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From Villain to Hero: Traces of the Gothic Villain/ Hero in Four Modern Films

Richard N. Van Eck

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FROM VILLAIN TO HERO: TRACES OF THE GOTHIC VILLAIN/HERO IN FOUR MODERN FILMS

by

Richard N. Van Eck
Bachelor of Arts, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, 1988

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This thesis, submitted by Richard Neal Van Eck in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

(Chairperson)

Michael Board

Daniel P. Sheid

This thesis meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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The Gothic novel of the 19th century is often viewed as the beginning and end of the "true" Gothic. While its role in creating or contributing to other genres, such as Science Fiction, Horror, and Romance, is widely recognized, the view of the Gothic as a "dead" genre often persists. The Gothic tradition has continued to the present time, however, and has experienced a recent resurgence of popularity in modern film.

This thesis proposes to examine four modern films as manifestations of the modern Gothic. A working definition of the original Gothic will be formulated, and then refined through the application of Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope, dialogics, and carnival. This definition will be applied to the films Batman, Darkman, Edward Scissorhands, and Cape Fear.

In the course of this application, it will be seen that although the villain has evolved into a Gothic hero, and the setting has moved closer to the "here and now" than in the early Gothic, the themes and motifs remain relatively unchanged. These themes are the struggle for the "self-as-
other" to coexist with society, the fear of social change as represented by the carnival, and the location of the work within in the "inner world" of the viewer's mind.

The work will conclude with a brief analysis of the Gothic's function as social criticism and agent for social change which, it will be seen, accounts for the Gothic's longevity as a genre.
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 CHAPTER 1

KEEPING THE ALLIGATORS FED:
TOWARD AN EXPLANATION OF THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
GOTHIC NOVEL

I like to see the most aggressive [horror movies] as lifting
a trap door in the civilized forebrain and throwing a baske'
of raw meat to the hungry alligators swimming around in that
subterranean river beneath.

-From Steven King's essay
"Why We Crave Horror Movies"

When we think of the Gothic we may think first of
castles, ghosts, and virtuous maidens imprisoned by depraved
villains. In short, we think of the Gothic romance. Not
only do we think of the Gothic as being set in the past, but
as itself a thing of the past. When it is discussed at all,
Gothic is frequently discussed as if it had died somewhere
in the 19th century.

Some might concede that the Gothic gave rise to many
other forms of literature and so, in that sense, lives on,
but then argue that as a separate entity it exists no more.
But the Gothic is still a healthy, viable tradition very
much alive today--the main difference now is that its mode
is cinematic rather than literary. In this paper I intend
to show the connections between the original Gothic and four
modern-day works which in my view grow directly out of the
Gothic tradition, and embody the spirit of that tradition today: Batman, Darkman, Edward Scissorhands, and Cape Fear.

That these works are cinematic rather than literary in no way weakens their claim to the Gothic title. As Northrop Frye eloquently points out in his Anatomy of Criticism, there is little use in fractionalizing schools of criticism or genres to the point that one cannot be discussed in terms of another or even several others. Frye makes the further argument that a genre need not be limited by what he terms the "radical of expression"—the visual text and written text may be part of the same genre: "One may print a lyric or read a novel aloud, but such incidental changes are not enough in themselves to alter the genre" (246). We find Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Frankenstein, and Dracula as examples of the Gothic novel that has been transferred to film, and surely none would suggest that they are no longer Gothic simply because of their mode! And Fredric Jameson maintains that we have begun as a society to recreate our world visually, and that the visual is the primary sense for our modern, commercialized culture:

Were an ontology of this artificial, person-produced universe still possible, it would have to be an ontology of the visual, of being as the visible first and foremost, with the other senses draining off it. (1)
One could say that the visual, which includes cinema as well as other narrative forms, has taken the place of literature, at least in the sense of being the primary mode of information and entertainment for mass culture.

So there may be some support for viewing the modern Gothic film in the same light as the early Gothic novel. Before such an examination can take place, however, I must first outline a working definition of the early Gothic. Unfortunately, few critics agree on such a definition. They all have their own way of looking at the genre itself, and often their own terminology. Subsequently, the genre has become hopelessly subdivided. As Joel Porte expresses in the conclusion of his essay on the Gothic, "In the Hands of an Angry God": "The critic searching for something like a unified field theory of Gothic Fiction will certainly be tempted to throw down his pen in despair" (Thompson 42).

There is even some debate as to whether the Gothic actually exists. In his introduction to The Romantic Novel in England, Kiely discusses the question of the English romantic novel's existence:

Gothic novels exist, but are usually described as pre-romantic rather than romantic, though that designation does not seem very helpful if the phenomenon they were supposedly preliminary to never came into being. (1)
Northrop Frye, on the other hand, claims that there has been no Gothic period in English literature, but merely a succession of Gothic revivals, going back to "Beowulf." In the end it makes little difference whether Walpole's Castle of Otranto in 1764 signalled the beginning of a genre or a revival of a tradition—we can certainly see the Gothic's "appearance" in 1764 as heralding at least a tradition, if not a genre, which has continued in various forms since then.

While few scholars agree on a definition of the Gothic, more agree on examples of the genre. Often, in fact, when pressed for a definition many fall back on a list of examples instead. Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto is widely regarded as the first "true" Gothic novel, and such classics as "Monk" Lewis's The Monk, Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, William Beckford's Vathek and, later, Charles Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Bram Stoker's Dracula are placed by most within this tradition. On the American side, there is agreement on Brockden Brown's Wieland, Nathaniel Hawthorne's The House of Seven Gables and The Marble Faun, and the works of such authors as Mark Twain, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor (all often referred to in yet another genre splinter as Southern Gothic), and Herman Melville and Edgar Allan Poe.
In the attempt to define the Gothic, critics have called it a kind of romance, the novel of suspense, the novel of terror, supernatural fiction, sentimental Gothic, and historical Gothic. Scholars often divide the Gothic into three divisions: Terror Gothic, Sentimental Gothic, and Historical Gothic. The first is said to be represented by such works as M.G. Lewis' *The Monk* and Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, the second by works in the vein of Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron*, and the third by authors like Sir Walter Scott. As Robert Hume points out, however, such distinctions are not very useful:

"Terror-Gothic" is too inclusive a category, lumping Radcliffe and Lewis together as it does. And the historical novel must at some point be distinguished from the Gothic. . . . Gothic novels are set in the past and are, as [J.M.S.] Tompkins says, at least "nominal historic," but they show no serious interest in the veracity of fact or atmosphere.

One might say the only unifying aspect of the Gothic tradition is that it defies easy classification.

The genre has been dismissed with labels like "terror for terror's sake," "escapism," and "titillation." Many other labels have sprung up over the years in an attempt to keep pace with the diversity of the genre. As is often the
case, the problem may be with the question rather than the answer (or, in this case, answers). One has only to look at the literature to see that the lack of a "unified" theory has not resulted in our inability to discuss the "Gothic." Peter Thorslev, in The Byronic Hero, calls the Gothic "the most well-plowed field in English literary history, in proportion to its worth" (57). While his purpose seems to be in part a contemptuous dismissal of the genre, the first half of his statement is an accurate assessment of the sheer amount of criticism devoted to the genre.

Many critics seem to have produced definitions only in passing, with the primary goal of interpreting single works: serious attempts at defining the genre itself are rare.¹ I have no intention of attempting to remedy this situation by here proposing a complete definition of the Gothic. Instead I will strive to outline some of the affinities Frye speaks of, which are in this case shared by Gothic works, to identify what I view as the most important elements of the Gothic tradition. These elements involve primarily the allegorical use of setting to locate the Gothic in a distant world (the inner world, I will argue), the function of the villain as a psychological metaphor for the viewer's inner self, and a conflict between the villain-as-self and

¹See Robert Hume, Northrop Frye, and Michael Beard in the bibliography for examples of such attempts.
society. These elements necessarily constitute a definition of sorts, but are not inclusive of the entire range of Gothic fiction. My purpose here is to provide the reader with a working model of the Gothic as I see it. I will use these elements to connect the two films discussed later to the early Gothic tradition. In the process of generic distillation, what are defined as the essential elements in the early Gothic are in reality represented in only one strain of what is called "Gothic" today. I will call this strain the modern Gothic, as distinct from horror and romance which are also often called Gothic.

Because of the focus of this paper only a brief overview of the criticism is possible. The reader is referred to the suggested reading list provided at the end of this work, which covers not only the English Gothic, but the American Gothic, and the Gothic tradition in film as well. What follows is a quick sketch of some of the major schools of criticism of the Gothic. Where it is possible to tie a theory to a critic or critics, I will do so. Unfortunately, while many of these theories seem widely accepted, their origins are rarely acknowledged. Whether this is the result of ignorance or carelessness is unclear. Given the frequency of their appearance in the criticism, they must be included in this summary.
The concept of the Gothic novel as a collection of "machinery" or devices is one theory (loosely speaking) designed more to relegate the Gothic to a back shelf rather than to provide any serious illumination of its function. In this theory, the Gothic is no more than a conglomeration of castles, ghosts, mysterious occurrences, and a villain. Under this label, Gothic then becomes any story which uses these or comparable techniques or devices. While it is true that most early Gothic tales share castles or mansions, ghosts and the supernatural, virtuous maidens in distress, and so forth, to attempt a definition on this level is to mistake the trees for the forest. By this strategy much of Shakespeare is unquestionably Gothic, yet none would argue that Macbeth and Vathek belong to the same genre, even were it not for their different "radicals of presentation."

Gothic as "terror for terror's sake," sensationalism, and escapism, are also familiar "theories," though again the word theory may belie the intention of the critic. Proponents of this school, such as Robert Kiely, attempt to account for Gothic as a reaction to the age in which it was born. The theory says that the Gothic was simply a reaction to the subject matter of fiction; people were tired of reading about "the drawing room and the country inn" (Kiely 10). The Romance supposedly provided an outlet for what Walpole referred to as "the resources of fancy [which had]
been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life" (Kiely 3; he is referring to the novel and realism as the means by which fancy was "dammed up"). As with most of these theories, there is an element of truth here: Gothic did provide an alternative to "the novel as life." Yet to define the genre with such a narrow stroke seems to be wishful thinking at best, and sloppy scholarship to boot.

Another school of thought on the Gothic, which for convenience's sake may be called the "cathartic," provides a different view. It is this school of thought which contains the roots of the analysis I will use later in this work. This theory, which is tied to Sentimentalism, proposes that by evoking such feelings as pity, sorrow, and affection through subjecting virtuous characters to mishap, the Gothic novel was thought to provide catharsis; an aerobics for the soul. Certainly, this is an integral part of the experience of the Gothic, but does not account for the evocation of darker emotions and unease (undeniable parts of the Gothic). To say that these elements are cathartic does little to explain what is happening in this process.

Such a theory runs the risk of creating a circular definition: Gothic is cathartic because it evokes dark emotions, and it evokes dark emotions because it is cathartic. What is the underlying explanation of such emotions? A thematic approach which examines the nature or
content of such "dark emotions," and their polarized structure (good and evil, night and day) would allow a dialectical perspective on the genre, and might go farther toward answering this question, as we will see later.

One flaw with most of these attempts (aside from a fondness for reductionism) is that they fail to account for the immense popularity of the Gothic novel initially and for the continuing interest in the tradition today, and they more commonly devalue the Gothic for its popularity. Gothic literature has always enjoyed tremendous popular support, and seemingly little academic support, although this has changed recently. It has long labored under such terms as "low-brow" literature and "popular literature" (the latter term said often in the same manner as the former). Clearly, the public has responded to something in the literature: something which cannot be accounted for by dismissive labels. Because the Gothic novel does not function in terms of "traditional" schools of thought (perhaps the main reason the Gothic is dismissed as "low-brow") does not lessen its significance. As critics we would do far better to examine the reasons for this support—what does this genre have that others do not? Frye addresses this problem in his theory of genres:2

2It should be pointed out that Frye classifies most of what I am discussing as Gothic, as romance.
. . . a great romancer should be examined in terms of the conventions he chose. William Morris should not be left on the side lines of prose fiction merely because the critic has not learned to take the romance seriously. Nor, in view of what has been said about the revolutionary nature of the romance, should his choice of that form be regarded as an "escape" from his social attitude.

(305)

Fredric Jameson goes a step further than Frye, as he discusses our tendency to view some literature as High culture and others as Low, now more often called mass culture:

. . . it seems to me that we must rethink the opposition of high culture/mass culture in such a way that the emphasis on evaluation to which it has traditionally given rise . . . is replaced by a genuinely historical and dialectical approach to these phenomena. (14)

Far more effective in accounting for the Gothic are the theories of Gothic literature as a reflection of the social, political, religious, and psychological attitudes of its times, which allows such a dialectical approach. By locating the impetus for these novels in current societal
attitudes and concerns, these theories are moderately successful in accounting for the popularity of the Gothic.

Commentators in the 1790's (including the Marquis de Sade) insisted on the connection between political terror and the novel of terror (Gothic). Radcliffe's and Lewis' works (1790, 1791, and 1794; and 1794 respectively) were extremely popular in France, and it is tempting to assume that the critics were right about the connection between political and literary terror: that art was imitating life. But many argue that such a view places the cart before the horse. While the dialectical relationship between the two seems obvious, it would be equally accurate to say that the revolution tapped a deep-seated anxiety already present in the authors and audience. After all, Otranto (1764) and Vathek (1786) were written well before the revolution, and they are unanimously considered Gothic.

The early Gothic (1764 to 1800), in another view, becomes a means of exploring the loss of faith in the church, and the fear of self-reliance and an uncertain future. Many longed for the clear moral and religious duality of the Middle Ages, in which "right" behavior was what the church said. This terror of the present and a
future in which clear-cut choices were impossible is often said to be represented by the protagonist’s confrontation with a lost age in the form of ruined castles, and in the Gothic’s attack on the church (which symbolizes the loss of religious faith). The villain, and later the guilt-haunted wanderer, becomes the fallen man, cast out into a world which he cannot understand, one without absolutes but for which he is nevertheless held accountable. He longs for a past world which he seems to have come from, but which is not visible to those around him.

Yet science, rather than providing an alternative hope, presented its own problems and attendant evils of industrialization. It is a small step to extend this disillusionment down the road to our modern time, with the realities of the atomic bomb, Apartheid, the Holocaust, Vietnam, and Watergate all contributing to a general sense of betrayal and mistrust of science and social progress.\(^4\) Robert Hume expresses this Arnoldian theme of being trapped between two worlds best:

tale (as in The Monk for instance), but obviously does not account for Gothic tales in which the church plays no part (Vathek), or a benign part (as in Udolpho).

\(^4\)Many feel that this view of science and progress explains the later Gothic’s substitution of the laboratory for the castle, and the role of science as creator of evil as in Jekyll and Hyde and Frankenstein—a theme which continues today.
The key characteristics of Gothic and romantic writers are concerned with ultimate questions and lack of faith in the adequacy of reason or religious faith [emphasis mine] to make comprehensible the paradoxes of human existence.

(289)

As I mentioned before, the ultimate result of this shift toward subjectivism was that humans had to find their morals internally and, by corollary, their capacity for immoral behavior as well. For English society in the Victorian age this was no small task. The perception that many thoughts and actions were unacceptable by society probably left many people feeling alienated. To be sure, the Church played a large part in this as well, for despite its damaged credibility, it was still able to dictate what "moral" behavior was.

With the advent of Freud, of course, the discussion of repressed feelings and desires became much easier, but in the 1800's there was a need for a means of acknowledging them. Realism, as a direct reflection of society and its moral values, would not allow this. The Gothic novel made this function its cornerstone:

the Monk, with other novels of the school, presented under the license of sensationalism significant and basic traits of human nature that
elsewhere, in "polite" fiction, went unexpressed.

(Lowry 242)

In order to explore these unacceptable thoughts and concepts, the novel needed to create a safe environment in which the reader could have no fear of social criticism. The solution was to give the reader a protagonist with whom it was "safe" to identify (the heroes) and a setting which was clearly not the "here and now."

As a result, the early Gothic tale inevitably exists in another world. Whether that world be another country as in Vathek; or, more often, another time, as in Udolpho; or both, as in The Monk, it is always clear that this tale is of another place. Harker feels he is "... leaving the west for the east" (exotic, oriental), which he is doing physically and mentally (Dracula, 1). Walton, in Frankenstein, is going to the isolated world of the north. The assumption, therefore, that the Gothic takes place in the past turns out to be an oversimplification.

One of the strongest indications of this "other-world" aspect is what Elizabeth MacAndrew refers to as the nested narrative. What this refers to is the presence of more than one narrator: one who narrates the action as it happens, and one who writes the introduction to the story just before it begins. Often, as in Frankenstein, these characters are the same person. A prime example of this nested narrative is
Otranto, where the editor reports that the following manuscript was found in the library of a good Catholic family. He has translated it for us. Further, in this example, there seems to be a tacit implication that Walpole himself is not the editor, since the book is listed as being "by" him, and is "A Gothic Novel." In this last example, then, there is the author, a translator, and a narrator.

The beginning of Frankenstein is similar, with first the narration of Walton, then of Frankenstein himself. Other tales do not need this technique: the narrator in Vathek is clearly not English, though it may be assumed that an Englishman is now translating it, giving the novel the same feel as a nested narrative.

Once this context is set, the author can explore any concept he or she wants. It isn't the "real" world, so the reader is able to view whatever happens without being threatened. This is no less true of the Gothic's function today than it was in the 19th century. The modern Gothic still addresses those areas in which conflict between society and the individual exists. In order to examine how the Gothic accomplished this initially, it will be useful to determine first of all what the main focus of the Gothic novel is for the reader. Usually, it is the protagonist(s) which the reader identifies with, and who serves to move us through the narrative. Unless one credits the cathartic
view of Gothic literature, however, in which the reader's finer "sensibilities" are exercised through the contemplation of perfect virtue and goodness, we must conclude that the "protagonists" of the Gothic novel do not function in the capacity to which they are assigned. They are terminally boring characters, socially correct automatons of 18th/19th century virtue and morality, with no potential to act outside of those parameters.

Likewise, unless we subscribe to the power of the "sublime" scenery of the Gothic to evoke "good" emotions within the reader, we cannot look to the setting of the Gothic novel as a focus either. This is not to say that neither the protagonists nor the setting have any function within the narrative, or that they do not occupy part of the reader's attention. But they hardly seem adequate explanations of an entire genre. So we can either conclude the Gothic is no more than an entertaining story about ghosts and the supernatural, in which the characters are important only in the sense that they make the story happen, or we must look to other elements, as critics have done.\(^5\)

\(^5\)Michael Beard, for one, notes in his book *Hedayat's Blind Owl as a Western Novel* that it is Ambrosio, in *The Monk*, with whom we identify—not Don Raymond, Don Lorenzo, Matilda, Isabella, or any of the other "pure" characters in the narrative. (See the Bibliography for the full citation).
not traditionally designed to function as sole focus—in this case elements such as the antagonist, or villain.

Frye might argue that the focus is shared by all characters, and that we identify with each in a different way:

The essential difference between novel and romance lies in the conception of characterization. The romancer does not attempt to create "real people" so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is in the romance that we find Jung’s libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively. That is why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes. (304)

It is not necessary to get into a critical discussion as to whether "identifying" and "projecting" are the same; it is simpler to recognize that they are certainly related, and that for the purposes of our discussion the distinction is not so important. It would not be fair (or accurate for that matter) to imply that the villain is the only or even the main source of interest for the 18th/19th-century reader, but there is a distinction to be made between the response toward the heroes and that toward the villain. I think it lies partly in the novelty of the villain, as well
as our voyeuristic fascination with violence and calamity (car accidents, natural disasters, etc). If we assume that the reader responded to each character in some way, it is fair to say that some responses were stronger than others.

Part of the reader's shock comes not only from this identification (we are all aware at some level that we have a "dark" side), but also from discovering such a character in the public arena of a novel. Even though the book is experienced at a personal, private level, it is in another sense a social dialogue. The novel before the Gothic has no such character. So while the heroes represented a familiar world, the dark world of the villain was a relatively unfamiliar one. Charlene Bunnell describes the difference between these worlds well:

The Gothic . . . is concerned with two worlds . . . One world is the external one—cultural and institutional; it is "light" because it is familiar and common. The other world is the internal one—primitive and intuitive; it is dark, not because it necessarily signifies evil (although it may), but because it is unfamiliar and unknown. (Grant 81)

She then goes on to say that the internal world represents a "personal identity of the self." At this point, our subject matter begins to outgrow the theoretical framework we have
devised, and some adjustments are needed. Her identification of the villain as "self" rather than as "evil" is a valuable distinction, one which will come into more significance later. The villain-as-self concept does not negate our earlier view of the villain as our potential for socially unacceptable behavior, because it must be remembered that to the individual anything which does not fit society's standards, or is unacceptable by society for any reason, must be seen as being at least abnormal (by definition) if not "evil." Further, even those thoughts/ideas/emotions to which society has no formalized objection, but which are nevertheless suppressed by it, must also be categorized as potentially abnormal.

And because the villain is juxtaposed with the virtuous characters the "discovery" of the villain was more shocking, almost as if our darkest secrets were suddenly exposed to the light of society. In this way then, the villain can be seen to have represented our personal, though socially defined evil. This might consist of sexual taboos, violence, or any trait which would mark us, if expressed, as "bad" members of society.

The early critics realized the villain's importance but failed to ascribe any significance to him beyond the fact that he was frightening, and therefore concluded that the public wanted to be frightened. But the really interesting
question lies in the nature of the readers' fear of the villain. The public saw something in the villain which they responded to powerfully and instinctively: the kind of fascination reserved for "taboo" subjects. This response can still be seen today in our modern preoccupation with such real and fictional characters as Jeffery Dahmer and Hannibal Lecter and, as I will show later, is essential in both understanding the villain's function and accounting for the popularity of the Gothic then and now. The exploration of this character will lead us eventually into the psychological approach to the Gothic, which I will adopt later for the analysis of the films.

One of the most noticeable characteristics of the villain is that he was prone to huge swings of temperament and might at any moment commit unspeakable acts, which made him much more interesting than those whose behavior was predictable. The Gothic villain was not evil incarnate, however, although he certainly functioned that way at times. Remorse has always been a part of his character as well. This is perhaps what allows us to see the villain somewhat sympathetically: if he were completely evil or insane, he would not feel remorse at all.

In *Otranto*, Manfred contemplates a marriage (as well as on several occasions lustful encounters) with his former daughter-in-law while his queen still lives, yet is torn by
moments of guilt and remorse, such as at the end as he addresses his wife:

Thou guiltless but unhappy woman! unhappy by my crimes! my heart is at last open to thy devout admonitions! Oh, could!—but it cannot be--ye are lost in wonder--let me at last do justice on myself! To heap shame on my own head is all the satisfaction I have left to offer offended heaven!

(598)

He then proceeds to relate the cause of all his crimes which, it turns out, are only the sins of his grandfather, whose guilt he has inherited. In this way, he is effectively redeemed. It was this trait which many argue made him the most interesting character and the major focus of the Gothic novel.

Another of the traits of the Gothic novel, which in this case helps to establish the villain's role as an allegorical representation of repressed desires, is the strong link between the villain and the environment. The terror of the hero(ine), induced by the scenery, is a reflection of both the villain's evil and our terror at the contemplation of this evil. Given our identification with the villain, his actions are our actions, his evil is our evil. Thus, the environment in the novel becomes an externalization of a character's internal event or emotion. The act of reading
the novel can be viewed as a similar process: the reader’s ability to live vicariously through the villain’s actions or, as Freud says, "revel in [their] own forbidden fantasies" (Richter 641), is the externalization of the reader’s internal event. Storms represent rage and anger; the sublime scenery represents the virtue of the heroes, etc. When we look further into this symbolism, it becomes easy to see the castles and mansions as further representations of the villain’s mind. Vathek is identified with his palace of the senses and with his tower (search for knowledge). When we find out that Montoni owns castle Udolpho, his evil is united with the castle and its state of disrepair to form a much more sinister impression of him.

Villains have a tendency to go underground in direct proportion to the progression of evil acts. These underground lairs are predictably full of twisted, confusing passages, representing the subconscious where our potential for evil resides. In this context, it could be suggested that scenes like those in Udolpho where the storm rages outside the castle in actuality represent our fears that the evil inside us will be acted upon some day (externalized) and/or exposed to the world. As Montoni’s evil increases, the storm seems to mirror that evil, as if evil thoughts immediately affect the outside world. Thus, when Emily thinks that "Nature’s contending elements" enter men’s
minds, we easily reverse the connection as well, and see these "contending elements" as reflections of the villain's mind.

As Todorov points out in Chapter Eight of The Fantastic, the literary exploration of our repressed, unacceptable thoughts and/or deeds often takes the form of taboo subjects like incest (Manfred and Ambrosio), promiscuity (Dracula), and necrophilia (Vathek). Because this world of the novel is unreal, we are free to explore anything without fear of reprimand. When these taboos are broken, it is by the "villain," not the heroes. Never mind that we privately identify with the villain!

This is, of course, as true for cinema as it is for the novel, and from here on in I will refer to them both as art. In the same vein, readers and viewers interpret the text in essentially the same manner, albeit by different modes and with differences in structural content. For ease of discussion within the confines of this work, where I do not refer to the audience the reader will do double duty for both reader and viewer.

Focusing on the villain and the reader's fascination with his "evil" is an important step in coming to terms with the Gothic, because it is one of the few constants in its
many forms. It will be my argument that this character and his psychological function is central to the Gothic’s popularity, and that it is he that the reader identified with in the 18th century, and it is he with whom readers identify now. The villain has evolved since then, however, so that today he is more hero than villain, and we must examine this evolution to complete our picture of this character.

Judging from the absence of criticism on the Gothic villain, it would seem that many assume he died in the 19th century, presumably with the Gothic novel. Actually, the Gothic villain moves quickly from novel to drama in the late 1700’s and early 1800’s, and develops into the Byronic hero by 1817. It is in this transition that the bulk of the villain’s transformation from Gothic villain to Gothic hero is achieved.

While Bertrand Evans cites critics who have noted the connections of the Byronic hero to the Gothic tradition (752), and his own study attempts to trace the development

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6It may be argued that "Gothic" exists in a pure sense only from Walpole’s *Otranto* (1764) through *Vathek* (1876). Although such distinctions are hopelessly arbitrary, there is certainly a shift from *The Monk* and *Vathek* to *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. And when Gothic gives rise to science fiction, detective fiction, Gothic romance, and horror, the relation of these genres to the original Gothic is often difficult to see. It is in this sense that I refer to the Gothic tradition (genres related to the Gothic) as opposed to modern Gothic literature.
of the Gothic villain to the advent of the Byronic hero in "Manfred," almost nothing has been done to trace this character beyond Byron. It was just such a lack that Evans was referring to in "Manfred’s Remorse and Dramatic Tradition":

At one side, in the novel, stands the villain, well studied; at the other, in poetry, stands the hero, well examined also. Resemblances are so apparent as to leave no question that the hero grew out of the villain. But the details of transformation remain undescribed. (754)

With the exception of Evans’ work, this gap is as much a reality today as it was in 1947. No less serious a lack is represented in the assumption that the Byronic hero is the final resting place of the Gothic villain. In reality, it is an intermediate step in the evolution of this character.

Many assume the Byronic hero erupts on the scene without warning— that we go immediately from static Gothic villain to Byronic hero. Evans’ work is one of the rare attempts at analyzing this shift from villain to hero, and is arguably the most significant. According to his well-reasoned and persuasive article, the Byronic hero grew out of the Gothic villain and the Gothic dramatic tradition, instead of having been created entirely by Byron as is apparently commonly believed. The shift from villain to hero occurred in Gothic
drama between 1796 and 1803 for two reasons, according to Evans:

the rise of principal actors to places of extraordinary power in the theater of the late eighteenth century. . .[and]. . .the strict moral scrutiny to which in that time the drama was subjected. (760)

At the heart of Evans' reasoning lies the assumption that because of the popularity the drama and its "stars," actors had more power, and because the villain was more popular with the audience, the actors sought this role out and were able to use their popularity to demand that the villain be changed to a more sympathetic character. This demand for change is also presumably linked to the censors who would often not allow an "imbalance" of good and evil in drama as a result of English society's finer, moral sensibilities--the same thinking which made it necessary for all gangsters in American film to die, no matter how sympathetic their characters were.

Evans' approach is valid, but incomplete in that he fails, as many critics have, to take the role of the reader into account when examining the evolution of art, in this case the Gothic villain/hero. This character is still the focus of the story: "the [villain] dominates the play, for the hero--as usual in Gothic plays--is flat and inactive"
(757). As Kay Mussell points out, it is essential to account for the reader’s role in the Gothic:

None of these approaches, taken singly, takes into account the necessity of recognizing the essentially internal, private experience between a reader and a work that is the core of the meaning of such fiction in the lives of readers and in the cultural experience shared over two centuries by some American Women. (97)

This response is more than simple emotional identification with the story, as Bunnell points out:

While a prime objective of the Gothic is indeed to involve the reader emotionally, Hume⁷ underrates the genre by limiting the response to purely an emotional one, excluding a moral or intellectual reaction. (Grant 80)

Evans has no trouble identifying society as a force for change when he speaks of censors who purportedly act at the

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⁷Mussel is primarily speaking of Women’s Gothic, or what Ann Snitow calls Mass Market Romance, but her comments seem applicable to the Gothic as a whole as well.

⁸She refers to Robert Hume, who is cited at the end of this work as well. The quote to which she is responding is as follows: "a distinctive feature of the early Gothic novel is its attempt to involve the reader in a new way . . . the reader is held in suspense with the characters and increasingly there is an effort to shock, alarm and otherwise arouse him. Inducing a powerful emotional response in the reader (rather than a moral or intellectual one) was the prime objective of these novelists" (Hume 284).
behest of society, but he fails to recognize that society and censors are made up of individual readers. The actors he speaks of, too, are readers, and are catering directly to the perceived needs of the audience.

If we consider the reader a determining force in the development of the Gothic villain, we get a more complete explanation of the metamorphosis of this genre and character. And it is the psychoanalytical approach to this literature which, by encouraging a reader-based interpretation, allows us to accomplish this best. This approach not only accounts for the transformation of the villain, but as it will be seen, is just as effective in analyzing the Gothic itself.

There are two advantages to focusing on the reader and on the psychological functioning of the work. First, we are not limited to contemporary political and social conditions as explanations of the literature, which would limit the applicability of the theory beyond the time in which the work was created. Second, if we can examine the work outside of its context of time and place, we can perhaps derive the principal functions the Gothic hero today as easily as in the 19th century.

This is only one aspect of the school; the other two aspects are that of examining the author's mind and the minds of the author's characters.
When Evans accounts for the growth of the villain's stature by pointing to the rising popularity of the actors who played him, saying the villain "came to assume a double personality—a mixture of odium and attractiveness" (761), he ignores the fact that this mixture can also be identified with the reader's view of themselves: the potential for great evil and great good. This mixture helps us to identify with the villain. Further, it is this identification which I believe is primarily responsible for the desire to "heal," forgive, or redeem this character (who represents the self), not the sympathy created by the villain's remorse, as Evans suggests:

> through the remorse exacted of him [by the censor] because he was a villain, the protagonist won the sympathy that was to gain him acceptance as a hero. (765)

Our sympathy springs from our own remorse at the contemplation of our evil, not the villains'. The Gothic apparently outgrows its need for "heroes" as representations of society, perhaps because the reader is able to provide their perspective on his or her own, and we are left with only the villain/hero.

Evans documents the point at which the villain's shift to hero takes place in drama. He quotes the heroine in Henry Siddons' *Sicilian Romance: or The Apparition of the*
Cliffs, who has "been chained to a rock, half-starved for months, forbidden sight of her child, and repeatedly threatened with stabbing," as she contemplates the villain in the end:

Look up, my lord; if the most tender care
Can make my love more worthy your acceptance,
By heaven I swear, in sickness and in health
To prove your constant, tendrest comforter. . . .

He finishes by saying "Thus, in 1794, the villain stood at the line separating him from hero" (Evans 766). It seems to me that the heroine's soliloquy could as easily come from the audience as it does from her, as a reflection of the readers' desire to forgive the villain (and themselves).

Regardless of its source, once forgiveness has been achieved, the villain is now free to act as a positive force on occasion. Sometimes, as Evans points out, these two actions are attained simultaneously. In William Sotheby's Julian and Agnes, Alphonso acts to save the two women he has hurt most by leaping to their rescue as they are beset by banditti. As he does so, he cries "Lo! the Avenger here!" (769). Evans feels, and I agree, that Alphonso's action in this play may signal the complete transition from villain to hero.
The problem for the dramatist/writer/reader now that the villain was hero, was to allow their hero a guilty past (Evans calls this remorse) without damaging him beyond the capacity of the audience to identify wholly with him. Earlier works had always provided an account of the villains past evil at the end. What this often did was either remove his cause for suffering by showing he was not really to blame (as in Otranto), or damning him beyond redemption if he was to blame. Evans points to Maturin’s Bertram: or the Castle of St. Aldobrand for one solution to this dilemma: “Maturin’s ‘solution’ was merely to present the spectacle of a hero suffering because he had evolved from villains who had cause to suffer” (770).

Another solution, one which Byron used in his work, was simply to leave the "remorse" unnamed. Here we have come back to what made the villain initially so attractive—we can identify with his evil so long as it is unspoken. The real genius of this move is that by keeping the evil unspoken the author ensures the greatest universality of this fear/evil. The unknown is far more frightening than the known not only because the evil is left to the reader’s imagination, but because our own "evil" (past and present guilt, or future angst) is a part of our memories and imaginations. Once the literary evil is spoken, we can distance ourselves from it to a certain extent; we can say
"at least I have not done that!" With the evil unnamed, the character is free to mirror the reader's capacity for both good and evil which, of course, opens up the possibility for him to act as a positive force as well. This, I believe, is the key to understanding the function of the Gothic "hero" today.

The transformation from villain to Byronic hero does not tell the whole story, however. Women's fiction, which Mussell says can be traced back to Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* at least 20 years prior to *Otranto*, was quick to take up the Gothic villain and incorporate him into its genre. Radcliffe's Gothic is much more romantic than Walpole's or Lewis'. Women's Gothic and Harlequin romance today is tied directly to this tradition as well.

The villain is no longer present as such: he is more Byronic hero than villain. He is always aloof and mysterious, with the suggestion of some horrible past manifest in his silence and the mystery surrounding his origins. Yet his evil is never revealed as such, and although there are "hints of cruelty" in his actions, he is never directly responsible for negative actions, or if he is, there is a reasonable explanation. It is interesting to note that the main plot in most Gothic romances inevitably surrounds the relationship of the woman to the "hero," and almost always concerns her "healing" him through her love: a
traditional "woman's role," which Ann Snitow and others argue is one of the main functions of the Harlequin romance (Snitow 253). The heroine's triumph is usually synonymous with getting the man to say that he loves her. This desire to "heal" him by being "woman enough" seems a clear reflection of the reader's desire to do the same for the Gothic villain in the 19th century.10

As we move chronologically away from the 19th century we encounter other forms and mutations of the villain/hero, many of them bearing less and less resemblance to the original the further we go. The private eye is one such character. This character first appears in the hard-boiled detective genre. Cynical, tough, always aloof and without any past to speak of, this character clearly bears the mark of the Gothic villain/hero.

The Gothic hero is prevalent in varying degrees in such characters as Conan and Elric in early pulp fiction, and Rambo in recent films, and his transformation from villain to hero is complete with his appearance in the films I will

10 We may question at this point whether there is a gender difference in the way the villain is viewed. Specifically, might men have wanted to "heal" the villain to forgive themselves, and women to heal the potential violence they saw in men—men upon whom they were dependent? See Joanna Russ's "Somebody is Trying to Kill Me and I Think it's My Husband: The Modern Gothic," Journal of Popular Culture, 6 no. 4 (Spring, 1973): 666-91, for a further discussion of this. Also see Tania Modleski and Ann Snitow for a more in-depth analysis of the function of mass-market romance.
discuss later. He is always outside of mainstream society, though often having been a part of it at one time, and his past is somehow a mystery to those around him and/or the audience. Like the villain, he is capable of tremendous violence, but it is almost always directed toward his tormentors or those otherwise deserving of it. He usually ends up acting for the forces of good, despite the fact that he is/has been wronged by society and those he helps, and can never be completely accepted. It is this character which I will examine in the two films in Chapters Three and Four.

In the first part of this chapter, I stated my intention to identify the essential elements of the early Gothic, and before we move on it may be useful to summarize briefly what these are. Most essential in my view is the villain's allegorical representation of the dark side of human nature, and the reader's identification with him. Just as important are the allegorical representations of society, whether they be heroes in the 19th century, or "normal" people today. Finally, the setting as "another world" ensures that readers can distance themselves from the villain enough to explore their own feelings without fear. There are a host of cues which tell readers that the setting is not the "real" world. Such cues include elements of unreality: the supernatural and allegorical elements like the psychological double, as
well as the nested narrative. In Chapter Two it will be seen that the apparent distance from the "here and now" that these elements create is somewhat illusory, that in fact the "other" world is actually the "inner" world of the viewer's/reader's mind.

First, however, a brief analysis of three aspects of Bakhtinian theory, adapted somewhat for use here, will provide a more solid framework for discussion. The view of the villain as self versus society is much easier to discuss formally within the theoretical construct of the dialogical "self-other." The setting of the Gothic also benefits from an analysis in terms of the Bakhtinian chronotope, since the setting of the Gothic is both another world, and the inner world of the reader's mind. Finally, the presence of carnivalesque elements is a trademark of the modern Gothic, although, as the next chapter will show, these elements are more the manifestation (and extension) of a concept implicit in the early Gothic novel. Chapter Two, then, will provide the analysis of these theories as I will be using them in the discussion of the films.
CHAPTER 2

BAKHTIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN:
APPLYING THE CHRONOTOPE, CARNIVAL, AND DIALOGICS TO THE
STUDY OF THE MODERN GOTHIC FILM

Chapter One provided a brief overview of the origins of the Gothic novel, the philosophical and social influences which helped create the genre, and the criticism which has been applied to it. It ended with the proposition that the villain in Gothic fiction has functioned as an allegorical representation of the reader's perceived inner "evil," and that his or her desire to be redeemed and be accepted by society was the primary cause of the villain's transformation from villain to hero in the early 1800's.

In this chapter I will refine this concept by applying Bakhtin's theory of Dialogics to the villain to show that Gothic fiction was and currently is a means of examining and defining one's self (the villain) through, and within, the "safe" boundaries of the construct of "Other"—the virtuous protagonists. I will complete this delineation of the Gothic by discussing the presence of what Bakhtin would call carnival in the Gothic as a hallmark of the modern genre as well, and by using his chronotope to define the setting of
the Gothic. It should be emphasized that this work does not pretend to be a full presentation of Bakhtin’s theories. My purpose is to provide a basic summation of those needed for my use here.

The reader may question at this point why Bakhtin need be applied here at all, why a discussion of the Gothic cannot take place based on the framework of discussion set in the first chapter. Indeed, it would be quite possible to move to the analysis of the films at this point, relying on "common" knowledge and terminology. Yet what is lost in terms of accessibility and familiarity by relying on an external critical structure is offset by a gain in objective reliability. I have no way of knowing if my idea of what is "shared" represents the reality or not, but I can be more confident that even if Bakhtin’s theories are not immediately known to all readers, they are at least located in the same literary space and can be referred to easily.

Even if I were to attempt to limit my discussion to commonly understood terms and structures I would inevitably end up creating my own terminology and adapting others’, both of which would require their own definitions. There seems little point in adding to the nebulosity of Gothic criticism, which often seems unfocussed as the result of such random definitions.
Using Bakhtin, of course, does not avoid this entirely as I must define my understanding of his theories, but it does reduce the tendency toward rampant subjectivity. Nevertheless, such considerations alone would not justify adopting an outside theoretical structure were it not appropriate to the subject. Bakhtin, however, is particularly suited to both the discussion of film and the villain.

The reader at this point may also question my theoretical basis for equating film and the novel by applying the theories of a noted critic of the novel to film. Yet I am not the first to have done so. The psychoanalytic school of criticism has been applied to both literature and film with great success, and with little complaint from other critical circles. Charlene Bunnell freely discusses both the Gothic novel and the Gothic film interchangeably in her previously cited essay.

Robert Stam's recent book, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*, is one of the more successful attempts at the application of "literary" criticism to cinema and, because it is the only sustained application of Bakhtin to the cinema, it is a source on which I will rely heavily. Stam maintains that Bakhtin is particularly suited to film:
The "rightness" of a Bakhtinian approach to film derives, I would suggest, not only from the nature of the field and the nature of the medium but also from the "migratory" cross-disciplinary drift of the Bakhtinian method. (16)

and:

Given the film medium's own variegated roots in popular as well as erudite culture, and given the historical permeability of the medium by developments in literary theory and criticism as well as its traditional openness to new and often radical methodologies, the encounter of Bakhtin with film might be viewed as virtually inevitable. (17)

Of central importance to the rest of this work is Bakhtin's dialectic of the self-other relationship, especially as it can be applied to the Gothic. It will be seen that this theory takes the analysis of the villain's and protagonist's allegorical function begun in Chapter One and use it to help clarify the most essential elements of the Gothic tradition. I will accordingly address this element first.

Next in importance is the element of carnival in the modern Gothic. While it is not always present in the modern Gothic and so is perhaps not as powerful a tool as the other
two theories I will apply, it is important for another reason. One of the central themes of carnival is opposition to order and social hierarchies. While there is little or no direct evidence of carnival in the early Gothic, its presence in the modern Gothic is the inevitable fruition of the seed of social alienation which is an integral part of the original Gothic.

Finally, I will discuss Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope to help define the "where and when" of the Gothic. The operation of these three theoretical elements in tandem allows us if not to define the Gothic, then to at least clarify one of the central strains of the Gothic: a strain I chose in Chapter One to call "the modern Gothic."

The principle of Dialogics is relatively simple, though its application and relation to other theories can be very complex. For Bakhtin, dialogue embodies the entire structural framework of dialogics--all speech, text, and art (utterances) exist in the context of a dialogue. This dialogue exists not only between the current and past texts, but between the text and the reader as well, which is essential to the analysis of the Gothic:

Bakhtin's . . . convictions that all discourse exists in dialogue not only with prior discourses but also with the recipients of the discourse aligns him with . . . the "reader response"
criticism of Stanley Fish and Norman Holland.

(Stam 20)

Because of the close relationship of the reader to the villain, which I argued for above, it is essential that the reader be included as an integral part of the analysis of the Gothic.

One of the keys to understanding Bakhtin's theories is his concept that no utterance (speech/act) exists autonomously, but is defined necessarily by the social and historical context in which it is made. That context includes all previous utterances as well. With the extension then of utterance to include text (or, rather, the necessary inclusion of text as utterance) every text is "informed by the 'already said' and by 'prior speakings'" (Stam 20). In this we hear the echo of Frye's assertion that genres are interrelated, and gain insight into means of continuation and modification of a genre such as the Gothic.

No text, therefore, can be considered to exist outside of the context of other texts/utterances, which themselves are "informed" by social, political, and historical contexts. It would be easy to get trapped in the cycle of interrelations here, but the point is that text and context are inextricably fused. As Stam puts it: "The barrier between text and context, between 'inside' and 'outside,'
for Bakhtin, is an artificial one . . . "(20). This said, we can turn now to Dialogics.

For the modern Gothic, then, we can derive two immediately useful applications from Bakhtin: that the modern Gothic is necessarily a reflection of its context (the social, political, and historical conditions in which it is/was created and by which it has been informed), and that this context must by definition include (among others) the early Gothic novel and the tradition which it generated. The former allows us to discuss the Gothic's function in playing out cultural and societal concerns, and the latter allows us to draw connections confidently between the modern Gothic and the early Gothic.

Support for using the principles of dialogism to examine a work in relation to society can be found in Stam's summation of Bakhtin's view of stylistics:

Stylistics . . . too often limits itself to the nuances of "private craftsmanship," rather than open [sic] itself up to the "social life of discourse outside the artist's study, discourse in the open spaces of public squares, streets, cities and villages, of social groups, generations and epoches." (19)

Of primary interest to us in the study of the Gothic is an extension of the principle of Dialogics: the notion of
the "self" as it is defined by the "other." At the heart of this concept lies the precept that all utterances are addressed to someone. This applies on all levels: between characters within the text, between the text and all other discourse, and between the text and the reader. Bakhtin extends this concept to the psyche of the individual as well:

"To be" signifies being "for" and "through" others. Even looking inside ourselves, as in confessional literature, we look in and through the eyes of others. (Stam 189)

It is impossible for the individual to exist in isolation just as it is impossible for the utterance to do so. In this manner one could consider the "self" as utterance as well. This leads us in an interesting direction when we apply it to the structure of the early Gothic.

As I suggested in Chapter One, the virtuous protagonists seem to function as representations of idealized society, whereas the villain may represent the dark elements within the individual. As Bunnell says, these dark elements often represent "evil," but more importantly they represent the "unknown," or the self. Again, I refer back to the function of unnamed guilt, which is to link the villain with all perceived deviations from the "norm" of society. In Bakhtinian terms, then, we might see the protagonists as
allegorical representations of society, as "other," and the villain as representation of the inner "self" in and where it is perceived to be in conflict with the "other." The Gothic novel then becomes a means of defining the self in terms of society, or at least of exploring the areas in which self and society are in conflict.

Bakhtin's assertion that even when we examine the self we do so through the eyes of the "other" explains much about the roles of protagonist and villain as well. It is the self/villain which is being examined, but we ostensibly identify with the other/heroes, and subsequently we observe the villain (self) from the perspective of "other." This tendency is reinforced by the fact that as interpreter of the text, the reader is forced to adopt the stance of "other."

One might question whether this can be said to apply beyond the early Gothic. With the advent of Freud's theories, which would seem to have provide a heightened awareness of these inner conflicts—a rejection of the good or evil dichotomy, one might have expected the Gothic villain to die out. Freud's theories, however, though of tremendous interest to many in the early 20th century, were not as accessible to the public as the novel was, or as cinema is today. Further, one could read a Gothic novel without being consciously aware of what the villain may or
may not represent—there is no reason to assume that readers of the Gothic were consciously exploring the inner self. At any rate, the presence of one mode of self-examination does not deny the possibility of others—we are today quite familiar with the concept of the dark side of our selves. Yet, rather than cutting off expressions of this concept, this awareness has generated many ways of portraying itself. When something captivates our attention as a culture, we express in it multiple forms, most notably in mass cultural phenomena:

Bakhtin’s work is compatible with . . . television and film reception studies . . . [which] document and theorize the process whereby specific audiences "negotiate" mass media messages. (21)

The modern Gothic film is one of those phenomena. The nature of the message of the Gothic is that in the process of creating the rules which govern our society, we tend to leave little room for deviations from this "norm," and this alienates and isolates those who see themselves as deviating from the norm. While such a statement may seem strong, it should not be construed to mean that we are all running around feeling like pariahs. The manifestation of strong emotions in the Gothic novel or film should not be equated with the strength of those feelings of alienation in the audience. Yet all of us experience these feelings to a
certain extent, at least enough for us to respond to their admittedly exaggerated portrayal in the Gothic villain and Gothic hero.

Bakhtin is particularly suited to examining and highlighting these feelings of being outside the social\cultural stratum:

Bakhtinian categories . . . display an intrinsic identification with difference and alterity, a built-in affinity for the oppressed and the marginal . . . (Stam 21)

I see no reason why the discussion of the "oppressed and the marginal" needs to be limited to minorities and political oppression--it would seem to lend itself as well to anyone who experiences feelings of marginality. This concept of the marginal is directly related to carnival, which is the second application of Bakhtin to the Gothic.

Stam defines carnival as "pre-Lenten revelry whose origins can be traced back to the Dionysian festivities of the Greeks and the Saturnalia of the Romans . . . (86), and in this sense includes festivals as diverse as that represented in A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Mardi Gras. Carnival's literary roots lie in Menippean satire, so named for Menippus of Gadara, a third century cynic/satirist who developed a type of satire characterized by its anti-
institutional humor, and it is this influence which makes
the carnival more than just a festival:

In carnival, all that is marginalized and
excluded--the mad, the scandalous, the aleatory--
takes over the center in a liberating explosion of
otherness . . . and festive laughter enjoys a
symbolic victory over death [and] all that is held
sacred, over all that oppresses and restricts.
(Stam 86)

It is an "alternative vision characterized by a ludic
undermining of all norms" (86). In this sense we can find
the seeds of carnival in the early Gothic.

The Gothic itself can be said to exist in the tension
between self and other, particularly the private self and
the public self, and between these latter and society. In
our conception of the Gothic those two forces are in direct
opposition, and it is this conflict which makes up the basis
of the Gothic story. The villain/hero’s rage is directed in
a sense at society and its "norms," for denying him the
right to exist. In his anti-establishment stance, as well
as the Gothic’s well-documented attack on the Church, we can
see the essential element of carnival, even though there is
little or no physical manifestation of carnival in the early
stories. In order to examine carnival’s appearance in the
modern Gothic, a brief history of carnival is needed.
Bakhtin points out that the presence of carnival in the works of Shakespeare and Rabelais would have seemed common to contemporary readers. Carnivals were literal events, traveling troupes which made stops in towns and cities, and which invited the populace to join in the festivities (a kind of revel without a cause).

These carnivals disappeared soon after Shakespeare’s time in the mid-1600’s and their existence became purely literary. They return outside the literary boundary in the Modernist period, as "salon" carnivals (Stam 98). These rituals are different from the early ones in one significant aspect: whereas the early carnival had been a "cleansing ritual" open to all regardless of social standing, the salon carnival was now open only to the excluded and oppressed. Stam describes these salon carnivals as "compensatory Bohemias offering what Allon White calls 'liminoid positions' on the margins of polite society" (98).

Stam next traces the influence of this "hostile" form of the carnival to Dada, Surrealism, and (in general) the avant-garde, eventually concluding "it is in its formal audacity, not just in its violations of social decorum, that the avant-garde betrays its link to the perennial rituals of carnival" (98). We might even be able to generalize this "formal audacity" to include any work of art which not only breaks accepted rules and denies expectations, but which
then flaunts this quality in its demand that the unexpected be expected. This will have important implications in our discussion of the Gothic film later.

 Violence is a part of the carnival in literature, though it is a kind of "dead-pan" violence, and seems unreal (Stam 108). This violence is often predictably directed toward society and members of the elite, but is occasionally wanton in its target. It is in the mindlessness of these latter episodes that society is most threatened, because there is no reason or rationale for them, without which there can be no "society."

 In cinema, predictably, carnival is often present in carnival side shows, which are frequently used as seemingly unrelated (or only marginally related) elements of plot. Also, as Stam points out, carnival appears in the use of comedy, clowns, and masks, these latter representing the premium placed on appearance versus substance. Bunnell addresses this indirectly in her broad summation of the Gothic’s plot: "... [the plot is] the struggle of the individual trying to find his or her self in a world where appearance is often confused with reality" (84).

 Laughter is also essential to the carnival:

 The culture of real laughter ... is absolutely essential to Bakhtin’s conception of carnival: enormous, creative, derisive, renewing laughter
Finally, the last element of Bakhtinian theory I shall employ in the following discussion is the chronotope, which translates literally from the Greek as "time-space." Bakhtin describes the chronotope as a process by which time is materialized in space. Every story takes place in a particular time and in a particular place, both of which are inextricably entwined with social, political, and historical events:

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history. (Bakhtin 84)

Bakhtin's development and application of the chronotope is primarily for defining genres: "It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time" (Bakhtin 85). He demonstrates the application of the chronotope to what he terms the Greek romance, the adventure novel of everyday life, ancient biography and autobiography, the chivalric romance, and the novels of Rabelais. Yet he himself notes that the chronotope need not be used exclusively to define genres:
"The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well" (85). And in the course of attempting a "historical poetics," he frequently applies the chronotope in a much narrower fashion, as in his assertion that although there are only two types of ancient adventure novel, "the characteristic features of this type occur in other genres as well . . ." (111). Rather than attempt a definition of the Gothic based solely on the chronotope, I will apply the chronotope more as a means of determining "characteristic features" of the Gothic setting: I am not sure a satisfactory definition of the genre based strictly on the chronotope would be very useful beyond a broad classification. It is, however, quite useful when applied to the Gothic on the micro-level. Stam notes that the chronotope has been used to describe "the atemporal otherworldly forest of romance, . . . [and] the 'nowhere' of fictional utopias" (11), which makes its application to the Gothic a small step.

Time is the essential element of the chronotope, so it is appropriate that we address this first in the Gothic. There is both literary time (time that passes in the novel) and historical time (the moment in which the story is located). In the early Gothic the historical time was always the past. The tales were introduced in a manner
which made it clear that the story to be told was old. Yet the anachronistic presence of the heroes undercut this sense of the past as a consistent structure. Also, while it is necessary that a work express the passage of time (time's fullness), the extent of this fullness varies from a minimum in the Greek novel to slightly more in the novel of everyday life (Bakhtin 146). There can be no story, Bakhtin says, "outside the passage of time . . . [or] time's fullness. Where there is no passage of time there is also no moment of time" (146).

The Gothic, I would argue, is as timeless as a novel can get. In the same way that time does not seem to elapse between "boy meets girl" and "boy is reunited with girl after many adventures" in the Greek romance, so does little time pass between the first encounter with the villain and his usually inevitable demise. One possible reason for the reduced "fullness" of time is that the encounter with the villain is the encounter between inner and outer worlds, which is psychological in nature and therefore outside of time. To be sure, time must pass: in the novel, and while it is being read, and time controls the ways in which this encounter is played out. But the heart of the novel is more a timeless moment which echoes and reverberates with the interplay of inner and outer worlds, the way our thoughts do when turned inward.
Space in the early Gothic seems at first glance to be indistinguishable from the temporal setting, which is because the past is as much a space as a time. The past is made concrete by the physical manifestation of castles and ancient houses. So time and space are the same, "fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole." And in the same manner as time in the early Gothic novel, space is in a sense an inner space as well—the limitless world of the psyche.

In Bakhtinian terms, then, the early Gothic takes place not here, and not now. For the early Gothic, this traditionally meant the setting was another country, and in the past. With later works such as Dracula, the initial setting is "not here, and now," but with the arrival of the count in London becomes the "here and now." With the advent of science fiction, the here and now became "here and future," or "not here and future." We begin to see that as the Gothic progressed, its chronotope (as far as we have defined it) seems to become less consistent, at least in terms of literary time and space. One might even say that the Gothic has no real chronotope. Yet the Gothic is also always located in the inner world, and in this sense its space is consistent. Likewise, the time in which it occurs is both immediate in our confrontation with the tension between self and other, and timeless in that this conflict
takes place in the inner world, in which time is meaningless. So in this manner, the essential element of the Gothic chronotope is the sense imparted of the inner/other world. The films convey this sense in many ways, both in elements within the story, and in techniques and structure apparent to the viewer. Terminology is needed to identify these two "worlds" easily. I will employ the term diegetic, which is commonly used to refer to any action or event which would be apparent to the characters in a film. Music which is played on a radio in the film would be diegetic; the music during the credits would not.\(^1\) Elements such as this the latter will accordingly be referred to as non-diegetic.

We turn, then, to the application of these theories to the modern Gothic film. In the next chapter I will examine two of the four films, Batman and Darkman. These two films most obviously employ the heroic elements of the Gothic hero—Batman from his tradition in comics, and Darkman as a hero who might have been created for the comics. I will examine how these films, through the presence of traditional Gothic elements, might be considered modern Gothic films. It should be emphasized once again that as I have been

\(^1\)Of course, it would be possible for this music to be diegetic as well, such as would be the case if the credits dissolved into a shot of a character listening to a radio play the same song, without interruption.
discussing "the Gothic" I have been pointing to common elements which are present in all Gothic art or fiction. Obviously the Gothic is more than just these elements. In recognition of that fact, I will frequently borrow from a host of other "traditional" icons or machinery and archetypes such as castles, doppelgangers, and "damsels-in-distress," as well as narrative techniques like the nested narrative, to show further ties to the original Gothic.
CHAPTER 3

MAMA DON'T LET YOUR HEROES GROW UP TO BE COWBOYS
THE GOTHIC HERO IN BATMAN AND DARKMAN

In this chapter, I will examine the recent films Batman (1989) and Darkman (1990) as examples of the modern Gothic. I have chosen to discuss these two films in conjunction for several reasons, but chiefly because both make the Gothic hero their central focal point, and in doing so illustrate the theme of conflict between self and society. That these films are literally created around the Gothic hero emphasizes both the extent of the Gothic villain's transformation and the continued interest in this character and what he represents. Whereas in the early Gothic the theme of the inner self versus society was somewhat muted by virtue of the villain's "secondary" importance, in these two films this theme is highlighted from the start. Even the titles of both films suggest the universal, allegorical theme of the inner self—Batman and Darkman. The former title is of course inherited from the older comic-book tradition which, in addition to the pulp magazines, is one of the genres which the Gothic inspired.

Both films convey to the viewer the sense that what happens in the story is not to be taken completely literally, that whatever the time/space of the films appears
to be, it is in some sense the internal world. The most logical place for the film to establish the inner world context is also where this discussion will begin: the introduction. We will begin with *Darkman*.

Immediately we encounter one of the major differences between the cinematic and the literary renditions of the Gothic: sight and sound. With the addition of sight and sound, there is a corresponding increase in the ability to communicate mood, which is essential to establishing the context of the Gothic. The music in *Darkman* is best described as dark and powerful, and is our first clue that we are not in the "normal" world. There is an extraordinary amount of bass and a relentless percussion which helps to create this impression. The score was written by Danny Elfman, who also did the scores for *Batman*, *Batman Returns*, *Beetlejuice*, *Edward Scissorhands*, and *Tales from the Crypt*. His music has always been outside of the mainstream. His first critical success was as a member of the group Oingo Boingo, whose music was a strange fusion of neo-punk and big-band, and whose hits included *Dead Man's Party*, *Wild Sex In The Working Class*, and *Insects*. As a keyboard and synthesizer player in the group and on his own, Elfman had a penchant for mixing such diverse musical voices as an operatic pipe-organ, a tuba, and violins to produce profoundly disturbing musical "epics." It is no accident
that movie-makers who want to convey a sense of other-worldliness seek him out.¹

The introduction continues with shots of amorphous (though not completely random) clouds of smoke or steam, which seem to be continuously on the verge of resolving into recognizable shapes. The steam and reddish background lighting immediately suggest Hades and the nether-world, but the shapes of the clouds seem to suggest something beyond this image. At one point they resemble a mushroom cloud, and just prior to disappearing entirely they form what appears to be a skull. Whether these particular shapes are intentional or just the by-products of two converging jets of steam created as sort of Rorschach "steam-blots" is irrelevant—they function as indicators of an inner-world. These images are fleeting, but effective in terms of setting the mood.

We then move without warning to a close-up of criminal Eddie Black talking to someone on a cellular phone. A black criminal named Eddie Black should almost be enough to

¹The other side to this, of course, is that Elfman's scores accrue meaning as they are associated with the movies they accompany. It may in fact be that Elfman's success in creating "dark" music is due to his ability to capitalize on earlier musical scores which were defined by the movies they accompanied as well, and which have an accumulated meaning for modern day audiences raised on old horror films. This would certainly be consistent with Bakhtin's theory that all utterances are "informed" by earlier ones.
indicate that this is a somewhat "unreal" world, and the fact that the scene is set in an abandoned warehouse or dockyard district (a failed societal institution) helps to establish that this scene operates at least partially as a metaphor for a world outside of the "real" world.² The brutal confrontation that ensues between Black and the chief villain, Robert Duran, who uses a cigar clipper to cut off his victims' fingers, quickly shows us that this world is also one of violence and mutilation.

We then cut quickly back to the smoke and distorted images of the introduction, which lends an almost dream-like quality to the episode in the warehouse. Coming back to the credits from the movie's "reality" forces us to view the credits as more "real" than the scene we just saw. The structure of this opening (credits-scene-credits) functions almost as the nested narrative does in the early Gothic novel, both as a miniature of the narrative structure of the Gothic novel and by providing the first part of a frame for the work. In the early Gothic novel someone literally introduced the narrative as well as closed it, and this may have served to highlight that the story was not to be taken

²Of course, it is not unexpected to see crime occurring in this kind of an area, and if the characters involved had any real depth, we might see them and the scene as realistic. But image being what is most important in "society," it is appropriate that these characters are in sense two-dimensional.
literally. Such non-diegetic elements contribute to an "other world" feeling in the audience.

There are other clues within the film itself which serve to deconstruct our belief in the story. Metaphoric elements (like Eddie Black) abound. When the protagonist, Peyton, is working in his lab trying to perfect a synthetic skin, he looks off into space and says: "It's out there waiting for us. Oh, I can feel it—God I can almost taste it." And when he and his assistant realize the skin cells are photosensitive he assumes the same posture and, again presumably to his assistant, says: "The dark--! Oh, of course--the dark! What is it about the dark--what secret does it hold?"

On a literal level he is referring to the skin, but it is also a reference to the mind, or the subconscious. Likewise, heavy-handed monologue such as Robert Duran's demand that Peyton "Tell us where to find the Bellisarius memorandum and we shall disappear, like a nightmare before the breaking day." and later images like the one of Peyton sitting atop a building between two gargoyles lamenting what

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3One could argue that the introduction provides a connection to the oral tradition of story telling, by which cultural myths are passed down, but also to the related genre of the fairy tale, and it's analogous device of "Once upon a time . . ." Other theories argue that the nested narrative provided an element of authenticity to to an otherwise fantastic story. It is of course possible that both are valid functions of the technique.
he has become are beyond the acceptable scope of diegetic reality.\textsuperscript{4} Elements like this are ostensibly diegetic, yet seem to have meaning beyond the diegetic world as well. They represent moments in which the diegetic reality "thickens," and grows beyond its own boundaries so that it is forced over into the non-diegetic world of the audience. They disturb the suspension of disbelief, and make the viewer aware of the film as a film. The viewer can either reject such moments ("that's stupid," or "that makes no sense") or accept them on the level of allegory or metaphor. It is in this latter response, in the "unrealistic" elements of the film, that the Gothic conveys much of its message.

In this sense, these actions are not entirely a part of the diegetic world, nor are they strictly non-diegetic. They operate in the "inner" world of the viewer's mind. A plot summary of Darkman (or any movie) could be constructed on a metaphoric/psychological level or on a strictly literal level of actions, and both would be equally correct. Though these two summaries would necessarily intersect, they would be obviously different. The level on which the latter story

\textsuperscript{4}This not-so-veiled reference to a scene in The Hunchback of Notre Dame also invokes the pathos inspired by that character in his conflict with humanity and his ethical/moral dilemma. This image has a meaning beyond the context of the original movie, so that whether the viewer is consciously aware of its origins, Peyton is still imbued with the same emotions originally associated with Quasimodo.
takes place is psychological, and elements such as the steam in the introduction, the music, the frame-tale structure, and all of the metaphoric dialogue, etc., are cues to the viewer to "listen" on this level. It is in this sense that the "other world" of the Gothic becomes the "inner world."

Diegetic devices and techniques such as the extensive use of shadows, and non-diegetic devices such as odd camera angles (the 45-degree tilt in the lab is reminiscent of the old Batman television show) are also a part of this inner world. Transitions like that from the lab explosion to the cemetery, in which the camera focuses on Julie while the background and her clothing change perpetuate this mood as well, as do the frequent visual shifts from the "outer" world of the film to the "inner" one of Peyton’s mind as he experiences anger and alienation. These latter shifts are perhaps the most significant contributors to this sense of the inner world. In one such shift the camera does a slow zoom down into an alley from above, to where Peyton is sleeping under a box during a storm. Rainwater is running down a manhole, and becomes superimposed over Peyton’s pupil. The camera continues to zoom toward the center of the whirlpool, and then apparently into Peyton’s mind. The inner landscape is a surreal, twisted world of stalactites and infernos, inhabited by disembodied images of clowns,
body parts, and screams. Such transitions are obviously not part of the diegetic reality, except perhaps for Peyton.

In this way the film's chronotope is identical to the Gothic chronotope in that both take place in the inner world of the viewer's and, in this last case, the character's mind. This puts the film immediately on a personal level—the viewer's inner mind is where we find the "real" person. Having established this context, then, the viewer is primed to see the protagonist as the representation of the self, though this is of course not inevitable—much depends on the actions of the character and the skill of the director.

On a more specific level in the film, of course, there is a correspondingly more specific chronotope. At first glance, the movie seems to take place in the here and now. The technology in Peyton's lab, and in the Hospital is certainly advanced, but not so far as to be beyond the realm of the present. The cars appear to be recent models, the clothing fashions familiar, etc. The city as a constructed setting is also familiar to us, even if we ourselves do not live in a city. Upon closer examination, however, we find that the city is a city at a very specific time: on the verge of tremendous urban renovation. This city is riding the crest of the wave of "progress," and the "city of tomorrow" which the real estate developer, Strack, wants to build looms threateningly above the old city of today. This
eternal moment, in which we are given time to contemplate the future just before it happens, provides a physical vantage point for a philosophical perspective. Located somewhere between the present and the future, this setting personifies our fears of "progress" and the future. Strack is inextricably associated with the "city of tomorrow," while Peyton seems to be more a part of the city that was (his lab was in a run-down district to begin with, and is now destroyed). These two characters seem on one level to represent two visions of progress. Robert Duran chases Peyton all over the city trying to kill him from his helicopter. Peyton hooks himself on to the helicopter, and as they whirl above the city for the next five minutes, their struggle becomes firmly associated with the city, and the struggle over its future. While it is not Strack who is actually chasing Peyton, Duran, as his flunky, represents Strack's interests. Later, during Strack's and Peyton's confrontation atop the steel skeleton of one of Strack's future buildings, this theme is again reinforced.

Having established the chronotope of the film as both the inner world and the city of today plus five minutes, it is time now to turn to a dialogical discussion of the film. The ways in which the connection between the "darkman" and the inner self are portrayed is important, for it is in this connection that the film is most closely related to the
early Gothic and makes its bid for inclusion as modern Gothic.

While I often discuss the inner self as if it were a completely autonomous construct, it should be remembered that within Bakhtinian theory there can be no self without an other, by which that self is defined and defines itself. In these films as well as the early Gothic, the inner self (the villain first, then the Gothic hero) is defined by the social codes and values he violates. As these codes are socially defined I have called them societal and, by extension, anyone who seems to embody them, society. I do not maintain that such characters are full representations of society, for they do not necessarily embody a significant portion of the social codes or values. However, I will also use society to refer to this entire system. Such a construct is arbitrary in its delineation, especially since I must often use it to discuss a prevailing attitude in the film for which there is no characterized representation. Yet, as some term is needed to discuss these aspects, "society" will have to do.

In the early Gothic, the virtuous protagonists provided a somewhat localized source of these values. In the modern Gothic film, it will be seen, these characters have been replaced by a multiplicity of characters, all of whom often represent different aspects of "society." In doing so, they
are often very different characters, and resist a common label. The one aspect they all have in common is that they represent pieces of the social fabric by which the Gothic hero is defined.

An examination of the main character in *Darkman*, Peyton, shows that his disfigurement in the lab explosion is in reality the physical realization of his inner self, which society of course views as abnormal; the "dark" is a convenient metaphor for all repressed inner feelings. What happens, then, is an inversion of the worlds of light and dark, outside and inside: Peyton physically becomes his inner self, which permanently places him in opposition to society. We see this first and foremost in his need to operate predominantly in the dark, and also in his ability to operate in the light only when he has a "mask" of synthetic skin on. This mask is temporary, however, as he cannot maintain this pretense of normality for long.

Even before criminal Robert Duran blows up Peyton's lab (with him still in it), there are several indications that Peyton is outside of the mainstream of society. As a scientist obsessed with his work, he is automatically lumped with all creative geniuses/artists and their role as outsiders: tolerated by, but never quite part of, society. His lab itself is by the docks in what looks like an
abandoned building, and so there is a physical distance from the rest of the world as well.

Peyton thinks that he and his girlfriend Julie should get married, but she wants her career and isn’t ready to commit. Aside from this apparent inversion of gender stereotypes, his belief in "traditional" values like marriage isolates him further from this new "traditional" society, whose perceived position on marriage more closely resembles Julie’s. The extent of this difference is perhaps reflected during the explosion at the lab. As Julie stands outside of Peyton’s lab, she repeats his question to herself: "Marry me?" at which point the camera cuts to a close-up of Peyton’s eye as the pupil contracts a split second before the explosion. It is as if the question itself produces the explosion. This, perhaps, is a reflection of the cultural/social fear that the nuclear family is disappearing along with "family" values (whatever they were\are). Not only does Julie not want to marry Peyton, she later becomes involved with a detestable real-estate developer named Louis Strack, whom she knows has committed several crimes. Clearly her judgment and perhaps her values are flawed. Julie herself, it will be seen later in this discussion, is firmly entrenched on the side of "society," even though she is a fairly sympathetic character.
At the cemetery our sense of Peyton's isolation from society is heightened by the absence of any mourners besides Julie. Death is apparently society's only answer for the individual who does not fit in. And yet Peyton returns from the grave later to challenge the society who abandoned him, including Julie. This is an interesting metaphor for society's fear that all who do not "fit in"--the homeless, the disabled, the Vietnam vets, etc., will return to exact their revenge for society's abandonment.

Peyton's comments before the explosion about the dark and about "it" being out there "waiting" also serve to emphasize the distance between him and the rest of society. If we accept the "darkness" as metaphor for the self, then his search for its secrets is also "abnormal"; he is focussed inward while society is concerned only with what is on the outside. The realization of this inner quest occurs not through his scientific search for synthetic skin (a search which is, after all, preoccupied with the tools of society--appearances and masks) but through its destruction. His inner self is born into the outer world in the explosion, which can be seen as a direct attack on society's obsession with surface realities.

Peyton has apparently not learned the importance of image in society yet, though allegorically the "darkman" and his synthetic skin represent this. This lesson is quickly
driven home, however. Without his "mask," society cannot recognize him as a person, though perhaps only the extra-diegetic audience is aware of this fact. Swathed in bandages in the hospital, he is referred to in a light-hearted manner as "Mr. John Doe, here." The doctor shows no recognition of him as a human being, as evidenced by her absolutely dead-pan expression as she jabs him with a pin (whether he can feel it or not is irrelevant to the viewer) and makes jokes about encouraging him while in reality she "give[s] him a 9 on the buzzard scale." It is not that he is so much treated cruelly as if he were not a person at all—as lacking in human rights as a vegetable would be. She never speaks to him directly, but treats him like a medical, or perhaps even a side-show carnival, exhibit.

An important link between Peyton and the early Gothic villain is forged in this scene as well. The doctor describes some of the side effects of the operation which has been performed on Peyton:

Starved of its regular diet of input, it [the mind] takes the only remaining stimulation it has—the emotions—and amplifies them, giving rise to alienation, loneliness—uncontrolled rage is not uncommon.

In this way, Peyton's anger and rage toward society is explained away scientifically, much the same way that
elements of the supernatural were often explained away in the early Gothic. Peyton is then given "license" to exhibit those behaviors which are normally not allowed, behaviors consistent with the villain's rage in the early Gothic. The viewer is aware that his behavior is quite consistent with his allegorical role, regardless of what "science" may or may not say about it. Science is the arm or tool of society, and society is by definition incapable of understanding the self, and can only understand its own language of "rational" explanations.

Peyton escapes from the hospital soon after this scene and manages to locate Julie as she walks back through the rain to her apartment. When she (predictably) cannot recognize him, his break from society is complete. It will take Peyton some time to truly realize this, however. The crushing blow which drives home his otherness is when even a stray cat hisses in response to his overture of affection in the abandoned warehouse Peyton makes his new home. But he has not yet accepted his inability to fit into society, as is evidenced by his panicked attempt to "perfect the skin," to recreate the mask he wore before the explosion.

At first he sees the skin as his ticket to rejoining society, not yet realizing that by the nature of who he has become (i.e., accepted), he can never again be a part of society. His first indication of his permanent isolation is
when he meets Julie (and society) to attempt a reconciliation:

It's just that, I feel like a rag-doll, all pieced together. *My outsides are on my insides and my insides are on my outside* (my emphasis). . . . If you could only see how I feel inside. I was ashamed, I was afraid you wouldn't want me anymore. What if I was hurt, like, like--horribly scarred--so that you couldn't bear to look at me, you couldn't even bear to have me touch you? What then, eh?

She says that she doesn't know how she'd react, but that it doesn't matter: "and look at you, you're fine, and you're back!" It is no accident that she places the importance of appearance first (as if looking at him were knowing him) and his return second--society cannot react otherwise. Peyton's almost anguished reply, "Yes, I am back, aren't I?" is clearly not something he or the audience believes, and in it we hear his acceptance of society's equation of appearance and identity.

This dialogue illustrates the seemingly impossible gulf between the individual and society: if your lover cannot see beyond the surface, nobody can. That he has become his inner self is clear from the first half of Peyton's description of his feelings to Julie (see italics above).
In a sense we have two identities present in Peyton: the last vestiges of who he was in society, and the inner self which has taken over but which has not yet been fully integrated.

After this meeting with Julie, Peyton begins to accept who he has become almost without realizing it. While he is ostensibly still striving to find a way back into society, he is in reality embracing his difference as a freedom. He begins to use society’s obsession with appearance-as-reality against those who live by this law by taking on the identities of the criminals for revenge. He takes photos of the criminals who blew up his lab, and creates masks of them which he dons to frame them and turn them against each other. As Pauly, the bagman for the crooks, he steals the money Pauly is supposed to deliver to Duran. He then plants two airline tickets in Pauly’s suitcase, one in Pauly’s name, and one in Ricky’s name (Robert Duran’s homosexual lover, whom Peyton has already killed). Duran then kills Pauly for stealing his money and his lover. As Robert Duran, he holds up a convenience store, and announces Robert Duran’s name for the security camera. While Duran is later

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5By society, I am referring here only to those who represent this obsession, rather than all of society. In order for us to identify with Peyton, we must reject this equation of appearence and reality, and so in this sense the majority of "society" might be said to be on Peyton’s side.
downtown answering for this crime, Peyton again takes his identity and goes to steal more of Duran’s money from Hong Fat. This further illustrates society’s confusion of appearance with reality since, as other people’s doubles, he is indistinguishable from them.

Peyton’s ability to manipulate image is his power (a power which is only possible to those who reject image as reality). It allows him to gain the money owed to Duran from Hong Fat in Chinatown. When Fat says he does not have the money, Peyton (as Duran) pulls out a lighter, and holds it to his own hand, supposedly in a display of willpower. Fat seems awed by this display of ruthlessness, though we know Peyton feels no pain. In fact, his burning of the "mask" (the fake hand) shows Peyton’s contempt for society’s preoccupation with surface images, and labels him firmly as outsider. It is this which unnerves Fat, not Peyton’s "machismo." Even those who habitually break society’s laws and rules are bound by the law of appearance.

He continues to use society’s own weapons against it as he dismantles the criminal operation, and avenges himself by using his masks to trick the criminals into shooting each other as they chase him around the warehouse. He seems to be working for society in this capacity, ridding the city of criminals, but his fundamental "difference" and his rejection of surface reality are at heart inimical to
society as a whole. The criminals he fights are "obviously" bad. And yet given our presumed identification with Peyton, his ostracism is a fundamental indictment of all of society, which would seem to place them in direct opposition to each other. I will discuss this in more detail at the end of this chapter.

At one point in the chase scene mentioned above, one of the gunmen exposes a cabinet to find all of Peyton's mask pieces of hands and faces hanging from hooks. This is presented to the audience in a manner intended to shock, with a sudden thrusting aside of a curtain, and is accompanied by a woman's screams. There are no women present to scream, however, and we are left wondering who the screams belong to. The screams are muted, and reminiscent of every scream ever heard in a horror movie. Apparently they are a projection of our anticipated or intended reaction to the horror we see, and yet to us it is almost expected. The only people who would feel horror at this image are those who are not prepared to see appearance as meaningless—society. The scream then becomes society's reaction to the rejection of surface reality, or at least our projection of society's reaction. As viewers we are continually assuming stances as self and as other (from which we view self), and here we are required to adopt both.
As Peyton is engaged in attacking society, he begins to accept his new identity and what it means in terms of his relationship to society, and this acceptance is played out in the separation of the world in which he operates (the dark) and the diegetic world of society (the light). Peyton operates predominantly in the dark which has become synonymous with his world and delights in brutal, vengeful retribution. The viewer's uneasy laughter at the dark humor of these scenes is a reflection of our uneasy accommodation of self and other. At the same time that we laugh when Peyton grits out "You-have-been-a-very-bad-boy" in time to his resounding punches to the face of a gunman, we are awed and frightened by the violence he shows--the violence we know we are capable of, and which we feel toward the forces of society which keep us penned up inside ourselves.

Peyton's outer world (the warehouse) reflects his inner world, and is contrasted at one point with the socialite ball. This ball is what Stam calls a "fake carnival," because it only gives the appearance of freedom. In reality, balls such as this are a means of controlling carnival, channeling it into "safe" arenas where it can pose no serious threat. Such events act as if they are an arena in which to forget about image, but everyone must dress a certain way, not drink too much, etc. Anyone who breaks any of these rules, who truly "lets go" in the spirit of
carnival, would certainly pay the price (Did you hear what so and so did at that party?).

Through contrasts between Peyton's world and the rest of society, the viewer is encouraged to view society from Peyton's perspective. As damaged as Peyton is, he is nevertheless attending to the inner person, which cannot be said (for certain) for any of the other characters. By the time the mad developer Louis Strack tells Julie "I understand how you feel, I really do," the viewer immediately rejects this as meaningless, superficial chit-chat—he cannot know how she feels. Besides, we know he has an ulterior motive. Appearance, then, is not simply a matter of looks; it is also an entire coded system of actions and language. When we later find out that Strack is responsible for Peyton's "death," his hypocrisy is fully revealed.

Peyton's anger and violence leads conveniently into our discussion of carnival in the film. Carnival is present in Darkman more than in any of the other films, with the possible exception of Batman. All of Peyton's actions against society are, of course, related to carnival in intent and focus, but cannot for this reason alone be considered carnival. The importance of appearance and masks in the film is directly related to carnival, however, both
in the masks themselves and the attack on society which they engender.

All of Peyton's attacks, especially those which involve laughter (his or ours or both) can be considered carnivalesque in their freedom from social rules, and in their attack on society as represented by those who are fooled by masks and appearances. The image of the "Darkman" itself can be seen as carnivalesque in terms of the grotesque exaggeration of his scars and mutilated body, much the same way that the hunchback was in The Hunchback of Notre Dame.

But there are more literal elements of carnival in the film as well. The drinking bird which is used to trigger the explosion in Peyton's lab, and which he later uses to blow up the warehouse, is a carnival image familiar to us from cocktail parties. When we take the first trip into Peyton's mind in the hospital as he turns cartwheels for medicine (on a wheel which stripped of its lights and wires, resembles a medieval torture device) we see the image of a dancing clown as a metaphor for part of his inner feelings. Peyton later has an outbreak of self-derision in the warehouse, in which he places a funnel on his head in the manner of the Tin Man in The Wizard of Oz:
What am I, some kind of a circus freak?! [begins jumping around] Step right up: see the dancing freak! Pay five bucks! To see the dancing Freak!

This is carnival born of pain, like all carnival under oppression. It hurts so much you have to laugh. This episode is mirrored later in the most obvious manifestation of carnival in the film: Peyton's and Julie's visit to a fair. Our first image of the fair is a clown with an oversized head. There is then a quick cut to people laughing as the fun house mirrors distort their images, and then another cut to a different clown. As he is about to tell Julie the truth about where he has been and why, a barker's voice begins to intrude, calling the crowd to see the latest side-show monstrosity. This culminates with the barker whipping off the bag which covers the head of the "exhibit," to expose a boy with highly abnormal skin and features. "He's a Freak, ladies and gentlemen, a FREAK!" announces the barker. The irony is that even though the boy is deformed, he is not as badly disfigured as Peyton who, of course, cannot now bring himself to tell Julie the truth. Instead he goes on to win her a stuffed pink elephant. When the booth owner refuses to give it to him. Peyton's rage builds quickly, and the camera cuts to images of clowns and rides accompanied by calliope music, which as carnival already represent rage against authority. These images then
"shatter" as if they were painted on glass, and as they fall away the inner world of Peyton’s mind is temporarily revealed. The "pieces" of reality suddenly come back together as if the film is being run backwards, and Peyton twists the booth owner’s finger 180 degrees back over his hand, and throws him through the wall of the booth.

These carnivalesque connections alone demand the inclusion of this work within the modern Gothic. Yet there are other ties as well. When Peyton escapes from the hospital, it is into a stormy night, much as the Gothic villain was associated with storms. As an outcast, Peyton takes refuge in an abandoned warehouse, the modern-day equivalent of the ruined castle. There is a definite mistrust of science evidenced by the cynical portrayal of the doctors in the hospital which, as Chapter One discussed, was often a part of the Gothic. Such surface similarities may be more a testimony to the Gothic legacy than an integral part of the modern Gothic. Sometimes, though, they play a more serious role, such as the Frankenstein images in Darkman. These elements deserve closer attention.

Even at first, Peyton would seem an obvious manifestation of the Frankenstein mythos—the classic overreacher who pursues knowledge at any cost. He even has a short assistant from another country. His initial fanatic devotion to finishing the skin and his later Promethean
image as the bringer of fire/light/knowledge to the darkened warehouse reinforce this perception. By the time he flies into a rage at the sight of his reflection in the water, it seems impossible not to see him as something of a modern-day Frankenstein.

And yet, just as the villain has metamorphosed into the hero, Frankenstein has undergone a change as well. Though he does not initially see it as such, Peyton is freed by his search for knowledge—not by the completion but by the destruction of that quest. He then uses science against society, and acts as the hero rather than the villain. Again, by society here I am referring only to the narrow range of codes which control and oppress individuality and self-expression. In this case, Peyton is attacking those who represent these codes. The concept of science as a positive force is an interesting development in the Gothic, and it is one we will see later in Batman as well. In order to find the real Frankenstein, we have to look to the developer, Louis Strack.

Strack is the modern-day Dr. Frankenstein, who does not mind the "occasional distasteful chore" (murder, bribes etc.) in the pursuit of his goal. He is completely evil in this incarnation, however, which may suggest that the traditional moral ambiguity in Frankenstein's portrayal is rendered through two characters: Peyton and his alter-ego
Strack. Strack’s monster is the city, which in the modern Gothic is as frightening a representation of progress and the destruction of "undesirable" elements (inner self) as the monster was as a representation of science and its negative effect on humanity in the early Gothic.

Strack represents the height of superficiality and greed, the ultimate yuppie whose goal is to change the appearance of an entire city. When he accuses Peyton of being immoral he exposes the heart of society’s hypocrisy and enmity toward the individual:

You really are one ugly son of a bitch. What do you think, Julie? Who’s the real monster here? I destroy to build something better—you're a man who destroys for revenge!

Strack implies that he is somehow beyond the reach of morality: the same morality which supposedly forms one of the bases from which society operates. The power of the system, which is based on the control of reality through appearance and by the exercise of "moral" laws, is shown to be inconsistent even within itself. Strack attempts to use society’s rules against Peyton as Peyton holds him suspended over the edge of the building by one ankle: "You let me die, you become as bad as me. Dropping me . . . is not something you can live with." For a moment, we almost wonder if he is right, but in the end there can be no doubt—
-Peyton is well beyond such restrictions: "I'm learning to live with a lot of things."

Once again at the end, Julie simultaneously expresses her acceptance of Peyton's disfigurement and reveals her inability to see beyond the surface. If she could accept him, she would say that she sees only the man she loves—his inner self which to her is normal. Instead, upon seeing his face she first says he will perfect the skin, then that it doesn't matter. Peyton knows that it does, and his speech at the end also serves to remind us of our own conflict with society:

As I worked on the mask, I found the man inside was changing—he became—wrong, a monster. I can live with it now, but I don't think anyone else can.

Ironically, the man on the inside, by Peyton's own admission, is the person he was before. The inversion is complete—Peyton's identity is purely that of the inner self, though he never saw the transition. Julie calls him back as he leaves, and he responds immediately with "Peyton is gone." As he looks back at the camera from a crowd of people, we are shocked to see a completely unfamiliar face. He could be anybody at this point, as his voice-over confirms:

I'm everyone—and no one.
Everywhere—and nowhere.

Call me—Darkman.

It is this last pronouncement which also completes our sense of the nested narrative begun in the introduction, as well as our discussion of Darkman for now.

*Batman* and *Darkman* share a genre, and both films illustrate the conflict between self and society/other by using a self/hero. They both use the carnival in their illustration, and operate in the "other" world in a universal, allegorical sense, and can thus be considered modern Gothic. Yet where *Darkman* uses one character (Peyton) to represent most of those elements, *Batman* divides its themes among three main characters—Bruce Wayne, Batman, and Joker. Further, the focus in *Darkman* was on Peyton’s discovery and acceptance of his inner self, whereas in *Batman* we have the fully developed self-character in Batman himself.

These differences present obstacles to discussing the film in the same manner as *Darkman*, and it is impossible to begin this section without addressing these essential differences, especially the multiple characters in *Batman*. At first glance, it might seem that Batman is Bruce Wayne’s alter-ego. And yet such a split demands extremes of character on both sides—Batman as an exaggeration of the darker, repressed self, and Wayne as a two-dimensional,
"high-society" snob (much as he was in the television series). This is not the case in the film, however; Wayne never fits in completely with society, and Batman never loses control of his emotions, at least not to the extent we would expect if he were simply Wayne's alter-ego.

The closer one looks at these characters, the more it becomes apparent that they are not two halves of the same character, but are the same character: they share the same goals and knowledge, and neither can be considered a "normal" part of society. There are, in fact, no discernable differences between the two except in appearance. Accordingly, in my discussion of this film I will view Bruce Wayne and Batman, and often refer to them, interchangeably.

The Joker, on the other hand, makes an excellent alter-ego for Batman, and in the later discussion of the dialogical perspective of Batman I will examine this in more detail. For now it is enough to note that Batman and Joker are in a sense responsible for each other's existence, and that while Batman exercises restraint, operating within an implied theoretical framework of laws and rules, Joker has absolutely no rules or limits. Joker's purpose is, in fact, the destruction of all such restraints. He is carnival personified and unleashed on/against society. Any further discussion of these elements would entail getting ahead of
myself, so I will turn now to the beginning of *Batman*, and the discussion of its chronotope.

Once again, the introduction to the film is our first clue that we are embarking on a journey through the inner world. The music is again written by Danny Elfman, and through its extensive use of bass and percussion the powerful, "other-world" mood is established. Visually we are given a series of images which refuse to resolve into anything meaningful. Grey stone shapes loom out of the darkness as the camera progresses past them and fades to black, only to pick up another shape soon after.

The world we see is lifeless and colorless—a static environment of cement and shadow. Often the shadows suggest bat-like shapes, and the walls give us the impression we are traveling through a maze. We are continually attempting to define what it is we are seeing and where we are going—for the camera's movement definitely suggests we are travelling somewhere. The maze is by now a familiar representation of the subconscious, so we may have a clue in that. Finally the camera zooms out and the maze reveals itself to be the bat-symbol. We find that our journey has in fact been circular and, thus, seemingly without purpose. The creator has played a practical joke on us, and in so doing pointed out our prejudice toward linearity, order, and progression, almost as if we have been scolded for expecting "normalcy."
In case we missed the point, however, the opening shot drives it home once again. Gotham City appears to be on an island, Avalon-like, and from a distance resembles nothing less than an ancient castle—black, of course. All we are lacking is the subtitle "Once upon a time..." This scene functions as a kind of frame for the movie, as the nested narrative did in the early Gothic. The resemblance of the next shot (where the criminals are caught by Batman) to Wayne's later recollection of his parents' murders also seems to suggest this sort of framing.

As in *Darkman*, there are several other indications that the world in this film is not to be taken literally. The most obvious of these is the city itself. As in *Darkman*, the space is the city but the appearance of the city is much different. There is almost no color anywhere: everything seems to be made of the same colorless cement as the bat-symbol in the beginning. It is as if what we are viewing is the skeleton of the world, stripped of all pretension and artifice. This lack of color is also a link to the mind and the subconscious.

In the same vein, all societal/power decisions are made well above ground: in penthouses, skyscrapers, and mansions on hills. These decisions take effect in "reality" at street level, and Batman comes from below this level, from the Batcave. All of this supports the view of the
city/setting as the mind. I would not argue for hard and fast distinctions such as id, ego, and super-ego—though they readily suggest themselves. I do not think the film is attempting any such literal delineations, but the director, Tim Burton, can hardly be unaware that the city lends itself to such a perception.

The story appears to take place "now" because of the social problems and technology shown. Street muggings, product tampering, chemical plants run amuck: all are familiar to the audience as current societal ills, although, of course, their portrayal in the film is somewhat exaggerated. And, although Batman's technology is very advanced, it does not seem beyond the scope of our own science, which routinely produces things we would not have thought possible. Yet the appearance of the city also suggests that it represents our fears of what the city will become, and in this sense the time could be said to be the future. This would presumably be a more distant future than in Darkman, where urban problems such as crime and chemical pollution have not had quite as obvious an effect on the appearance of the city. In this sense, the two films share a similar chronotope: the future and the city. Gotham City, however, is not quite "here," even though Gotham is actually
a nickname for New York City. As New York at one time represented the best in America, it has now also come to epitomize the worst of its social failures. It is this latter vision of New York City which Gotham represents: at once every city and no city. Gotham is a symbolic stand-in for our fears of what our cities and society will become.

As in Darkman, there are several reminders of the "otherness" of the setting throughout the film as well, such as the suggestion of the supernatural. Many of the city's buildings have inexplicable features: huge pipes sprout out of roofs. Once again we have steam, this time as a diegetic element, rising out of practically any grate or alley possible. Although science is used to "explain" Batman's abilities, much as it was used to explain the supernatural in the early Gothic, many times we do not see these explanations. In the beginning of the film, Batman captures two criminals who have mugged a family. After he knocks one out, and tells the other one to tell all his friends about "The Batman," he steps off the roof of the building and disappears. We have no "rational" explanation for this at the time. Even when he performs these actions later, when

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6Current Batman editor Dennis O'Neil has described the Batman chronotope as "...Manhattan below Fourteenth Street at 3 a.m., November 28 in a cold year" (Boichel).
we have seen some of the ways he accomplishes them, we are still left with the impression of supernatural powers.

There are other examples of the "unreal" in the film. Even by our standards, Axis Chemicals is an unbelievable cess-pool of chemicals, and the "surgery" which Joker goes to resembles a filthy butcher shop more than a medical facility. Occasionally, non-dieget ic elements appear to be noticed by the characters. When the Joker breaks into the mayor's broadcast, which we witness on multiple monitors, the mayor acts as if he can see and hear him. In "reality," the Joker is miles away in another building, and so can neither see nor be seen by the mayor. Joker then "pushes" the mayor's screen off the monitor, which the mayor apparently notices. All of this is completely unbelievable on the surface. Television, as the ultimate celebration of image over reality, is perhaps being appropriated here to make a point—as we will see later, Joker is beyond the boundaries of appearance. These elements, along with the use of setting and allegory, help establish that the location of the film is, at least partially, the inner world.

The character of Batman has undergone serious changes before his arrival in this latest film. When The Batman first appeared in 1939 (Detective Comics #27), he was clearly a vigilante, operating well beyond the limits of the
law. With the inception of the Comics Code Authority in response to Frederic Wertham’s book, *The Seduction of the Innocent*, which attacked the superheroes of comic books as poor role models, Batman became a creature of the light rather than the dark. Batwoman was then created in response to charges that Batman was homosexual, and the villains became less monstrous. In 1966, the first episode of the television series appeared, which as camp further distanced The Batman from his roots as the dark knight. The Batman was revived again by DC comics and Frank Miller, who recast the character in the original mold in his graphic novel *The Dark Knight Returns*. It is this last Batman which the movie most closely resembles. His character has been softened for the film however. Gone are such violent interior monologues as how Batman will disable the policeman: "There are seven ways to disable a man in this situation. Two of them are fatal—the others just hurt" (More or less quoted from memory of the first few pages of this novel).

The characterization of the protagonists in *Batman* and *Darkman* is similar. Like Peyton, Bruce Wayne is portrayed as not quite fitting in with society. He looks the part, having a nice house, fancy clothes, parties, etc., but he seems more a spectator than a participant. As he wanders aimlessly through his party, absent-mindedly putting glasses
down in strange places when he notices them in his hand, he more resembles a curious guest than the host. We are asked to believe that he is a rich eccentric, yet even that link to society is tenuous. He doesn’t seem motivated by the jaded search for diversion we might expect from such a character, nor is he a misanthrope. He does not even play the part of philanthropist, as the character in the television series did. Even though he is shown throwing a benefit for the festival, it seems he does so more because it is expected than out of a sense of charity.

The reason for his dissociation from society is that he is focussed inward. When he is seen mixing with society, it’s almost as if he is playing a game--having set up all the "masks" and social trappings, he is now watching to see how society works. His awareness of his inner self is what really isolates him. He has spent so much time as himself that he has no idea how to react to society. His idea of dinner with photo-journalist and potential girlfriend Vicki Vale is to sit at opposite ends of a huge table, which separates him from her. He is completely out of touch with the practicalities of daily life, telling Vale that he "couldn’t find my socks without him [Alfred, his butler]."

When he comes to her apartment to apologize for standing her up, he illustrates his inward focus again, as well as his isolation from society and human contact:
You know how—a normal person—gets up, and—goes downstairs, and—eats breakfast, and—kisses somebody goodbye, and goes to a job, and—you know?

Vale, of course, does not know what he is talking about, but it is clear to us that he is speaking as an observer, not a participant, of normal life. And, from the manner in which he talks about it, we can tell he has spent a lot of time analyzing society, attempting to discern its rules and how it works. This betrays his perception that people are cogs in the machinery of society, and can be understood only as a conglomerate.

One of the rules he has discovered is the same one Peyton discovered—society places the highest premium on image rather than substance. To be successful (i.e., accepted) one must be concerned about one’s appearance. As the reporter Knox says to Vale after they’ve spoken to Wayne in his armory during the party: "You know why they’re so odd? Because they can afford to be. I mean, look at this mirror—maybe it should be Bruce Vain!" Knox’s natural association of success with narcissism is indicative of society’s attitude.

There are mirrors in Wayne Manor, in the criminal’s penthouse, and in the surgeon’s basement. We see Harvey Dent’s image blown up to gargantuan size at the press
conference, and the extensive use of television images throughout the movie, both as security monitors and as news broadcasts, emphasize the role of image in society.

Vicki Vale, like Julie in *Darkman*, is a representative of society; she is a photographer who gets paid to sell images. Her work has appeared on the cover of *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines—fashion bibles both. True, she also has photographed war scenes for a cover story for *Time*, but her work is nevertheless about images. (It is ironic that the filmmakers cast Kim Basinger as this character, given that her fame is due more to her image than her acting ability). Vale’s natural attraction to Wayne instead of the reporter Knox who, in addition to being her co-worker, seems like a nice guy with a good sense of humor, creates the impression that she is motivated by social image as well as physical image. We would like to see her as Batman’s intellectual equal, as well as his lover. And yet this desire is continually undercut by minor indications of intellectual "blind spots," such as when she lies to Batman when he asks how much she weighs (she says 108 pounds). She is apparently too caught up in the world of image and society to see beyond them at times, and so while she remains a sympathetic character, she never quite takes the final step into Batman’s world.
Batman is well aware of the power of images and appearance, as is evidenced by his ability to apparently "fit in" with society, even though we can see that he really does not. The armory in Wayne Manor, which Vicki and Knox stumble into during the festival benefit, is full of suits of armor which represent not only war, but the ability to put on and take off identities. It may be this awareness of the power of image which prompts Wayne to design the Batman suit. The image of the bat as a creature of the night, of the dark hidden recesses of the earth and mind, is a natural counterpart to the colorful images of "reality" which society demands. Since Bruce Wayne and Batman are essentially the same person, when Wayne puts on the Bat-suit, he is putting on a mask of sorts, but it is a mask of the inner self (almost a contradiction in terms). This is the real reason his image strikes fear into the hearts of all he encounters; like Peyton's disfigurement, the "outer" trappings of the inner self are horrifying when exposed to the world. This is also why society is not eager to accept him as a hero—as the inner self he is a potential threat. Society exists by subjugating the needs of the individual to those of the many, which creates a climate which is hostile toward deviations. We, therefore, tell ourselves to keep the inner self hidden, or risk social judgement and/or chastisement. Batman represents a defiant celebration of
the self, and as such inspires the fear that someday the inner self will explode into the outer world despite our best efforts to keep it concealed.

Joker is well aware of the role appearance and image play in society as well, but his reaction is to use them directly against society. As Jack Napier, he was concerned with his appearance in a narcissistic way, but was vaguely contemptuous of society’s preoccupation with it. Our first sight of him is as he is watching television, with his feet resting on the cover of Vogue. Alicia makes a point of lifting his feet off the picture of the model. As he is adjusting his tie in the mirror, she tells him he looks good, to which he replies that he "didn’t ask" her.

When he sees what he looks like in the mirror at the surgery, however, his character changes. The chemicals from the Axis plant have frozen his face in a rictus, and bleached his skin white, and his hair green. He destroys the mirror in symbolic rejection of the importance of surface appearance, and is reborn as carnival incarnate through his laughter. He stumbles up the stairs, still laughing maniacally, and smashes the bare light bulb—extinguishing the light and signalling the transition from sanity to insanity as well as from the surgery to the next scene. Joker’s situation is similar to Peyton’s in Darkman: his inner self has just been placed in full view of the
world. His reaction, however, is much different. He becomes dedicated to destroying the society which he sees as responsible for his torture. This ties him even more closely than Batman to the early Gothic villain.

As with Darkman, we have a rational explanation for the Joker's actions: his deformity has pushed him over the edge into insanity. All he wants to do now is strike back at Batman for destroying his appearance/image, and at society for making image so important that his loss is so devastating. Batman's attack on crime is motivated by revenge for his parents' deaths, which is what allows him to be a positive character. If either he or Darkman were attacking all of society (as Joker does) they could not be heroes. Batman and Darkman attack only certain elements of society, to make it better as a whole, while Joker attacks all indiscriminately. Yet in the same way that "explaining" the supernatural does not deny the role it plays in the Gothic, the explanations of these characters do not negate the other roles they play in the story. As I will discuss later, Batman and Darkman are both potentially as against society as Joker.

Joker is inevitably linked with the carnival not only through his appearance, but through his determination to destroy society and all of its "rules." The crime boss who "runs" the city, Grisholm, had originally asked Napier to
break into Axis chemicals, steal some files, and make it look like industrial espionage. He then told Lt. Ekhardt (his well-paid policeman) to surprise them and shoot Napier. Batman intervenes and drops Napier in the acid, which is how he sustains his injuries, but Napier remembers that it was Grisholm who set him up, and as the Joker, he returns to kill him. As Grisholm attempts to bargain his way out of death, he calls Napier by his first name, Jack, to which Joker replies: "Jack? Jack’s dead. You can call me Joker. And as you can see, I’m a lot happier now!" Joker then proceeds to empty a revolver into Grisholm as he dances around the room to calliope music, firing behind his back, over his head, etc. From the moment we see him shoot Grisholm, his connection with the carnival is clear.

The way Joker attacks society is, predictably, through appearance. The products which are responsible for the "allergic reaction" are all cosmetics: deodorants, hairspray, and lipstick—all masks. Appearance is not limited to physical looks either. He kills an opponent by a combination of a traditional social gesture—a handshake—and a traditional carnival joke—the joy-buzzer. When he sets up the parade by promising to drop money on the crowd, it is a further illustration of society’s inability to distinguish reality from image. There is every reason not to trust the Joker, yet the masses all assume he’s
trustworthy (or appear to, which is the same thing for them) as long as he’s giving out money. One might argue that they do not know what trust actually is, and simply go with the most pleasing "image." And we all know that if money can’t buy you happiness, it can at least buy you a good image.

Joker’s success is also partly due to his appropriation of the controlled carnival (Gotham’s festival) by attracting the disadvantaged and oppressed. He then destroys the carnival by attacking this marginalized crowd.

True to the carnival spirit, all of the violence committed is either dead-pan, or accompanied by laughter. Joker himself says it best when talking to Vale in the art museum:

You know how concerned people are about appearance--this is attractive, that is not . . . well that is all behind me. I now do what other people only dream--I make art until somebody dies.

He seems genuinely shocked that Vale does not find his disfigurement of Alicia appealing—he is utterly beyond all social/moral laws. His reaction to Alicia’s death is similar: "You can’t make an omelette without breaking some eggs!" at which point he smashes her mask and laughs.

The carnival which Joker represents is completely destructive. There is no indication of any freedom resulting from the dropping of social barriers, no positive
element whatsoever. This carnival represents society's fearful view of carnival and its release of the inner self as the ultimate destructive force. It is as if acknowledgment of the individual (self) means there can be no collective, thereby leading to anarchy. There is, perhaps, something of this interdependency reflected in the pairing of the release of the inner self and carnival, as if you cannot have one without the other. Certainly in this work, Batman and the Joker as representations of the self and of carnival respectively, are interdependent. When Batman says he is going to kill Joker, Joker replies: "You idiot! You made me!" to which Batman replies that the Joker made him when he shot Wayne's parents. This scene is reminiscent of Strack's taunting of Peyton as Peyton holds him over the edge of the building; as alter-egos Strack and the Joker cannot be afraid of death--they are both a part of the other character (Peyton and Batman).

In one sense, Batman and Joker represent two aspects of the same phenomenon. Both are manifestations of the inner self, but while Joker is predictably against society, Batman works for society. In many ways, Joker is more like a character we would expect to represent the inner self in its fight against society, whereas what seems to be implied by Batman's affiliation with society is that society and the individual are not necessarily diametrically opposed.
Certainly Batman cannot be said to be fully integrated into society, but neither is he hopelessly outside it or against it—that position is reserved for the Joker. Batman’s relationship with Vicki Vale becomes a kind of metaphor for the desire of the individual to be accepted by society. As they are standing in the Batcave, Wayne tells her why he is the way he is, in the time-honored language and style of the outsider to the world:

Wayne: This is how it is—it’s not a perfect world.

Vale: It doesn’t have to be! I just need to know—are we going to try to love each other?

Wayne: I’d like to, but he’s out there, and I’ve got to go to work.

Batman, as the self, gives voice to the audience’s fear that the self is permanently isolated from society. Vale’s assertion that it doesn’t have to be that way is an interesting variation. Batman’s fight against the Joker, then, is a way of reassuring society and/or the individual that coexistence is possible, that individuality does not have to mean the destruction of all values, collective or private. This is the last element of the modern Gothic which needs some discussion: the role of the Gothic as agent for social change. Such a discussion is better left until
the end of this work, however, so that all four films may be encompassed. In the next chapter, I will discuss Edward Scissorhands and Cape Fear as radically different forms of the modern Gothic. These films illustrate the flexibility of the Gothic genre: a flexibility which allows a multiplicity of formats in which to present its themes. It is also this quality which is responsible for the Gothic’s continued existence since 1764, and which will ensure its presence in the future as well.
CHAPTER 4
FEAR OF THE KNOWN:
VARIATIONS OF THE MODERN GOTHIC

Edward Scissorhands and Cape Fear represent significant deviations from the modern Gothic as it was represented by Batman and Darkman. Further, these films do not represent the same kind of deviation: Edward Scissorhands is a fairy tale, while Cape Fear is a revenge/horror film. Yet both contain enough elements of the Gothic to require their inclusion in the genre, as the following discussion will show. I will begin with Edward Scissorhands, as it is the closer of the two to the modern Gothic of Batman and Darkman.

Whether it was the day-after-tomorrow, post-modern city of Batman, or the more immediate future city of Darkman, the diegetic chronotope in the two previous films was the future and the city. Through the use of fantastic imagery, music, narrative structure, and other predominantly non-diegetic elements, both films conveyed a sense of the fantastic and the unreal. In Batman, for instance, it is hard to believe that the city truly appears to the characters as it does to the viewer, both because of the physical appearance of the city and the vertical perspective the camera imparts.
Likewise, the exaggerated characters, fluidity of identity, and metaphoric polarization of night-day/good-evil *Darkman* contribute to the aura of being outside of "reality." In this sense, these stories become almost cautionary fairy tales, playing out our modern fear of social/urban progress and what it means for the individual in society.

Just as the chronotope of the early Gothic changed from the past to the present and from another country to England, the modern Gothic chronotope need not always be the city and the future either. *Edward Scissorhands*, for example, uses the city's offspring (the suburb) as the location and a timeless pastiche of the early sixties and modern eighties as the time.

Edward is a boy/machine created by a mad old scientist-type in a castle on a mountain. As he is building Edward, the scientist reads to him, and educates him. Unfortunately, the old man dies before he can finish Edward's hands, leaving him with several scissor-like appendages instead. Edward has trouble fending for himself, and cuts himself several times while trying to fix his hair or scratch his cheek, scarring himself noticeably. This, in addition to his inability to comb his hair and the buckle-covered leather body suit he was created in, give him a decidedly "punk" look.
Edward is eventually discovered by Peg, an Avon lady from the town below. She takes him home and, with the best intentions, attempts to "cover" his scars and re-make him into someone who fits in with society. Slowly he and Peg's daughter Kim fall in love while the rest of the neighborhood fights for Edward's attentions. The community finds that he can clip dogs, shape hedges, create intricate artwork, etc., and it soon appears that he may be able to assimilate, by satisfying their penchant for the exotic. But he is conned by Kim's boyfriend Jim into helping with a burglary and is caught and punished. Soon after, in an attempt to save Kim's little brother Kevin from being hit by a car, he cuts the child a little and scares him more. The neighborhood turns completely against him as a result, and he is chased by a mob back to the castle (a la Jame's Whale's Frankenstein) which sits (strangely) just above the suburban neighborhood on a forbidding mountain. He ends up killing Jim to protect Kim and himself, and Kim helps Edward fake his own death by showing a spare scissored hand to the crowd and telling them the roof caved in on him. The townspeople are satisfied, and leave him to live alone in the castle.

Edward Scissorhands is perhaps even more fantastic than any of the other movies, at least in terms of its setting. The suburban neighborhood is a picture-perfect stereotype of the early 60's variety, a pastel-colored cardboard cut-out
of neat lawns, trimmed hedges, and swept porches. It is an intentionally two-dimensional image of society as it exists in suburbia.

The film is peopled with stereotyped, undeveloped characters as two-dimensional as the houses they live in. There is a religious fanatic who plays the organ all day and lights candles, a "lonely" nymphomaniacal housewife, an overweight woman named Marge who seems to always have curlers in her hair, and the Avon lady Peg, who brings Edward home. We rarely see the men, as they are all working in the city, and so the society we see is made up predominantly of stereotyped grotesques which are quickly labelled and dismissed. Peg and her family are potentially the characters with the most depth, as they seem willing to accept Edward. Yet they do not seem to know exactly why they do, and spend much of their time spouting dialogue reminiscent of the Cleaver family on the television show *Leave it to Beaver*.

This lack of realism seems to be intentional, as if by creating such bland characters and cliched surroundings the writers hope the viewer’s attention will be on the major thematic and metaphoric elements of the story. Perhaps more obviously than any of the other movies, *Scissorhands* stands as a self-contained metaphor for society’s inability to accommodate the individual. This approach to the film as a
kind of fable is certainly encouraged by the introductory sequence, as it was in the earlier movies.

The film begins with snow gently falling, which gives way (once again) to the oddly disturbing music of Danny Elfman. This time, however, there is a hint of the "music box" to the score, suggesting childhood innocence perhaps. Nevertheless, the introduction is made more disturbing by the perversion of this innocence. The credits are all slightly askew as they appear on the screen, and are superimposed over shots of grotesque statuary and machinery, covered with dust and cobwebs. The credits end, and the camera pulls back from snow falling to reveal the view of the outdoors from a bedroom window. A grandmother is tucking her grandchild into bed, and is cajoled into telling her a story. This forms the first frame of the nested narrative structure, and sets the film in the land of the fairy tale and cultural myth.

One of the most interesting features of the introduction is the close-up of Vincent Price, who appears to be dead. This not only connects Scissorhands with the 50's and 60's tradition of horror films, but seems to be a merging of the past with the present, as if he has been resurrected for this part—indeed, his gaunt, cadaverous appearance suggest that he has been brought back from the dead. This is appropriate as he plays a character much like Victor
Frankenstein, in effect resurrecting the Frankenstein mythos. As an inventor who created a man but died before he could finish him, he represents God’s abandonment of humanity and/or science’s failure to create a utopian society.

Edward is thus fatally flawed, like the early Gothic villain, but in this instance does not take this out on society. He is not quite the Gothic hero that Darkman or Batman are; he never takes any of the actions against society which would be necessary to see him in the same light as the aforementioned heroes, except perhaps when he kills Kim’s boyfriend Jim at the end. He is ultimately a passive character, reacting to other people but rarely initiating anything. This makes him a convenient metaphor for the marginalized inner self/individual, which is usually controlled easily in society.

Peg seems to notice the castle for the first time in her rear-view mirror, looking backwards through the looking glass so to speak, although she has to have seen it many times before. As she wanders toward the castle, she finds this netherworld both "beautiful" and disturbing. She discovers Edward in the attic (often a metaphor for derangement and insanity) of the castle, which he has partially covered in pictures from magazines—his awareness of, and longing for, the world outside. That this reality
is two-dimensional reality makes no difference to him, and given the nature of the town outside the castle, may be as good as the "real" thing. Edward is insane only by the diegetic society's standards: to us he is no less normal than the other characters. Why she decides to take him home is unclear. As an Avon lady she may be more aware of the role that appearance plays in determining her reality. If we see Edward and the castle as the inner self, then it becomes significant that she is the first (only?) person to ever approach the castle. Perhaps she recognizes something in Edward's world which is lacking in her world—a promise never realized in society. It may also be that as a dealer in masks, she instinctively seeks out irregularities and attempts to smooth them over into a more socially "palatable" form. It is certainly a shock that she accepts him at all, given the archetype she initially appeared to be.

Peg quickly tells him the rules of society once he gets home: "the light concealing cream goes on first, then you blend, and blend, and blend. Blending is the secret, mm-hmm." She does not seem to notice the irony of her own words, of course: appearance and conformity are again inextricably caught up with society's view of reality. Everything that Edward does for the neighborhood relates to changing appearance: trimming hedges, cutting hair, and
clipping dogs. And while from this it at first appears that society can accept difference, it soon becomes clear that they do so only by controlling it, by creating a fashion fad. Appearance does effect reality in this world—-one dog is physically changed from a shaggy mutt to a standard poodle with a show cut just by trimming. Unfortunately, this doesn't work for Edward. He does not quite understand this world, as the court psychologist points out after Edward is picked up for breaking and entering: "His awareness of what we call reality is radically underdeveloped." The psychologist almost seems aware of his culture's limited vision of reality here, but he quickly snaps back into character. It is almost as if the characters have brief flashes of insight about their society and Edward's world, but they cannot (or dare not) go far enough, and so return to their safe roles in society.

Edward is hopelessly outside society, despite the repeated assertions by many that they "know a doctor who might be able to help" him. Assimilation means fixing his appearance. Edward represents not only the autonomous individual/self in conflict with society, but also the apparently broken promise of science and progress to create a better world. The "modern" world of the suburb, with its aluminum Christmas trees and fake snow, likewise represents the failed promise of humanity. The suburb itself
represents the mainstream, middle-class society, which exists only at the expense of marginalizing everyone else. These people have abandoned the city for the suburb, which has become a hopelessly artificial culture of averages and conformity. It is a far cry from the vision of utopia many of us were raised on.

Edward's creator obviously intended to create something beautiful through science, but created something frightening instead. Or perhaps he succeeded, and society failed—society in this community proves itself no different from the peasant community of James Whale's version of Frankenstein (1931). For all our "progress" we are no better off than we were 150 years ago. This cultural stasis is mirrored in Edward's inability to age (at the end he is the same, while the old woman turns out to be Kim) and in the recurrence of the Frankenstein myth itself. The question is never the survival of the free spirit, but whether society will allow that spirit to co-exist.

It is in this way that Scissorhands attacks modern culture and society. The parody of society in the film becomes an attack. Whereas in Batman and Darkman it was an individual hero who rose up to strike back, here there is no such attack. Rather, there is a criticism implicit in the people's persecution and rejection of Edward, and the link with the "barbaric" past this represents.
Just as the criticism of society is more implied than explicitly stated, carnival is less prevalent than in the other movies. The fantastic topiary Edward carves, as well as the statues at the mansion, are perhaps weak elements of the carnival. The same could be said for the attempt to mask Edward, both in terms of make-up and clothes, though these elements certainly do not convey the same power as Joker did in *Batman*, or the clown images did in *Darkman*. Jim calls Edward a freak, and while he may not represent the entire neighborhood in all things, in this he seems to do so. Everybody treats Edward like a side-show: they ask to use his "fingers" for shish-kabob, make jokes about his cutting cards at a card party, and use him as a can opener. Likewise, when we see the laboratory for the first time, it is filled with robotic images of clowns and disembodied hands and feet. Of course, Edward, with his missing hands, is a body grotesque as well. But the strongest element of carnival is in the portrayal of society itself.

With its pastel-colored houses, impossibly neat streets, and stereotyped characters running around, this picture of society is its own carnival. All of these ridiculous exaggerations both provoke and embody our laughter. Society here is the side show, the freak. The mob which forms to chase Edward back to the castle is a kind of carnival run amok. Rather than attacking social barrier and removing
them, this carnival perpetuate these walls, and persecutes difference. As a parody of society, the subject of the film is carnivalistic laughter: our laughter at this exaggeration of the mainstream. And just as Edward does not fight back, carnival is not used to attack society--the film acts as a still-life parody for the audience to contemplate, and react to.

The music is often circus-like, as we view the neighborhood or laboratory. On one occasion all of the men return from the city at the same time as calliope music plays in the background. This music quickly picks up a demented undertone, thanks to Elfman, as they all pull into their respective driveways at the same time. The next morning, they all come out at the same time, get in their cars, and drive off: again to the same type of music.

While there are significant differences between Scissorhands and Batman and Darkman, they all share a kind of fantastic setting. If the films were ranked according to the degree to which they resembled "reality," Edward would be the furthest away, Batman next, and Darkman would be the closest. And yet even Darkman is clearly not quite "the real world" so much as it is a generic stand-in. We can see elements of reality reflected in all the films, but they are always exaggerations and cliches (the colorless urban world of Batman, the "fashionable" colors of suburbia in
Scissorhands; heartless doctors and evil yuppie real-estate developers in Darkman). All of these films are set in another world: the post-modern city of the future in Batman, the pastel pre-fab suburban 60's/80's nightmare of Edward Scissorhands, and (less obviously) the present-plus-five-minutes city of Darkman. None can be said to exist completely in the here and now. In this respect, they resemble the early Gothic novel—whether by means of location or time, the chronotope is always "somewhere else."
Occasionally in the modern Gothic, however, the story seems to take place in the same world we live in, as in the last film I will discuss, Cape Fear.

Cape Fear is so radically different in surface appearance from the other three films that one's first reaction is that it cannot be called Gothic, at least not in the same manner as the others. Upon closer examination, however, the presence of Gothic elements in the film certainly allows, if not requires, an analysis of the film from this perspective. These elements consist primarily of the alter-ego as metaphor for the evil within the individual; the criticism of society, especially as it relates to the oppression of the individual and inner self; the more obvious Gothic elements of forbidden sexual desires and transgressions; and the theme of responsibility for ones
actions, especially as it is played out here in the resemblance to Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I will discuss these elements in the same theoretical framework as the earlier chapters: through the presence of the chronotope, dialogics, and carnival.

*Cape Fear* is complex enough to allow any number of interpretations, and it is not my purpose to deny the validity of such attempts. As a genre, the Gothic is so pervasive that its motifs and themes invade and often take over films which on the surface may not "look" Gothic. *Cape Fear* is one example of this.

Even visually, *Cape Fear* is a tremendous departure from the other films. Where the worlds of the other films were somewhat static, both as a result of the environments (the solemn grey cement buildings of *Batman*; the straight walks and pastel houses of *Edward Scissorhands*; the empty warehouses and bare steel girders of *Darkman*) and of the timeless moment in which all the stories occur, the world of *Cape Fear* is active and fast-paced. The motion of the camera imparts a sense of urgency and dynamism which was lacking in the other films. The shots are frequently positioned above or below the characters, often at odd angles. These non-diegetic elements become a much more integral part of the experience of the film than similar (though less frequent) elements did in the other films.
While they do not necessarily portray the Gothic themes better than the earlier films, these techniques make the film seem much different.

Sam Bowden is a successful lawyer, whose wife, Leigh, is an advertising consultant who designs company logos. They have a fifteen-year old daughter, Danielle, with whom they live in a very large house in a suburb of New Essex. They have their share of domestic problems (Sam’s past infidelity, frequent fights, Danielle’s punishment of attending summer school because she was caught with marijuana) but nothing like the trouble they have once Max Cady shows up.

Max is an ex-convict whom Sam defended fourteen years earlier on a charge of rape and aggravated assault. Sam uncovers evidence that the victim was "promiscuous," which could have helped Cady avoid a jail sentence, as he had twice in the past. Sam knew that Cady committed the crime, and felt that he should go to jail for it, so he buried the evidence. Cady was sentenced to fourteen years in jail. During that time, he taught himself to read, and then studied law so that he could represent himself for an appeal. In the course of reviewing his case, he finds the evidence Sam buried, and discovers his betrayal. He loses the appeal seven times and serves his full jail sentence, which is complete as the movie begins.
Cady shows himself to Sam several times, but Sam does not recognize him. He then introduces himself, and tells Sam that he is "gonna learn about loss." He then begins terrorizing the Bowden family. He follows them around town, appears at their home, and then kills their dog. Nothing he does can be proved legally, however. He implies that he is going to attack Sam's wife or daughter, which prompts Sam to hire a private investigator, Claud Kersek, to watch Cady. Cady, masquerading as an instructor, "seduces" Danielle at school in spite of Kersek, and Sam is convinced to take Kersek's advice to hire some men to "do a hospital job on Cady." This backfire's when Sam warns Cady to leave or he'll "be hurting like you won't believe." Cady not only tapes this, which he uses later in court against Sam, but he beats the men sent to hurt him.

Sam is supposed to go to Atlanta for disbarment proceedings for his threat on Cady, but stays behind with Kersek to shoot Cady if/when he comes to the house to get Leigh and Danielle. Cady breaks in, kills Kersek and the housekeeper Graciela, and leaves. The Bowdens flee to their houseboat on the river/swamp, from the latter of which the movie derives its name, and determine to wait until Cady is caught. Cady, however, has followed them, and attacks them during a storm. As he lights a cigar prior to attempting to rape Danielle, she squirts lighter fluid on him and he jumps
overboard in flames. Before they can get control of the boat, however, Cady comes back. He ties up Sam, confronts him with the evidence he buried, and condemns him. He then turns to Leigh and Danielle and instructs them to take off their clothes. Just then the boat whirls 360 degrees, and sends everybody flying. Leigh and Danielle manage to get off the boat, but Cady catches Sam before he can jump. They fight, and Sam cuffs Cady to a pole just as they hit a rock which destroys the boat. Sam jumps clear, and wakes up next to Cady, who is still chained to a piece of the boat. Sam beats Cady repeatedly with a rock until he is all but senseless, and just as he is about to kill him, the boat drifts out into the stream and sinks, taking Cady with it.

As is apparent from even this summary, *Cape Fear* is a much more subtle and complex form of Gothic than the other films discussed. *Batman, Darkman,* and *Scissorhands* relied to a large extent on generalizations and stereotypes, painting their themes in broad strokes. Director Martin Scorcese, on the other hand, seems more interested in details and multi-level thematic representations. In the earlier films, the critique of "society" was fairly straightforward, and primarily restricted to its distorted social/moral codes. *Cape Fear* takes a more specific political and philosophical stance in its criticism of society, attacking the class system, the judicial system,
and the family unit. The family alone could be seen as a microcosm of society, with its hierarchical and patriarchal structure intact, and all of these elements in combination represent society as a whole. The effect is a more serious societal criticism than was present in the earlier films.  

Max Cady is central to the representation of these themes: he’s a marginalized member of a lower economic class, a symbol of what is wrong with the justice system, and Sam Bowden’s alter-ego and inner self. As a character who evokes Bowden’s inner self, Cady represents an attack on the family structure (and by analogy society) as much or more than he does the repressed individual in society. In this respect, Cape Fear differs significantly from the earlier films’ reliance on the inner self versus society theme.  

One of the first points of similarity between the films is found in the chronotope, though even here there are some significant modifications which need some attention. The Gothic chronotope has always been flexible enough to accommodate change in time (past and future) and location (here and elsewhere) as the generic tradition has grown. In general, it moved quickly from the distant past and elsewhere (The Monk, Udolpho) to the near past and here (Dracula) and then to the future and elsewhere (science
fiction). This "other world" setting may be more a matter of convenience than necessity, however.

I argued in the first chapter that the setting was a means of allowing the reader to distance him or herself from the narrative. With the changes in the chronotope since the early Gothic novel, however, this distance seems to have become less important. The time and place of the story is less important to the Gothic than the themes it portrays. The "other world" aspect of the modern Gothic may simply be a narrative tradition like the "Once upon a time" of fairy tales: a cue to adopt a particular stance toward the story that follows. Whether the story itself then takes place in the past or the present is of little consequence. An illustration of this can be seen in Cape Fear, which is set in the "here and now."

The world which protagonist Sam Bowden and his family inhabit is quite familiar to us, although their standard of living is much higher than most. Their house, though big, is nevertheless a "normal" house. Sam's job as a lawyer naturally allows him a better home, a newer car, and even a houseboat. Yet they go to a movie and the ice-cream parlor like "normal" people. Normal is in this case defined strictly by the American dream, however: a rich, white, two income family, with both parents part of the professional class (advertising and law). This is what makes Cady's
attack on the Bowden’s an attack on society at large—they are a cultural myth. Their role here is analogous to the virtuous protagonists of the early Gothic; they embody the social values and ideals we would like to believe are a reflection of our society. The myth itself has a few cracks in it already, however: adultery, the generation gap, Leigh’s depression, the suggestion of incestuous desire, Danielle’s near expulsion from school, etc.

The appearance and location of this place are also unremarkable, unlike in Batman or Edward Scissorhands. New Essex is a typical (we imagine) southern city which, with the exception of the slight accents of its inhabitants, could be any city. Their house is not a mansion full of narrow twisting hallways and mysterious attics: the Gothic use of a stylized setting is completely absent. This, perhaps, enhances the universal applicability of the Gothic themes in the movie. The Bowden’s marriage is troubled, their daughter Danielle is unhappy, but these elements make them more believable as characters and people. With the exception of Max Cady, there are no larger-than-life characters, nor any unexplainable phenomenon until he shows up.

The location of Cape Fear is neither the city (as in Batman and Darkman) nor the suburbs (as in Edward Scissorhands), and the time is not noticeably the future or
the past. So the chronotope would appear to be here and now, more so, perhaps, than in any other Gothic work since Dracula. Yet, despite the immediacy of Cape Fear's time and location, it still makes use of the nested narrative, which seems to support the earlier conclusion that the nested narrative functions less as an indicator of physical or chronological distance than as a cue toward the stance the viewer is asked to take toward the film. In this regard it is no different from the many other elements (diegetic and non-diegetic) of "unreality" in the modern Gothic.

*Cape Fear* begins much like *Batman* and *Darkman*—amorphous shapes in blue and red appear and fade out, distorted by the surface of a body of water. The sound of a storm runs in the background, eventually giving way to dissonant music as the credits roll by. Each word is split horizontally, the top half shifted slightly to the right, the way a pencil seems to be split when submerged in water and viewed from the side.¹ This split will be represented later by the alter-ego relationship of Cady to Bowden. In fact, the

¹The credits were done by Saul Bellow, who not only did the credits for the original *Cape Fear*, but for many of Alfred Hitchcock's films as well, including *Psycho*, which used the same type of split credit. The score was composed by Bernard Herman, who also wrote the music for the original *Cape Fear* and several Hitchcock films, though he is perhaps best known for the *Psycho* score. These associations with the Hitchcock films may contribute something to the mood and meaning of *Cape Fear* as well.
association with *Psycho* alone, may for some viewers signal the presence of such a relationship to come in the film.

Gradually the images begin to form alternately an eye, nose, teeth, and lips, fading out between each image. Finally, the camera settles on an eye, which at first looks side to side frantically, then focuses straight ahead. The camera pulls back gradually, and the color becomes normal, until we are looking at a girl (the Bowden’s daughter, Danielle) as she speaks (somewhat cynically, it seems) directly to us:

*My Reminiscence.*

I always thought that for such a lovely river, the name was mystifying—*Cape Fear.* When the only thing to fear on those enchanted summer nights was that the magic would end, and real life would come crashing in.

Danielle’s "reminiscence," which we learn later is part of her summer school project before Max Cady shows up, serves as the first half of the frame for the movie. The end of the movie completes the reminiscence and the nested narrative:

We never spoke about what happened, at least not to each other. Fear, I suppose—that to remember his name, or what he did, would be to let him into our dreams. And me? I hardly dream about him
anymore. Still, things won't ever be the same as they were before he came, but that's alright. Because if you hang on to the past, you die a little every day. And me, I know I'd rather live.

The End.2

Her narrative is itself nested between the spoken title (My Reminiscence) and close (The End). Everything which occurs diegetically in the middle of her soliloquy is apparently her narration, though like the early Gothic we never hear her actually narrating during the story. In a sense, this structure locates the story within Danielle's mind: she is, after all, narrating the story from her perspective and memory. This may encourage the viewer to interpret the film differently than if it were simply presented as "reality." Even though the story itself takes place in the past, it is a recent enough past that it is indistinguishable from the present, and so functions more as a cue for the audience to view the film allegorically rather than to provide a physical or emotional distance from the story. Cape Fear, like the earlier films, has several other

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2This theme of hanging on to the dead past, or being controlled by it is a familiar one from the early Gothic. Whether is was original sin, or the "evil" which the villain had committed in the past, the ultimate goal was to be free of the past. This is also mirrored in the Romantic notion of being trapped between two worlds of the past and the future, and the general notion of social change.
elements which perpetuate this perception, but as most of
these elements relate to Max Cady’s character and function
they are better left until the discussion of his
character/role.

Aside from the apparently different chronotope of Cape
Fear, there is one other area in which this film differs
sharply from the earlier films—the relation of the hero and
the alter-ego provides a more balanced or symmetrical
quality to the struggle between good and bad than the more
centralized Gothic hero did. The presence of this latter
character was obvious in Batman and Darkman, and less so in
Scissorhands. But even though Edward was to a large extent
a passive character, he was still able to act as a positive
force on occasion. He was also the central character and
focus of the movie. Cape Fear not only lacks such a hero,
but also a single central character. Like Batman, Cape Fear
seems to have at least two protagonists, or perhaps one
protagonist and one antagonist: Sam Bowden and Max Cady.
Unlike Batman, however, the dark character of Cady functions
best as a convenient alter-ego for Bowden.

As mentioned earlier, the theme of marginalization is
given more specific attention in Cape Fear than in the other
films, and takes the form of the politically/economically
marginalized individual as well as the inner self. As a
prisoner, Cady represents the ultimate marginalized figure.
Society disposes of those who do not conform to its standards (legal in this case) by killing them or banishing them to prisons. Even when they have "paid their debt to society," they are often discriminated against, which is why we now have employment laws prohibiting discrimination against ex-cons just as we do for minorities and other marginalized people. When the police run Cady in for questioning and a strip search, they assume they can get rid of him on a vagrancy charge; after all, everyone knows ex-cons have no money. The film shows a recognition (and condemnation) of the ways in which society discriminates—they know he doesn't have money because they would not give him a job.

There are several other marginalized characters in the film. The Bowden's housekeeper, Graciela, as both a domestic servant and Hispanic woman, represents an underclass. The Bowdens, as upper-crust white society, do not recognize her as an equal. While the family is waiting in the house to trap Cady should he attempt to break in, Graciela drops a pile of magazines. Mrs. Bowden asks Kersek, the private investigator, if they can send her home. When he says no, Leigh remarks that "she is just making me nervous." Nobody seems to recognize that they are discussing this in front of Graciela as if she were a dog or a piece of furniture. Leigh Bowden's annoyed comment about
being nervous is extremely condescending, and the camera briefly shows us that Graciela recognizes this as she is picking up the magazines. This may lend significance to Cady’s adoption of Graciela’s identity later when he kills Kersek.

Earlier in the film, the daughter Danielle tells Graciela about her father’s plan to trap Cady and shoot him. She responds by calling him a barbarian, and the anger and contempt in her voice makes it clear how she views Sam Bowden at least. Danielle is the only one who treats her like a person. This may be because as a teenager she is herself a marginalized character. Her parents do not pay much attention to her, and often treat her as though she were still a baby. They tell her everything is "alright" just after she’s seen them hitting each other. Even though she is a part of the same class as her parents, she has no power, which links her more with Cady and Graciela than with her family. This may be part of the reason Cady is able to assert his influence over her—as members of a marginalized class, they naturally speak the same language, as is evidenced by his speech to her in the basement of the school:

Your parents, they judged you, they got plenty angry at you, didn’t they? They punished you for their sins. . . . See, they punished you for their
sins, and you resent that! And you should resent that! . . . Your daddy won't admit he makes mistakes.

Sam Bowden's "friend", Lori Davis, is a court clerk who, in Sam's somewhat arrogant words, is "just a kid; she's a clerk, I'm a lawyer. She looks up to me!" She is clearly of a lower caste than him, at least in his eyes. He tells her that his wife doesn't know she exists, and condescendingly tells her that "another time, another place, who knows?" as he wants to back off on the "relationship." He treats her as if she has no say in what happens between them, and as if he can avoid all responsibility. But then, the upper classes have traditionally been able to fool around with the hired help: the lord and the serving wench, the aristocrat and the peasant, the master and the slave. As a court clerk in Sam's firm, Lori is essentially the hired help.

When the Bowdens flee to their houseboat toward the end of the film we see an old black couple, possibly married, who apparently live by the river. The woman observes Cady climb out from under the Bowden's car and we expect her to challenge him somehow. Instead, they exchange a look of mutual anger which seems somehow not directed at each other. Later, the man wordlessly rents Cady his boat, effectively aiding him in his attack on the Bowdens.
The rage that all of these characters feel as a result of their marginalization is given expression in Cady's attack on the Bowdens, as "upper-class" society. This theme of the underclass uniting against the upperclass is not only consistent with the Gothic's anti-societal stance and carnival, but with an earlier form of the genre, the southern Gothic. The fear of the "other," primarily Afro-Americans was, in Leslie Fiedler's reading, the motivating force behind the southern Gothic. Cape Fear seems aware of this connection, not only in terms of the theme of "other" versus bourgeois society, or in its location in the South, but also through the words of Claude Kersek (the investigator hired to follow Cady) to Sam Bowden as they are setting the trap for Cady:

You're just scared. That's ok, I want you to savor that fear. You know the South revolves on fear: fear of the Indian, fear of the slave, fear of the damn Union. The South has a fine tradition of savoring fear.

The numerous religious images in the film are a further link to the southern Gothic. Cady obviously sees himself as a Christ figure, akin to the Southern Baptist view of the avenging angel. The pictures of Christ and Mussolini on his

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cell wall and the religious quotes and symbols tattooed on his body reinforce this image. He tells Lee and Danielle Bowden that "My granddaddy used to handle snakes in church, and my grandma used to drink strychnine. You might say I had a leg up, genetically," as he allows a flare to drip molten sulphur on his hand. This religious element is prevalent in the southern Gothic, especially in the works of Flannery O'Connor. We might question the nature of Cady's God, however, which allows him to do the things he does. His quoting of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* later might seem to deny God's existence entirely, leaving Cady and the individual to be their own god/overman, a role he fits at least as well as the avenging angel of Christ.

As I mentioned earlier, Cady is not only a representative of the economically/politically marginalized class, but of those that fall through the cracks of the judicial system. America is supposedly founded on the principle that all people (though only men specifically) are equal, and have the same rights and the same chance at happiness and success. The marginalized characters in all these films, as people who have been denied these rights/opportunities, are walking proof that the system does not do what it says it will. When we confront these characters, we confront our complicity in a system which has made them what they are, and this is always accompanied by
the fear that we will pay the price for having done so, that the underclass will rise up to exact its revenge. As bourgeois viewers, Bowden's fears are ours. This threat is mirrored in the tattoos on Cady's body: "Vengeance is mine!" "My time has not yet come!" and "The Lord is the avenger!"

As a society, we have an uneasy relationship with the penal system: we recognize the need to punish some, but fear that we may punish the innocent as well. Therefore, we set up safe-guards like public defenders and Miranda warnings. But even so, there are some whom we know are punished wrongly and others who are let off free, all because the system cannot cover every contingency. The media is full of stories about rapists and murderers who serve little time, people who get off on technicalities, rich people who go to summer camp jails, etc. All of this fosters the perception that the legal system is basically flawed. It was just such a flaw that led Sam to break the law in the name of justice, by burying the evidence that Cady's victim was "promiscuous."

In much the same manner that Batman and Darkman attacked society with its own weapons, in his revenge Cady appropriates the tools of the system which oppressed him. And in the same way that society created him through economic and political oppression, it created him as the avenger as well. Because of his social status prior to his
jail sentence Cady had no access to education, which is the only way to power and/or success in American society. Ironically, it is because society sends him to jail that he is given time for and access to education. He teaches himself to read, educates himself as a lawyer, and discovers his betrayal. His appeal is turned down seven times, which seems strange given the obvious grounds for mistrial based on the buried report. It is almost as if the system protects its own, even at the expense of self-contradiction. This simply reinforces Cady’s accurate perception that society is rigged against him. He then determines to avenge himself by using the system against Sam.

Unlike Sam, who initially responded to the policeman’s suggestion of setting a trap for Cady by saying he couldn’t "operate outside the law! The law’s my business!" Cady can do so. He uses the law in his favor, but commits acts which are illegal. He poisons their dog, and eventually attacks them, but nothing can ever be legally proved. All of his means of harassment are either within legal boundaries or protected indirectly by them, which again shows us the system is flawed. Just as the system can be used to "lean on undesirables" it can be used to fight back as well, and ethically there is no difference. The extent to which this is true becomes obvious when Cady gets the restraining order, initially filed by Sam, granted in his favor against
Sam. He has beaten Sam at his own game. The viewer, too, feels that the law is no protector here, and that it has come down to "kill or be killed." This is a frightening concept for a culture which prides itself on a civilized system of law and order.

Sam, both as a symbol of the class system which created Cady and as the man who (perhaps) single-handedly condemned Cady to prison, is responsible for him. We have some sympathy for Sam—the victim’s promiscuity did not give Cady the right to rape and beat her. Sam did what he felt was the "right" thing to do, regardless of the law. Whatever his motives, however, he breaks his oath and violates the code of his profession. We may understand his reasoning, but he is still wrong to do it. In his actions, he is no different than his earlier Gothic incarnation, Victor Frankenstein. The purest motives do not absolve the individual of responsibility. Victor intended to advance the causes of science, to help prolong life. Yet when things go wrong, he abandons his creation, just as Sam and society seemingly abandon Cady. We cannot come down entirely on the side of either character, no more than we could in Frankenstein. Of course, the monster is perhaps more deserving of our sympathies than Victor, and Sam is ultimately the character we side with. Nevertheless, the moral ambiguity we feel in contemplating both sides of the
issues is the same. In their interactions throughout Cape Fear, there are several moments in which one could substitute Frankenstein and the monster for Sam and Cady.

There seems to be little doubt that Cady committed the crime—he never once denies it as he persecutes the Bowden family. His complaint is that Sam buried the evidence, thereby denying him equal justice under the law, just as the monster’s complaint to Frankenstein is that he has been denied the life of love and companionship due all human beings. Cady’s complaint is valid, we know, and yet we understand Sam’s motivations. This points up our dissatisfaction with the legal system: both Sam and Cady are right in their own sense. The conflict here is ethics versus justice, and though we want them to be the same thing, we know that often they are not. The Gothic narrative explores our discomfort of this space in between such dichotomies: good and evil, light and dark, etc.

Bowden’s response toward Cady is to abuse the legal system again by having Cady hauled in and submitted to a strip search. Robert Mitchum, as Police Lt. Elgart, jokes about this, saying "We’ll give him a full body strip search—jerk a knot in his tail. There are so many ways on the books to lean on an undesirable." Sam does not care about whether he was right or wrong, he wants only to be rid of Cady, as Frankenstein wanted to be rid of his creation. Sam
hires an investigator to lean on Cady who again illustrates a disregard for law or justice: "I don't give a rat's ass about your rights." He later calls Cady a "white trash piece of shit," which again highlights Cady's economic and political role in society.

Cady is aware of these inequalities, which is what he is really avenging in one sense by attacking the Bowden family, just as Frankenstein's monster attacked Victor's family for the same reason. As Cady accuses Sam in a mock trial on the houseboat, he says Sam betrayed the principles of "our" trade, equating himself with Sam. On several other occasions in the film, Cady openly asks Sam if he thinks he is better than him, and suggests that they are "colleagues" and "fellow counselors." Except for this last quote, these exchanges could have come straight from the pages of Shelley's work. There the creature's main argument is that he must be the same as any newborn child, and Victor the same as any father, and that therefore Victor owes him at least what all humans owe each other. When Cady and Sam meet on the street early in the film, Cady suggests that if Sam had been sent to prison, he would not have been put in with the "white trash" like Cady—they'd have a special place for him.

Sam's girlfriend Lori makes fun of Cady because he doesn't understand the word debauchery. She condescendingly
says "yeah, it's a three syllable word."\textsuperscript{4} She, too, is a marginalized character to a certain degree, though she does not recognize this. Yet, in her eyes at least, Cady is even below her. He exacts his retribution from her later by beating and raping her. Again, just as the monster in Frankenstein attacks Victor by killing his wife, Cady's attack is directed toward the women in Sam's life.

His obsession with being as good or better than any man is evident in other ways, too. He has a bumper sticker which reads "You're a VIP on earth. I'm a VIP in heaven," and his self-celebratory monologue after he beats up the three men sent to attack him attacks the greatest "inequality" possible:

I am not God, God is not me.
I am not as big as God; he is as big as me!
I cannot below or above God be!

When he kills the investigator, he calls him a "white trash piece of shit." As Cady wraps up his condemnation of Sam on the boat, he bellows triumphantly "Now you and I will truly be the same!" All of this revolves around the issue of him being equal or above everybody else: the reversal of reality as society sees it, but the realization of a basic truth in his eyes.

\textsuperscript{4}Actually, it is a four-syllable word!
Cady attacks Bowden for abusing the legal system. Yet many might say that it was his moral/ethical duty to abuse it—Cady was guilty and might have been set free. He had beaten two prior raps on the same charges. The system would probably have allowed him back on the street to rape and beat somebody else. The system allows Cady to terrorize the Bowdens (or at least cannot prevent it). Yet for following the spirit of the law, Sam is threatened with disbarment, his marriage and the lives of his family are put in jeopardy. Thus Cape Fear indirectly attacks the judicial/legal system and, by corollary, all of society: America is almost culturally defined by its legal system—"With liberty, and justice for all."

The setting of the story near the fourth of July is hardly accidental either. The celebration of the nation’s birthday makes a convenient backdrop not only for carnivalistic images, but for emphasizing the equation of country with the legal system (which, after all, grows out of the Constitution), the family, and the American Dream. This celebration is hypocritical in nature, as it symbolizes a freedom and equality which we know do not exist universally.

One of the first, and most obvious examples of carnival in the film is the fireworks. The colors are unbelievable hues of lime green, purple, and other brilliant tones rarely
seen in fireworks. Neither can they be completely explained by the Fourth of July, for as Leigh Bowden remarks to her husband Sam: "It’s not even July 3rd yet." These fireworks are still going off long after the Bowdens have gone to bed. Leigh wakes up in the middle of the night, and the fireworks are still going as strong as they were before. Most displays last no more than an hour or two, and then only on the Fourth itself, so this display seems highly unusual.

Leigh goes to look out the window and sees Cady on the wall. The camera shifts to three different views of him, as Leigh looks out three different windows. In each shot, he is shown against a spectacular backdrop of fireworks, and it is hard not to associate him with this carnivalesque image. The sense of pent-up energy being released in sudden, though controlled, violent moments is analogous to carnival itself and Cady’s actions in the film.

Cady is connected with the carnival in yet another form of Independence Day celebration—the parade. The camera first approaches the parade from above, at a 45-degree angle. The disturbing music from the introduction masks the parade music as the camera cuts to a side view of the parade. The images of George Washington, three soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima, and other patriotic icons are given a strange meaning when accompanied by the music—an almost tragic sense of the betrayal of the principles these
images are supposed to represent. Sam sees Cady on the other side (of course) of the parade and cuts across its current; at right angles to all that it represents. Cady is staring at Sam's wife and/or daughter, and says "Mmm-mm. Hot as a firecracker on the fourth of July. You sure are lucky to have her, boy." Sam punches him out, and is restrained by the crowd as Cady berates him for his "uncivilized" reactions. Sam's anger may simply be the result of another man lusting after his wife or, if Cady is referring to Danielle, in reaction to the insinuation that Sam would like to sleep with his own daughter.

There are other aspects of carnival within the film as well. The previously mentioned tattoos which cover Cady's body are a prime example. Aside from their analogous relation to the bodily disfigurement of Frankenstein's monster, they are also carnivalesque signifiers of his "otherness." Tattoos are a traditional sign of the outsider/outcast: bikers, Vietnam vets, circus "freaks," and even carnival workers. The large cross which covers his back, the numerous quotes from the bible, and especially the tattoo of a crying clown holding a gun in jail are as awe-inspiring as the fireworks were. As Mitchum's character says, "I don't know whether to look at him or read him!" And when Cady is picking up Lori in the bar, the camera is again at strange angles, and the background is filled with
balloons and streamers, presumably for the Fourth of July. Cady’s laughter is a further link to carnival as well, especially since it rarely is related to humor. His laughter in the theater, for example, or at the end when Sam is beating him on the head with a rock, is threatening in its chilling inappropriateness.

As we saw with the previously discussed movies, the inner self is often portrayed in the Gothic work as a marginalized character. This character can be a hero, as in Darkman; a villain, as the Joker was in Batman; or something in-between, like Edward. Max Cady, as the manifestation of Sam Bowden’s inner self, is more like the Joker. He is obviously associated with carnival and an attack on the status quo, but his attack represents a kind of controlled chaos. He operates within societal norms only as long as it suits his purpose; at heart he is a force of destruction rather than revolution.

In one sense, of course, Cady can be seen as Sam’s past catching up with him. His actions fourteen years ago, which he has been able to keep to himself all this time, are suddenly made manifest in Cady and his vendetta. Cady is Sam’s guilt personified, returning to haunt him from the moment Cady is released from jail (the self is set free). Immediately after Cady is released from jail, the camera cuts to the Bowden house, and we hear a voice (which we
later learn belongs to Leigh Bowden) intoning that "The idea is to resolve the tension, I need to find a motif. ..."
This tension is diegetically referring to her work on a company logo, but could also relate to the family tension or, non-diegetically, to the tension the audience feels as a result of the movie's progression, or even to the tension between the individual/inner self (Cady) and our society/judicial system (Sam). The theme of the inner self is heightened by Cady's own words as he speaks to Danielle in the basement of the school: "See that book you have? Thomas Wolfe? It's all about self-discovery, the inner voyage." And later:

Your daddy won't admit he makes mistakes . . .
Every man carries a circle of hell around his head like a halo, your daddy too. Every man, every man must go through hell to reach his paradise.

Here again we hear the echo of Frankenstein's refusal to accept responsibility for his creation.

On one level, it seems impossible to see Cady as Sam's inner self, because Cady is seen by and interacts with characters other than Sam. And yet the film often seems to provide such clues to this interpretation, clues which seem to make no sense diegetically. Often, only Sam sees Cady at the parade, outside the ice-cream store, etc., so that he is almost an unreal figure. This impression is reinforced
by Sam’s assertion to the police that Cady didn’t come into the house and they didn’t let the dog out of the house, yet Cady killed the dog. There is no explanation as to how this could have happened, at least initially. Later, Sam wakes up and tells Leigh he knows how Cady did it: "I know how the dog died—I just had the weirdest feeling he was already in the house." This is no explanation at all: how can Cady already be in the house? He had to get inside at some point. One explanation is that he is Sam’s inner self. Here the inner self is made up entirely of forbidden impulses and reprehensible behavior, with no redeeming characteristics. This self is portrayed as an autonomous character which the protagonist must confront. In Darkman, the self came out of the character and took him over. In Batman and Edward Scissorhands, the inner self was already actualized. And in all three examples, the self was simply different, not evil.

The traditional view has always been that the family is the safe, protective body, and that the danger of sexual and physical abuse lies in the unknown stranger. The reality, however, is that the real danger to women is within the family and relationships—in the power structure and in the marriages. The common wisdom that rape is committed solely by the stranger in the dark alley, is a myth. In light of
this reality, Cady’s actions make an interesting metaphor for familial violence.

Further evidence for this can be found elsewhere in the film. Sam tells Kersek (the investigator) that "[Cady’s] able to slip into the house, and out undetected, although is he out I can’t tell, he’s either out or he’s in, I can’t tell." We assume, of course, that Sam is just upset and raving a bit, but it also lends the impression that Cady is an ethereal figure. Likewise, we are never given any account of how Cady gets into the house later and kills Graciela and Kersek. One explanation is that such scenes operate on a supra-real level, analogous to those moments in *Frankenstein* which Diane Johnson refers to in support of a psychological interpretation of the monster as alter ego: "in the case of this curious novel, psychological explanations work better than others to account for what would otherwise seem to be defects in the plot and construction. How else explain the deep sleeps and trances which prevent Frankenstein from impeding his monster at the moment he is killing . . ." (Johnson xvii). These events represent Sam’s own guilt, and as a part of his inner landscape are not subject to the "laws" of reality.

When Sam discovers Kersek’s body, he slips in the blood and ends up with blood all over him and the bloody gun in his hand—almost as if Cady’s actions were his own. Sam
packs up the family and flees to their houseboat, but Cady, incredibly, stays with them. This, and their subsequent conflicts on the boat suggest a "you can run but you can't hide" motif, whether it's himself or his past that Sam is trying to hide from. As in Frankenstein, the confrontation between the characters is inevitable given the nature of their relationship as inner and outer selves. This confrontation needs to take place in the "unreal" world of the mind; in Frankenstein, this world was the arctic north--here, it is the river/swamp.

The last ten minutes of the movie are difficult to accept on a strictly literal level. The pairing of the storm with Cady's actions again suggests psychological turmoil as it did in the early Gothic, especially since Cady's release from prison was paired with a storm as well. Sam pleads with Cady to let him control the boat as it is tossed about: "Cady, somebody has to man the boat--we're heading into unpredicted waters." This statement is reminiscent of Peyton's melodramatic comments about the dark in Darkman--it makes sense diegetically in reference to the danger the boat is in, but demands a wider interpretation as well. These "unpredicted waters" could as easily be the mind or psyche as the river itself, appropriately named Cape Fear.
The corridors of the early Gothic castle have here become the channels of the river/swamp, and the storm reflects Sam's battle with himself. Sam and Cady are ultimately left alone on the boat to fight each other to the death, and by now it seems obvious that Sam is the only one who can really kill Cady. After a brief scuffle on the boat Sam jumps free and, in a visually confusing transition in which the film appears to be loaded backwards and upside-down while Sam is airborne, we cut to Sam lying on the shore. Sam has not killed Cady, and so of course Cady is still there with him.

Cady laughs as Sam beats him with a rock, until Sam picks up a large boulder and screams, "I'm going to kill you," to which Cady replies, "You already sacrificed me!" Again, diegetically this refers to Sam burying the report, but also speaks to the larger issue of abandonment of the individual and perhaps the self. Cady drifts out into the river chained to what's left of the deck, and begins babbling incoherently as it sinks. It may be that the blows to his head have damaged his brain, or he may be speaking in tongues. Or perhaps Sam has moved beyond the world Cady inhabits, by not only abandoning him, but by destroying him completely. The blood on his palms seems to suggest either his own guilt, or stigmata. If it were the latter, though,
it would perhaps indicate Sam's internalization of Cady's evil, since Cady is the one who was crucified.

As Sam's alter-ego, Cady attacks the social institutions of marriage and the family. His attempted rapes of Leigh and Danielle Bowden can be seen as a metaphor for Sam's inner desires as well. Granted, just because Cady can be seen on occasion as an alter ego, it does not follow that everything Cady does is what Sam would like to do. But there are several indications within the film which suggest familial violence and sexual tension. Scorsese himself, in an interview with Premiere magazine, said he "Catholicized" the script because the Bowden family in the 1962 version seemed too happy, too unreal. The interviewer sums up Scorsese's analysis of the film: "It became a drama of sexual guilt and punishment." Scorsese then says that "Cady was sort of the malignant spirit of guilt, in a way, of the family--the avenging angel. Punishment for everything you ever felt sexually" (Biskind 73). This theme of forbidden sexual desires is a direct descendent of the Gothic tradition.

The revelation of Sam's past infidelity is the first indication that all is not well in paradise. Leigh is obviously unhappy with their marriage, and her reaction to his "affair" with Lori is more a vehicle for all of her frustrations than a new rift. The cracks in the "perfect"
family are close to the surface and begin to show at the slightest provocation. Leigh suggests that if they had a gun for protection against Cady, they might shoot each other. Sam replies that, if not, then Danielle might shoot them. When Sam and Leigh have sex, we see her staring off over his shoulder, vaguely dissatisfied. She later gets up and puts lipstick on while he sleeps, perhaps imagining a lover, only to rub it off guiltily later before Sam can see it. There is a tremendous amount of tension in all the Bowden’s interactions, and violence seems to be waiting just underneath the surface, as it did in the early Gothic villain’s propensity for flying into rages of anger or sexual desire toward the heroine.

Sam’s relationship with Danielle seems a mixture of paternal love, sexual tension, and violence. The theme of violence toward children is first brought up in the movie the Bowdens go to see: Problem Child. The scene shown involves the father (John Ritter) tearing apart the child’s room, throwing things out the window, and screaming "Here’s Johnny": a line familiar to many of us from The Shining. This scene occurs right after the one in which Leigh Bowden is telling her daughter that she "needs to resolve the tension" between stability and dynamism for the rental car company logo. After Danielle shakes her head in exaggerated derision and walks away, Leigh takes their dog’s face in her
hands and tells it that "the hospital switched babies on me." Her mild irritation with her daughter takes on a larger significance when immediately combined with the theme of familial violence of *Problem Child* in the next scene, almost as if the movie scene is the unconscious acting out of the Bowden's troubles.

Soon after, the Bowdens are at the ice-cream shop, and Sam is wrestling playfully with Danielle. He is apparently too rough with her, though he does not know it, as she is making grimaces of genuine discomfort. This scene also seems sexual, possibly because of the way she taunts him into it: "You should have just punched [Cady] out!" Her encouragement of a masculine use of force heightens our sense of her (culturally defined) feminine passivity and, by extension, her sexuality.

The Gothic theme of sexual violence is common throughout the film. The fights between Sam and Lee are often ferocious. In addition to creating stress between them, the fights also affect their daughter, who at one point tells her friend that nothing much is going on, "I'm just losing my mind, that's all." Later, as Sam is talking to Danielle about her unintentional meeting with Cady, whom she assumes is the drama teacher at the school, Sam becomes violent and pushes her up against the bed board. He quickly apologizes,
but the damage is done both to Danielle and to his character's role as a "good" father.

There is a tremendous amount of sexual tension throughout the film, most of it centering around Sam. We know he has lost control of these urges at one point in his life, and so suspect he may do so at any time again; a perception reminiscent of the early Gothic villain. His physical flirtation with Lori during racquetball may not be far removed (ethically) from having sex with her. When Cady asks him what he thinks about a group of teen-age girls walking down the street, Sam looks very uncomfortable, as if he is attracted to them and knows he shouldn't be. There is nothing unusual about this, perhaps, but it does provide a common ground between Cady and Sam.

The flirtation with the theme of incest in the early Gothic is present in Cape Fear as well. Sam's relationship with his daughter Danielle, too, is charged with sexual tension, and as we see him together with her more often than the wife, the lines between wife and daughter become somewhat blurred. His wife teases him as he complains about Danielle's punishment for smoking marijuana: "Yeah, it's right up there with incest . . ." Like most fathers, he is uncomfortable with his daughter's emerging sexuality. He jokes about the drama teacher getting her interested in himself instead of school, and tells her to put some clothes
on as he sees her lying in bed, clothed only in panties and a tank-top.

Danielle is presented as an awakening sexual force, and the audience is aware of her sexuality. The clothes she wears often seem too small for her, as if to emphasize that she has physically outgrown childhood, but is not completely aware of it. This makes it difficult to view any of the characters' actions toward her in a non-sexual way, even her father's. Thus, when Sam reacts violently toward Danielle's suggestion that Cady "didn't force himself on [her]," the audience also perhaps sees his reaction as jealousy: "No! No! Do you hear me? There will never be a connection. Did he touch you? Did he?" Certainly Sam's is a father's rage at the thought of his virginal daughter being touched by any man, let alone a psychopath like Cady, but perhaps it is also because of his own inner tensions regarding her sexuality. His rage can also be seen as his own censorship of such behavior on his part: the appropriation of society's voice in condemnation of his impulses.

Sam is responsible for most of the pain in his family. His infidelity started it all, and he is, rightly or not, responsible for Cady's attack on the family, just as Victor Frankenstein was responsible for the attacks on his family. If we acknowledge the possibility that Cady is in some way a part of Sam, Cady's actions take on new meaning. When Sam
is confronted with Lori’s pain in the hospital, he is confronting his own potential violence. The most interesting scene in this regard is the scene in the basement of the school.

If we momentarily substitute Sam for Cady, this scene becomes an startling allegory for the abuse of a child by a parent. Danielle thinks she must descend to the basement of the school for Drama class, although why the theater is in the basement at the end of a dimly lit hallway is uncertain (unless, of course, we see this as the modern day equivalent of the Gothic castle and its passages). She comes out in the theater alone, with no other classmates present. A gingerbread house, reminiscent of Hansel and Gretel, is set up on the stage against a backdrop of a darkened forest. The fairy tale atmosphere not only suggests childhood innocence, but also connects the scene to the tradition of fairy tales and their psychological function. Bruno Bettelheim has suggested that such classic fairy tales as Hansel and Gretel and Little Red Riding Hood actually serve as allegorical representations of psycho-sexual and developmental conflicts.  

Cady comes out of the house and offers Danielle a joint. He proceeds to gain her confidence by talking about growing

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5For a complete analysis of the psychological functioning of fairy tales, see Bruno Bettelheim’s The Uses of Enchantment.
up and sex. When she asks him where he is from, he says "I'm from the Black Forest. Maybe I'm the big bad wolf."

If we see Cady as Sam's inner self, this scene begins to get very uncomfortable. Fathers often read fairy tales to their children, and this seems almost a sexual re-telling, especially since dad is usually the valiant hunter in Red Riding Hood, not the wolf. Cady/Sam then pushes his thumb into her mouth, not completely by force, and kisses her. This scene is very disturbing at this point, mostly because of the idea that this maniacal male sociopath is taking advantage of a young girl, but also perhaps because we do identify him and his actions with Sam.

In the end, Cady is "killed" and they all live, if not happily, at least comfortably ever after. Somehow, it doesn't really matter though. Danielle tells us that they don't talk about him, or what happened that night— that to do so would be to let him into their dreams. They have not learned anything here; they are repressing and ignoring their troubles just as they were in the beginning of the film. This time, though, it seems almost as if Sam has completely internalized Cady, and the threat of violence and trouble seems stronger than when it primarily concerned Sam's past infidelity, etc. All of Sam's previous transgressions seemed human, and therefore redeemable. Sam never accepts responsibility for his actions, however, and
killed Cady rather than come to terms with him. Of course, in this case, it is not possible to come to terms with the inner self, and that is even more frightening. He and Cady are, in Cady's words, "truly the same." Sam has made his choice, and it is to reject responsibility for his actions as an individual and for Cady's existence as member of society. This is no resolution; it is a postponement of the inevitable. Danielle says she hardly dreams about Cady anymore, which implies that she did dream about him frequently at one time, and those dreams could not have been pleasant ones. And, dreams being the domain of the subconscious, we know the extent to which this is a part of all their lives now, inextricably merged within their lives and identity as a family. Far from solving their problems, Sam has doomed himself and his family by killing/rejecting Cady. If Sam has repressed the part of him that Cady represented, rather than acknowledging it, we might wonder in what form this "darkness" will come out later.

In *Frankenstein*, it was the creator who was killed in the end, rather than the monster. As unappealing as Cady was personally, if we accept that he represents Sam's inner self, we cannot feel that his death is the answer. The Gothic motif of the abandoned and persecuted inner self is always left unresolved, so that the reader/viewor is left feeling as if the story has suddenly taken a wrong turn.
This is admittedly not as strong in *Cape Fear* as it was in *Darkman* or *Edward Scissorhands*, but it is still present. It is in this unresolved tension that the Gothic is most effective in calling for social change. It is this last which is at the heart of the Gothic's use of carnival and anti-institutional motifs, and which will provide the subject for my conclusion.
CONCLUSION: 
THE GOTHIC AS AN AGENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The Gothic’s criticism of society has never been indiscriminate, any more than the villain was completely evil. Like the element of remorse in the villain in the early Gothic, social criticism has not only remained a part of the Gothic, but has also become more prominent. Bunnell describes this aspect of the "Gothic philosophy":

Although not demanding that tradition, rules, order, and beliefs be completely abandoned, the Gothic does ask us to re-evaluate and re-examine their validity and purpose. It recognizes the passage of time and, consequently, the necessity for change. A static society—be it created by purposeless tradition, evil houses, or un-dead vampires—retards or even denies time. . . . So while society and its institutions are not necessarily evil or hypocritical, a rigid adherence to unchanging doctrines, traditions, and ideas is, for it creates an isolated and closed world. (83)
In this light, the anti-institutional element of the early and modern Gothic might be better characterized as anti-stasis. Social and cultural norms and traditions necessarily lag behind the need that creates them, and so society is continually one step behind. The nature of such traditions is that they are resistant to change—if they were not there could be no collective. The extent of this resistance then determines the extent of forces needed to change them: natural evolution, social and legislative protest, or revolution.

The Gothic critique of society lies partway between gradual evolution and revolution. The role of literature as public discourse is of course familiar; Bakhtin makes it the cornerstone of all of his discussion of literary theory. While the thrust of this for him is the means of discussing the continuation of genres through the echoes and reverberations of all works as they "inform," and are informed by, each other, it also provides us with a way of discussing literature as a societal battleground of ideas. As public discourse, the novel is obviously influenced by current social conditions, and while it may not be the author's primary purpose to argue for or against social change, his or her work cannot help but do so, at least indirectly.
The Gothic has continually made this a part of its makeup. Whether is was the indirect criticism of women’s roles in society in Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic, the direct criticism of the Church and "higher" morality of M.G. Lewis’ The Monk, or the leveling/destruction of social status in Otranto and Vathek, the Gothic novel always embodied social and institutional criticism. In this sense, we can perhaps see the rationale for labelling the Gothic the novel of political terror, anti-religion, or women’s fiction. At the same time, we can also see the futility of attempting a definition based solely on one or another of these distinctions. As society changes, the themes of the Gothic will change as well.

With the increased role of science in society came the fears of what that science might do, and so we saw Jekyll and Hyde, and Frankenstein. As discussion of marginalized "minorities" in American culture becomes more prevalent, we find this theme appearing in films like Cape Fear. Some of these themes have remained constant, just as the problems they represent remain constant in society. The general mistrust of science and progress are still as prevalent as they were over 100 years ago, as we saw in the discussion of the earlier films. The theme of the marginalized individual or inner self, on which I base much of my delineation of the
Gothic tradition, is perhaps the most constant of such themes.

In the formation of social laws and conventions, there is little room for individuality. Though we recognize, and even celebrate, the role of the eccentric individual, as a cultural body we seem to have difficulty providing a niche for this figure in society. The nature of society is to level all radical extremes to form a core of common ground on which most can agree. This common ground is synonymous with the legislative, judicial, and political arenas, but also includes social mores, etc. While there is a certain tolerance for the "fringe" elements, if they begin to form a unified voice they become a threat to the mainstream, as the counter-culture in the 60's did. And so, to protect itself, society punishes those who deviate too far from the "norm."

We create this norm, a hopeless construct called the "average" person, and use this as the yardstick by which we then measure ourselves. If this construct were truly an average of all of human characteristics, the disparity between the individual and the average would not be so significant. But rather than creating an average citizen we have manufactured an idealistic cultural icon, by endowing him or her with all the ideals we like to think our society represents. Not surprisingly, then, we rarely measure up to this standard. And if this is not enough, through
advertising and popular media we have since endowed these people with unattainable beauty as well as ideals. It is only natural that we resent those unrealistic standards which tell us we are "inferior." It is this resentment which responds to the Gothic's attack on social norms as far as they deny individuality and the inner self.

This theme lends itself well to the adoption of carnival, which in its modern form is a force of revolution and destruction of social hierarchies. Yet while there is resentment of social norms and traditions, there is also the recognition that they are necessary, and so we are perhaps uneasy in contemplating their total demise. This is why in the modern Gothic, we often see the attack on society balanced by a force working for society, and why the early Gothic villain not only exhibited remorse for his actions, but also inevitably was defeated.

It is the fear that any change for society means the total abandonment of all beliefs and traditions which is being played out in the conflict between Batman and Joker, for instance. Joker represents an attack on all traditions and beliefs, whereas Batman quietly condemns some traditions and not others. Were Batman completely outside of society, Napier's henchman would not be able to hold commissioner Gordon hostage to get Batman to release Napier in Axis Chemicals. When Vicki Vale tells Wayne that his house and
all his "stuff" (the trappings of a static "society") does not seem like him, we might expect him to say that it isn’t. Instead, his response defines his stance toward society and change: "Some of it is very much me. Some of it isn’t. . . ." He does not, however, elaborate on just what is acceptable and what isn’t. He is able to recognize that while there is a need for some change, this does not entail discarding the whole system. His role is to point out that there is a need for change—it is up to the audience to determine what that change is or is not.

Batman does act as a force for change, however, and in so doing holds out further hope that the individual and society can co-exist. His destruction of the chemical factory is compatible with society’s prevailing attitude toward the environment today, and his appropriation of science and technology in his work seems to say that these forces do not always have to lead to trouble.

Initially, Batman operated almost clandestinely, without fanfare or public recognition. People did not know if he was a rumor or a myth. His public existence becomes more pronounced as the movie progresses, through the news-media and word of mouth, though society was still mistrustful. When he captures the balloons in the parade (after he and Vale profess a desire to "love" each other) he is operating in the most public environment yet. The last scene in the
movie, where Gordon reads Batman's letter and reveals the Batsignal demonstrates society's full acceptance, and even celebration of the self or individual.

One might wonder if this acceptance can result in real change, or whether society will simply appropriate the "image" of Batman instead, the way that it appropriates carnival--so that it is actually used to control the "self" rather than encourage it. (Will Gotham, too, soon be inundated with Batcups, Bathats, Batshirts and [Bat forbid] Batmovies?)

Joker embodies the need for change, as well as the dangers of not changing. The crooked cop, Ekhardt, tells Napier that he takes orders only from Grisholm, whom Napier has already described as "a tired old man who couldn't run the city" without him. Grisholm represents a static system of worn-out traditions, and is later killed because of his refusal to change. Napier responds to Ekhardt by telling him that he should "think about the future," and in his warning we hear a warning to society as well. Ekhardt does not mend his ways and when he later helps set Napier up, and Napier again tells him to think about the future, the warning is accompanied by a bullet. The message here is that if society cannot to accept change, and in this case the individual/inner self, carnival and revolution will result.
Darkman holds out less hope for the individual’s acceptance, in that Peyton seems completely outside of society at the end. And yet, his final assertion that he is everyone and no one unites him figuratively with all of society. And Julie’s desire to be with him, despite her blind spots, holds some hope for a change. While he is for the moment shunned by society, it is implied that this is an impossible isolation which will some day be overcome, either through social evolution, or by force of revolution (carnival).

Despite his isolation, Peyton fights for society, just as Batman did. His attack on Strack represents the fight against the most negative aspects of social "progress." He does not become a raging chaotic force as Joker does in Batman. He still wants to belong, which is why he works so hard on his mask. Eventually, however, he realizes that it is not he that needs to change, but society—the mask is not the answer. In the end, he realizes that assimilation is not possible for him in the present: if it were, the film would not be Gothic. The call for change is effective only if the movie resists closure. But in Batman’s actions it is implied that if change does not come, if room for the individual to exist despite "flaws" is not made, the carnival unleashed toward Strack et al. will be turned against society at large.
Edward Scissorhands and Cape Fear do not play out the theme of social change in the same ways. Both films rely on a much more pessimistic portrayal of those elements which need change, rather than producing a character who may effect that change. In Edward, it is society’s reliance on conformity and appearance, and the attendant persecution of the different which is being parodied, and hence criticized. In the end, there is no progress toward changing this. The assimilation hinted at is not possible, and Edward is driven back to the castle/subconscious. The daughter, Kim, seems to truly love Edward, yet even she cannot go with him in the end, as we would expect her to do if the movie ended like the traditional fairy tale it seemed to be. The only reason for this seems to be that Kim is a part of society, and by virtue of her inclusion, can never be with Edward. The tension produced by the ending here is perhaps greater than in any of the other movies, because we all know how fairy tales end, and Edward Scissorhands violates this traditional form.

In Cape Fear, the justice system as it represents social ideals is criticized, as well as the abandonment of the individual, and the attack on the family. Never does there seem to be much hope held out that any of this is possible to avoid. It seems that there can never be any reconciliation between Cady and Sam. This is part of what
makes the film so devastating: Sam must kill Cady or be killed. Yet at the same time, we feel that this is not the answer to the conflict between self/individual and society. Sam is forced into an action which can only compound the trouble--his prior mistake forces him to consciously make another. This is also our fear that our past mistakes as a society (the atom bomb, Vietnam, etc.) have doomed us to make more.

Yet in their pessimism, these films are also hopeful. As Orwell said about the dystopia, nobody could create such a dismal picture who did not also have a view of utopia for comparison. The purpose is not to say that all is hopeless, and we should give up, but to provoke a reaction in the viewers/readers, to get them to reject such a pessimistic view, and to then ask themselves "where did the characters go wrong?"

And so all four films retain the essential message of hope for change, and the accompanying warning of violence through carnival and revolution if change is ignored. This also helps explain the Gothic tradition's survival to modern day: we are in no way less in need of social criticism and change than we were when the Gothic first arrived on the scene. Many of the religious and social mores which isolated the 19th-century individual from society on the basis of "unacceptable" thoughts and emotions have changed,
and many have not. Those that have changed have more than likely been replaced by new mores which have the same effect. We have by no means reached the point where as a society we can completely tolerate individuality, wherein we can see a wide range of emotions, desires, and thoughts as healthy. The only way this will happen is if society is constantly reminded of the need for this diversity. As Bunnell says at the end of her essay on the Gothic:

... the intellectual response the Gothic demands of us... may not reveal any deep, dark secrets regarding the meaning of life, [but] it will probably enlighten us a little more about our inner self and behavior. (99)

Judging from the continued presence of this genre, it would seem that many feel that society is still too rigid in its adherence to standards of what is and is not acceptable. And if as a society we value this message, perhaps we will change. If not, there are always the Jokers and Darkmen to help us along.


Porte, Joel. "In the Hands of an Angry God: Religious Terror in Gothic Fiction." (See Thompson).


