

What is Gothic?

Basic Definition

Gothic – of or pertaining to a literary style of fiction prevalent in the late 18th and early 19th centuries which emphasized the grotesque, mysterious, and desolate [i.e. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the works of Edgar Allen Poe]. This is the relevant dictionary definition.

But what does gothic mean in regards to the group of people? Here's where it gets confusing. There are things that many Gothics like that are not gothic (Industrial or Classical music). There are things that are gothic that many Gothics dislike (vampires, interest in death). There are things that some people think are gothic that are not gothic (bands like Marilyn Manson and Nine Inch Nails), and there are things that do not call themselves gothic even if they are considered gothic by most people (bands like Sisters of Mercy and Dead Can Dance). However, there's no Grand Gothic Judge to decree what is truly Goth and what is not, although there are plenty of people who claim to be it. It's an ambiguous label with many people using it that don't understand what it means. The people who do understand it often have many different definitions.

History of the Movement

The date of origin is usually placed in 1979. That was the year that the song "Bela Lugosi's Dead" by Bauhaus was released. It was originally intended to be tongue-in-cheek; however, many young fans took it as the inspiration for the budding gothic subculture. The song had a certain mystery and eeriness that listeners quickly latched onto. The first generation of the gothic movement emerged mostly in the UK in the late seventies and early eighties as a splinter from the punk movement. Punk music was breathing its last breath as this gloomy, introspective mutation gained momentum. Bands like The Damned, Bauhaus, and Siouxsie and the Banshees characterize the first generation. They were called Gothic later on, but most didn't consider themselves Gothic. There's a great deal of uncertainty as to who coined the term "gothic" and how it got attached to this dark music. I believe it was the British music press that made the label stick. In the early eighties, the gothic movement thrived with bands like the Sisters of Mercy at the forefront, but by the mid to late eighties, it was waning.

In the late eighties and early nineties, a new, second generation of gothic bands emerged to breathe new life into the scene. This would include The Shroud, Rosetta Stone, and London After Midnight, for example. They were the first to characteristically call themselves Gothic. This is when the US Goth movement grew significantly and Gothic became recognized as a distinct subculture. Through this time period, gothic music and culture grew and splintered, diversified, and branched out into various subsets, pushing the boundaries of what had previously been considered gothic.

Recently, widespread mainstream interest in the gothic subculture is apparent. Many gothic cultural quirks have filtered into mainstream culture, such as an interest in the supernatural and dark aesthetics. Historically, a dark leaning becomes prevalent towards the end of a century. Since we are also at the close of the millennium, it is much more pronounced now.

As the gothic movement progresses into the late nineties, we are possibly witnessing the emergence of a distinct third generation. Though some of the noted writers on the subject (Mick Mercer, Dave Thompson, Jo-Ann Green) have not yet recognized this new generation, I propose its existence. As the second generation ages into their mid to late 20's, they become progressively less interested in participating in the gothic social scene. A "new breed" must emerge to shape the future of Gothic if there is to be one.

The third generation contains an explosion in the number of people referring to themselves as gothic. Many of the younger generation have learned about gothic culture because of the present widespread commercial availability. For example, national chain stores like Hot Topic have made Goth accessible for kids at a younger age than ever before. With the huge commercial popularity of "shock rock" act Marilyn Manson, the spotlight has been thrown onto this subculture. Many Goths wish to make clear that Marilyn Manson plays heavy metal music. They might state that he is the Alice Cooper of the 90's, using extreme shock tactics and marketing genius to outrage conservative forces, appeal to rebellious youth, and in the process becoming very rich. Many Goths claim that the

younger over-ardent followers of Manson are not in fact authentic Goths – the term often used for them is "spooky kids."

It appears that a new crossbreed category of music may eventually be recognized: metal goth. Many Goths cringe at the possibility of this crossover or deny its validity. The sound of what would be called metal goth is certainly different from what is now recognized as gothic music. First and second generation Goths look suspiciously upon the new generation, doubting their authenticity and disliking the exposure they give to a subculture which would prefer to remain underground. The new generation is not well received by their elders, but time may prove otherwise. It would be difficult to predict what the future holds for the Gothic movement. After 20 years, it continues to change, grow, and adapt, making it the longest surviving youth subculture in existence.

Cultural Idiosyncrasies

Some of the popular gothic style traits and miscellaneous things Goths tend to like:

- anything black (Less common is white clothing and any dark colors such as navy blue or deep red.)
- pallor (In general, Goths view paleness as much more aesthetically pleasing than being tan, whether or not they have a reason why.)
- dyed hair (Black, very light bleached blonde, red, or purple are fairly common.)
- black and white makeup -- white foundation, black lipstick, black eyeliner
- bondage and fetish fashion -- leather, PVC, latex, rubber, vinyl and bondage gear, corsets
- poet's shirts -- a few ruffles around the cuff, the collar, and the front (They're sometimes called pirate's shirts and are usually white.)
- velvet and crushed velvet
- silver jewelry
- chokers
- opera-style capes or cloaks
- fishnet tights or shirts
- opera length gloves, either satin or latex, shorter length gloves as well, usually vinyl
- black and white horizontal striped tights like the Wicked Witch of the West
- pointy-toed shoes, buckle boots, high heels, combat boots or Doc Martens
- wearing band T-shirts, having band stickers on your car, notebook etc.
- a short A-line haircut , or ratted out, hair-sprayed, chaotic hair, sometimes hair extensions
- a leather jacket -- often with designs painted on it, black trench coat, black vinyl jacket, or velvet jacket
- a box (It's something like a cross between a small purse and a lunchbox, usually black with silver hinges and a briefcase-like handle. They are usually decorated with band stickers and what not.)
- art (The majority of Goths are dabblers in the creative arts in some form, whether it's photography, music, painting, writing, or drawing etc.)
- the humanities in general (Many have an interest in literature and history, philosophy etc.)
- cats
- fairies
- gargoyles
- candles
- clove cigarettes
- coffee, "going to coffee" -- getting together to drink coffee and socialize at a diner or coffee shop
- Christmas lights -- the miniature kind strung all around the bedroom
- spider webs, spiders -- spider web design on tights, shirt, jewelry
- skulls, skeletons -- in jewelry, on tights or clothing
- graveyards -- especially to take pictures or have picnics
- coffins (There are a few people who own actual coffins; usually they're used as a coffee table. Most times, you might find a coffin shaped box -- the cross between a lunch box and purse -- or jewelry holder.)
- other such spooky things (You get the idea.)
- Egyptian symbols, Christian symbols, Pagan symbols -- cross, ankh, pentacle etc.

Critical Analysis

Gothic culture is a multifaceted entity with several different aspects; there are at least three major ones that compose the subculture. One is being involved in the **gothic social scene** -- especially frequenting clubs and knowing others involved in the scene. To outsiders, gothic is almost always evaluated and judged by what is known of the visible social scene. The social scene ideally facilitates the exchange of ideas and draws individuals of like mind and interests together. In reality, the scene is most often a social group similar to other social groups and cliques in structure and function, i.e. it provides a sense of belonging, contains unspoken social hierarchies, establishes norms of social behavior, etc. It must be noted that gaining acceptance in the social scene is not necessarily an interest of everyone involved in gothic culture. It often becomes progressively less important to individuals as they grow older through their 20's and 30's.

Another essential aspect is having a **gothic personality**. In short, this includes individualism, an interest in the darker side of life and the supernatural, focus on beauty and dark aesthetics, art, emotion, creativity, intellectualism, mystery, and drama. Almost everyone in the subculture would probably agree that possessing the gothic personality is ultimately what makes someone gothic.

The last is a passion for **gothic music**. The subculture is a musically based and driven one; the music is what holds the social scene together. As the music changes, the direction of the scene changes. Music is most often the reason cited for continued involvement in gothic culture over the years.

These three aspects of gothic culture are interdependent in many ways; they are intertwined to make up the whole picture. However, each of the three does not possess the same amount of importance to different individuals; some people may only be involved in one or two of those three aspects. Further examination follows.

The Gothic Social Scene

Gaining Acceptance

Drugs and sex are the fastest way for someone to initially become accepted in the gothic social scene, but obviously not the only way. They are the fastest methods because they allow a person to meet and create quick superficial connections to others. Not everyone takes that route in meeting people when they first become involved in a scene. What follows is an observation of the general criteria that the gothic social scene will use to evaluate whether someone should be considered Gothic. Categories two, three and four are the biggest test of "true Gothness."

- 1. Frequenting where Goths are** -- Regularly visiting places where Gothics are is the easiest and most superficial way to become accepted. This includes gothic clubs, coffee shops, cool thrift stores, fetish stores, independent music stores, etc. If there are no specific gothic music nights at a club, someone may visit fetish or industrial themed nights. These go hand in hand with Goth. However, frequenting places Goths are may give someone exposure to the culture, but not acceptance.
- 2. Dressing a certain way** -- In order to identify him or herself as Gothic to other Gothics, a person would do this through dress. At first, one's appearance is an identifying factor. It initiates the belief within the group that this person should be considered one of them. However, it often takes further investigation to decide whether or not this person should actually be considered gothic. The way a person dresses alone does not automatically make a Gothic. For some people, the image of being Gothic is shed as easily as taking off those gothic clothes.
- 3. Having the "gothic mentality"** -- This category indicates what a person is like inside. Several of the following questions will help to get an indication of whether someone is "Goth on the inside." These are questions that come to mind, whether consciously realized or not, when evaluating if someone is gothic: Is this something you are doing in order to look cool or to gain acceptance, or is it who you are? Are you willing to stand up for yourself in the face of normal society, daring to be different despite ridicule, harassment and prejudice? Are you getting into Goth because you're following a trend? What is your depth of knowledge of gothic music and culture? What are your similar values or traits that you should be accepted for -- i.e. are you pensive, artistic, gloomy, moody, or dreary? Are you fascinated with the mysterious, the supernatural, and the beautiful?

4. **Listening to certain music** -- This includes such things as: the amount of time someone has liked a band, how underground the band is and that person's passion for it -- how much he/she knows about the band, how many CD's he/she has. It also relates to what a person wears (band T-shirts or stickers). The music plays different roles to different people. Some people enjoy Gothic only for its social or aesthetic aspects and never seek to listen to more than the most popular and well-known of Goth bands. True dedication to gothic culture is often displayed in one's span of music knowledge. This category also includes familiarity with other media, such as movies and books, etc. However, these count to a lesser extent and do not qualify alone.
5. **Knowing certain people** -- Unfortunately, this often seems to be the biggest factor in whether or not someone is considered gothic by the social scene. If a person is accepted by the most infamous members of the social group, that is often automatic grounds for being considered Goth no matter the length of time in the scene, how extreme that person looks, or musical preference. Perhaps the assumption is that their standards for someone being Goth are fairly strict because they have suffered the most persecution, prejudice and ridicule to be a part of it. These standards in no way mean that infamous Goths will not accept another as a friend if they are not gothic. The standards only apply to accepting someone as a Gothic. People who have been around the longest in the scene tend to be the most infamous and/or most respected. It is because they have proven consistently over time that it is not a phase, but part of who they are.

Gothic Music

Description of Relevant Music

There is a considerable amount of flexibility when classifying a band as one thing or another. Different people can put the same music into different classifications. A band might change their sound or style from album to album with a variety of labels put on their various works. There's a good amount of crossover of music types as well, such as Gothic Industrial, when the same music falls into more than one category at the same time. There are many more divisions of music that could be listed, but here is a brief, general guide. This is in no way the official or definitive way to classify this music.

Punk: The relevant classification of old school punk died in the 70's. Punk as a subculture survived. From punk music, two children emerged -- first Industrial music in 1976, then Gothic music in 1979. Not as closely related to punk musically, perhaps a nephew, comes New Wave (Modern music) in the 1980's. Punk was characterized by bands like the Dead Kennedys, Sex Pistols and Circle Jerks with irreverent, anarchic, and anti-establishment themes. Punk is most influential to the gothic rock division of gothic music, with bands such as The Cure (1978) and Siouxsie and the Banshees (1976) first lumped musically into a post-punk category.

Modern/New Wave: New Wave became popular in the early eighties. It is also sometimes called modern music. New Wave as a term originally was used to describe just that, a new wave of bands that were creating music different from everything being made at the time. It was an all-encompassing term for all types of different and freaky music and its listeners, including the New Romantics (Adam Ant and Duran Duran), death rock (the Cult), post-punk (Police), modern (Talking Heads), etc. Right now what we think of as New Wave is much more specific to a certain underground look and feel of the 80's. It is the first pop music form to use synthesizers and keyboards on a regular basis. There is also a certain glamour and camp to the band members. Modern music is also used to describe (often British) bands such as Depeche Mode, The Smiths, and The Cure. They have a good amount of popularity and longevity, yet are still a little "odd" musically. People who are into this type of music are called mods or wavers. In the eighties, wavers were the most visible form of alternative music and culture -- they were strange, but not quite bizarre yet. What we now call gothic was a fairly small group of people. Goth was not yet used as a term, and they were generally lumped together with all other underground groups as wavers or freaks. In the late eighties and early nineties, Gothic gained a lot of visibility with the emergence of the second generation. Mods became somewhat retro in their love of eighties music, fashion, and British pop music.

Industrial: A record label called Industrial Records coined the term in 1976. Bands like Throbbing Gristle were the Industrial pioneers. As a subculture however, industrial is much younger, probably only becoming identifiable in the 1990's. Its adherents are called rivetheads. Industrial music has its own subdivisions. There is the more guitar oriented industrial rock music, of KMFDM and Ministry for example, the more electronic dance music called EBM

(Electronic Body Music) of bands such as Front 242 and Front Line Assembly, and the more experimental electronic soundscape type of music from bands like Coil and Download. Industrial music often uses electronics, synthesizers, noise, unconventional items (especially used as percussion instruments), samples from movies or political speeches, loops, and distorted vocals. The sound is often fast, loud and aggressive. Industrial music and culture tends to be overwhelmingly male-dominated. Rivetheads are usually not quite as bizarre-looking as Gothics in general. The relative newness of the subculture also helps make them less noticeable than Goths. There is a huge significant amount of crossover between Gothic and Industrial music and these bands are often called Gothic Industrial or Industrial Gothic.

Goth rock/death punk/death rock: This is what gothic music began as, a darker form of punk rock music with a tendency toward misanthropy, the macabre, mystery and desolation. It grew into a distinct entity from the punk movement in the late 70's. Originally what we now call Gothic music was called death rock and its listeners death rockers, especially in the UK. It wasn't until the mid to late eighties that it was called Gothic. Gothic rock is characterized by the music of Christian Death, The Sisters of Mercy and Bauhaus, for example. It usually contains the hard guitars typical of rock music, but with a more apocalyptic flair, a darker sound and feel, and a certain theatricality of the band. Gothic music in its narrowest definition only consists of this music type. Note that gothic rock is quite different from heavy metal and death metal.

Darkwave: A fairly new term that refers to a branch of gothic music that is more introspective, moody, emotional, and artistic -- less rock and roll oriented. There is some uncertainty as to whether darkwave music is a subdivision of Gothic or a separate sister category in itself like Industrial. Darkwave originally was used to designate a more dark electronic sound, however it wasn't until the distribution service called darkwave was born that the term had a widely noticeable usage. Darkwave encompasses the subsets of ethereal music (angelic, otherworldly, usually with high female vocals and a soft sound, often using acoustic guitar, violin, flute, piano and/or electronics) and darkambient music (minimalist, layer upon layer of sound, experimental, often dark electronic, little or no vocals). The term is usually used today to refer to bands featured in the darkwave catalog.

Is Goth a Bad Influence?

The majority of teenagers who become involved in Gothic move on to something else within a few years. Most find it appealing initially as a form of rebellion and as a way to gain social belonging. A teenager will basically try on the gothic identity to see if it fits. For most, Goth is a phase. Some do stay involved because the identity fits; they have found a group of people with similar interests and ideals. Those likely to become interested in Goth and remain involved in it will usually possess most of the following characteristics and traits beforehand: individualistic, reflective, artistic, introspective, emotionally focused and driven, sensitive, non-violent, moody. They are likely to have a distaste for authority, possess above average intelligence, and be social misfits.

There are elements of Gothic that can be destructive to those who let it be. Teenagers are faced with the same basic decisions regarding drugs, drinking, smoking and sex as they would in any other youth social group. It is always an individual's choice to experiment with whatever potentially destructive forces gothic culture might expose him or her to. If a person is easily led and susceptible to the influence of peers, then it is possible for that person to be led into the destructive side of Goth. If a person is self-assured and has made solid decisions regarding sex, drugs, drinking, etc., before becoming involved in Goth, they are less likely to become influenced by any negative aspects of the culture. Parents and adults in authority who set reasonable limits and keep communication lines open help *any* child, gothic or not, resist *any* negative or destructive influences.

It seems that the most common issues causing concern among adults when it comes to Gothic teenagers are drugs, Satanism and depression. Further investigation of these issues follows.

Drugs

Drug use is found in the gothic scene, just as in any teenage group. However, it is by no means required. My studies show that those most commonly used are alcohol, LSD, and tobacco. Drug use by Goths often stems from

two types of people. The first is the hedonistic, rebellious, destructive type of people. They would do drugs regardless of their association with Goth. Second are those who do not believe drugs should be illegal. They believe that personal responsibility in the area of drug experimentation is the key to keeping a drug's harmful effects in check. The roots of drug use are often connected to two things: curiosity and a lack of respect for authority.

Religion and Goth

There is no set belief system for Gothics, although most of them have a leaning towards being agnostic and/or having certain beliefs and views of a particular religion (especially Christianity) but not following any set rules or any organized forms of that religion. Religion has nothing to do with one's "Gothness," and one's religious beliefs don't affect one's being a member of the gothic community. One will find represented in Goth: Christians (Mormon, Catholic, Baptist, etc.), atheists, Jews, agnostics, Satanists, pagans, and so forth. While there's an incredibly wide variety of religious beliefs and views, most Goths don't follow any sort of organized religion, and their personal spiritual beliefs are of a private nature.

Gothics are often accused of being Satanists because of their bizarre or dark appearances. There are some Satanists who are also Goth, but Satanists can be found in any group of people. They are not exclusively Gothics. Satanism and the occult itself are extremely complex belief systems with as many differences in interpretation and types as Christianity. This is an area that people have the most confusion and misinformation regarding. Satanism as a documented religion, such as Anton LeVay's Church of Satan, is almost nothing like what most people's conception of Satanism is. Satanists are a *very small* percentage of Goths, and Goths are an *extremely small* percentage of Satanists.

In 1989, the FBI National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime published a 50+ page report by Kenneth Lanning, Supervisory Special Agent, entitled *Satanic, Occult, Ritualistic Crime: A Law Enforcement Perspective*. Excerpts from this study may help clarify some misunderstanding:

"The fact is that far more crime and child abuse has been committed by zealots in the name of God, Jesus, and Mohammed than has ever been committed in the name of Satan. Many people don't like this statement, but few can argue with it... After all the hype and hysteria is put aside, the realization sets in that most satanic/occult activity involves the commission of NO crimes, and that which does, usually involves the commission of relatively minor crimes... It is easy to blame involvement in satanism and the occult for behaviors that have complex motivations. A teenager's excessive involvement in satanism and the occult is usually a symptom of a problem and not the cause of a problem. Blaming satanism for a teenagers' vandalism, theft, suicide or even act of murder is like blaming a criminal's offenses on his tattoos: both are often signs of the same rebelliousness and lack of self-esteem that contribute to the commission of crimes.

...Most teenagers involved in fantasy role-playing games, heavy metal music, or satanism and the occult are going through a stage of adolescent development and commit no significant crimes. The teenagers who have more serious problems are usually those from dysfunctional families or those who have poor communications within their families. Those troubled teenagers turn to satanism and the occult to overcome a sense of alienation, to obtain power, or to justify their antisocial behaviour. For these teenagers, it is the symbolism, not the spirituality, that is important. It is either the psychopathic or the oddball, loner teenager who is most likely to get into serious trouble. Extreme involvement in the occult is a symptom of a problem, not the cause. This is not to deny, however, that satanism and the occult are negative influences for a troubled teenager. But to hysterically warn teenagers to avoid this 'mysterious, powerful, and dangerous' thing called satanism will drive some teenagers right into it. Some rebellious teenagers will do whatever will most shock and outrage society in order to flaunt their rejection of adult norms..."

Depression

It's hard to say categorically if Goths are more depressed than anyone else. In everyday society, depression and sadness are seen as an abnormality, something that must be suppressed or fixed. Adolescence is a time of depression for many; yet, young people feel pressure from family, friends or teachers to be the "perfect" child and not show when something is wrong. They may feel incredible pain, but don't want to be looked down on for it as if they are

abnormal. Some people find Gothic culture to be one group of people that says, "We know you are depressed, it's okay. We don't think any less of you for it. Here's your chance to be depressed, to not push those feelings down anymore. We'll accept you all the more for it."

While I don't believe that Goths in general are necessarily more depressed than any other group, depression comes to be a feeling that Goth personifies. These days people feel so alienated from each other that everyone has broken off into small groups, latched onto something very specific (race, music, an idea), and formed a culture surrounding it. People belong to these subcultures in order to feel as if they own something, are a part of something. Subcultures take an idea and exaggerate it, focus on it to the point where they typify it. This exaggeration of the beauty of sadness in Gothic culture leads people to think that Goths are more depressed than other groups. I doubt that they are in a significant way, but it is possible. It's also possible that this is just the impression people get about Gothic because it is an exaggeration.

Being Goth doesn't necessarily make one sad, but I do believe that people can easily become trapped in their own expectations from themselves and absorb the energy of their appearance and those they surround themselves with. If people constantly surround themselves with the depressing aspects of Goth, it becomes hard to see the fun, creative, inspiring part of it. People can start taking the image and stereotype of being depressed and being Gothic too seriously. They find themselves living up to an image and don't allow balance in their lives. They close themselves off to thoughts or clothes or activities that don't fit this image. That's when being Goth can lead to people creating more depression for themselves. However, it depends on what they were like beforehand and how they perceive Goth.

The bottom line is that being Goth does not necessarily mean being depressed. While Goths are capable of feeling extreme sadness, they are also capable of experiencing great joy. To some, Goth only says that sadness, like happiness, has its own majestic beauty and must be embraced as a valid emotion, not pushed down as an abnormality.

Conclusion

Some people might assume because they find the Gothic subculture bizarre, that there is something evil or unhealthy about it. There certainly are some things that raise many people's eyebrows. However, within Goth there is a very vibrant tongue-in-cheek sense of humor. It is not all gloom and tragedy; most Goths try not to take themselves too seriously. They have fun with the spooky, campy aspects, and they're able to laugh at themselves. Though gothic culture is unusual, it is not something that should be feared or derided.

Many Goths say that Gothic represents acceptance of the inevitability of death and the existence of the darker side of life. That does not mean that Goths possess an obsession with either one. Goth is recognizing the balance of dark and light, life and death, without turning away, denying, or living in fear of the things some people find disturbing. To say that gothic culture's interest in the dark side of life means that Goths are evil would be similar to saying that daytime is good while nighttime is evil. There is no issue of good and evil when it comes to day and night; they are merely different. Gothic is the same way. It is simply a different way of perceiving and acting on the world than most people are used to. That doesn't make it wrong, bad or evil, just different.

The only time involvement in Gothic culture could become a cause for concern is if a person does not maintain balance in their lives. Excessive fixation on *anything* is unhealthy. There are Goths who choose to wallow in misery, brood over death, cut themselves, obsess about vampires, take things to extremes. Those are the extremists however, not the average Goth. Teenagers who are mentally or emotionally unstable or have serious problems should receive help. These problems are most likely caused by a larger issue such as low self-esteem or a poor family situation. It is essential to realize that *anyone's* dangerous involvement with drugs, depression or self-destruction requires help. However, it is the harmful *behavior* that should be focused on, not the appearance, musical taste, or social affiliation of the youth in question.

Author's Note: In 1997, prompted by what I viewed as media scapegoating, I began researching gothic culture. Since then, I have spent an extraordinary amount of time reading, observing, analyzing, writing, interviewing and speaking about the subject in order to gain and offer a comprehensive idea of what Gothic is. I currently am twenty-two years old, do web design by day and DJ gothic music at a local club by night. Though I never refer to myself as being a Goth, I am involved in the gothic scene and have been for the past six years. The majority of the material in this article was taken from the website I created – “A Study of Gothic Subculture: an Inside Look for Outsiders” at <http://www.gothics.org/subculture>. The site is a huge information resource, covering in depth a wide variety of subjects related to Gothic such as the occult, Wicca, vampires, advice for parents, definition of terms and phrases, archetypes, stereotypes, gangs and more. Gothic is such a complex entity that it can't be described easily or quickly. I feel it is important to get the whole picture by referring to the web site. Some people may never understand the Gothic subculture, but I hope to establish that Goths as a whole are not a gang, or evil, or dangerous.

I do not claim to represent the true, correct, objective or definitive answer about Gothic. It would be impossible to do so because of its ambiguity, the many differences of opinion and conflicting information, as well as the measure of individual interpretation and creation that makes Gothic what it is. Keep in mind that any generalizations made about Gothic are likely to never be entirely correct. There are many statements made here which should be prefaced by "Most Goths," "My observation leads me to believe," or "As a general tendency." Because I've omitted those qualifiers from the text in places, do not assume that any statement made is universally true.