyber Goth* (club scene and rave influenced fashion) and *Visual Kei* (a Japanese street style, sometimes referred to as *Lolita Goth*). **Publication 1** demonstrates the positive effects on the expansion of the

Goth identity developing from Hodgkinson's initial concern. *Gothic Styles* catwalk show embraced the new possibilities that the fluidity of the Goth identity offers within a twenty-first century context. This positive approach is identified in part by Hodgkinson (2002) as he reflects on the potential wealth of diversity through the creation of identities, 'different types of make-up, clothing, sounds and accessories'. Hodgkinson argues that this offers unlimited possibilities in the construction of identity, creating a 'pick and mix of artefacts' where everything is available and the only limits are the individual's imagination (Hodgkinson, 2002, p.38). Goth as a performance of self and reflection on fashion and identity fuelled this line of enquiry as the works in this thesis evolved. The performance of self was shared through several conference papers that discussed the importance of Goth subcultures and the shaping of identity through clothing and styling. In 2016, this research was presented at the *Gothic North Symposium*. The research investigated how the Heavy Metal and Goth communities, from the northwest and northeast regions of the UK presented their identities via album artwork, promotional materials and performances. The conference paper 'Vision Thing: The Northern Goth Music Scene' identified a shared visual aesthetic through the exploration of three bands of the nineteen eighties: *Joy Division*, *Bauhaus* and *Sisters of Mercy*. By analysing the visual language within their catalogue of work it established the impact of Goth themes that influenced contemporaries and bands in subsequent decades, including *Nirvana* and *HIM*. This combination of fashion and visual culture within the Goth community therefore confirms a place for this research that asserts the gothic as a mode in permanent flux, ever evolving, creating exciting new possibilities and spaces in which new modes and dialogues can be uncovered. As the collaborative work with the Manchester Centre for Gothic Studies progressed, it developed into an opportunity to co-convene the fifth iteration of the Manchester Centre for Gothic Studies annual Festival which that year focused on the theme of *Gothic Styles* (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Gothic Styles Promotional Material (Booklet and image from the catwalk photoshoot)

The finale of the festival culminated in a catwalk show. As Academic lead, this role as producer and creative director of the show was working alongside with the communities of the Manchester Centre of Gothic Studies and commercial partners such as Selfridges and Halloween in the City (Figure 8). The catwalk presented a wide range of people from the north of England Goth communities, families and individuals that highlighted their unique style and clothing. Identities included *Steam Punks* (incorporate retro futuristic elements and aesthetics), *Cyber Goth* (club scene and rave influenced fashion) and *Visual Kei* (a Japanese street style, sometimes referred to as *Lolita Goth*). This included collaboration with fashion designers, students and alumni from across the UK that embraced the darker themes of the Goth style and influences within their collections. The show was integrated into Manchester City Council's 'Halloween in the City'. The event, along with the subsequent attention the festival gained that year, demonstrated the achievement of the show and the desire for audiences, both academic and the public, engaging within a more mainstream context.



Figure 8: *Gothic Styles Catwalk Show Finale* (2017)

At this time, Professor in English and American Studies Clive Bloom was working on the *Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic*, a comprehensive exploration of modern gothic that covered a range of works within art and popular culture. Developing the theme of the catwalk show and previous conference papers on the Goth subculture, **Publication 4** was submitted to this edited collection. The work developed the *Gothic Styles* catwalk subcultural and street styles modes, whilst analysing fashion designers inspired by these themes. The work began with an articulation of the Goth subculture: why are *haute couture* designers developing these influences within their work and do examinations of these themes offer clues to the reasons behind the proliferation within contemporary fashion? This work developed the themes of subculture and identity by extending prior discussions of Goth within fashion observed by Steele and Park (2008) exhibition and book, *Dark Glamour*. This book identifies street style and high fashion iterations of the Goth style. It was particularly influential to **Publication 4** via discussions of *haute couture* and fashion designer Alexander McQueen. Steele and Park (2008) put forward the idea that the Goth is not just engaging as a subculture but can be expressed through mainstream approaches such as those found within fashion, the gothic as mode. The *haute couture* world is important here because Steele and Park argue that the gothic has existed as a presence within it since its inception. This supports the notion of

gothic as mode as a space for growth with a substantial timeline of themes presented through both fashion and visual culture. Spooner (2006) examines the Goth subculture investigating why it is resurfacing as a proliferation in contemporary popular culture of the twenty-first century. These two ideas argued by Steele and Park (2008) and Spooner (2006) offer new spaces for the gothic to exist. The establishment of its reemergence over time helped to locate this work by identifying an area where the discipline of fashion could contribute to this dialogue. Brigid Cherry, Howell and Ruddell (2010) offered a way for **Publication 4** to be contextually framed. In the preface to the book Spooner (2010) states that we are experiencing a 'temporal cusp' (Spooner, 2010, p.9). This is essentially a moment in our lives that draws parallels to those experienced when the Gothic mode emerged (in the literary sense) in the eighteenth-century. Through the synthesis of depictions of the gothic as mode in fashion and visual culture, **Publication 4** analysed examples spanning the period between 1938 – 2019. **Publication 4** concluded that the adaptations of the gothic in fashion are a presence throughout the twentieth century and have in fact strengthened its core as a location within popular culture.

Fashion and visual culture have therefore become spaces where gothic as mode is mediated. It allows for reflection and expansion of its presence within the increasingly gothic inclined twenty-first century culture. Spooner argues that it has become increasingly dominant as 'a mode of cultural production' (Spooner, 2010, p.10). Therefore, these modes need to be 'taken seriously' as new spaces in which to express its presence. **Publication 4** explores how the emergence of these Goth themes has shaped and developed the work of fashion designers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. By examining the presence of Goth in street style fashion, haute couture collections, and themes within eighteenth-century Gothic literature, this chapter presents new influences evident in contemporary fashion (Figure 9). It extends Spooner (2010) discussions by identifying that the gothic mode's resilience and adaptability are the reasons why it has continued to be a presence today. It asserts that it is an ever-evolving space where people can critique their place in the world, or as a response to the needs of society and culture.



Figure 9: *The Influence of the Gothic Genre in High Fashion* mapping of themes

Publication 4 corroborates these ideas as presented by Hodkinson (2002) and discusses a wide range of Goth fashion. As Brill (2008) states, Goth fashion is defined by the appearance of black clothing, black dyed hair, and black make-up. Brill's definition was the starting point for this research exploring this aesthetic and the extension of the Goth present in *haute couture*, ready-to-wear and street style interpretations of the Goth subculture. Alongside the *haute couture* collections, new permutations and hybrids of the subculture have emerged during the new Millennium, including *Health Goth*, *Victoriana*, *Steampunk* and *Lolita Goth*. The *Lolita Goth* (Figure 10) originated within the Harajuku district in Tokyo. The style borrows heavily from the Goth movement and aesthetic of the nineteen eighties and fuses these with elements from Japanese culture. Ishikawa (2007) states that this style is 'distinctively different from the British Goths who emerged in Japan in the mid to late eighties' (Ishikawa, 2007, pp.88-89). This research develops the idea that of an active space constantly creating various permutations that coexist together geographically through manifestations of the style which include the Goth style of the nineteen eighties and more theatrical manifestations, as its inspiration is informed by the aesthetic of the Romantic and Victorian periods. It clashes these two styles together to create a new iteration of *Lolita Goth* which is presented as a new manifestation of the Goth subculture. Beginning in the nineteen-nineties in Japan, it has evolved to create variations of style from blouses and bows to Victorian petticoats and wide skirts. The term Lolita has many connotations but is probably well-known from the

infamous novel of the same name written by Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955). In the case of the street-style *Lolita Goth*, the reference is only made to the 'child like' qualities of the choice of clothing. Elegance is prioritised over any subsequent western connotations which may have been misplaced. The *Lolita Goth* also undertakes pastimes that reflect their style through the overtly feminine use of activities such as embroidery, sewing and baking.



Figure 10: Examples of *Lolita Goth* Identities(*Lolita Goth* Community in Manchester and Japan).

From an *haute couture* perspective, the chapter established how the emergence of Goth subculture, themes and influences have shaped the work of fashion designers in the twenty-first century. Fashion allows for new creative expression to be present and this reflects its own evolutionary nature. Fashion designers included in the analysis are Rick Owens, Alexander McQueen and Dilara Findikoglu. Associations with Witchcraft and the Occult have been a major influence for fashion designer Dilara Findikoglu. She staged her first collection in Autumn/Winter 2017. This included her signature use of red and black with dead and decaying roses. Her work assimilates and evolves the themes of Punk, Goth, with the subcultures of Fetish and Heavy Metal. This approach echoes Hodkinson's earlier discussion of the 'pick and

mix' mode of Goth and how Findikoglu takes these different elements to create her own unique creative language.



Figure 11: Dilara Findikoglu S/S 2018 Collection.

Dilara Findikoglu's Spring/Summer 2018 collection (Figure 11) 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. Alex Jones, writing for Dazed in 2017, referred to the collection as 'a satanic orgy' (Jones, 2017). The show, held in Holborn St Andrews Church, also highlighted the association of the Gothic from the eighteenth-century origins of literature and a love of dark haunted castles and creepy churches as settings for work as found in Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764-5) or Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796).

Both **Publication 1** and **Publication 4** argue that there is little evidence to suggest that it is diminishing in its power as it becomes a prominent presence within fashion. It offers transformative possibilities for fashion and the extension of visual culture

with new and exciting iterations as evidenced in current collections of the twenty-first century.



Figure 12: *Transcending the Traditional: Fashion as Performance* mapping of themes.

Publication 2 investigates the performative aspect of the body through analysis of performance pieces that combine art, fashion and the body (Figure 12). The three creatives examined in the chapter – Daphne Guinness, Viktor & Rolf and Olivier Saillard and Tilda Swinton – connect via exploration of the boundary, disrupting present expectations of what performance should be to create a sense of unease or tension in the viewer. This reflects the gothic as mode, as a malleable and flexible space. These performances develop new territory pushing the boundaries of fashion and the body. They explore new ways of thinking about performance as a transformative space. They force the viewer to ask questions of themselves and the transformative qualities of fashion. Daphne Guinness, Viktor & Rolf, Olivier Saillard and Tilda Swinton, collectively demonstrates the breath of possibilities open for the expression of fashion outside of the established modes of the performative. **Publication 2** examines the disruptive nature of the Gothic as a space to investigate the relationship within fashion and how these practitioners reflect their identities, manifesting through these works by articulating its transformative nature. It is a place where a more critical consideration of the importance of the body can manifest.

Publication 2 defines the role of transformation through the relationship between the body and the garment. It draws on traditional literary Gothic themes of the theatrical and macabre, arguing that the presence of clothing can evoke emotional responses to readings of the work. It uses a case-study approach to analyse the work of Daphne Guinness' *Remembrance of Things Past* (2011) and Olivier Saillard and Tilda Swinton's collaborative work including *Cloakroom Vestiaire* (2015). These examples highlight work that is located outside of the traditional norms of the presentation of fashion, moving away from the defined fashion practices of displaying collections such as via the catwalk show. Instead, these works are reflecting on disruptive and alternative ways of display and presentation. **Publication 2** attempts to challenge established orders of the fashion system by highlighting the work of creatives such as Daphne Guinness and Olivier Saillard as an introduction into the wide range of possibilities that present nostalgia, melancholy and memory and how these can be active as a site of transformation aligned within the gothic as mode. This exploration highlights its mobility as a place of uncertainty that offers new ways to interrogate themes of the self and Other. To break the constraints of established rules and presentations of fashion, alternative forms are free to flourish as the fluidity of the gothic as mode is embraced to unlock of new ways of thinking and interrogations of its transformative nature. The images of Daphne Guinness' performance piece in Barney's department store window in New York City in 2011 were key to **Publication 2**. Originally the intention was for Barney's to show a collection of Guinness' fashion garments in six of their store windows. On the last day of the exhibition, Guinness entered one of the windows to change into a gown in preparation for attendance at the Costume Institute's Met Gala. This moment created a performance piece titled *Remembrance of Things Past* (2011) (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Daphne Guinness (2011) *Remembrance of Things Past*

This performative act became the catalyst for this book chapter that developed the question: what happens when the human body interacts with clothing items outside of the established modes of catwalk shows within the fashion industry? The chapter argues that the performative act of metamorphosis that Guinness undertakes reflects the transformative state of the gothic as mode. The work is tinged with sadness and melancholy as the work is something of a love letter to her deceased friends Isabella Blow and Alexander McQueen. In an interview for *The Telegraph* a few years after the performance, Guinness reflected on this moment. She stated that the work was ‘a poetic gesture’ to both McQueen and Blow (Carpenter, 2016). The chapter argues that this offers a way to consider the breakdown of the established rules of fashion, art and the body. Transformation is identified as an alternative, a space of growth within the current context of fashion and the industry of the twenty-first century. It offers opportunities for transformation and artistic expression which transcend the structures as presented in fashion. Geczy and Karaminas (2017) state that fashion has long been a signifier of registration and difference. It was established as one of the factors which reflected your belonging to a new order. Therefore, fashion offers a critical space where meanings are stretched and malleable, reflecting the transformative power of the gothic as mode.

In **Publication 2** three works highlight the collaborations between Olivier Saillard and Tilda Swinton. *The Impossible Wardrobe* (2012), *Eternity Dress* (2014) *Cloakroom Vestiaire* (2015) demonstrate transformative potential through the exploration of how clothes are inhabited. This mirrors the disruptive nature of gothic as mode by simultaneously reflecting its uncertainty and ambiguity. They are transformative, and similar to the work of Daphne Guinness, because the audience is central to their practice. *Cloakroom Vestiaire* (Figure 14) sees Saillard and Swinton invite audience members to deposit their clothes with an attendant (which just happens to be Swinton). The audience then watch as their items are performed and interacted with by Swinton. They may be held up in the air, a flower inserted into a buttonhole, or a note added to a jacket pocket. At the end of the performance, the items are returned to their owners. This work is playful and contemplative highlighting the complex relationship between people and their embodiment of self. This work echoes the disruptive qualities present within gothic as mode by creating a sense of melancholy yet simultaneously create an unease and tension. The audience is unaware of what will happen in the moment as it is a spontaneous performance which creates a sense of ambiguity. It is an act of unknowing that moves away from the expected literal iterations of performance instead pushing against the norms of what an audience member might expect. Each performance is unique in that moment as it shifts and changes driving explorations of the boundary and displays of the self.



Figure 14: Olivier Saillard and Tilda Swinton (2015) *Cloakroom Vestiaire*.

Publications 1, 2 and 4 explore the opportunities that transformation as presented within the gothic as mode can offer. **Publication 1** asserts the transformative nature through the presentation of a catwalk show that embraced and expanded the different facets of the Goth identity, alongside the fashioning of the gothic as mode, as a space of discourse in the twenty-first century. **Publication 2** considers the potential of the transformative nature as a disruptor, an alternative approach to the exploration of fashion and more avant-garde performative modes within fashion in the twenty-first century. **Publication 4** extends the work of **Publication 1** by critically examining the Goth/gothic as mode as presence in the twenty-first century aligning fashion in an academic context. Collectively, these publications expand its resonance as a continual presence and inspiration to fashion designers and demonstrates the extension of Goth within subculture and construction of identity.

3.3 Transgression

The fluidity of gothic as mode has enabled it to be both active and mobile. Faber and Munderlein (2024) claim that although it has changed over time, it has retained its ability to be transgressive. Faber and Munderlein argue that the modes of the 'gothic vary greatly, depending on time, geographical location, social, political, and religious contexts' (Faber and Munderlein, 2024, p.1). This ability to shift and transform has enabled gothic as a transgressive space that transcends established orders, questioning people's definitions of self and Other whilst simultaneously addressing people's place within the contemporary world.

This interrogative and resistive quality reflects the ephemeral nature of both fashion and gothic as mode. Kawamura (2023) explores this identifying that fashion is 'not visible or tangible' and so clothing is articulated as a 'symbolic manifestation' (Kawamura, 2024, p.34). This idea of haunting supports this links between goth as mode and fashion highlighting the ambiguity of fashion itself and the constant shifting and changing nature of both fashion and goth as mode. Definitions lack clarity and therefore ideas and perceptions of what they could be change through

approach varying from one academic to another. This is echoed by Smelik (2017) who explains that the term fashion studies itself just 'settled and stuck' (Smelik, 2017, p.618). Fashion is still not clearly defined as its parameters are in a state of constant change. This element of resistance highlighted through its multidimensional nature parallels the trajectory of goth as mode. The transgressive and resistant nature of both fashion and goth as mode link them together as they both have attempted to be defined, they continue to be unruly and messy, openly defying convention.

This resistance and subsequent flexibility of gothic as a mode offers a space for people to interrogate their cultural anxieties through the exploration of monsters, morality, faith, or superstition. The transgressive nature works as a counter to the established social and aesthetically prescribed rules. Botting (2013) supports these ideas as he states that the Gothic gives 'voice to ambiguities and anxieties without resolving them into certainties' (Botting, 2013, p.10). It can be 'reiterated', 'generated' and 'refracted' lending this transgressive nature of the gothic mode both shape and form (Botting, 2013, p.13). Williams (1995) corroborates Botting (2013) and suggests that it is 'organised around anxieties about boundaries and the subsequent transgressions of them' (Williams, 1995, p.16). Williams adds that these boundaries can be problematic as in many instances the boundary already exists. For example, a social boundary can be interpreted to define what is deemed to be correct behaviour, perhaps a rule imposed onto people, or a guideline established to protect people. The identification of the self and Other is another key component of the gothic and helps to support this idea of the boundary. This echoes Spooner (2012) reflections as an expression of the 'nature of self' (Spooner, 2012, p.8). The self is a key component within the transgressive as it allows for agency. This work emphasises the exploration of the abject. The abject appears in contemporary society often through ambiguity as a space in-between the subject and object. These reflect Spooner (2012) identification of three specific themes: the construction of identities, the monstrous and the Other.

The construction of identities, the monstrous and the Other are highlighted through a central theme within this thesis. **Publications 3** and **5** explore the transgressive

nature of the gothic as mode presented through specific case studies that appear in film. Transgression is evident through these two publications and develops examinations of the blurring of the boundaries within **Publication 3** and **Publication 5**. The ambiguous nature of the gothic mode and its ability to shift and change has driven explorations of ideas of the boundary. The boundary is examined as a barrier that allows for disruption, questioning established identities and displays of the self and Other. This manifests in these publications through examination of the performance of self and Other, subcultures and artefacts. These two publications confirm the mobility of the gothic as a place of uncertainty that attempts to break the constraints of established rules. Alternative forms are free to flourish as the very ambiguity is embraced as a space to unlock new transgressive potentials which interrogate its disruptive nature.

3.4 Discussion of Publications 3 and 5

Publication 3 analyses the film *Countess Dracula* (1971) and how it frames women through the transgressive presence of the gothic mode. Identifying themes of fear, anxiety and revulsion, it addresses the work of Kristeva (1982) and Creed (1993) to explore the abject and the apparent demonization of women and how they are presented. **Publication 5** develops the idea of the fashioning of women in horror film and proposes that fashion is a conduit for the gothic as mode. It explains how clothing is articulated as a communicator of culture and narrative present within horror film. It identifies three films where women are 'Othered', presented as transgressive by their respective communities and how they build upon and navigate these worlds through their clothing choices.

Both chapters identify how women are presented as transgressive through the gothic mode and the construction of self. They highlight Kristeva (1982) and Creed (1993) and their explorations of the abject and the Other. In **Publication 3** and **Publication 5**, the abject is discussed through the physical object and the presence of clothing

and dress. Both chapters reveal the building of worlds through the transformative effects of clothes.

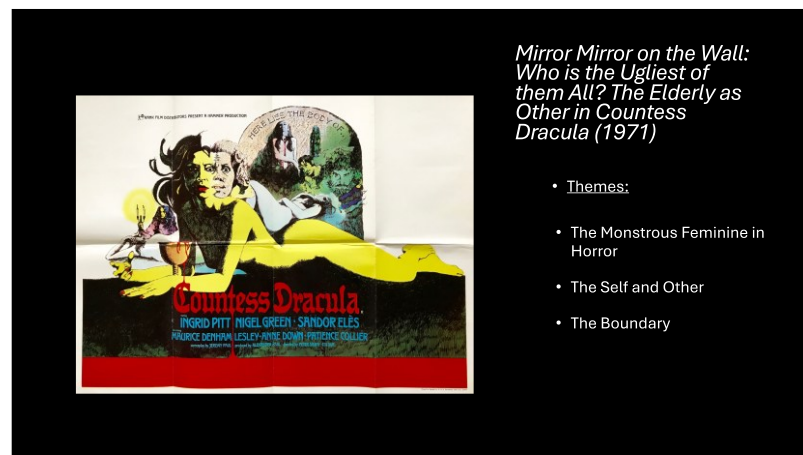


Figure 15: *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who is the ugliest of them all?* mapping of themes.

Publication 3 challenges the ways this film reflects society's ambivalent attitudes towards the ageing process. By highlighting the female depictions present within the film (Figure 15), the meanings and attitudes embodied are uncovered in the depiction of *Countess Dracula* (1971). This research builds on the scholarship of Horror Studies, particularly Masland (1994) and Zlosnik (2016) discussion of role of the elder woman as crone. Within Gothic Studies, witchcraft and the supernatural have often been associated with horror from a literary perspective, yet the gothic mode as a visual form is manifested and popularised through screen cultures. The chapter interrogates Gibson (2018) work on female tropes associated with depictions of witchcraft in popular western culture developing the discourse around Fisiak (2011, 2019) term 'hagsploitation'. This is defined by Fisiak as a presence in film through the appearance of horror, thriller and strong women. It identifies the older woman who terrorises those around her as she longs to regain her youth. In the case of the film, Countess Dracula (Ingrid Pitt) discovers a way to reverse the ageing process by bathing in the blood of young women. This film draws on the myth of Countess Elizabeth Bathory, a sixteenth-century Hungarian nobleman woman, who was accused of torturing and murdering hundreds of women. As *Countess Dracula*,

she experiences episodes of transgression back to her youthful self but when she discovers that these episodes are temporary, the Countess reverts to her original age and subsequently the 'hagsploitation' trope is activated. She terrorises those around her due to her frustration. As these episodes escalate, she becomes increasingly unbalanced and violent. Shelley (2009) explains that the hag in question is unaccepting of the laws of nature, she 'refuses to accept reality' and 'exemplifies the fear of ageing and death' (Shelley, 2009, p.8). Countess Dracula's inability to acknowledge her fate demonstrates her 'monstrousness' as she condemns others to death their own unnatural deaths to postpone her own.

Creed (2015) identifies the concept of woman within folklore and myth as an 'abject' and 'terrifying' being (Creed, 2015, p.8). Creed (1993) defined the Monstrous Feminine, an embodiment of depictions of the female and femininity through the horror film. This definition is used to articulate the emphasising importance of gender within the construction of monstrosity and how it is located and presented in contemporary horror film and wider discussions within popular culture (Creed, 1993, p.3). **Publication 3** debates societal constructs and the wider implications of what is perceived to be 'feminine', or the construction of fear. Kristeva (1982) concept of the Other offered context to the construction of this chapter with relevance to Kristeva's exploration of the abject. This idea presents the abject as a human reaction to a breakdown in meaning created by the loss of identity, system, order' (Kristeva, 1982, p.4). Here, Kristeva critically evaluates the wider themes of horror, marginalization, and castration in relation to our human reaction to the abject. Abjection is a complex concept, but Kristeva demonstrates that this is a place in which abjection disturbs or undermines our established notions of what is horrifying thus reflecting its presence within horror film.

'The Abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to I'.

(Kristeva, 1982, p.10).

Abjection occurs when borders are broken down between people. Kristeva uses the human response to the abject as horrifying, inducing a physical response to something that creates a feeling of sickness or unsettling emotions.

what is *abject*, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me towards the place where meaning collapses.

(Kristeva, 1982, p.11).

The Countess' body is unable to sustain itself without the consumption of blood. This means there is always a sense of fear and the threat of the Countess returning to her aged original form (Figure 16). Drawing on Kristeva's idea that the abject creates a sense of instability, the Countess' physical body is in a state of vulnerability due to its inevitable collapse. This mirrors the abject as a way of breaking down of the borders between people. Manifesting in transgression, this state of abjection creates a feeling that is unstable and disturbing. The boundaries of the self are disturbed. Consequently, a visceral, emotional reaction confronts the audience in this moment. It is a deep-rooted psychological reaction to human experience.



Figure 16: Ingrid Pitt as *Countess Dracula* (1971) before and after.

The idea of the abject for Kristeva is rooted in the human desire for self-identity. Consequently, the publication proposes the gothic as a mode that addresses people's desire for identity, belonging and our place in society. Punter (2016) suggests that gothic resonates because it 'is restless, questioning, never silent' (Punter, 2016, p.3). The fragmentation of the gothic mode within the twentieth century enables it to be present as it expands through construction of self and identity. These ideas manifest

based on the boundaries set between themselves, the self, and Other. Creed develops Kristeva's exploration of abjection, locating the Monstrous Feminine within its historical roots identified in the formation of the history of religion and notions of subjectivity.

Creed (1993) expands the Monstrous Feminine within visual culture, focusing on film specifically to defend her argument through themes of transgression. Creed identifies the construction of the maternal figure, as 'mother, woman, reproduction' (Kristeva, 1982, p.91). Woman as monstrous is typically depicted in relation to her mothering or reproductive abilities. Creed explores Kristeva's notions of the abject against that of the maternal. The archaic mother, the monstrous womb, the witch, the vampire, and the possessed woman all appear to demonstrate the proximity of the mother in relation to her own physicality and the subsequent instability this creates from a societal perspective, highlighting the 'examination of the material female body' (Creed 1993, p.11). The physicality of the body itself as a tangible form is central to the construction of the Monstrous Feminine. This corporeal, visceral form creates tension and instability with the borders between good and evil and human and non-human encountering each other and creating disruption. Countess Dracula therefore manifests as an extension of Kristeva's abjection and Creed's use of archetypes. As the effects of the blood rituals become progressively weaker, they also become more costly for the Countess both mentally and physically. The qualities that the blood rituals restore in the Countess' appearance diminish and become less potent, they are unsustainable as her actions are ultimately going against the rules of ageing. This unnatural desire for youth ultimately creates instability.

These archetypes of the transgressive woman appear as Creed's Monstrous Feminine throughout depictions of the gothic female. From archetypes of the Witch, Vampire, Crone or possessed woman, Creed identifies the ways these archetypes have been documented through history, myth and folklore. Whilst women are depicted as frightening and horrific, they are often sensitive, adolescent and misunderstood. Drawing on these ideas, **Publication 5**, is a co-authored with Dr Robyn Ollett, Lecturer in English Studies and Media Studies at Teesside University. The chapter was

published in *Satanism and Feminism in Popular Culture: Not Today Satan* (Editor Cocoran, M) ((Figure 17).

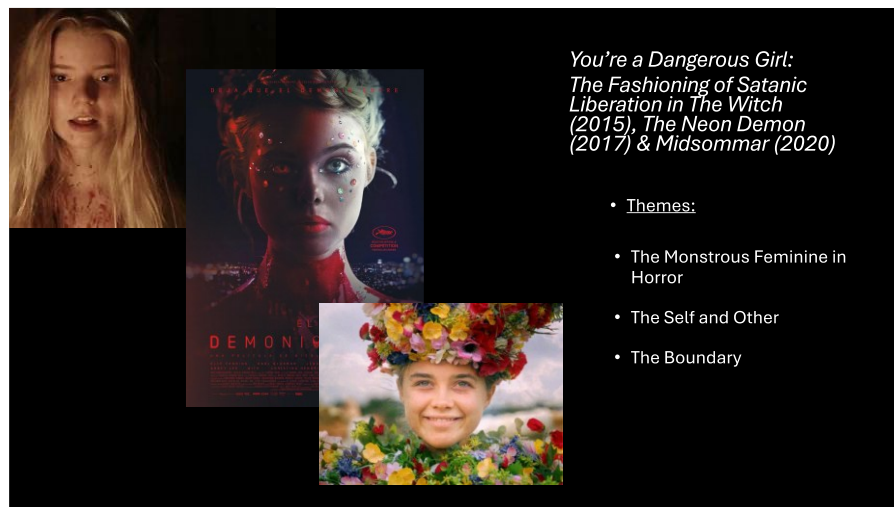


Figure 17: “You’re a dangerous Girl” mapping of themes.

This work develops the 2017 landmark study by Per Fexneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Culture*. Fexneld argues that in the nineteenth century the construction of the Devil was articulated for women as a symbol of women’s liberation, progression, and intellectual values. For nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century women who identified as suffragists, artists and radical thinkers, Satan offered an ‘empowering’ mode of self-determination and non-conformity (Fexneld, 2017, p.5). In the twentieth century, the gothic’s association with dark, mysterious or Occult themes was particularly expressed through the mode of film including *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968), and *The Blood on Satan’s Claw* (1971). **Publication 5** develops the presence of transgression within the twenty-first century, as Satanism has retained its discourse with feminism and liberation. Organisations like the Satanic Temple (founded in 2012), utilise Satanic iconography in campaigns for reproductive justice and LGBTQ+ rights. Around the same time, a new wave of films and television shows used Satanic ideas and iconography to explore feminist themes, including the *American Horror Story* franchise (2011-present) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018-2020). From the dual perspectives of Gothic Studies and fashion studies, ascertain the level of feminist liberation available to

Thomasin (*The VVitch*), Jesse (*The Neon Demon*), and Dani (*Midsommar*). These films reflect depictions of transgressive women through the lens of the male gaze, and **Publication 5** contends that the satanic liberation extant is an uneasy and profoundly ambivalent thing.

This work is important for advancing the explorations of the gothic body in the twenty-first century. These enquiries initially rose to prominence within the *fin de siècle* era. The body and in particular the female body, is often located within these texts as sites for horror to inhabit. Using sexuality, scientific exploration, or supernatural events as a conduit for monstrosity to take place. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) the character of Lucy Westenra becomes the site for these monstrous activity. She is beautiful and pure, yet her body is slowly corrupted, and her repressed sexuality is exploited by Dracula. Khader (2012) argues that Lucy slowly 'collapses the distinctions between the human and the inhuman, becoming a horrific imitation of her original human form', into the Monstrous Feminine (Khader, 2012, p.85). From this point onwards, the human body moves away from depictions of stability, with the body becoming a site of metamorphosis and in William Hope Hodgson's words, 'abhuman' (Punter, 2016, p.62).

This vulnerability to evil is observed when the audience is first introduced to the character of Jesse (Elle Fanning) in *The Neon Demon* (2016). The audience observes her laid out across a *chaise longue*. Jesse is dressed in a blue strapless *Emporio Armani* two-piece with her make-up exaggerated and garish, clothes over-styled and presented as an object. This foreshadows her story arc as fellow model, Sarah (Abbey Lee) points out in a later scene: 'She's dessert, because she's so sweet'. This is after make-up artist Ruby asks, using the logic of identifying oneself with a lipstick shade, 'are you food or sex?'. In this instance and throughout the film women are products and commodities to be eaten, used, and cast off. The Devil cannot strictly be blamed for everything these young women are put through in these films, all of which prove that cultures of consumption are the greatest source of harm and transformation. Thomasin (Anya Taylor-Joy), Jesse and Dani (Florence Pugh) are each engulfed, embraced, and assimilated into a new order, where perceptions shift, power is won,

and they are swallowed by their new environments. Dani in *Midsommar* (2020) begins the film in light coloured clothing and throughout the film the importance of the clothing that she wears becomes increasingly more exaggerated as it reflects her story arc. Consequently, **Publication 5** established the importance of clothing as a catalyst for the presence of the gothic mode. This idea develops that of Fexneld (2017) who argued that the Devil was a way for women to become liberated from their lives and to pursue their own sense of empowerment. **Publication 5** validates the fact that femininity is perceived as a threat to social and psychological structures that the characters inhabit within these films. Yet, their fashion choices give them agency and offers liberation from these perceived constraints (Figure 18).



Figure 18: Dani (Florence Pugh) in *Midsommar* (2020)

Publications 3 and **5** identify transgression and, by extension, the concept of the border that is central to the construction of the monstrous because ‘that which threatens the border is abject’ (Creed, 1993, p.91). This border is a central focus point for all depictions of women at this point within the horror genre, there is almost always a point at which the so-called symbolic order is evident and simultaneously threatened. Abjection is ‘the dark revolt of being’ (Kristeva, 1982, p.1) and therefore a place where these culturally constructed borders between subject, object and other are unstable and therefore both mind and body being to break down. Creed

develops this through her examination of the 'Fragility of the Law' (Creed, 1993). Here, instability occurs if an individual fails to respect the established laws and instead are hypocritical or lie about their acts. Transgression enables the creation of tension and instability since these borders shift and change, they are transgressive and so there is always the possibility of collapse at any given point.

4 Conclusion

Returning to Angela Carter's original quote that opened this thesis, definitions of the Gothic, Goth and gothic as mode all continue to be a presence in our contemporary times. The gothic's different modes highlight its fluidity and multiplicity which this thesis argues will continue to grow and expand through the twenty-first century as it navigates its evolving manifestations. This expansion into the realms of fashion and visual culture is another way of making sense of our world and as Carter states, is a true reflection of our 'Gothic times' (Carter, 1976, p.122). This thesis and accompanying publications demonstrate how the gothic as mode is a transformative and transgressive space that is active throughout history and simultaneously as a presence in the twenty-first century. Through the publications the gothic mode is expanded within the fields of fashion and visual culture, its inherent fluidity ensuring its resurgence in the twenty-first century. This fluidity is manifest through its evolving parameters that offer new iterations of the macabre, nostalgically drawing inspiration from a 'pick and mix' (Hodkinson, 2002) of the gothic mode presented throughout its histories and into the present day. The malleable opportunities offered are expressed through its endless variations and iterations over time.

From its inception in the west, the gothic as mode continues to be culturally and commercially relevant as a space of integrity and critique. From eighteenth-century literary traditions to the extension of the field throughout the twentieth century, the gothic as a mode has embraced change, continuing to be an active space. New iterations appear in contemporary reinterpretations of Gothic classic literature and film such as Anne Rice's *Interview with A Vampire* (2022) and Tim Burton's sequel *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (2024). Dark Academia and Goth themes are present within fashion via social media, with editorials in *Another Magazine* exploring subcultural fashion in Spring 2024 (Figure 19).



Figure 19: Thue Norgaard and Ellie Grace Cumming, (February 2024) *Another Magazine*.

This thesis locates these manifestations by reflecting on the opportunities that these new spaces can offer, as insights or critiques of the different eras and fields that the gothic has been previously located in. Retaining its relevance it has extended its cultural appeal and influence because its longevity enables it to be adaptable to changing social circumstance. The significance of the five publications discussed focus on resurgence, developing scholarship on the gothic as mode and the nature of self, the exploration of transgression, transformation, and creation of identities. This thesis brings together the importance of the fields of fashion and visual culture within current discourse identifying this as a space of growth.

The key themes of transgression and transformation define the resurgence of gothic as mode. The themes appear throughout the five publications: contextualising and framing the analysis of embodiment, culture identity and self-expression. **Publications 1, 2 and 4** examine the transformative qualities of the gothic mode by developing the increasing number of permutations within contemporary visual culture. These examinations range from performances and catwalk shows to *haute couture* and street style discussions of Goth subcultures. They explore the fluidity of

Goth through analysis of individual and Goth collective identities. **Publications 3** and **5** investigate the theme of transgression by examining the construction of identity through the medium of film. Here fashion is identified as an engaged space in which to be present. This thesis and accompanying publications argue that the gothic as mode is a powerful space in which to construct, disrupt and celebrate the darker side of existence. It has become an increasingly fluid space which mirrors the complexities present in the twenty-first century society. Therefore, the gothic mode is an activated space where these dialogues take place. This research contributes to this by making it clearer to understand, navigate and enjoy.

The aim of the work is to expand these areas by developing an understanding of the gothic mode throughout history and into the twenty-first century. These different and diverse manifestations offer potential to support the understanding of what it can be within the twenty-first century. Limitations of the work are that there is less presence of the gothic mode within fashion and visual culture in terms of current scholarship due to its discontinuous nature. Although this can be limiting academically and subsequently difficult to expand this research due to the lack of scholarship available, this could be also viewed as an opportunity. By extending the fields of fashion and visual culture this work offers new research possibilities to help strengthen scholarly continuity within these fields. This thesis celebrates the interdisciplinary nature by developing a framework through the key themes of transformation and transgression to extend the gothic mode within the fields of fashion and visual culture and to explore the relationship of what can be understood as the gothic today. The work that comprises this thesis focuses on the presence of the gothic mode within the west spanning a timeframe predominantly from the nineteen eighties until the present day. This research has the potential to be developed further to engage with the presence of the gothic mode in a more global capacity. Increasing digital connectivity, the internet and social media all offer new possibilities without the obstacle of a geographical location. The Goth subcultural presence in the east also offers potential for expansion and critique with subcultures such as *Visual Kei* gaining prominence in Japan which is highlighted in **Publication 3**.

The gothic mode is increasingly accessible as a visual form as it has aligned itself with more mainstream post-modern culture and therefore has a continuing relevance. As a presence within the twenty-first century, it has found new communities that will continue to embrace it today and into the future. The intention for this work is that it is accessible and that it has the potential to draw new researchers to the interdisciplinary fields of Gothic Studies alongside the disciples of fashion and visual culture. The hope is that this work is inspiring to scholars, and that future research can continue to be developed as an active space in which to manifest the new exciting possibilities that studying the gothic mode can offer.

The potential of the gothic as mode to develop new research pathways is exemplified by the methodology of **Publication 5**, offers a more contemporary focus on the themes present within the gothic mode today. *Deathlands* is an Arts Council project that explores creative practice through myth and folklore with an interdisciplinary perspective. The growth in Folk Horror in particular, as highlighted in **Publication 5**, demonstrates the potential of scholarly activity within this field.

The author is also developing a further publication, *Vampires and Fashion*, in collaboration with Dr Robyn Ollett. “Another Taste, Another Year, Another Place, Another Tear”: Fashioning the Anti-Social Icon from Orlok to Lestat’, adopts an interdisciplinary perspective of fashion studies and the literary queer Gothic, with the chapter exploring how costume design specifically narrates and emphasises the queerness and exceptionality of the vampire. The chapter analyses the economic metaphors within two examples of vampiric nobility that have seen several adaptations over the years and have resurged in popularity once more.

Finally, ‘Material Afterlives: Fashioning Menswear in the Blade Runner Films’ is a book chapter in *The Cultural History of Bladerunner* due to be published in October 2025. This work develops a case study approach for the critical analysis of fashion within film. This draws together many of the themes present within this thesis, appearing in **Publications 1 and 4** through explorations of subcultural theory, identity, and materiality. Interestingly this approach focuses specifically on

menswear, developing a further line of enquiry for the author as a fashion academic and practitioner. This is new territory for the author, as it moves away from the focus of this thesis on the study of women within fashion and visual culture to focus instead on men within these contexts. Studying fashion and visual culture together offers new readings of works within the genre with both fields being critical tools for examination within the framework of gothic as mode.

The contribution to knowledge made by this thesis lies in its alignment of disparate fields of fashion and visual culture. The accompanying publications highlight the opportunities for these fields of study which have previously been discontinuous. The key themes of transformation and transgression of the gothic mode are presented within this thesis as a framework to facilitate the expansion of the gothic mode through the fields of fashion and visual culture. Transformation and transgression can help to make sense of these continuities. Transformation confirms the gothic mode's ability to mutate, blurring perception and evolving to reflect different realities. Transgression demonstrates that the gothic mode is as an active space which transcends established orders, questioning our definitions of self and other whilst addressing our place within our contemporary world.

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Appendices

1. Commentary: Publications 1 and 4

Publication 1

Richards, J (2017) 'Gothic Styles: Gothic Festival 5', Manchester Centre for Gothic Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester (Various locations).

Co-Convenor, Academic Lead Show Producer Gothic Styles Catwalk Show

Publication 4

Book Chapter: Richards, J (2020) 'The Influence of the Genre in High Fashion' In Bloom, C *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp.1063-1074.

ISBN: 978-3-030-33135-1

This practice-based work and accompanying book chapter, advances earlier discussions of the gothic within fashion by authors such as Catherine Spooner (2012) and Valerie Steele and Jennifer Park (2008) which proposes that the gothic mode's resilience and adaptation are the reasons why it has continued to be important in the twenty first century. Through both publications, Richards explores

both high fashion and street interpretations of the genre. Its many facets and permutations allowing for the Gothic mode to be a continued source of inspiration within contemporary fashion and beyond. The combination of fashion and the gothic is proposed as a space in which new modes and dialogues can be created, a place to be free and to explore a wide range of possibilities concerned as much with identity as with clothing.

The chapter arose from Richards' work as Co-Convenor at the Gothic Manchester Festival in 2017. The Festival ranged from body-beautiful horror in Nicholas Winding Refn's *The Neon Demon* (2016) to a North West street style in a catwalk devoted to extraordinary goths and steam punks. For the Festival's finale Richards was show producer and creative director, working alongside Manchester City Council's Halloween in the City Events, Manchester BID, the University of Manchester, Design Manchester Conference 2017 and sponsors such as Selfridges and the Sophie Lancaster Foundation. These events centred on a one-day conference of papers delivered by an egalitarian mix of students, academics, other experts and enthusiasts.

The Festival was named as one of the *Guardian's* 'Top 10 things to do' nationally in October 2017, achieving significant publicity via both traditional and social media. The Festival hashtag also trended on Twitter in 2017. Media articles about the Festival and associated Manchester Centre Gothic Studies activity reached an estimated circulation of over 107,000,000 according to data from media analytics source Meltwater.

Through the research for this chapter, Richards was invited to discuss her work at the conference Gothic Times in October 2019 at Manchester Metropolitan University and was accepted to speak at the University of Hertfordshire's Gothic Encounters Conference in April 2021.

Link to Film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpw40qlTNm8>



2. Commentary: Publication 2, 3 and 5

Publication 2

Richards, J (2018) 'Transcending the Traditional: Fashion as Performance' In Carlotto, F & McCreesh, N (Eds) *Engaging with Fashion: Perspectives on Communication, Education and Business*. Brill Publishers, pp.249-257.

This research asks what happens when human bodies interact with clothing items. Richards explores the osmotic interplay between fashion and the body. This relationship is examined by exploring contemporary examples of the pose through fashion shows, fashion displays and fashion performances. The examples chosen seek to break the barriers of the traditional modes of the pose within the fashion context. The work of Patricia Lara Betancourt and Fiona Fisher helped to drive this chapter. They examine the interior as a stage upon which modern lifestyles are fashion in their Performance, *Fashion and the Modern Interior* (2011), but it was not until 2015 that Elizabeth Paterson's *Fashion as Performance* (2015) represented the first critical examination of fashion as dramatic performance. Francesca Granata's *Experimental Fashion* (2016) traces the proliferation of the grotesque and carnivalesque within contemporary fashion and the close relation between fashion and performance. Adam Geczy's *Fashion Installation: Body Space and Performance* (2019) examines fashion thinking beyond the traditional methods of display to simulate interest in collections. This chapter examines the work of Daphne

Guinness and Viktor & Rolf, and concludes with a case study of Olivier Saillard, a prominent historian and fashion archivist, to examine the intersections where embodied fashion appears in contemporary society. Examples include the analysis of specific examples of works on the catwalk, in shop windows, and on the stage, capturing the rich reality behind clothing manipulation. The chapter builds on Richards' paper for the 8th Global Conference: Fashion: Exploring Critical Issues at Oxford University in September 2015. Following the book's publication, Richards was invited to present her research to postgraduates studying The Art of Luxury at Sotheby's Institute of Art in London in April 2019.

Publication 3

Richards, J (2019) 'Mirror Mirror on the Wall, Who is the Ugliest of them all? The Elderly as Other in Countess Dracula' In Bowdoin Van Riper, A & Miller, C *Elder Horror: Essays on Film's Frightening Images of Aging*, McFarland, pp.119-129. ISBN: 978-1-4766-7537-4

This chapter originated in a call for papers from Elder Horror editor, Cynthia Miller. It discusses Countess Dracula as an example in which the horrors of ageing are prominently featured: it examines the film's narrative representation of the stigma of ageing and our desperate struggle to avoid its visible consequences. The research explores the ways in which the film reflects and shapes our ambivalent attitudes toward growing old, specifically through the female depictions present within the film. Richards' research builds on horror studies which examine the role of the "elder" woman as crone, the female tropes associated with depictions of witchcraft, "hagsploitation", Creed and Kristeva's work on the "Monstrous Feminine" and the "Other", Gerbner (1976) and Tuchmann's (2000) theories of "symbolic annihilation". Richards examines in detail the meanings and attitudes embodied in the depiction of Countess Dracula (1971). During the research for this chapter, Richards was invited to contribute to the Fashion Studies Journal weeklies column in an article #Coven: The Season of the Witch examining the rise of witchcraft in contemporary society, asking questions about the use of the trope and the representation of the female in contemporary culture. It was promoted by the

Museum of Witchcraft in Boscastle, International Gothic Association, Irish Gothic Studies Network, Open Graves, Open Minds Gothic Research Group (University of Hertfordshire), and the Witchcraft in History and the Arts (Public Group). The research was also disseminated within a paper at the Gothic Feminism Conference in 2017, Representing Women in Gothic and Horror Cinema. In December 2020, Richards joined the Academic Steering Committee for the AHRC project Fabulous Femininities (Leeds and Northumbria Universities).

Publication 5

Richards, J (2023) & Ollett, R & "'You're a dangerous Girl": The Fashioning of Satanic Liberation in *The VVitch* (2015), *The Neon Demon* (2017) and *Midsommar* (2020)' In Cocoran, (Ed). *Satanism and Feminism in Popular Culture*, Amsterdam University Press. ISBN: 978-9-4637-2129-5

This co-authored chapter's starting point was Per Fexneld's landmark study '*Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Culture*' (2017). This book argued for the existence of a nineteenth century counter-reading of Satan that constructed the Devil as a symbol of women's liberation, progressive values and intellectual freedom. Satan was arguably framed as an empowering model of self-determination and nonconformity. This chapter seeks to build on the work of Faxneld by mapping how Satanism has been employed as a lens through which to explore issues relating to gender, sexuality and feminist activism in the twentieth and twenty first centuries. It adopts a case study approach by examining three films, *The VVitch* (2015), *The Neon Demon* (2017) and *Midsommar* (2020). These three films include a central woman protagonist who is stylised as a Gothic heroine. Explored from the dual perspectives of Queer Studies (Ollett) and Fashion Studies (Richards), the authors attempt to reconcile the level of female liberation available to the spectator and how they portray a stylised performance of exceptional femininity. Richards contribution examines the idea of fashion as a conduit for the Gothic

analysing the ways in which fashion can cultivate character within the three films. This is expanded further in the chapter to address how abject femininity is identified through the complex relations between identity and place and the effects of the contamination the protagonists experience through their environment, colour and aesthetics. In conclusion, the chapter considers how these films reflect the male gaze, and contends that the satanic liberation extant is an uneasy and ambivalent thing.

