

Notes on the Gothic Mode

1. At the center of all Gothic or Gothic inflected stories is a **pathology** (physical, mental, moral, social, spiritual disorder). This pathology can result in/from...
 - A. ...an inability to grow, change or adapt
 - B. ...a **dis-integration** or **disassociation** from
 1. from self
 2. from society
 3. from history
 4. from "reality"
 - C. ...withdrawal and isolation, which leads to an effect of secrecy and **mystery**. (The effect of an unseen or unseeable pathology is **terror**; the effect of a pathology that's graphically revealed is **horror**.)
2. In the Gothic mode, pathology and dis-integration are embodied in **split or doubled characters**.
 - A. a split personality that is divided against/from itself
 - B. pairs of characters who are really two sides of one healthy person and who are incomplete--and thus pathological--without one another
3. **Gothic settings** can also be dis-integrated like the characters.
 - A. Settings are typically divided up into lots of hidden spaces by trap doors, sliding panels, revolving bookcases--or twisted into maze-like and labyrinthian confusion.
 - B. Many Gothic settings are also dis-integrated from the world (society, history, "reality")
 - C. Disintegrated settings and spaces lend the effect of mysteriousness, confinement, isolation
 - D. Common Gothic settings include a house, ship, village, forest
4. In the Gothic mode, settings and objects are **anthropomorphized** (attributed human motivations and characteristics to inanimate objects, places, etc.) or **constructed as symbols** for . . .
 - A. a divided or pathological mind of a character
 - B. a dis-integrated or pathological family
 - C. a dis-integrated or obsolete culture or social order
5. Many Gothic stories are **set against a background of the modern, mundane, or otherwise "common sense" world**, which enables the writer not only to tell a Gothic tale but to comment on social, historical, or psychological issues. For instance, a writer may...
 - A. ...celebrate a vanishing, ghostly world of obsolete but admirable values set against a modern, if perhaps more mundane world
 - B. ...describe a tenacious enclave of backward, de-evolved, degraded, or corrupt values, as opposed to the modern world
 - C. ...portray irrational, supernatural or otherworldly events set against a rational, natural, or everyday background.
 - D. ...present a pathologically abnormal or deviant character coming into Gothic-style contact with the normal and conventional world)
6. Gothic pathology necessarily suggests an **contradiction of common-sense assurances**, and may variously represent a rejection of, a challenge to, a criticism of common-sense norms (**radical fuction**), or a enactment of the need for common-sense vigilance and for continued "normalization" (**conservative function**). Sometimes these two functions can operate, potentially, in the same text.