Unit #2:

Romanticism,

Transcendentalism, & Gothic

Literature

Part 3: Dark Romanticism or Gothic Literature

#### **Dark Romanticism = Gothic Literature**

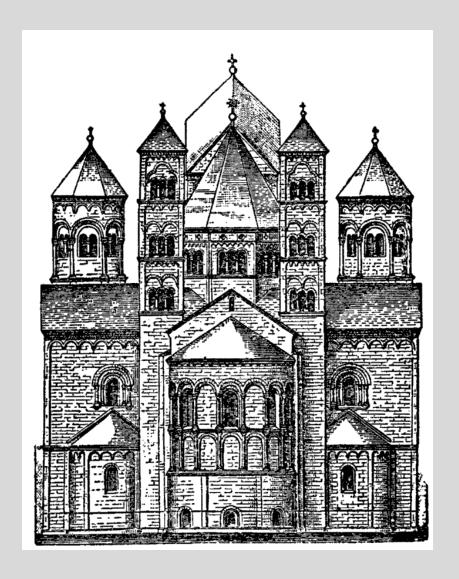
- Dark Romantic literature is also known as Gothic literature.
- The name is derived from its similarities to the Gothic medieval cathedrals.
- Gothic architecture features a majestic, unrestrained architectural style with often savage or grotesque ornamentation.





#### **Gothic Architecture is an Influence**

- The vaulting arches and spires of Gothic cathedrals reach wildly to the sky as if the builders were trying to grasp the heavens.
- These Gothic cathedrals are covered with a profusion of wild carvings depicting humanity in conflict with supernatural forces—demons, angels, gargoyles, and monsters.

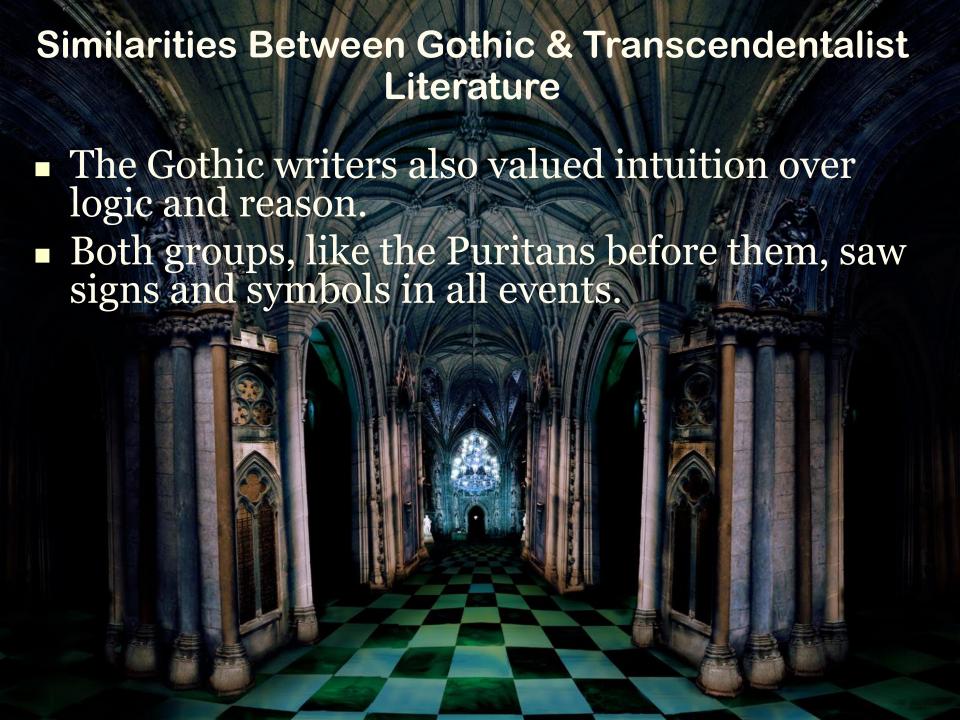


#### **Gothics Vs. Transcendentalists**

- Writers of Gothic literature are often called anti-Transcendentalists.
- The Gothics' views of the world seem so opposite of the optimistic views of Emerson, Thoreau, and their followers.

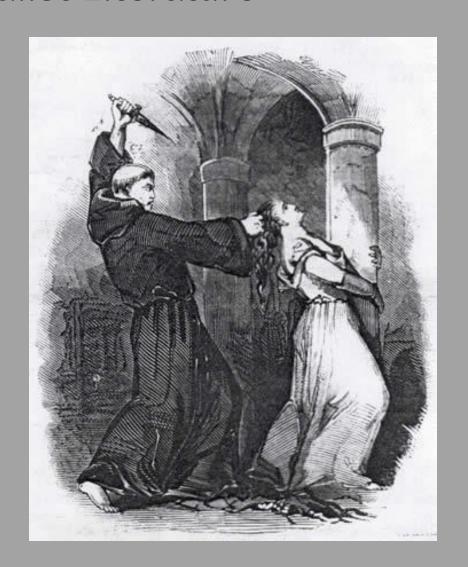






# Differences Between Gothic & Transcendentalist Literature

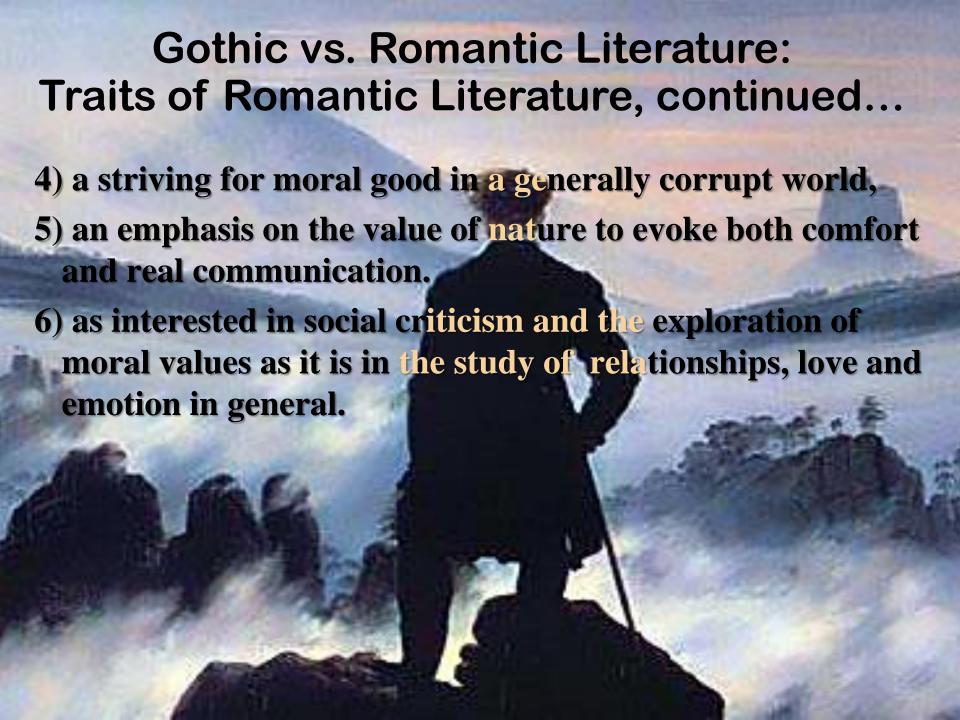
- Transcendentalists believe that spiritual facts lie behind the appearance of nature.
- Gothic writers somewhat agree with this belief.
- However, they just do not think that those facts are necessarily good or harmless.
- Transcendentalists advocate social reform when appropriate, works of Dark Romanticism frequently show individuals failing in their attempts to make changes for the better.



### Gothic vs. Romantic Literature: Traits of Romantic Literature

- Remember that Romantic literature focuses on the following:
  - 1) importance of the individual as opposed to society's values
  - 2) questioning of the traditional authority of the ruling classes
  - 3) an emphasis on the power of emotion and imagination





#### Gothic vs. Romantic Literature: Gothic

- Gothic literature, on the other hand, is generally less focused on character development and ideas.
- This dark literature is more interested in entertainment and imagination, especially relating to fear and dread.
- In class terms, where the romantic novel is a middle class form, the gothic novel has always been regarded as popular, lower class fiction.
- A great many popular gothic novels were written in the early nineteenth century, and they were the most successful form of popular literature.



# Gothic Literature Comes from Puritan Literature?

- The Gothic writers developed their literature from the dark side of Puritan Literature.
- The Puritans emphasized Original Sin, the innate wickedness of human beings, and predestination (the idea that whether or not a person goes to heaven is already determined at one's birth).

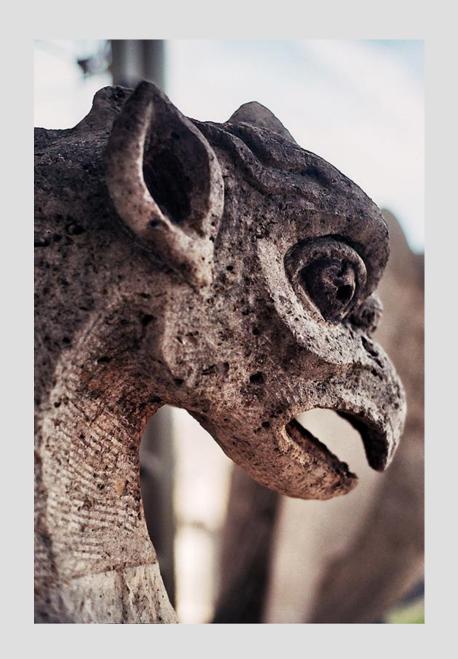






#### The Dark Side of Individualism: Gothic literature

- Themes and motifs of gothic literature often focused on the darker side of human nature.
- Gothic writers explored the conflict between good & evil and the psychological effects of guilt and sin.
- Betrayal, the desire for revenge, insanity, superstition, and supernatural elements such as ghosts and spirits are common motifs used by the Gothic writers.



### **Defining Characteristics of Gothic literature**

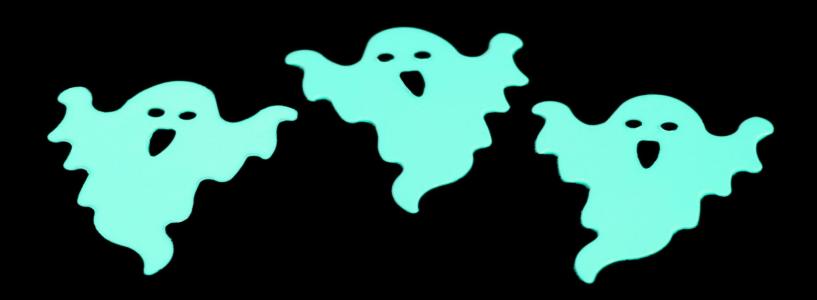
- 1) There is a victim who is helpless against his torturer;
  2) There is also a victimizer
  - 2) There is also a victimizer who is associated with evil and whose powers are immense or supernatural;
  - 3) The victim is in some way entranced or fascinated by the inscrutable power of his victimizer.

- 4) The setting is at some point within impenetrable walls (physical *or* psychological)
  - This heightens the victim's sense of hopeless isolation.
  - Setting included dark castles, crumbling mansions, haunted cathedrals or abbeys within which the victim is imprisoned.
  - Often times the setting will include secret passageways and hidden trap doors.



THE RESERVE THE PROPERTY OF THE PERSON NAMED IN COLUMN TWO IS NOT THE PERSON NAMED IN COLUMN TWO IS NAMED IN COL Defining Characteristics of Gothic literature, continued... 5) The mood and tone of gothic literature is meant to arouse terror. - The atmosphere is pervaded by a sense of mystery, darkness, oppressiveness, fear, and doom. - This is to recreate the atmosphere of a crypt--a symbol of man's spiritual death and a "vehicle for presenting a picture of man as the eternal victim".

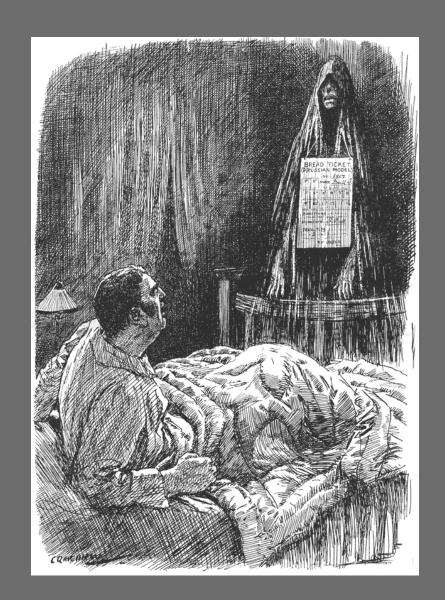
- 6) Supernatural or otherwise inexplicable events occur.
  - Ghosts or giants walking or inanimate objects (such as a suit of armor or painting) coming to life are a few examples.
  - In some works, the events are ultimately given a natural explanation, while in others the events are truly supernatural.



- 7) Signs/Omens:
  - Reveal the intervention of cosmic forces.
  - Often represent psychological or spiritual conflict.
  - Examples are flashes of lightning and violent storms
    - these might parallel some turmoil within a character's mind.

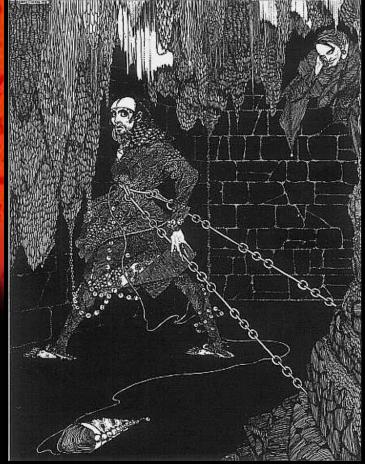
#### 8) Dreams/Visions:

- Terrible truths are often revealed to characters through dreams or visions.
- The hidden knowledge of the universe and of human nature emerges through dreams.
- When the person sleeps, reason sleeps, and the supernatural, unreasonable world can break through.
- Dreams in Gothic literature express the dark, unconscious depths of the psyche that are repressed by reason.
- These are truths that are too terrible to be comprehended by the conscious mind.





The Dark Side of Individualism:
The Authors



- -Three authors from this group are as follows:
- Edger Allan Poe,
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, & Herman Melville.

# Edgar Allan Poe & Nathaniel Hawthorne

- -Poe developed the American short story.
- Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* introduces the foundation of two new genres: science fiction and horror. Poe uses dark and melancholy tones in his writing to thoroughly describe the setting.
- In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne greatly focused on sin, pain, and the evil of human life. The story tells of two adulterers who try to hide their sin and attempt to stop a devil-like man from shaming them.

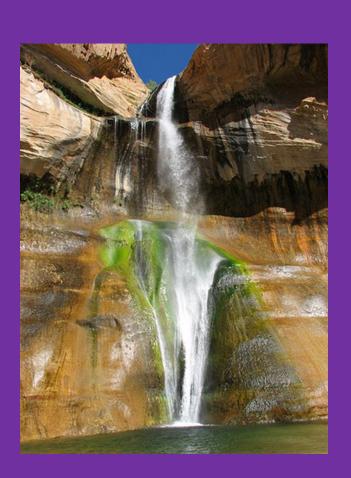


# Similarities between Romanticism, Transcendentalism, & Gothic literature



- The literature often deals with escapes, especially into nature and the unknown.
- All groups value intuition and imagination over logic and rationalism.
- They also share the common style of using new ideas, themes, and characters.

# Similarities between Romanticism, Transcendentalism, & Gothic literature



- 4) In addition, few of the groups reference God. Most romantic authors wrote about or referenced the past in their works.
- 5) The main purpose is to find the "system" (God). The artist writes/sings/paints God into existence (The Bible).

# Differences between Romanticism, Transcendentalist, & Gothic literature

- 1) Each group has their own style of writing; romantics prefer poetry, transcendentalists draft essays, and dark romantics (or Gothics) create short stories.
- 2) Romantics and
  Transcendentalists believed
  in optimism, while Dark
  Romantics tended to write in
  pessimistic and dark tones.
- 3) Whereas Romantics still believed in God, transcendentalists believed that the individual is part of God or the "oversoul" from which we originate and to which we return after death.



# Differences between Romanticism, Transcendentalist, & Gothic literature



- 4) Transcendentalists believe that God's spirit is everywhere. There is no need for a church or an assembly we must rely on ourselves and look inward.
- 5) Transcendentalists
  believe that evil is a
  negative merely an
  absence of good. Light is
  more powerful than
  darkness because one
  ray of light penetrates
  the dark.