

The Gothic Genre

■ A Brief Overview

Gothic Literature

- Developed as a genre in 18th century
- Is devoted to tales of horror, the darker, supernatural forces
- English Gothic novel origin: Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764)



-
- Derives its name from similarities to medieval Gothic architecture
 - Also derives name from a barbaric Germanic tribe, the Goths



Gothic Literary Motifs



The Doppelganger

- A second self or alternate identity
- Represents opposing forces in human nature
- Suggests humans have a double nature



The Faust Motif:

- Forbidden Knowledge or Power
Hero attempts to control supernatural powers
Ambition leads to fall



Monster/ Satanic Hero/ Fallen Man

- Fallen Hero becomes a Monster
- Or, confronts a monster who is his double
- Like Satan, he defies the rules of God's universe



Demons/ Devils/ Witches/ Angels

- Represent conflicting forces in the human soul
- Hero may be tempted by evil spirits
- Or, redeemed by good spirits



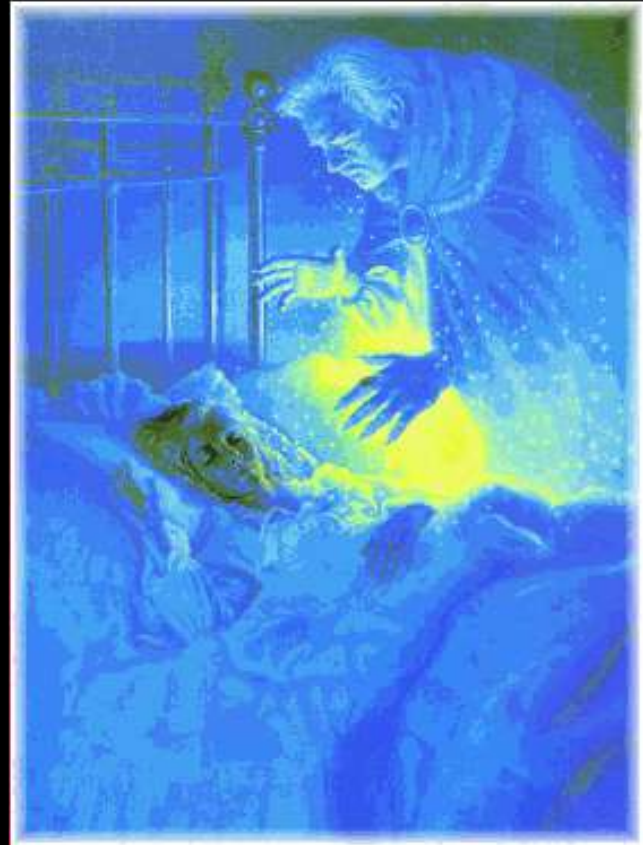
Magic Talismans

- Symbolize supernatural forces
- Or, forces in the hero's personality



Dreams / Visions

- Reveal hidden truths of the unconscious mind



Signs / Omens

- Reveal intention of cosmic forces
Often represent psychological or spiritual conflict



copyright Wm.L.Wantland 1998

Graveyards / Churches / Ruins

- Suggest human confrontation with infinite forces



Haunted Castle or House

- Reflects Hero's Psychological character



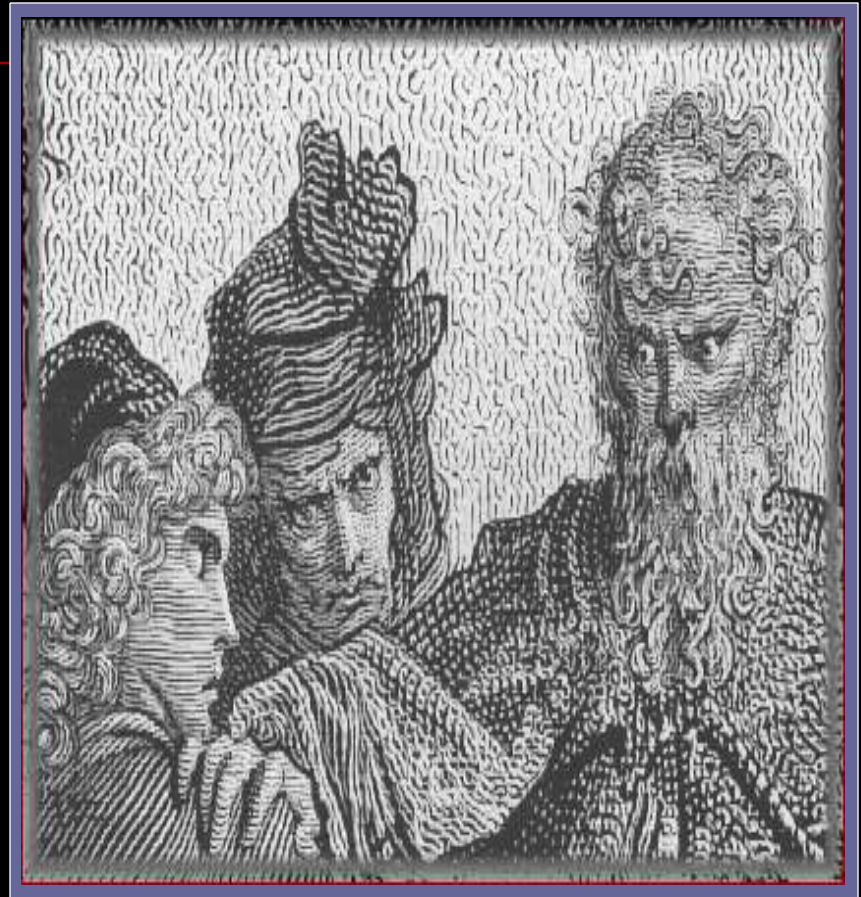
Multiple Narrative

- Series of secret manuscripts or multiple tales
- Narrative spirals inward to hidden truth
- Narrator compelled to speak to captive listener



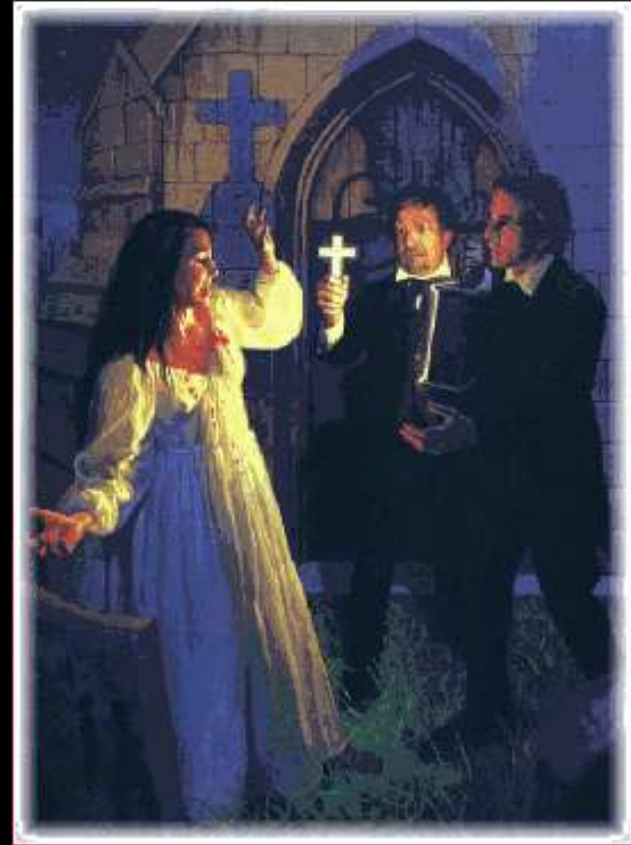
Madness

- Reflects realities beyond rational comprehension
- Mad characters speak truths we wish to deny



Blood

- Symbolizes paradox of human condition
Represents life/death,
guilt/innocence



Other Motifs

- Murder

 - Incest and sexual perversion

 - Value reversals

 - Mistaken/secret identities

 - Dichotomies

 - Innocence victimized by evil