to this day (Ainsworth 1881: I, IV). Ainsworth also superseded Maturin and brought the Gothic to the mainland (see Maturin, Charles Robert). Lookwood represents a bridge between the eighteenth-century Gothic and the contemporary urban nightmares of the penny dreadful and the literary novel, being stylistically and historically liminal, somewhere between Romantic and Victorian (see Dennis DRADEPFUL ROMANTIC). A craze for criminal romance ensued, and Ainsworth returned to the Newgate Calendars in 1839, serializing Jack Sheppard in Bentley's Miscellany, which ran concurrently with Oliver Twist. As both stories were set in the London underworld and illustrated by Cruikshank, critical comparisons were common, much to Dickens's annoyance (see Dickens, Charles). An editorial moral panic, the "Newgate controversy," followed, originally led by the Examiner, Punch, and the Athenaeum, centering around the Newgate novels of Lyttton, Ainsworth, and Dickens, and their potential to corrupt young, working-class males. When the valiant François Courvoisir murdered his master, Lord William Russell, allegedly after reading Jack Sheppard, the charge against Ainsworth seemed incontrovertible and his status as a good Victorian and a serious literary novelist never recovered. Dickens publicly and privately distanced himself from his friend, Thackeray criticized and lampooned, and Poe savaged Ainsworth in Graham's Magazine, later sending him up in "The Balloon-Hoax" (1844).

Down but not cut, Ainsworth took over the editorship of Bentley's Miscellany from Dickens in 1839, and began two historical romances, Guy Fawkes and The Tower of London, transferring his Gothic sensibilities from the underworld to the kings and queens of England. A stream of popular romances followed; forty years on Ainsworth was still turning national landmarks into sublimes spaces, and populating them with ill omens, fatted monarchs, pious saints of noble birth, star-crossed lovers, Gothic villains, hot gypsies, and plenty of ghosts. His last major work, however, was The Lancashire Witch.

The Lancashire Witches is the only of Ainsworth's forty-three novels to have remained consistently in print, often shunted alongside Dennis Wheatley and Montague Summers (both of whom it undoubtedly influenced). In its role of Gothic Other to patriarchal versions of femininity, Ainsworth's powerful Faustian protagonists know, like Eve, that they have a much better chance with Satan than with God. Although the primal plot offers a more moral interpretation, the possibility that it is good to be bad remains forever teasing and present. At times the author appears on the threshold of more serious comment on persecution but chooses, instead, magic realism. The narrative therefore works according to the logic of a fairy tale, which is really where witches belong, and much of the story takes place in an enchanted wood. This anachronistic synergy of history, folklore, romance, and melodrama is the last English novel that can truly be said to belong to the original Gothic tradition.

Ainsworth subsequently dropped from the literary mainstream, although the "Lancashire Novelist" was honored at a Lord Mayor's banquet in Manchester in 1881 as "an expression of the high esteem in which he is held by his Fellow townsmen and of his services to Literature." An accompanying article in Punch effusively described him as "the greatest axe-and-neck-romancer of our time" (Carver 2003: 389, 402). Ainsworth died a few weeks later.

Although rejected by his contemporaries as a hack, and still often critically overlooked, Ainsworth contributed significantly to the development of the literary novel after Scott, and to the new urban Gothic of Dickens, Reynolds, and Stevenson (see Reynolds, G. W. M. (George William MacArthur); Stevenson, Robert Louis; Romanticism; Tales of Terror; Urban Gothic; Victorian Gothic). His approach to history, while flying in the face of Lukácsian historicism, can still be seen in popular narratives such as Ruma, Titanic, and The Tudors.

SEE ALSO: Dickens, Charles; Maturin, Charles Robert; Penny Dreadful; Poe Edger Allan; Reynolds, G. W. M. (George William MacArthur); Stevenson, Robert Louis; Romanticism; Tales of Terror; Urban Gothic; Victorian Gothic.

American Gothic

CHARLES L. CROW

The United States and the Gothic have common origins in the turmoil of European thought in the late eighteenth century. The cue of the Enlightenment and Romanticism produced many English Gothic novels, the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution. Deeply entwined with American thought from the beginning, the Gothic has produced a dark twin of the national narrative, a critique of the story the United States has been trying to tell about itself. It has offered a voice to the repressed and oppressed, to those left out or consigned to an imagined border. The Gothic is a literature of borders, suited to a country defined by its frontier. It also has patrolled other shifting and unstable boundaries, and provided an index of American fears, anxieties, and self-doubt.

The sources of American Gothic go back much further, before the Revolution, to early colonial experience. When Puritans looked from the deck of the Mayflower upon the inhospitable coast of New England, they saw a wilderness filled with wild animals, savages, and devils. The story they told about themselves in this wild land, and that their leader William Bradford wrote in his history Of Plymouth Plantation (1651), was based on the Book of Exodus. The experience of these English Christians paralleled that of the Israelites, fleeing the Egyptians and seeking their Promised Land. Like them, the Puritans would have their faith tested in the wilderness. Such a test was experienced by Mary Rowlandson, wife of a minister, whose account (1682) of being captured by Indians during the uprising known as King Philip's War was the first best-selling work of the English experience in New England. Narratives of Indian captivity, an innovation at the beginning of American literature in English, often containing proto-Gothic graphic descriptions of violence and the suffering of the captive, would remain a popular form for the next two hundred years. Eventually, Native American voices would begin to complicate this story.

In the New England master narrative, carried forward by later-eighteenth-century Puritan intellectuals such as Cotton Mather, the success of the colonists was resisted by Satan and his allies. In this nearly Manichaean vision, Satan ruled the wilderness and continually attempted to infiltrate the settlements and create a secret cadre of his followers. Thus, when a few girls began to exhibit strange hysterical symptoms in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, investigation into suspected witchcraft was begun, and a special court was appointed.

AMERICAN GOTHIC

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FURTHER READING


American Gothic

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Accusations and indictments multiplied, and ultimately nineteen men and women were hanged and one man pressed to death with heavy stones (see WITCHCRAFT).

The Salem witch scare was traumatic for New England, and its implications for its narrative of place were debated even while the trials were in progress. The witchcraft outbreak was proof of New England’s success, argued Cotton Mather (1692), since the righteousness of its people enraged Satan and motivated his jealous attacks against its communities. Yet others doubted Mather’s assurances and suspected that a great injustice had been done, implicating not only the Puritan leadership but also the community, which somehow allowed itself to be brought to a collective mania in which fear and suspicion swirled reason and law. The legacy of Salem witchcraft would continue, not only in the writings of the town’s most famous son, Nathaniel Hawthorne, but also in the popular imagination of the nation. Washington Irving’s Ichabod Crane retells witch stories from Cotton Mather to frighten his listeners, and himself, in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1820). Americans still evoke Salem when they speak of an atmosphere of suspicion and persecution as a “witch hunt,” and modern writers as different as Arthur Miller and H. P. Lovecraft have evoked the old witch days (see LOVECRAFT, H. P.; HOWARD PHILLIPS).

If the Salem witchcraft disrupted New England’s narrative, other aspects of the American experience before the revolution also had the power to shock and frighten. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur’s Letters from an American Farmer were written to answer the question “what is an American?” and celebrate the emerging society of the middle colonies as the most perfect in the world. Yet his optimism gave way to horror in South Carolina when he encountered a dying slave hung in an iron cage, his eyes pecked out by birds. Crevecoeur, “suddenly arrested by the power of affright and terror” (1782:164), hirerly concluded that “we certainly are not that class of beings which we vainly think ourselves to be” (1782:159). In this encounter with slavery in its most monstrous form, a true Gothic moment, Crevecoeur exposed the irresponsibility of America’s original sin with its dream of perfection and innocence.

Thus, by the time the English colonies earned independence—despite Hawthorne’s later, and probably ironic, assertion in the preface to The Marble Faun—America had “no dark and gloomy wound” (1930:596)—there was ample material for Gothic literature.

The first great American Gothic novelist, Charles Brockden Brown, originated most of the interrelated Gothic subjects that would be explored by his successors: madness, the terror of the wilderness, disease, political corruption, self-deception, and race. As for many American writers, Brown was a student of the world as essentially ambiguous and deceptive led him to experiment with unreliable narrators and conflicting points of view. Brown’s characters, as well as his readers, are often unable to distinguish truth from illusion or dream. The eponymous Wieland (1798) goes insane when deceived by ventriloquism and slaughters his family. The protagonist of the story “Sonnambulism” (1805) may (or may not) have run through the forest while asleep and executed his beloved while dreaming that he was trying to protect her. Edgar Huntly (again eponymous; 1799), in a pattern that would endure in American literature, is horrified by his own emerging violence during a night of flight and combat in the woods (see BROWN, CHARLES BROCKDEN).

In Arthur Mervyn (1798), Brown introduced the metropolis of Philadelphia as a Gothic subject, symbolically linking its corruption to an epidemic of yellow fever. Brown’s contemporary, George Lippard, would continue the city Gothic in The Quater City: Or, The Monks of Monk Hall (1844), the most popular American novel of its era, and the most sexually explicit. The hub of the tale is a vast, rambling structure like the novel itself, a playground of both the city’s elite and its criminal class. Presiding over this fouled den is a one-eyed monster called “Devil Bug,” who, in this sadism, energy, and obscene humor, anticipates by some two hundred years the character of Al Swearengen in the television series Deadwood (2004–6).

The cultural explosion called the “American Renaissance” (roughly from 1830, when Emerson’s Nature was published, to the Civil War) was the late flowering of American Romanticism, and can be divided between Emerson and his followers, and Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville—the “Dark Romantics,” whom we would now label Gothic writers. James Fenimore Cooper also included Gothic elements in his work, as in his Leatherstocking wilderness series, and introduced sea faring as an American subject, which would be extended by both Poe and Melville.

The American Romantics, like their European counterparts, shared a vision of nature as symbolic of spiritual facts, so that the world could be read as a text unfolding secrets about ultimate truths. The ways in which they read this text differed radically. Emerson saw nature as in essence good, and, in an inversion of the Puritan narrative, described the woods (in Nature) as a wholesome place where reason and faith were restored. The dark Romantics, in contrast, found “the power of blackness” (Melville’s words in “Hawthorne and His Mosque”; 1850 [1943]; 1921) a profound reality, and the woods, as Hawthorne demonstrated in “Young Goodman Brown” (1835), faith could still be lost. Poe’s poetry might acknowledge the realm of perfect beauty and truth (as in “Tarryt,” 1831), but his work is usually located in the subhuman world we inhabit, a place of mortality and decay. While Emerson’s world was bright and morally clear, that of the dark Romantics was fractured, multilayered, and ambiguous. Developing techniques of ambiguous narration pioneered by Charles Brockden Brown and John Neal, Poe’s first-person narrators are often self-deluding prophets. For all of the dark Romantics, pursuit of perfection or ultimate truth, or perfect revenge, leads to destruction or madness. Thus, we meet such deluded enthusiasts as Poe’s self-judging murderers, Hawthorne’s artists and scientists, and Melville’s Captain Ahab and Pierre (see HAWTHORNE, NATHANIEL; MELVILLE, HERMAN; POE, EDGAR ALLAN).

During the middle years of the nineteenth century, one of the country’s greatest writers, as we now know, was a woman living a cloistered and eccentric life in Amherst, Massachusetts. Emily Dickinson published little during her lifetime, and we in the twentieth century her writings were available only in altered versions that obscured her startling originality. Dickinson, like the dark Romantics and unlike Emerson, found the gap between human spirit and nature unbridgeable. She possessed a true Gothic imagination, exploring the haunted regions of the mind and confronting the reality of death and dying, even in one startling poem assuming the point of view of a dying person. She wrote of the ways society enfolds its definitions of normality and of madness, anticipating later writers such as Gilman and Plath. Dickinson is both a late writer of the Romantic tradition and an early example of the exploration of small and private lives, especially in small and rural communities, that would characterize the age of realism after the Civil War.

It is only an apparent paradox that the years following the war were a period of major Gothic literature in the United States. Realism’s investigations into the forest while white, however, will uncover untold secrets. Moreover, writers of realistic fiction in this period, such as M. E. W. Freeman and realism’s champion, W. D. Howells, were accomplished writers of ghostly tales. Recent scholarship has stressed the compatability of the ghost story with the feminist concerns of writers of women’s regional realism, a long list that would include Alice Brown, Alice Carey, Freeman, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Noailles Murfree, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, among others. The tradition would also include, at least peripherally, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Madeline Yaffe Wynne, and continue into the twentieth with the ghostly tales of Gertrude Atherton, Ellen Glasgow, and Edith Wharton.

The great master of Gothic fiction in the last half of the century was the architect and
theorician of realism Henry James. In The Turn of the Screw (1898), a novel that has generated a longer critical discussion than any other American work, James created an ambiguous disruption of the narrative of innocent childhood that was being created by the Victorian era (see JAMES, HENRY).

James and other realists lived in a time when Western culture, and America especially, was trying to reassure the rationality of the Enlightenment, to join science and "common sense" to a doctrine of social and moral progress. And yet it had not quite stopped believing in ghosts, even among scientists, as testified by the Society for Psychical Research, of which James's brother William was an important member (see PSYCHICAL INVESTIGATION). Everyone in this era seems to have attended at least one seance, in part because of the many bereavements of the Civil War (see SPIRITUALISM).

In the postbellum South, another narrative was being forged and disrupted. Writers of the "plantation school" produced a sentimental view of the life of the period before the war, and especially of its slave-owning aristocracy. The reaction against this moonlight and mint-julep dream was a major impetus of American literature of this period. Realism always has an antisentimental bias, and some of the most distinctive achievements of this period, such as Mark Twain's exploration of the "Matter of Hannibal," exhibit a creative tension between nostalgia and a savage debauching of the mythic South. Coming from widely differing backgrounds and with various agendas, Southern writers such as George Washington Cable, Grace King, Kate Chopin, Charles Chesnutt, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson produced realistic snapshots of Southern life, and often these realistic pictures wove into the Gothic, exposing the buried secrets of families, especially the families in the big plantation houses of the old South; which, if they arrived into the postwar era, were often skabby shells inhabited by ghostly survivors of diminished families. The secrets of the old families became a staple of Southern Gothic, and very often involved the hidden genealogies of the mixed-race people who, in the literature of the plantation school, were usually invisible (see SOUTHERN GOTHIC).

The African American writers who emerged in the period, such as Charles Chesnutt and Alice Dunbar-Nelson, were of exactly this background, descendants of enslaved women and of white men who did not acknowledge their mulatto children. The secrets of white families were their inheritance and literary material, as were the escaped slave narratives and the folktales and music that coded the chronicles of black captivity. Realism and the Gothic are both in the roots of African American literature. Chesnutt wrote in the mode of Gothic realism in stories such as "The Sheriff's Children" (1899), where the uncanny grows steadily until the revelation of a black prisoner's identity as the son of the popular sheriff, a reversal that radically reverses the previously upbeat tone of the story, which, in Chesnutt, is associated with white self-deception. He uses the black American tradition of magic in The Conjure Woman (1899), a cycle of frame stories employing Black English. Several of these stories contain suppressed genealogies: secrets of parentage that the black characters of the stories understand but that the reader must struggle to unlock. Similarly, in Alice Dunbar-Nelson's "Sister Josephine" (1899), the key fact of the title character's racial heritage is never stated, and can only be inferred from what is not written as in an overheated conversation (see AFRICAN AMERICAN GOTHIC).

In the last years of the nineteenth century, the relationship of scientific thought to literature was given new importance in the literary movement known as naturalism. With its insis-
tence on the powerlessness of the individual when confronted with a universe of force, and its willingness to confront taboo subjects such as sexuality, addiction, and disease, naturalism easily blended with the Gothic. Stephen Crane's "The Monster" (1899) is a good example of the Gothic-naturalism hybrid, depicting, in the hyperbolic response of a community to a black man whose face has been burned away, society's construction of the monstrous from its own prejudices and fears. Frank Norris's naturalistic werewolf story, VANDOR and the BRUTE (1914), employs the forbidden subject of general disease, though the book was not published during Norris's brief lifetime (see WEREWOLVES). The Gothic-naturalism hybrid was common in the early twentieth century, as in Edith Wharton's Ethan Frome (1911) and Summer (1917), and would provide one of the ars artistic was woven into early modernism.

In apparent (and only apparent) contraction of literary naturalism, American writers at the end of the nineteenth century also continued to refine the tradition of the weird tale developed by Poe. The weird tale produces a powerful uncanny effect through a plot reversal or twist, and often uses the supernatural, though this may be revealed to be the result of delusion or dream. Lafcadio Hearn was a practitioner of the weird tale, as was Ambrose Bierce, who in turn influenced Robert W. Chambers and, in the twentieth century, H. P. Lovecraft.

Entering a new century, American Gothic writers and their audiences shared many of the same subjects that had been developed in earlier generations. New England and the South, the two regions with the greatest burdens of history, continued as reservoirs of material. Though the frontier had disappeared and wilderness was dwindling, wild country existed in remote areas, and could be remembered as it had been, as a site for frightening journeys and encounters. The city remained as a subject, joined by the new phenomenon of the suburb. Race continued as a central issue, though increasingly articulated by members of long-silenced minority groups. To these subjects would be added the Euro-Asian import of the vampire, which would grow in importance through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. While traditional print media would continue as dominant and prestigious forms, new media would emerge to compete and interact with them: radio, television, graphic novels, and, especially, cinema. In the late twentieth century, certain patterns of the Gothic would be appropriated into a growing and often disturbing pattern of youth culture.

The South, still haunted by its past, produced some of the finest works of American literature, and American Gothic, of the twentieth century. Pre-emminently, William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha saga depicted decline, degeneracy, and racial guilt in his representative Southern county. His fiction, including The Sound and the Fury (1929), Sanctuary (1931), Light in August (1932), and Absalom, Absalom! (1936), the story cycle Go Down, Moses (1942), and "A Rose for Emily" (1930), among others, all show a land cursed by the sin of slavery and the class structure based upon it. Faulkner created typically Gothic ambiguity through technical innovations in point of view (thus the four narrative voices of The Sound and the Fury) and modernist fracturing of chronology. Faulkner was the dominant voice of a region that produced many writers of Gothic in the twentieth century: Truman Capote, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, Eudora Welty, and Tennessee Williams, and, more recently, John Dufresne, Peter Matthiessen, Cormac McCarthy (in his early works), and Donna Tartt, among others. While many of these writers produced sympathetic African American characters, it was left to black authors such as Charles Chesnutt (1899) or "A Rose for Emily" (1930), among others, to create another view of the Gothic works of the second half of the century, and it brings to a summation much of the American Gothic cycle that preceded it (see FAULKNER, WILLIAM; SOUTHERN GOTHIC).

Another narrative awaiting its revision was that of the Native Americans, whom white writers had envisioned too often as savages and demons. Indian voices had at times emerged, and by the early twentieth century writers such as Alexander Posey were beginning to draw upon their own oral traditions in stories they spun. Following N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn (1969), there were many Indian voices, including Leslie Silko, Gerald Vizenor,
and Louise Erdrich. Erich's continuing series of novels about interrelated families in Minnesota and North Dakota, beginning with Love Medicine (1984), rivaled Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha cycle for complexity and for the genealogical challenge it presents readers, and often blends Gothic techniques with Ojibway folklore.

New England in the early twentieth century, like the South, was a region in long decline, its population shrinking and its landscape dotted with abandoned farms Edwin Arlington Robinson, who was a contemporary of naturalists such as Crane and Norris, wrote poetry about the lives of New Englanders defeated by loneliness and time. Thus, his poem "The Mill" (1920), a virtual Gothic-naturalist novel in twenty-four-line stanzas, records the suicide of a miller and his wife, whose arsinal livelihood has been destroyed by industrialization. Edith Wharton, though dividing most of her life between New York, the Hudson River Valley, and France, wrote novels and stories set in New England. A cycle of ghost stories, set most often in New England's bitter winter, pays homage through its characters' names and its imagery to Nathaniel Hawthorne. H. P. Lovecraft also draws on Hawthorne and the Matter of Salem as well as Poe and other sources in creating his "Cthulhu Mythos," in which New England is the setting. We see this demonic plot, as described in a mysterious book, The Necronomicon. Lovecraft's considerable achievement has become something of a cult, and influenced later writers such as Stephen King. Shirley Jackson wrote both supernatural Gothic in The Haunting of Hill House (1959) and in the Gothic-naturalist tradition in We Have Always Lived in the Castle (1962). Her celebrated short story "The Lottery" (1948) draws obliquely on the Matter of Salem, and can be read, like Arthur Miller's play about Salem witchcraft, The Crucible (1953), as a comment on the anti-communist scare of the 1940s and 1950s. Jackson's concept of an ancient cult underlying the culture of a New England village, anticipated in some of Wharton's stories, is developed further by Thomas Tryon in Harvest Home (1973). The hugely popular and prolific Stephen King, in many ways the successor of Lovecraft, sets most of his fiction in New England (see Jackson, Shirley; King, Stephen; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); New England gothic; Wharton, Edith).

As true wildness has nearly disappeared in the United States, Americans view the wild land and its rough frontier interface with civilization with varying proportions of fear, wonder, and nostalgia. Pockets of empty country can still be imagined as sites of terror, as in James Dickey's Deliverance (1970), a journey of adventure turned to nightmare. The last frontier in the nineteenth century is revisited with profound Gothic effect in Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian (1985) and in the recent television series Deadwood. McCarthy's judge and Al Swearengen from Deadwood are among the most compelling of recent Gothic villains (see McCarthy, Cormac).

As wildness was paved over with subdivisions and shopping malls, suburbia became the norm of American life. The largest American generation, the baby boomers, grew up there. Celebrated in television programs such as Leave it to Beaver (1957-63) and The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet (1952-66), the idealization of suburbia was a narrative waiting to be dishonored and demystified in the Poltergeist movies (1982-8) as well as countless films featuring babysitters as the distressed Gothic maiden, or, reversed, as the stalker of innocent children (the distant kin of James' Miles and Flora), as well as television programs such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003). Suburbia is also one of the favorite settings for the major Gothic writer Joyce Carol Oates. Her novel Zombie (1995), to choose one example from her vast output, is a narrative from the point of view of a suburban serial murderer (see Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003); Oates, Joyce Carol).

Increasingly throughout the twentieth century, the narratives that Americans absorbed came from movies and electronic media. For decades Americans entertained and frightened themselves with radio dramas that included Orson Welles' Mercury Theater dramatizations of The War of the Worlds, which panicked much of the nation one night in 1938, and weekly programs with titles such as The Shadow, The Whistler, and Inner Sanctum that delightfully frightened generations of school children. The most important new narrative medium of the twentieth century, clearly, was film, which has influenced the way we all think and dream and now exists in creative symbiosis with traditional novels, graphic novels, television, and, recently, videogames. The notoriety of film, coming out of German expressionism, has produced a long interaction between crime fiction, science fiction, and movies that has produced a number of movies that can be classed as Gothic, including, in recent years, Chinatown (Roman Polanski, 1974), Die Hard (John Milius, 1988), and, still more recently, Winter's Bone (Debra Granik, 2010) (see film; radio; television).

The interaction between movies and fiction was essential to the vampire plague of the late twentieth century, an infestation that continues in our own time. Vampires constitute an immensely complex subject, as objects of fear and desire, and as coding for various issues of gender, race, disease, and political paranoia (see vampire fiction). As specifically American phenomenon, there had been a distinct New England vampire tradition, probably deriving from the region's long history of tuberculosis. Edith Wharton draws on this tradition in some of her New England Gothic stories, but the later eruption of vampires was propelled by the British Hammer Studio movies and to the equivalent Hollywood films. Seen first by Americans at local theaters and then by their children on black-and-white television in suburban living rooms, these films filled the creative nightmares of boys and girls who would grow up to write of monsters and vampires in the later years of the century (see Hammer House).

Vampires in America usually fall into two camps: the descendants of Dracula and the products of civilization-ending plague. Vampires have flourished in the Gothic regions of New England and the South in the popular novels of Anne Rice and Stephen King (in Salem's Lot, 1975), who both build on the conventions established by Bram Stoker; vampires are an ancient race who can reproduce by infecting human victims. This pattern, with variations, is also followed by Poppy Z. Brite and recently, Elizabeth Kostova. Another camp grafts the vampire story to the tradition of postapocalyptic narrative, a tradition begun in the United States by Jack London in his still underappreciated The Scarlet Plague (1912), whose title suggests a link backward to Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842) and extended by George Stewart in Earth Abides (1949) and continued by Cormac McCarthy in The Road (2006). In this tradition, only a few humans survive a nuclear war or devastating plague. The vampire variant imagines a virus that turns most humans into vampires. This premise was developed by Richard Matheson in I Am Legend (1954) and recently by Justin Cronin in The Passage (2010), the first novel of a projected trilogy (see Brite, Poppy Z.; Matheson, Richard; vampire fiction).

The Gothic, in various permutations (drawn from graphic novels, adolescents' fiction, and movies), has become absorbed into American youth culture—understandably, considering the Gothic's position as a literature of the outsider and the repressed. Adolescents have their own narratives to disrupt, Herded into high schools that relentlessly sort boys and girls according to standards of attractiveness, athletic success, and the elusive quality of "coolness," the losers or those resistant to this mandatory contest are often drawn to fantasies of escape, power, or vindication. Stephen King's first novel, Carrie (1974; filmed by Brian De Palma in 1976), captures both the environment and a lonely girl's response perfectly. The vampire has been a particularly attractive figure for adolescents in recent years, since the vampire offers sexual potency, glamour, and power. Stephanie Meyer's wildly popular Twilight series of novels (2005-8) and their film...
adaptations satisfy this adolescent need, and suggest that the Gothic will remain in the national consciousness far into the present century.

SEE ALSO: African American Gothic; Bierce, Ambrose; Brite, Poppy Z; Brown, Charles Brockden; Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997–2003); Comics and Graphic Novels: Degeneration; Faulkner, William; Female Gothic; Film; Hammer House; Hawthorne, Nathaniel; Jackson, Shirley; James, Henry; King, Stephen; Lovecraft, H. P. (Howard Phillips); Masks, Veils, and Disguises; Matheson, Richard; McCarthy, Cormac; Melville, Herman; New England Gothic; Oates, Joyce Carol; Poe, Edgar Allan; Psychical Investigation; Radio; Rice, Anne; Slavery and the Gothic; Southern Gothic: Spiritualism; Suburban Gothic; Television; Urban Gothic; Vampire Fiction; Werewolves; Wharton, Edith; Witchcraft.

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Amityville Horror, The

CONNY UPPERT

On the night of November 13, 1974, 112 Ocean Avenue, Long Island, New York — a Dutch colonial property named "High Hopes" — became the scene of a grisly mass murder. Ronald Joseph "Butch" DeFeo Jr., twenty-three years old, was convicted of killing his parents and four siblings, who had all been shot in the back with a high-powered rifle while they were sleeping in their beds. Butch, who had claimed to have discovered the bodies of his slain family members upon his return to the house, was initially brought in as a witness by the police. DeFeo’s story, which involved suspicions about a mob-related execution of his family, initiated by a man called Louis Falini, was made somewhat believable by the sheer professionalism with which the murders were conducted, and the fact that it was regarded as unlikely that one perpetrator had killed all six victims. Soon, however, DeFeo’s status changed from being a witness in protective custody to being a suspect. Empty cartridge boxes fitting the murder weapon had been found in his room and DeFeo changed his statement slightly, now