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A cave of their own: A comparative examination of recurring social and psychological themes in gothic fiction and gothic youth subculture through the song lyrics and fiction of Nick Cave

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A CAVE OF THEIR OWN:
A COMPARATIVE EXAMINATION OF RECURRING SOCIAL AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL THEMES IN GOTHIC FICTION AND GOTHIC YOUTH
SUBCULTURE THROUGH THE SONG LYRICS AND FICTION OF NICK CAVE

by
Bradley M. Hunter

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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November 1998
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to examine the Gothic phenomenon as it pertains to late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century fiction, and extrapolate its social and psychological concerns as they relate to the Gothic revival in the late nineteenth-century Decadent movement and late twentieth-century gothic subculture. This examination focuses on recurrent social and psychological themes in eighteenth/nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, the late nineteenth-century Decadent movement and twentieth-century gothic music and subculture, which, in turn, are compared to the themes and motifs of the song lyrics and fiction of Nick Cave. Within this context, the recurring theme of the psychological exploration of the effect of the alienation of the individual subject within a rapidly changing social environment will be explored.

Chapter one introduces the concept of examining song lyrics as poetry, and provides an overview of the social and psychological themes and motifs of Gothic fiction and gothic music and subculture. It concludes by placing the work of Nick Cave in a Gothic fiction context within the sociological framework of a gothic subculture context.

Chapter two compares some of the psychological themes of early nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, twentieth-century gothic subculture and the lyrics and fiction of Nick Cave. It shows how fears and apprehensions invoked by divergent social changes result in the fictional expression of converging psychological themes. This chapter addresses the recurring theme of alienation.
Chapter three focuses on some of the concerns associated with the western phenomenon known as the *fin de siècle*. Specifically, it shows how the fears and apprehensions of the *fin de siècle* that deal with masculinity and sexuality have manifested in the male psyche. These fears that were abundant in the turn of the century Decadent movement are mirrored and, indeed, expanded upon within gothic subculture and, in particular, the fiction of Nick Cave. The chapter concludes by drawing attention to some of the social changes that could be informing the current concerns that underpin the latest occurrence of the gothic phenomenon.

The concluding chapter examines the notion that Gothic fiction looks to the future and speculates, albeit pessimistically, about the future of society and humanity. It specifically examines various Cave song lyrics and gives emphasis to their recurring images and the theme of apocalypse. The notion that the 'black' aesthetic of gothic subculture and music derived from this pessimistic view of the future is highlighted through a close reading of apocalyptic images in Nick Cave's song lyrics.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

Date: 18 November 1998
This thesis developed out of numerous discussions with lecturers and peers about two issues: firstly, the apparent unpopularity or unfashionableness of poetry in the latter part of the twentieth century – although this trend seems to be rapidly reversing in very recent times with the mainstream influence of 'rap' music and performance poetry; and secondly, concerns about adolescents who are reluctant readers.

I have always maintained throughout these discussions that poetry is consumed in large quantities in youth culture in the form of song lyrics, which are more often than not included in the printed form known as a 'lyric sheet' with compact discs.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support of my supervisor Robyn McCarron throughout what was a tumultuous year. Thanks are also due to readers Dr. Lorna Kaino, Gwen Stapleton and Dr. Julie Goyder for their valuable input and encouragement.

A very special thankyou to Penny Walsh for rescuing me when everything almost fell apart towards the end of semester one. Also, I owe a debt of gratitude to Mary Walsh for supporting Penny and me during the emotional weeks following the sad loss of our good friend Naomi.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Song Lyrics, Poetry, and Gothic Fiction and Gothic Music

Song Lyrics, Poetry and Nick Cave

Essentially, a song lyric is nothing more or less than free verse set to music, usually in the voice of a single narrator – with the exception of course of duets. Baldick (1990, p. 125) defines a lyric as "any fairly short poem expressing the personal mood, feeling, or meditation of a single speaker. In ancient Greece, a lyric was a song for accompaniment on the lyre." So it could be argued that the song lyric's historical link to poetry is self-evident. Furthermore, Goldstein (1969) argued the validity of reading popular songs as poetry:

At its core, good rock music has always provided that kind of mystical experience. But few adults tried to penetrate its gaudy cliches and rigid structure—until now. Today, it is possible to suggest without risking defenestration that some of the best poetry of our time may well be contained within those framed couplets. (p. 3)

In order to examine song lyrics as poetry, I have chosen to investigate the works of contemporary Australian singer/songwriter, novelist, screenwriter, playwright and actor, Nick Cave, whose lyrics have been published as poetry in two volumes: King Ink (1988) and King II (1997). Nick Cave has also published one novel, And the Ass Saw the Angel (1989), co-written a screenplay, Ghosts ... of the Civil Dead (1989) and he has written a number of brief one act plays that feature in King Ink. He is currently the motivating force and chief songwriter of the band Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds and has been
involved with two other influential Australian bands, The Boys Next Door and The Birthday Party.

**Gothic Rears its Beautiful Ugly Head**

The Gothic connection in Cave's writing becomes evident in reading Cave's novel, *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, which exudes an overwhelming American southern gothic influence in its style and themes. Baldick (1990, p. 92) defines the Gothic novel as "a story of terror and suspense, usually set in a gloomy old castle or monastery (hence 'Gothic', a term applied to medieval architecture and thus associated in the 18th century with superstition)." Abrams (1993) states:

> The term "Gothic" has also been extended to a type of fiction which lacks the medieval setting but develops a brooding atmosphere of gloom and terror, represents events which are uncanny or macabre or melodramatically violent, and often deals with aberrant psychological states. . . . America, especially southern America [emphasis added], has been fertile in Gothic fiction in this extended sense. (p. 78)

Baldick (1990) concurs:

> In an extended sense, many novels that do not have a medievalized setting, but which share a comparably sinister, grotesque, or claustrophobic atmosphere have been classed as Gothic: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is a well known example; and there are several important American tales and novels with strong Gothic elements in this sense, from Poe to Faulkner and beyond. (p. 92)

Closer examination reveals that a Gothic influence can also be seen to run strongly through Cave's song lyrics in their themes, motifs, imagery and symbolism. The second chapter of this thesis includes a comparative examination of the social and psychological themes in Cave's novel *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (1988), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1831/1992) and Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839/1989), placing them in a Gothic context.
In a contemporary context, Cave's early musical roots stem from the late-seventies punk movement, "a form of New Wave music developed from music earlier in the decade . . . based on the work of Lou Reed, John Cale and the New York Dolls whose imagery was outrageous and camp" (Brake, 1980, p. 80). According to Brokenmouth (1996, p. 11) Cave's first band, The Boys Next Door, "started in Melbourne in 1974" as a "High School" band, but during 1976 "became less of an occasional hobby" (p. 14). So Cave's induction as a performer into popular music began in earnest at the time that punk was peaking.

Because "goth developed outside of, but very much dependent upon, an increasing preoccupation within what was already (1978) being labeled [sic] the post-punk school of gloomy introspection" (Greene & Thompson, 1994, p. 2) it could be argued that Cave's 'dark' lyrics and imagery inevitably reflect the influence of the gothic music movement that was emerging not long after the beginning of his own musical career.

Given the American southern Gothic influence in And the Ass Saw the Angel and the burgeoning gothic music movement of the early eighties, Cave's song lyrics and fiction allude to a connection between Gothic fiction and gothic subculture that warrants investigation. Like a gargoyle on the facade of a fifteenth century cathedral, Gothic reared its beautiful ugly head.

**A Theme Emerges**

The theme of alienation recurs throughout Cave's lyrics and is the motivating force behind the protagonist of his novel And the Ass Saw the Angel. In a sociological context, alienation "denotes the estrangement of individuals from themselves and others" (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 1988, p. 8). Alienation, although not recognised
as a traditionally Gothic theme, relates in this instance to the early nineteenth-century Gothic preoccupation with human psychology in the process of construction of subject identity exemplified in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1831). That is, Cave's lyrics and fiction, like much late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, often explore the psychological effects of alienation upon a subject both by and within society.

Upon closer examination, the theme of alienation of the/an individual both by and within society becomes evident in the narrative treatment of characters such as Mary Shelley's 'monster' in *Frankenstein* and Edgar Allan Poe's Roderick Usher in *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Both Shelley and Poe are among the first cited in any text dedicated to the discussion of Gothic fiction and Gothic horror fiction. To this end, comparisons will be made in the second chapter of this thesis between the treatment, both narratively and by other characters within the texts, of Shelley's 'monster', Poe's Roderick Usher and the protagonist of Cave's novel, Euchrid Eucrow. Furthermore, this treatment will be shown to extend to the protagonists and/or narrators of numerous Cave lyrics.

**Gothic Subculture and the Youth Culture Connection: An Elusive Bunch They Be**

Due to an apparent dearth of information or studies on gothic subculture, this thesis draws upon only two major sources and one minor source of information on gothic subculture, gleaned from studies posted on the Internet. The two major sources are Gunn (1997) and Porter (1997), who both conducted surveys and audience studies of gothic subculture for purely personal reasons. The minor source is a UK based on-line newsgroup whose charter reads:
The uk.people.gothic newsgroup will be open to discussion of all aspects of gothic lifestyle, including the aspects of art and science that are relevant to gothic culture. It is hoped that the newsgroup will become a central place for discussions about the medium within the UK. (Oakley, 1998, p. 2)

Both Gunn's and Porter's studies were conducted primarily in the U.S.A.; Minneapolis and Salt Lake City respectively, and included Internet interviews.

Generally, the age range of respondents in Gunn (1997b) and Porter (1997d) and (1997e) is from mid teens to late twenties/early thirties: Gunn (1997b, p.4) says "Ages ranged from 16 to 32 years, the average approximately 23 years old"; and in Porter's profiles the ages range from 17 to 32, with an average age of approximately 22 years. However, the age ranges may also reflect gothic subculture being "club-based, usually oriented around venues where people go to dance and enjoy live performances" (Gunn, 1997b, p. 5), which would to some extent limit the participation in the subculture of younger members who initially identify with the subculture through the music and style. In Porter's studies the majority of respondents claimed to have been involved in the gothic scene or to have identified with gothic subculture since their early teens, which indicates gothic to be a youth oriented subculture with a strong loyalty that continues into early adulthood.

However, Pendrill and Rovis-Hermann (1998, p. 3) report that "President of Dominion [gothic social club in Perth, Australia] Nathan Baxter, 26, said gothics ranged in age from 14 to 50." Also, both Porter and Gunn identified a paradox wherein respondents to their studies often rejected being labelled 'gothic', yet identified with and/or participated in the gothic music scene, style and subculture to varying degrees. Also, Porter (1997f, p. 2) posits that there have been two "generations" of gothic bands and "Whether or not
second generation is authentically Gothic depends on whom you ask" (Porter, 1997f, p. 3). Therefore, these studies, limited as they are, generally suggest that gothic subculture eludes a definitive style, ethos or social set. Consequently, Gunn (1997b, p. 10) asserts "It is clear that most fans of gothic music and culture consider both to be complex, polysemous phenomena." In other words, the participants in gothic subculture appear to be attempting to evade labelling. Rather, they view gothic subculture as defying definition, or, at the very least, as having a nebulous and fluid definition.

In effect, the elusive fragmented nature of gothic subculture plus its bricolage of style alludes to a parody of post-modernism. Gunn (1997b, p. 8) postulates that "The embrace of all things historically called 'gothic' by gothic communities seems to signify a rejection of certain components of the 'post-modern' condition." That is, gothic subculture can be read as both a symptom of, and a reaction to, the anxieties of post-modern society in much the same way that late eighteenth-century Gothic fiction can be seen to be "responding to social and literary concerns of its own time" (Graham, 1989, p. xvi).

**Sociology and Psychology Applied to Gothic Fiction and Gothic Subculture**

It is necessary to turn to both sociology and psychology to explore the underlying conditions which frame the contemporary gothic phenomenon or subculture and how it relates to the concerns of eighteenth-century Gothic fiction and the nineteenth-century Decadent movement. There are numerous writings that examine Gothic literature from a psychoanalytical or psychological viewpoint, but there appear to have been few sociological studies of gothic subculture. However, the studies that I have been able to locate suggest a correlation between the social and psychological concerns of those
involved in contemporary gothic subculture and the social and psychological concerns expressed in late eighteenth-century Gothic fiction and the Decadent movement of the late nineteenth-century.

**Gothic Fiction, Gothic Subculture and the Decadents**

The main social indicators of gothic subculture are music, style and the historical junctures in which it and Gothic fiction occur. So relating gothic subculture to Gothic fiction requires an examination of style in gothic subculture — a preoccupation with black dress, pale skin and generally all things 'dark', such as the themes of 'gothic' or 'industrial' music — and the connection between the periods and settings in which gothic subculture emerges and Gothic fiction emerges then re-emerges — that is, the end of the eighteenth and then the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, alluding to a Gothic connection with the *fin de siècle* phenomenon. Baldick (1990) defines *fin de siècle* as:

> the French phrase ('end of century') often used to refer to the characteristic world-weary mood of European culture in the 1880s and 1890s, when writers and artists . . . adopted a 'decadent' rejection of any moral or social function for art. (p. 84)

Bloom (1998, p. 6) notes "By the turn of the [nineteenth] century gothicism was a byword for decadent 'Yellow Book' writers as well as popular 'yellow press' writers."

That is, Gothic fiction developed and thrived around the turn of the eighteenth century then petered out, only to re-emerge "in parallel with the newly emerging interest in supernaturalism, 'spiritism', mysticism and theology that marked the latter nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth" (Bloom, 1998, p. 6). Not surprisingly then, the style adopted in gothic subculture draws upon images of vampires and ghouls from eighteenth/nineteenth century Gothic fiction and the flamboyance of anti-Victorian Decadent style.
The social and psychological connection between gothic subculture, late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century Gothic fiction and the Decadent writers of the late nineteenth century underpins the influences and concerns of Gothic fiction in the twentieth century. In this light, MacAndrew (1979) asserts:

The development of the study of the mind into the science of psychology has continued to affect the concepts of human nature and their reflection in Gothic literature. The course of the Gothic tradition in the twentieth century merits a study of its own for this reason alone. In addition, there has been a great proliferation of forms as a result of the upsurge in popular literature, the introduction into our culture of films, television and comic books, and the appearance of a "youth culture." These together change the nature of the study needed. A glance at the kind of Gothic tales that have appeared in our century reveals, nonetheless, something of the direction the tradition has taken in its expression of man's [sic] fears and fancies. (pp. 241-242)

Again the youth culture connection arises, along with an inference of Gothic fiction's preoccupation with social and psychological concerns through the "expression of man's [sic] fears and fancies." And, writing from a point in time just before the rise of gothic music, style and subculture, MacAndrew (1979) stops just short of pre-empting the conception of 'gothic rock.' That is, MacAndrew mentions every form of popular entertainment except rock/pop music.

Darkness Descends: The Psychological Effect of Gothic Themes and Motifs

Similarities can be observed between the "adjectives" (Gunn, 1997c, p. 3) used within gothic subculture to describe gothic music and those used to describe Gothic fiction, such as Baldick's (1990, p. 92) "claustrophobic atmosphere." For example, Gunn (1997c) notes:

In a series of interviews and surveys of fans of gothic music and subculture I conducted last year, fans repeatedly resorted to the same adjectives to describe gothic music: "The music is generally dark, quite ambient [emphasis added]," noted one fan. Another said gothic music was "dark or haunting music that is not heavy metal." (p. 3)
Hence, the "themes of death, destruction, and explorations of 'darkness' . . . minor chords, sparse, minimalist rhythms, and slower tempos" (Gunn, 1997c, p. 2) of gothic music and the symbols that make up gothic style are combined to elicit a similar psychological reaction from the participant in and observer of gothic subculture as the effect of the "claustrophobic atmosphere" of a Gothic novel upon its reader. Hence, Gunn (1997c, p. 2) notes "Pale white faces, black clothing, victorian-styled [sic] fashions . . . medieval ruins and gothic architecture, and so on, grace album covers and the pages of 'gothic' fanzines." Gothic subculture elucidates its psychological intention by drawing upon images of ghoulish and vampire-like spectre, "bondage and fetish fashion" (Porter, 1997g, p. 1), nineteenth-century Decadent style, and, according to Porter (1997g, pp. 1-2) "Christian" and "Pagan" religious iconography to create a style that invokes an 'atmosphere' reminiscent of that of the Gothic novel or Gothic Romance.

Furthermore, as in traditional Gothic fiction, the motifs and symbols of gothic subculture (its style) are often part of a subversive or transgressive activity. That is, "the very ambivalence of Gothic fictions to prohibitions" (Graham, 1989, p. xiii) runs parallel to youth subculture's "subversive implications of style" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 2). In other words, gothic subculture highlights:

the tensions between dominant and subordinate groups [that] can be found reflected in the surfaces of subculture – in the styles made up of mundane objects which have a double meaning. On the one hand, they warn the 'straight' world in advance of a sinister presence – the presence of difference – and draw upon themselves vague suspicions, uneasy laughter . . . . On the other hand, for those who erect them into icons, who use them as words or curses, these objects become signs of forbidden identity, sources of value. (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 2-3)

However, the 'true' symbolic value placed upon these "mundane objects which have a double meaning" in gothic subculture is difficult (impossible, I would argue) to ascertain when simply viewed from outside the subculture.
Therefore, Gunn (1997b) argues:

Concerning the study of musically oriented subcultures . . . expert readings offer critical insights that sometimes seem dubious. . . . Although most of these scholars do not sustain the interested straight position throughout their work, many of them slip into highly dubious conjectural territories that should lead us to question whether their larger, more sweeping claims are representational or merely theoretically illustrative.

My point here is not that subcultural theorizing should be dismissed, but rather, that such theorizing often suffers from a sort of post-modern disciplinization where the so-called "death of the subject" has been internalized much too deeply. (p. 2)

To this end, Gunn (1997b) says:

In the spirit of developing a more interactive and reliable critical position, the overriding purpose of this paper is to provide a description of a particular musically-centred subcultural community from both internal (participatory) and external (critical and academic) viewpoints – as a critical exercise. (p. 1)

In other words, Gunn has attempted to combine a semiotic analysis of gothic music and style with an audience study of gothic subculture. Thwaites, Davis and Mules (1994) seem to vindicate Gunn's methodology with their acknowledgment of the usefulness of audience studies in combination with a semiotic approach:

We suggested in the Introduction that the semiotic approach with which we began was far from the only approach to cultural studies. In fact, since that point we have moved a considerable distance from semiotics, as we came across issues which demanded other considerations, other types of investigation. . . . One of the ways cultural studies has reacted to this has been to switch attention from analysis of texts to a study of the way actual audiences behave when they watch or read media texts. (p. 205)

Similarly, Porter's (1997a) study *Gothic Subculture: An Inside Look for Outsiders*, a self-professed "biased" study of gothic subculture from within the subculture itself, is a response to the "sensationalistic [sic] way that the media has portrayed the Gothic subculture" (Porter, 1997a, p. 1) and an attempt to dispel some myths about gothic
subculture. Despite the obvious shortcoming of Porter's biased approach, the comments from respondents, observations, and conclusions of both Porter's and Gunn's studies show enough similarities to enable a degree of generalisation.

A Cave of Their Own: A Literary Study in a Social Framework

I was a member of the audience at the most recent Perth performance of Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds, at the Belvoir Amphitheatre in December 1997, and it was curious to see the predominance of gothic style in the dress of the overwhelming majority of patrons, given that at a performance of the same band in Fremantle in 1994 the dress of the overwhelming majority was conservative and mainstream (jeans and t-shirts).

This trend towards gothic fashion and/or attraction of a gothic fan base has developed despite Cave and other members of his various bands having always shunned or denied the 'gothic' label:

Mick [Harvey] [integral member of all of Nick Cave's bands]: ... "They [London music papers] tried to push us into [Goth], make us something so they could understand it, so that people knew what to wear to our concerts. Most of the goth people didn't really like us because we didn't do the right thing. The gothic elements of what we do and did are there, but the superficial goth thing didn't have a lot to do with us." (Brokenmouth, 1996, pp. 179-180)

Despite this, Nick Cave and his fellow band members often perform wearing the stereotypical 'goth' style of all-black suits, or black pants with "white poet's shirts (the kind that has a few ruffles around the cuff, the collar, and the front, sometimes called pirate's shirts)" (Porter, 1997g, p. 1). Furthermore, promotional photos (see Brokenmouth, 1996) of Cave from the early eighties show him with "ratted out, hairsprayed, chaotic hair" (Porter, 1997g, p. 2) typical of early gothic style, and artwork in booklets accompanying Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds compact discs appear to highlight gothic style and imagery (see Appendix). Sayer (1997) muses:
For two decades Cave has perplexed and entranced fans with his apparently contradictory personality. A man who loves the Bible but also pens songs about mass murder. A man who embraces destruction in the process of creation. (p. 28)

In many respects, Nick Cave the performer is an elusive and often contradictory enigma who defies mainstream music industry attempts to categorise him and his music.

Similarly, gothic subculture's attempt to defy definition through the refusal of its participants to acknowledge the 'goth' label is an enigmatic attempt to evade the labels applied by mainstream culture. Both Porter and Gunn, at various stages in their respective studies, focus on the paradox that exists wherein many members of gothic subculture do not consider themselves gothic, or they perceive that they would not be or are not considered gothic by other 'goths', yet they acknowledge their 'gothicism' in that they are perceived as gothic by 'non-goths'. However, whether or not Cave and/or the members of his various bands are or are not gothic, or are or are not perceived to be gothic by either goths or non-goths, is not essential to this study of the Gothic phenomenon, because this is a comparative literary examination of late eighteenth-century Gothic fiction and contemporary gothic youth subculture through the song lyrics and fiction of Nick Cave.
CHAPTER 2

ALIENATION AND TRANSGRESSION AS SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL THEMES IN GOTHIC FICTION, GOTHIC SUBCULTURE AND NICK CAVE'S LYRICS AND NOVEL

Self, Identity and Alienation: ... Art Imitating Life Imitating ...?

Often themes that arise in art and literature in popular or mass culture have prompted the paradoxical question "Is it art imitating life or life imitating art?" Accordingly, the popular literary genre born in the late eighteenth century that came to be known as 'Gothic fiction' and the contemporary cultural phenomenon that has come to be known as 'gothic subculture' present themes and images arising from social concerns that are framed by the same paradox. Similarly, Brake (1980, p. 155) acknowledges "One problem in the analysis of any youth culture is the extent to which it is a response to a culture deliberately manufactured for marketing and consumption." However, contemporary gothic subculture can also be seen to offer an unconscious critique of mass culture similar to that offered by Gothic fiction in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. In an audience study of gothic subculture, Gunn (1997b, p. 7) observes that "The connections between the themes of gothic and romantic literature and the current gothic subculture emerged time and time again." Gothic fiction and gothic subculture both contribute to and react against social and psychological concerns of the mass culture at the time of their production. Ultimately, Gothic fiction and gothic subculture both address the themes of alienation and rejection both by and of society.
Primarily, Gothic fiction, like psychoanalysis, can be seen to have developed as an exploration of the machinations of the human psyche in that "a number of Gothic novels are really structured like case histories" (Punter, 1989, p. 5). For example, according to Varma (cited in Pelzer & Pelzer, 1996, p. 6) "'Melmoth the Wanderer' by Charles Maturin is interpreted as a 'psychological' study of the nature of fear and its relationship to pain, taking up studies which turned out to be predecessors of psychology and psychoanalysis." And Schapiro (1994, p. ix) asserts that "Freud acknowledged repeatedly his indebtedness to literature." But Gothic fiction goes further than being just a fascination with exploring the human psyche. According to Graham (1989, p. xiii) it can also be seen as "a shout against an imposed silence or an assertion of truth to counteract a convenient prejudice — or, more subversively, it may affirm a constraint while quietly transgressing it . . . the Gothic experience grows out of prohibition."

Hence, Graham (1989, p. xiii) further posits an "ambivalence of Gothic fictions to prohibitions." So it can be seen that Gothic fiction developed in western culture in the late eighteenth century as a literary form of transgressing social prohibitions, through an unconscious or psychological critique, and came to be associated with "fundamental subversiveness" (Graham, 1989, p. xiii).

When determining the development of "Psychoanalytic Relational" theory, Schapiro (1994) asserts:

The scientific theories of any age, as Thomas Kuhn has argued, are dependent on the presuppositions, the underlying belief systems and models of reality that determine the experiments, the observations, and the consequent "facts" on which the theories are built. Freud's psychoanalytic model of the mind was highly determined by a Newtonian and Cartesian-based scientific paradigm [emphasis added]. (p. 1)
Hence, Gothic fiction can be seen to follow and respond to both scientific and social developments. However, Gothic fiction conversely explores these developments through a psychological framework, rather than specifically developing or positing a 'psychoanalytic model' based upon a 'scientific paradigm.' In other words, eighteenth-century Gothic fiction can be read as a psychological critique of contemporary social concerns at the time of its production.

Late eighteenth-century Gothic fiction can also be read as an unconscious reaction to the massive and rapid social changes of the time. According to Pelzer and Pelzer (1996, p. 4) "The expectation is of course that here as in many cases literature reacts to problems arising in the society of that particular time. The comments given to the period in England indicate that this is the case with Gothic literature." However, Varma (1957) is quoted by Pelzer and Pelzer (1996, p. 5) as claiming that "There is no doubt that the Gothic romance drew its inspiration from a tangle of many external sources, yet its impulse sprang from the creative personal dreams and repressed 'unconscious' of its sensitive authors." Accordingly, "David Punter turns to the socio-psychological theories of Melanie Klein to locate the origins of Gothic narrative in a world of dissolving social and legal norms, where fearful landscapes of part objects will not coalesce into reassuring wholes" (Graham, 1989, p. xiv). And, the psychologically motivated themes of late eighteenth-century Gothic fiction can be seen to have developed out of social influences and changes.

That is, rapid industrialisation and the subsequent rise of capitalism initiated fundamental changes in social and labour structures in the eighteenth century, which in turn provided a springboard for an 'unconscious', or psychological, critique of issues
surrounding the psychological and social construction of identity and 'self'. In relation to industrialisation and capitalism, the resultant psychological concern was that of 'alienation', or "feelings of indifference or hostility . . . to the overall framework of industrial production within a capitalist setting" (Giddens, 1989, p. 487). And the psychologically induced themes of Gothic fiction provided fertile ground for an unconscious exploration of alienation in relation to the construction of identity and 'self'.

Subsequently, by the early nineteenth century there had emerged Gothic novels, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1831) that explored the psychological and social issues of subject construction. Through the Gothic motif of the 'mad scientist' (Victor Frankenstein) *Frankenstein* supports a complex analysis of Victor Frankenstein and his creation, the 'monster', as 'subjects' constructed by and within social and cultural prohibitions, and the subsequent perceived danger in attempting to transgress, circumvent or subvert the process of subject construction. That is, Frankenstein creates an alter-ego 'monster' that struggles throughout the novel to identify with humans, which it was supposed to be a construction of, but fails miserably because humans fail to recognise the monster as 'human'.

Ultimately, the monster fails to recognise itself as 'human'. In psychoanalytic terms, the monster is transfixed in the:

*mirror stage* [which is] a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality. (Lacan, 1996, pp. 128-129)
That is, the monster does not form a 'Gestalt' in which "the subject [monster] anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power" (Lacan, 1996, p. 127). So, in seeing himself as a 'monster', the monster 'mirrors' how others see him:

but how I was terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror [emphasis added]; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. (Shelley, 1992, p. 110)

As the novel goes on to explore the psychological paradox of the effects of alienation, the monster becomes increasingly and perpetually alienated. This eventually leads to the monster committing abhorrent acts against humanity, which, ironically, in turn further alienate him from society.

MacAndrew (1979, p. 245) asserts "Gothic techniques also appear in works depicting the psychological aspects of alienation." The recurring theme in both Gunn's and Porter's studies of gothic subculture is that of alienation. Porter (1997b, p. 1) posits that "These days people feel so alienated from each other that everyone has broken off into small groups, latched onto something very specific (race, music, an idea), and formed a culture surrounding it." The majority of subjects in Porter's (1997d) and (1997e) studies expressed a common interest in art and creativity and cited similar likes in music – there was a recurrence of specific band names cited. Many subjects also expressed a general interest in some form of classical music. But, most significantly, they all expressed a feeling of being 'different,' which they identified as inherent from a relatively early age (ie. early teens). Likewise, Gunn (1997b, p. 8) argues "gothic subculture . . . provides a place of belonging for fans who feel discriminated against, or alienated, for being perceived as essentially different, or having particular 'personality traits' that are undervalued by [the] dominant culture."
Paradoxically, however, many of the subjects in both studies often shunned or were indifferent to being labelled 'gothic', including Porter (1997c) herself, who says:

I don't consider myself gothic. (Then again, a lot of people who are considered gothic don't want to label themselves gothic.) I am not sure if people consider me gothic . . . I think non-goths consider me goth and goths don't. (p. 1)

Likewise, Gunn's (1997b) study included four interviewees at "a local dance club ('Ground Zero') during . . . 'gothic night'" (p. 3) and "All of them dressed in what many would identify as a gothic style, yet patently denied feeling included in the scene" (p. 9).

So there exists a paradox of acceptance and alienation both by and within gothic subculture. Hence, within gothic subculture, Gunn (1997b, pp. 7-8) identifies a "thematic cluster . . . [who] stressed a paradoxical notion of alienation: alienation from without and alienation from within." However, Gunn (1997b, p. 8) also notes that "respondents identified with gothic, music, style and scene in opposition to mainstream cultural productions." Therefore, the common thread in nearly all the profiles, according to Gunn's (1997b) and (1997c) findings and Porter's (1997d) and (1997e) studies, is the theme of alienation, which arises from disillusionment with mainstream society and the values and concerns of mainstream society.

So it is not surprising that Punter (1998) asserts:

some of the more important constituents of Gothic – the exploration of paranoia . . . the alienation [emphasis added] accompanying divisions between social groups and between areas of knowledge and feeling – appear to me to have recently received very considerable attention, and to have generated a range of very important fictions, some of them recognisable as Gothic in the traditional sense, some not. (p. 118)

The theme of alienation runs strongly through many of Nick Cave's lyrics, although his music is not considered particularly gothic and most respondents to Porter's (1997d) and
(1997e) studies did not cite Nick Cave among their musical interests. However, Cave has developed a large gothic following in Australia – the style preferred by the large majority of concert-goers at the December 1997 performance by 'Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds' at the Belvoir Amphitheatre near Perth in Western Australia was predominantly gothic (black clothing, heavy 'gothic' make-up, etc.) – and Oakley (1998, p. 3) cites Nick Cave among "several 90's goth bands who have had hits in the national or independent charts" in the UK.

Generally, the music and style are seen to be the identifying and identifiable elements of gothic subculture. However, the identifying component for gothic followers of Nick Cave appears to be the lyrics. Oakley (1998) asserts:

Music plays a smaller part in the goth scene of the 1990's than it did in the 1980's. . . . They [90's 'goth' bands] may not sound like 80's goths . . . but they all have powerful, haunting vocals and a dark theme to their music. (p. 3)

And it is through the recurring 'dark' theme of alienation and/or total rejection from society that this occurs in the lyrics of Nick Cave:

The kitten that padded and purred on my lap
Now Swipes at my face with the paw of a bear
I turn the other cheek and you lay into that
O where do we go now but nowhere
(Cave, 1997, p. 154)

Here a sense of hopeless and irreconcilable rejection – the feeling of "nowhere to go" – can be elucidated, as in many of Cave's lyrics. For example, many of Cave's lyrics are narrated by or narrate the lives of social outcasts, often of dubious character, who have been alienated from and rejected by, and/or reject, the society that surrounds them, such as the narrator of "When I First Came To Town":

When I first came to town
People took me round from end to end
Like someone may take round a friend
O how quickly they changed their tune
Suspicion and dark murmurs surround me
Everywhere I go they confound me
As though the blood on my hands
Is there for every citizen to see
(Cave, 1997, p. 68)

Although it is not revealed what 'blood' may be on the hands of the narrator of "When I First Came To Town" it is inferred that the narrator is a vagrant of dubious character.

However, the narrator views society as no more 'innocent' than himself:

When I first came to town
Their favours were for free
Now even the doors of the whores of this town
Are closed to me
(Cave, 1997, p. 68)

Likewise, the narrator of "The Hammer Song" (Cave, 1990, track 6) describes:

I stumbled into a city
Where the people tried to kill me
And I ran in shame

And, the rejection of the narrator of "The Hammer Song" is extremely similar to that experienced by the monster in Frankenstein:

The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons, I escaped to the open country and fearfully took refuge in a low hovel, quite bare, and making a wretched appearance after the palaces I had beheld in the village. (Shelley, 1992, p. 102)

For the reader of Frankenstein it is obvious why the monster is rejected, but the narrators of "When I First Came To Town" and "The Hammer Song" never divulge specifically why they have been suddenly rejected by society.

Yet, like the misunderstood monster in Shelley's Frankenstein, the persecuted narrator of "When I First Came to Town" turns to viewing his own reflection in an attempt to figure out why society is rejecting him:
I search the mirror [emphasis added]  
And I try to see  
Why the people of this town  
Have washed their hands of me  
(Cave, 1997, p. 68)

By turning back to their own reflections for answers to their rejection, the actions of both characters further allude to a narcissistic regression to Lacan's "Mirror Stage" as a result of their alienation from society. Finally, the narrator of "When I First Came To Town" vows:

But one day I will return  
And the people of this town will surely see  
Just how quickly the tables turn

O sweet Jesus  
This really is the end  
There is always one more town  
A little further round the bend  
(Cave, 1997, p. 69)

So the implication is that the narrator is as much a product of the society that continually alienates and rejects him as he is an antagonist of that society. Likewise, the antagonistic actions of the monster in Frankenstein derive from society's rejection of the monster in the first instance.

Similarly, Cave's novel And the Ass Saw the Angel, partially narrated by a mute inbred, Euchrid Eucrow, whose psychological stability is tenuous to say the least, establishes Euchrid as an antagonist to a society that alienates and rejects him. However, not only is Euchrid the antagonist of the alienating society, but he is also the first person narrator of large portions of the novel, and the novel's protagonist. Euchrid lives on the outskirts of an isolated, religiously based community that fears, shuns and ultimately rejects him. Ironically, Euchrid responds to this rejection by seeking refuge in the Bible and, like the narrator of "When I First Came To Town" (Cave, 1997, pp. 68-69), plots revenge upon
the community, but guided by 'the voice of God.' So the first person narration gives the reader an insight into the psychology (and psychosis) of an individual who is alienated by society.

Clearly, like Gothic fiction in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Nick Cave's fiction and many of his song lyrics derive their themes from both social and psychological concerns. And the underlying – or overriding depending on which way you look at it – theme is that of alienation of the transgressive, or identifiably 'unusual' or 'abnormal' individual both by and within society. Therefore, the themes of Nick Cave's lyrics and novel not only exemplify the themes of contemporary Gothic fiction and gothic subculture; they also identify or even unify elements of gothic subculture. As such, they prompt the paradoxical question of popular culture in reference to gothic subculture: "Is it life imitating art or art imitating life?"

**Self, Identity and Transgression: The Incest Taboo Explored in *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (Cave, 1989), *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Poe, 1839/1989) and *Frankenstein* (Shelley, 1818/1831/1992)**

*And the Ass Saw the Angel, The Fall of the House of Usher* and *Frankenstein* all embrace the Gothic theme of incest then subject it to an unconscious social and psychological critique. A psychoanalytic examination of the respective protagonists of each of these texts reveals them to be 'subjects' constructed by and within social and cultural prohibitions, who are ultimately alienated from society, either directly or indirectly, as a result of transgression of the incest taboo.

In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the narrator reveals:

I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. (Poe, 1989, p. 138)
Along with the inference of incest, *The Fall of the House of Usher* also broaches the associated theme of insanity. That is, the character Roderick Usher "spoke of acute bodily illness – of a mental disorder which oppressed him" (Poe, 1989, p. 138). Furthermore, the inference of incest can even be extended to the relationship between Roderick and his sister Madeline. Ultimately, *The Fall of the House of Usher* critiques then damns the incestuous Usher family, and the story climaxes in the demise of both the family and their ancient decaying castle-like home in a surreal, almost supernatural, catastrophe:

The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened – there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind – the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight – my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder – there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like a voice of a thousand waters – and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the 'HOUSE OF USHER'. (Poe, 1989, p. 155)

So, *The Fall of the House of Usher* not only uses the theme of incest – "a staple item in Gothic tales" (MacAndrew, 1979, p. 11) – but it also critiques, then finally condemns the incestuous Usher family to insanity and annihilation.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein's "quasi-incestuous childhood relationship [with Elizabeth] . . . is used to throw a subtle light on Victor as 'villain'" (MacAndrew, 1979, p. 74). The relationship and subsequent marriage between Victor and Elizabeth is a 'quasi-incestuous' one because "In the 1818 edition [of *Frankenstein*] Elizabeth had been Victor's cousin, daughter of his father's sister. In 1831, though the term 'cousin' continues to be used . . . Elizabeth Lavenza is no longer biologically related to Victor" (Hindle, 1992, p. xiv). Therefore, the anomaly of the continued use of the term 'cousin'
in the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* alludes to an incestuous relationship between Elizabeth and Victor.

In *And the Ass Saw the Angel*, Euchrid's Father, Ezra, "suffered beneath the yoke of his kinfolk's incestuous practices. . . . Eye-blinding headaches, catatonia, seizures, trances and frequent outbursts of violence were the order of the day" (Cave, 1990a, pp. 24-25). Hence, Euchrid's unusual physical features of "strange almond eyes, with slightly swollen upper lids and next to no lashes, blue but so pale as almost to verge on pink" (Cave, 1990a, p. 8), like Roderick Usher's 'illness', alludes to the hereditary effects of prolonged inbreeding. So it would be reasonable to assume that Euchrid's muteness is also attributable to inbreeding. It is Euchrid's unusual physical features and his muteness that keeps him alienated from the other residents of Ukulore Valley, through their fear of his appearance and misunderstanding of his attempts to communicate without language. Upon the deaths of Euchrid's parents, an antagonistic relationship develops between Euchrid and the society that surrounds him. The ultimate result is a psychosis in which Euchrid believes himself to be the 'messenger of God', sent to enact revenge upon the people of Ukulore Valley:

> And word by word, chant by chant, instruction by instruction — go down to the town go down to the town go down to the town — God spelled it out for me. And in time ah learned the business of mah existence, plain and simple . . . . And with His most precious portent God illuminated the grinding darkness that had whelmed me all mah life, and ah saw the way in which mah life — mah cog — slotted neatly into another smaller cog from which an axle turned that sprung a mechanism which, in turn, ignited a tinder attached to a long wick that fizzed and sputtered down to a pyramid of red sticks — till death us do part till death us do part till death us do part — *Boom*!! Till death *Boo*!! Till death *Boom*! Till death *Boom*! Till death .

**KILL BETH BOOM!**

And so ah began the preparations. (Cave, 1990a, pp. 288-289)
And it is through the murder – or, rather, attempted murder, for Euchrid's plan does not succeed – of Beth, whose "well-being was the most important factor in the Ukulites' lives" (Cave, 1990a, p. 230) that Euchrid believes he will enact revenge upon the Ukulites. So Euchrid, the protagonist in the novel, becomes the antagonist of (the Ukulite) society.

In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, however, it is the monster that has no ancestry, who is the antagonist of society. But, the monster is created, indirectly, through the unleashing of Victor Frankenstein's repressed incestuous desire. That is, upon the death of Victor's mother, Elizabeth Lavenza proceeds to fulfil the role of 'mother' in the Frankenstein household in compliance with the request of Victor's dying mother: "Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my place to my younger children" (Shelley, 1992, p. 42). But, Victor's mother also expresses her desire for the matrimonial union of Victor and Elizabeth: "my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed in the prospect of your union" (Shelley, 1992, p. 42) – a sentiment with which Victor's father concurs. In effect, Victor's mother is insisting that Elizabeth sequentially fulfil the role of sister, mother and wife to Victor.

In Freudian terms, this would satisfy Victor's repressed pre-Oedipal desire for the mother without the father's threat of castration, because "Very often, as development proceeds, a sister or a cousin takes the mother's place in the boy's sexual phantasies and feelings of love" (Klein, 1975, p. 324). After the death of his mother, and the subsequent prospect of the circumvention of the Oedipus complex, Victor embarks on his project of 'creating' a human being – under the guise of perhaps being able to "in the process of time . . . renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (Shelley, 1992, p. 53). This alludes to the prospect of Victor being able to
'resurrect' his mother. So, by allowing Victor the prospect of achieving the mother, through the proffered marriage with Elizabeth, Victor's repressed desire for the mother surfaces in the form of a (the) monster. Hence, Victor creates an alter-ego to which he is the 'mother', and it is the alter-ego that is alienated by, then enters into a destructive and self-destructive antagonism with society.

Ultimately, the character that enters into, or is the result of, the transgression of the incest taboo undergoes a narcissistic regression that culminates in his/her death, as either a direct or indirect result of the psychological effects of the incest taboo. In the case of Frankenstein, he is driven into a self-imposed exile from society, and ultimately death, by the antagonistic psychological feud with his alter-ego monster. Similarly, Roderick Usher retreats into a degenerative paranoid psychosis in which he exiles himself from society in a crumbling mansion that eventually collapses upon him. For Euchrid, his psychosis leads him to believe he is the 'messenger of God', and therefore enters into a vengeful attack upon the inhabitants of Ukulore Valley, launched from "Doghead. Mah fortress of refuge. Mah Kingdom by appointment" (Cave, 1990a, p. 214), resulting in him being pursued to his death as retribution for his 'misunderstood' actions. Clearly, the transgressive and ultimately (self) destructive act of incest arises as an underlying theme in *And the Ass Saw the Angel, The Fall of the House of Usher* and *Frankenstein*. 
CHAPTER 3

SOME CONTEMPORARY GOTHIC CONCERNS: MASCULINITY, SEXUALITY AND THE FIN DE SIÈCLE

The Development of Contemporary Gothic Music, Style and Subculture: Who, What, Why is Gothic?

To an outsider's gaze (glance) gothic subculture may appear to be a superficial middle-class phenomenon, more about image than imagination, more about style than lifestyle. And to some extent this is true, because the style of gothic subculture lies in the 'tail-end' of the punk movement of the late seventies. Gothic subculture developed out of the punk movement, which, although it had its origins in working-class sensibilities - "Punk reproduced the entire sartorial history of post-war working-class youth cultures" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 26) - had been well and truly appropriated and commodified by middle-class youth culture by the early eighties. However, Brake (1980, p. 81) argues that punk always had links to middle-class youth "because it is a stratified subculture, drawn from lower middle-class art colleges attempting to 'épater the bourgeoisie', and working-class kids rejecting the virtuosity of superstars, the wealth of successful musicians, and the hippies." So gothic style has its origins in the middle-class commodification of subcultural style, because "Gothic culture took specific items from punk culture, like black clothing, leather and bondage and disregarded most of the rest" (Beswick, 1993, p. 2). It could be argued that contemporary gothic subculture is merely a superficial extrapolation of punk style, "a bricolage of a bricolage if you will," (Beswick, 1993, p. 2). But, like Gothic fiction, gothic subculture also has psychology at its roots. That is, eighteenth-century Gothic fiction and contemporary gothic subculture
are framed by the psychological concerns of the popular culture of their respective origins. Yet, gothic subculture is difficult, perhaps impossible, to define by who or what is gothic, but is more easily defined in terms of 'why is gothic?'

Gothic subculture developed out of the punk movement in England. In Australia, the punk scene was already "based on middle-class youths questioning middle-class values, rather than the working-class values apparently underlying the UK punk movement" (Brokenmouth, 1996, p. 9). And, where "the punks seemed to be parodying the alienation and emptiness [emphasis added] which have caused sociologists so much concern" (Hebdige, 1979, p. 79) the "Goths identified with vampyres [sic] and ghouls, outcasts of society [emphasis added]" (Beswick, 1993, p. 2). In identifying with these outcasts, gothic subculture embraces alienation from the mainstream as an identifying or unifying theme. Or, as Beswick (1993, p. 2) asserts "Where punk culture was out to shock, gothic culture was out to blaspheme." In other words, style in gothic subculture remains true to Hebdige's (1979, p. 18) assertion that "Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance." However, gothic subculture defies being pinned down to a definitive style, which makes it somewhat enigmatic and ambiguous in its themes and images, but no less emphatic about its social and psychological concerns.

As a subculture that has evolved from a music scene — that is, "early 'gothic rock' performers... had already formulated a distinctive style and sound before the Batcave [London gothic club] was recognized as the center of the emerging subculture in 1981" (Gunn, 1997c, p. 2) — gothic subculture reflects the social concerns of its late seventies progenitor, punk. And, in Australia 'punk' means the "alternative music scene [that] developed as a means of questioning established values" (Brokenmouth, 1996, p. 8). Likewise, eighteenth-century Gothic fiction can be read as an unconscious critique of
the social values of its times through subversive transgression of taboos, such that "In all of the developments commonly tied to the Gothic is an expression of uneasiness with the apparent, if superficial, eighteenth-century rational climate of opinion and a desire to escape from its restrictions and limitations" Spector (cited in Pelzer & Pelzer, 1996, p. 7). So it is no surprise when Gunn (1997b, p. 7) notes that "many respondents noted how the gothic novel and historically situated architecture (12th to 15th centuries), are elements subsumed by the subcultural aesthetic."

Because gothic subculture is music based, it is pertinent to examine the role popular music and its lyrics play in youth subculture in order to locate the connections between the social and psychological concerns of Gothic fiction and gothic subculture. Frith (cited in Brake, 1980, p. 156) argues that:

middle-class children are interested in alternative values, expressed in the lyrics of rock music, whilst working-class children are more concerned with the beat and dancing, drawing their alternative values from their street peer culture. Music for working-class children . . . is a background for other activities.

However, Brake (1980, p. 156) argues that music "is an intrinsic part of other activities and they [working-class children] certainly listen to the lyrics." The roots of gothic subculture, however, lie in the middle-class appropriation and commodification of the working-class originated punk style, and gothic subculture has a music-based unification, inferring that gothic subculture belies, or at least blurs, the traditional youth subculture boundaries between working-class and middle-class youth. To this extent, gothic subculture would seem to fit well with the Australian cultural myth of an egalitarian, classless society. That is, as an interviewee of Pendrill and Rovis-Hermann (1998, p. 3) reports "Here no one cares about your choice of sex or clothing or what mood you're in. It doesn't matter who you are as long as you are willing to accept the
people around you." In other words, gothic subculture transcends, or at least attempts to transcend traditional youth subculture boundaries.

However, Gunn (1997b, p. 8) discovered "more than half of the respondents seemed to indicate that the gothic scene was also 'relatively pretentious and snobbish' . . . hierarchical moves take place that alienate members on the basis of many exclusionary perceptions." Therefore, gothic subculture appears to extrapolate fears regarding the "issues of class, gender, and race [that] are all present in an intricately interwoven way [in Frankenstein]" Malchow (1996, p. 40). That is, in Frankenstein:

\[
\text{The Monster, unnaturally conceived without woman, oversized, oversexed, physically repulsive, and economically and socially marginal, encompasses three confused elements of middle-class nightmare: racial, sexual and proletarian. (Malchow, 1996, p. 40)}
\]

Yet, Oakley (1998, p. 5) maintains that "there are goths of all faiths, races, beliefs and orientations. If you want to be a goth, be one." Paradoxically, Oakley (1998, p. 5) also notes that "Racially, goth is a very 'white' culture", but concludes that "Goths are rarely racist and are often concerned at the lack of multiethnicity [sic] within the culture" (Oakley, 1998, p. 5). Porter (1997b) concurs with Oakley, saying:

\[
\text{They are an urban occurrence and mostly a white subculture (not out of racism, but just because most minority youths have a much more dominant subculture to belong to. Rap, R&B, Hip Hop, Soul, or gangsta type music etc. is what they identify with more than Goth . . . . A racial subculture is a much more powerful pull than goth culture, a musical subculture, to most minorities). (p. 1)}
\]

Generally, it can be said that gothic subculture is as ambivalent to its own membership and the label 'Goth' as Gothic fiction is to prohibition and transgression.
The ambivalence of gothic subculture to its own themes and concerns is apparent in the adoption and/or parody of Gothic 'monsters' evident in gothic style, and stems directly from the same ambivalence in Gothic fiction. Halberstam (1995) claims:

'Gothic' describes a discursive strategy which produces monsters as a kind of temporary but influential response to social, political and sexual problems. And yet, Gothic . . . always goes both ways. So, even as Gothic style creates the monster, it calls attention to the plasticity or constructed nature of the monster and therefore calls into question all scientific and rational attempts to classify and quantify agents of disorder. (p. 255)

Twentieth-century gothic subculture reflects the general social and political concerns and fears about economic instability, rising unemployment, the deterioration of the environment, and rapid scientific, technological and medical advances that form the discourse of the current fin de siècle. And, gothic subculture also continues to elucidate sexual concerns from the previous fin de siècle.

Masculinity, (Female) Sexuality and Contemporary Gothic

Masculinity under Fire: The Threat of the Fin de Siècle

The little that has been documented about late twentieth-century gothic subculture tends to suggest a connection between the kinds of social and psychological concerns of gothic subculture, the writers of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Gothic fiction, and the 'Decadent' movement of the late nineteenth century. Ledger (1995, p. 23) posits "The critical preoccupation of our own fin de siècle with the so-called 'holy trinity' of gender [emphasis added], 'race' and class had its origins in the cultural politics of the 1880s and 1890s." And Brake (1980, p. vii) claims that "On the whole, youth cultures and subcultures tend to be some form of exploration of masculinity." Hence, a contemporary examination of the fin de siècle (end of the century) phenomenon in western culture reveals some of the recurring themes and concerns that arise in various
manifestations of the contemporary gothic phenomenon. The most prominent theme arises from issues concerning masculinity and (female) sexuality. Likewise, at the end of the last century, "it was often gender issues which mediated the cultural politics of the day" (Ledger & McCracken, 1995, p. 4). Gothic subculture also elucidates concerns with gender issues through its ambiguous and ambivalent approach to transgressive sexuality and gender. And concern with issues of masculinity in relation to female sexuality is clearly evident in Cave's series of brief one-act plays based on the Salome legend and numerous song lyrics. Specifically, Cave's 'Salome' plays and the songs, "Do You:Love Me?" (Cave, 1994, track 1) and "Jack The Ripper" (Cave, 1992, track 9) express social and psychological concerns with masculinity that expand upon those elucidated a century earlier in the Decadent movement.

**Masculinity, Alienation and the Decadents**

The social and psychological concerns expressed by the Decadents, and to some extent by Cave, deal more with masculine identity than the concerns with subject identity in general, as expressed in late eighteenth-century Gothic fiction and highlighted here in the second chapter. The concerns of the Decadents, however, stem partly from the alienation of the artistic or creative individual:

The essence of the Decadent sensibility of the late nineteenth century . . . was the "dandy's" revolt against nature in favour of the creatively artificial. This was partly a reaction against the overwhelmingly materialist and rationalist emphasis at mid-century, which tended to marginalize both artists and the aristocracy. (Parker, 1989, p. 470)

It is through the alienation of the artistic or creative individual that gothic subculture can be seen to identify with "the Decadent sensibility," because Gunn (1997b, p. 8) identifies "ARTISTIC/CREATIVE ALIENATION: That artistic and creative people are seen as being abnormal to mainstream culture" as the second of three areas of alienation from mainstream society for gothic subculture.
Alienation of the artist can be seen to have initially developed in the late eighteenth century. According to Smith (1988):

The third occasion upon which the artist again appears in the role of hero is associated with the political and industrial revolutions of the late eighteenth century. . . . In the new industrial situation the artist is thrust from the privileged apex of production towards its eccentric edge. (p. 19)

It could be argued that the artist also takes on the role of hero in gothic subculture in the form of the songwriter as poet. Smith (1988) appears to attribute the rise of the musician as a hero in contemporary popular culture to the division of labour originally associated with industrialisation and capitalism:

It [the division of labour] encourages manual dexterity and advances invention, since the drudgery of routine manual movements stimulates the bright mind wonderfully to find appropriate mechanical movements. Indeed for more than a century young millwrights and factory hands applied themselves to inventing machines with an assiduity comparable only to the way in which they now learn to play electric guitars. (p. 21)

So it is through the marginalisation or alienation of the artist, as inaugurated by the social changes of the late eighteenth century and re-established in the repressive Victorianism of the late nineteenth century, that gothic subculture appears to emphasise the role of the songwriter/musician as poet as a point of identification.

Spector (cited in Pelzer & Pelzer, 1996, p. 7) asserts that "Wherever and whenever the restraints of society have seemed repressive and fantasy and imagination have appeared threatened, the Gothic, in one form or another, has thrived." The form that Gothic takes in this century is the music based gothic subculture, which identifies with the artistically based Decadent movement that "expressed itself emotionally by a revolt against biological sex in favour of a cerebral eroticism that exalted self-sufficient androgyny" (Parker, 1989, p. 470). The artistic eccentricity expressed in the style and lifestyle of
the Decadents surfaces in the transgressive androgynous or transvestite style of gothic subculture.

Transgressive sex/gender in the form of "androgynous or transvestite appearance" (Oakley, 1998, p. 5) is another major unifying motif of gothic subculture. However, Oakley (1998) also asserts:

> goths have pretty much the same spread of sexuality as any other similarly aged social group. . . . Many goths - particularly heterosexual males - can feel misunderstood when picked upon just because of transvestite elements of their dress and will often take offence from being called "queer" or so forth even when they don't consider homosexuality as bad. (p. 5)

In other words, Oakley expresses what Brake (1980, p. 149) refers to as being "caught up in a situation where they [males] are wearing a costume which transgresses traditional concepts of masculine dress, hence when challenged over effeminacy, they have to prove their masculinity, or prove by flight that they are not masculine." So if a male chooses to "take up a . . . feminized image, they have to be especially hard and confident, or very quick-witted in repartee" (Brake, 1980, p. 149). Similarly, Connell (1995, p. 37) asserts "Those who reject the hegemonic pattern [of masculinity] have to fight or negotiate their way out." However, negotiation or 'quick-wittedness' could be seen to require a higher than normal level of intelligence or intellect, and Gunn (1997b, p. 8) identifies "Intellectual Alienation" as the first of the three key areas of alienation from mainstream society that unify gothic subculture. Therefore, the male who rejects traditional concepts of masculinity or gender is caught in a paradox where he may have to resort to that which he rejects; that is, male gendered aggression, in order to validate or legitimise his position, or flee to a place of safety, such as the gothic scene, where he will be accepted without question of his masculinity.
Yet, there appears to be some ambivalence towards transgressive sex/gender in gothic subculture, in that male members accept transgressive sex/gender, but may not accept 'being' transgressive in their own sexuality if in their gender. Gunn (1997b) identifies transgressive sex/gender as the third category of alienation from mainstream society:

SEXUAL/GENDER ROLE ALIENATION: That fluid and/or alternative conceptualizations of gender and sex roles are impermissible in mainstream society. . . . Respondent 31: "Everyone's so worried about being called homosexual and stuff, and here [referring to Ground Zero] [gothic club] no one gives a shit. I mean I'm dressed goth with my little black gloves and stuff, but I'm not gay." (p. 8)

While it can be seen that this respondent gravitates towards gothic subculture as a refuge where his peers accept his transgressive expression of gender, he still feels the need to strongly defend his masculinity. In effect, he is caught in the paradox of at once trying to explore and assert his masculinity. And an exploration of masculinity may take as a starting point that which it can be defined in opposition to, femininity or female sexuality.

Female Sexuality as a Threat to Masculinity: The Legacy of Salome

Cave's treatment of the Salome legend in a series of five one-act plays elucidates the usual male insecurities when confronted with overt female sexuality. That is, for the most part, Salome is presented as a *femme fatale* who is solely responsible for ordering the beheading of John The Baptist. In this respect, Cave strays from:

The basic story [which] is to be found, in slightly different versions, in the gospels of *Mark* (6:14-29) and *Matthew* (14:1-2): Queen Herodias, in revenge for John the Baptist's denunciation of her incestuous marriage to Herod, her brother-in-law, uses the charms of Salome, the daughter of her previous marriage, to wheedle a gift on Herod's birthday, and when this is granted, has her daughter demand John's head. In *Mark* Herod is horrified by this request but has to keep his word; in *Matthew* he

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1 Cave is well renowned for his intimate knowledge of the Bible. He has written a preface for the book of *Mark* in the serialised version of the Bible recently released by Canongate. He appears to have a particular fascination for this part of the Bible, saying "There, in those four wonderful prose poems, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, I slowly reacquainted myself with the Jesus of my childhood, that eerie figure that moves through the Gospels" (Cave, 1997, p. 139).
complies more readily because he wishes John dead for political reasons, and Salome too is a more knowing accomplice. (Parker, 1989, pp. 471-472)

In Cave (1988) it is Salome who directly orders the beheading of John the Baptist and has his head presented to Herod, whereupon "HEROD recoils in horror" (Cave, 1988, p.75). Here Cave has not only combined the Salome of Matthew with the Herod of Mark, but he has also left out Herodias altogether. In the opening play, The Seven Veils, and the four subsequent plays, there is no mention of Herodias let alone any suggestion of collusion between Salome and Herodias. Rather, the play opens with Salome reluctantly performing The Dance of the Seven Veils for Herod - "Her slips, shrugs and sudden spasms are a cruel test for the ancient but riggish King. Salomé is bored and finds small pleasure in the torment" (Cave, 1988, p. 69) – and concludes with Salome crying, "Seize him guards! Seize the Baptist!" (Cave, 1988, p. 70) after "Herod clutches painfully at his heart as he collapses" (Cave, 1988, pp. 69-70).

Cave's treatment of the Salome legend in The Seven Veils supports Glancy's (1994, p. 45) criticism that "biblical critics consistently infer that Herodias and her daughter plot the dance in order to achieve their sexual and political ends, an interpretation that distorts the textual evidence." Rather, Cave exemplifies Glancy's (1994, p. 45) "more plausible interpretation of the story [where] Herod orders the (step)daughter to dance."

For example:

Dance for me, my peach, your King is old and finds small joy in his waning years. Dance for your King and brighten an old man's corner with your youthful fulgence. Come, my petal, dance and you shall be rewarded. (Cave, 1988, p. 69)

This in turn reflects similar concerns with the portrayal of female sexuality as those that Glancy (1994, p. 45) identifies in Oscar Wilde's Salome, where, "although Wilde represents female subjectivity as a threat to masculinity, he retains an insistence on
Herod's responsibility for events." Cave, however, does not continue the emphasis on Herod's 'responsibility', but transfers all the responsibility, and hence all the power, to Salome by having her give the order to capture and ultimately decapitate John the Baptist and present his head to Herod, rather than Herod being coerced into ordering the capture and decapitation.

Decapitation represents the threat to masculinity of unrepressed female sexuality, through symbolic castration. As Parker (1989) asserts:

The attempt of such women to control or usurp male creativity was emblematized by the Decadents in vampires, sphinxes, maenads, willis, and destructive watersprites, but a particularly apt image was discovered in the symbolic castration afforded by decapitation or decollation. (p. 471)

Of course, the allusion to staple Gothic characters – especially the blood-sucking vampire – are obvious. Further, Cave's John the Baptist declares Salome to be the "Spawn of incest, you are damned for eternity" (Cave, 1988, p. 71). As has been shown here in chapter one, incest is a staple Gothic motif for characters that threaten or transgress social norms. So, as well as an intersection of social and psychological concerns surrounding masculinity in Cave's Salome plays and the Decadents exploration of the threat to masculinity of female sexuality, there are pervading motifs from Gothic fiction in both Cave's plays and the way in which the Decadents expressed their fear of unrepressed female sexual desire.

While the sexuality of Cave's Salome is still presented as a major threat to masculinity, she is not the "Salome . . . of the Decadence [who] is essentially ambiguous, both corrupt and innocent" (Parker, 1989, p. 473). Rather, Cave's Salome is "coldly sensual", but without "Mallarmé's . . . childlike purity" (Parker, 1989, p. 473) which Cave
transfers to the male, Herod, whose "crown, throne etc must look like they were made by children" (Cave, 1988, p. 69). Moreover, Cave presents female sexuality as a threat to masculinity in the vein of "Kristeva's highly complex ... musings ... on the fear of the 'archaic' mother and the nature of defilement (excremental and 'menstrual'), the mechanisms of symbolic rejection and the borderlines of taboo" (Bloom, 1998, p. 15). For example, as John the Baptist is decapitated, "The moon blinks on and blood runs down the insides of SALOMÉ's dress" (Cave, 1988, p. 74) and similar imagery is applied to the narrator's lover in "Do You Love Me?" (Cave, 1994, track 1):

Ah, here she comes, blocking the sun
Blood running down the inside of her legs
The moon in the sky is battered and mangled
And the bells from the chapel go jingle-jangle

Cave appears to express the same concern as the Decadents who "devalued women ... as economic parasites who destroyed man's spiritual freedom by entrapping him into the expense and social responsibilities of marriage" (Parker, 1989, p. 470) through the use of the moon, a common feminine motif, 'blocking' the 'male' sun. In both cases, the juxtaposition of the moon and menstrual blood alludes to the threat to masculinity of unrepressed female sexuality or sexual desire.

In the case of the song "Do You Love Me?" (Cave, 1994, track 1) the result of the threat to masculinity is the symbolic castration of the narrator through his perception of emotional and intellectual inferiority when confronted with female sexuality:

She was given to me to put things right
And I stacked all my accomplishments beside her
Still I seemed so obsolete and small

In the case of Salome, the threat is elucidated through the symbolic castration, enacted through decapitation, and subsequent physical demise of John the Baptist. That is, Cave appears to reiterate "Wilde's assumption ... that female sexual desire leads to the
execution of John the Baptist" (Glancy, 1994, p. 45) in the final Salome play, *The Platter*:

KING HEROD: [*clutching his problem heart*] Wha... what is that!?

NEGRO: This my most worthy master is the head of John the Baptist... minus the tongue, which Salome demanded for herself. She said to inform you that you may eat the head but she's gunna teach her cunt to talk good.

(Cave, 1988, p. 75)

But, where Wilde's Salome "longs for him [John the Baptist] to return her gaze, and the decapitation she orders is an attempt to hold him captive so that he must look at her as she looks at him" (Glancy, 1994, p. 45), Cave's Salome is interested only in John the Baptist's tongue. She presents his head, and hence his (male) gaze, to Herod. The inference here is that Salome wishes to usurp the patriarchal language of John the Baptist's religion and hence adopt its controlling power.

In the song "Jack The Ripper" (Cave, 1992, track 9) the narrator is rendered powerless in his sexual advances to his "woman" and, hence, subservient to her demands:

I got a woman
She rules my house with an iron fist
I got a woman
She rules my house with an iron fist
She screams out Jack the ripper
Every time I try to get a kiss

As with Cave's Salome, the narrator of "Jack The Ripper" is rendered powerless through the female taking over the controlling power of language:

I got a woman
She just hollers what she wants from where she is
I got a woman
She just hollers what she wants from where she's at
("Jack The Ripper", Cave, 1992, track 9)

The inference here is that the narrator's "woman" is commanding him and controlling him with language. The narrator also transfers this oral threat to a physical threat by
saying, "She strikes me down with a hand of lead". However, not only does the narrator's female partner rule his house, she also rules him by spurning his meagre advances – all he is doing is trying to kiss her – yet the narrator appears to be intimidated by her sexuality:

We bed in a bucket of butcher's knives
I awake with a hatchet hanging over my head
("Jack The Ripper", Cave, 1992, track 9)

Again, the male (narrator) is symbolically threatened with castration by female sexuality in the form of imminent decapitation.

For Cave, it is as if the symbolic threat of castration that unpressed female sexuality poses to masculinity translates to the more sinister 'real' threat of the loss of the power of patriarchal language. So the overt female sexuality of Cave's Salome threatens the hegemonic power of patriarchal language and turns the male gaze back on itself. That is, Salome has John's head presented to Herod, whose gaze was originally transfixed on Salome – "KING HEROD sits on throne centre-left oggling [sic] a despondent SALOMÉ" (Cave, 1988, p. 69). The popularity of "bondage and fetish fashion" (Porter, 1997g, p. 1) in gothic subculture is applied to a similar end as Salome's actions and her treatment of John's head in Cave's plays. That is, as Hebdige (1988) asserts:

in punk and post-punk [emphasis added] . . . girls have begun playing with themselves in public:
parodying the conventional iconography of fallen womanhood – the vamp, the tart, the slut, the waif, the sadistic maitresse, the victim-in-bondage. . . . These girls turn being looked at into an aggressive act [emphasis added]. (pp. 28-29)

And, Brake (1980, p. 147) pre-empted Hebdige's observations by stating that while "Popular culture is sexist . . . Punk has at least attacked this image, although fetishization [sic] remains, at least it has elements of shock and satire." In gothic subculture, Gunn (1997b, p. 7) identifies a "knowing, performative aspect of 'goth' . . .
underscored by the use of humor: 'Gothic is appreciating the gloomier aspects of life but also meeting them with a grin—you can’t be too serious . . .' (Respondent 8)." In other words, gothic subculture, as a logical extension of its precursor punk, still maintains elements of fetishism, but subjects them to further scrutiny through self-parody or parody of an act of parody.

Therefore, the concerns about masculinity and (female) sexuality that are expressed in Cave’s Salome plays and the songs "Do You Love Me" and "Jack The Ripper", and the images invoked through the style of gothic subculture, would appear to be a logical extension or extrapolation of those expressed by the Decadents at the turn of the last century. Although the fin de siècle is a common denominator, the apparent unsettling psychological effect of such does not adequately explain why these concerns should arise when they do. As Ledger and McCracken (1995) state:

To put this more succinctly, the fin de siècle was only an epoch of beginnings and endings if we look for them: the cultural forms and conflicts we find there are inescapably constructed by the double-look of the 1890s and 1990s, and can only be reconstructed via the discursive practices available to us in the 1990s, which may of course include . . . those available in the last fin de siècle. (p. 4)

An examination of some of the social concerns of the concluding decades of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries may at least shed some light on why the gothic phenomenon emerges as a means of unconscious critique, through transgressive themes and images, of the alienating effect that rapid social change has upon (sexist) popular culture and (masculine) youth culture.

Science, Fiction and the Fin de Siècle: (Bad) Seeds of Doom

Gothic (fiction and subculture) can be read as a product of the growing fear and apprehension associated with rapid social change. In late eighteenth-century England
the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent rise of capitalism forced massive changes to the means of production, which "reduce[d] many people's work to dull, uninteresting tasks" (Giddens, 1989, p. 486). Ironically, Eagleton (1995, p. 13) claims that in the late nineteenth century, "materially speaking, the era of Victorian prosperity is now over; the oldest industrial capitalist nation in the world is being shamefully outpaced by its juvenile rivals." This contributed to the fear and apprehension now recognised as the fin de siècle phenomenon. In the late twentieth century, however, it is the effect of rapidly advancing technology replacing jobs, damaging the environment and invading our private lives that underpins much of the fear and apprehension of the fin de siècle.

Industry and technology have combined in the twentieth century to create potentially cataclysmic effects for the environment. There is growing concern about the greenhouse effect, the depletion of the ozone layer, rapidly disappearing forests and the subsequent high rate of extinction of flora and fauna. Could we be next? But, at a social level, advances in industrial technology have replaced humans with automation (robots) of repetitive production line work. Ironically, it was those same repetitive jobs, created out of the advances of the Industrial Revolution, which initiated the social changes that underpinned the fear and apprehension expressed in the psychological themes of late eighteenth-century Gothic fiction. So today's youth now look to a future with no job prospects, or, at the very least, insecure part-time and casual employment.

Also, medical, scientific and technological advances have arguably initiated even greater psychological concerns. Advances in genetic engineering (cloning for example) and medical science have reactivated the fears expressed in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein of a society of 'monsters' (only recently we have seen doctors replace a
man's missing hand with that of a dead man) so superior to ourselves that 'normal' conception will be made redundant due to its capacity to produce 'inferior' results. Similarly, in the late nineteenth century "many periodical writers of a medico-scientific bent were busy depicting New Women as the mothers of a degenerate 'race', as the breeders of 'monsters' [emphasis added]" (Ledger, 1995, p. 31). Although the New Woman and cloning are entirely separate issues, the psychological effect upon males is similar. That is, males look to the future and ask the question: Does society still need us? A sentiment that Cave's play Garbage Hearts (1988) seems to express:

**SCENE**

*Up against the garbage dumpster, knee between her legs, he takes deep inhalation. The garbage and her uniform. Putting his prick where his knee was prior, the tip of it comes into contact. The skin collects under her fingernails as he rams it home. The repeated cracks of her skull against the dumpster bang out the rhythm of passion. He dribbles out.*

**GIRL:** [Pulls away] I'm late for work and I am a waitress in a truck stop. What about you?

**BOY:** [In blue jeans and t-shirt, turns his face to light] Nothing.

**BLACKOUT**

(Cave, 1988, p. 60)

The play opens with an ambiguous scene that could almost be a rape, but closes with the despondent one word reply of a male who has been rejected – he feels and is 'Nothing.'

Youth in general looks to the future with bleak despondency. In Australia, concern over high rates of youth unemployment, homelessness and suicide is commonly acknowledged. A recent study indicates that suicide in the young male population is a particular concern:

In 1995, suicide was the recorded cause of death of 2,366 Australians. By far the greater part of these deaths involved males . . . . At present,
the highest risk age range for suicide for males appears to start at about school leaving age and continues into early middle-age. . . . Among females, deaths by suicide are much lower than for males. (Background on youth suicide in Australia, n.d., p. 1)

In recent years Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds have developed a strong youth following, to the extent that they have been a regular inclusion in the annual 'Big Day Out' series of youth oriented and focused concerts since 1993. It is perhaps depressive expressions of angst in Cave's lyrics that these youth are drawn to and the reason that he has earned the title "Prince of Darkness" (Dwyer, 1998; Sayer, 1997) and been described as "the gothic pin-up boy" (Sayer, 1997, p. 28). Parallel to this youth following, Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds have developed (perhaps cultivated?) a gothic following during the 1990s, which they shunned and denied in earlier years.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION: "WHERE DO WE GO NOW BUT NOWHERE"

The motifs of gothic style emanate from a combination of images drawn from the ghouls, vampires and general 'dark' aesthetic of Gothic fiction, and the style and lifestyle of the Decadents. Gunn (1997b, p. 5) claims "fans described the aesthetic style . . . of 'goths' as decadently 'morbid.'" The themes of gothic music and concerns of gothic subculture appear to be heavily influenced by the psychology of the fin de siècle phenomenon. To many, the world appears to be in very bad shape; to name just a few concerns, the hole in the ozone layer, global warming, the continued manufacture and testing weapons of mass destruction and world economic instability. Add to this the threat posed to humanity by HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and antibiotic resistant 'super bacteria', and, as we approach the next millennium, western society looks towards the future with growing fear, apprehension and a very dim view.

After the turn of the eighteenth century, Mary Shelley honed the Gothic genre to speculate about the future:

While Gothic was originally related to a certain era in the past, it is in the Frankenstein case directed to fantasies or speculations about the future which are able to create the same horror, to make the reader feel his [sic] nothingness. (Pelzer & Pelzer, 1996, p. 6)

Since Shelley, Gothic fiction, gothic music, then gothic subculture appear to have drawn their psychological themes from social concerns, at the respective time of their production, imaginatively and creatively extrapolated with a foreboding pessimism for the future of humanity.
Pessimism about the future drives the melancholic and depressive nature of gothic music and is expressed through the 'dark' aesthetic of the style of gothic subculture. Nick Cave's song lyrics often express a melancholic and pessimistic view of the future through apocalyptic themes and images:

STRAIGHT TO YOU

All the towers of ivory are crumbling
And the swallows have sharpened their beaks
This is the time of our great undoing
This is the time that I'll come running
Straight to you
For I am captured
Straight to you
For I am captured one more time

The light in our window is fading
The candle gutters on the ledge
Well now sorrow, it comes a-stealing
And I'll cry girl, but I'll come a-running
Straight to you
For I am captured
Straight to you
For I am captured
Once again

Gone are the days of rainbows
Gone are the nights of swinging from the stars
For the sea will swallow up the mountains
And the sky will throw thunder-bolts and sparks
Straight at you
But I'll come a-running
Straight to you
But I'll come a-running
One more time

Heaven has denied us its kingdom
The saints are drunk and howling at the moon
The chariots of angels are colliding
Well, I'll run, babe, but I'll come running
Straight to you
For I am captured
Straight to you
For I am captured
One more time

("Straight To You", Cave, 1992, track 3)
Here, images of apocalypse are juxtaposed with a Romantic tone of melancholy. In particular, phrases such as "All the towers of ivory are crumbling" suggest the imminent apocalyptic demise of the hegemonic ruling class, while the tone of the final chorus, "Straight to you / for I am captured . . . One more time" is distinctly melancholic. Within gothic subculture there is a perception that the subculture "allows members to perform, sometimes parody, two key emotions often suppressed by mainstream society: melancholy/depression and love/romance" (Gunn, 1997b, p. 7). Cave also applies this notion of parody in themes of apocalyptic destruction. For example, in the video clip for "Straight To You" he parodies his own stage style to present a melodramatic performance of the clichéd 'tortured' artist.

Apocalyptic images surface in many of Cave's lyrics from the early nineties on. They are particularly prevalent on the Henry's Dream (1992) album. For example:

Entire towns being washed away
Favelas exploding in inflammable spillways
Lynch-mobs, death squads, babies being born without brains
("Papa Won't Leave You, Henry", Cave, 1992, track 1)

A recurring theme of corruption and decadence leading to, or as a symptom of, the demise of humanity is associated with the apocalyptic images. This theme is alluded to in the 'dark' images invoked by gothic style and the ambivalence to transgression in gothic subculture and in Gothic fiction.

Cave applies the theme of the corruption and imminent demise of humanity in ways that draw attention to the psychological effect of pessimism about the future upon a disaffected society. In the aptly named "The Weeping Song" (Cave, 1990b, track 4) there is a sense of society looking to an apocalyptic future with depressive apprehension:
Father, why are all the women weeping?
They are weeping for their men
Then why are all the men there weeping?
They are weeping back at them.

This is a weeping song
A song in which to weep
While we rock ourselves to sleep
This is a weeping song
But I won't be weeping long
But I won't be weeping long
But I won't be weeping long
But I won't be weeping long

Although there is no suggestion as to why the father and son narrators and 'all the men and women' are weeping, the inference is that the future, rather than the past, holds the answer to the question as to why everyone is weeping:

Father, why are all the children weeping?
They are merely crying son
O, are they merely crying, father?
Yes, true weeping is yet to come
("The Weeping Song", Cave, 1990b, track 4)

The suggestion here is that the father sees only a future in which there will be no respite for his son from the depression that besets the current adult population. Rather, he sees the situation as becoming worse. However, the repetition of "But I won't be weeping long" at the end of the final chorus has a tone of solemnity and inevitability about it that suggests the son feels respite is soon to arrive in the form of an apocalyptic termination.

It is perhaps as an expression of concern about the bleak uncertainty that the future holds for society that propels gothic subculture to adopt the predominance of black into its style. Porter (1997b, p. 1) claims that "Goths happen to have a preference for black, for mystery, and they tend to like depressing music." But, Porter (1997b, p. 1) adds, "While I don't believe goths in general are necessarily more depressed than any other group, depression comes to be a feeling that Goth personifies." And, Kristeva (1996, p.
136) says, "I would say that the creative act is released by an experience of depression without which we would not call into question the stability of meaning or the banality of expression." Hence, we return to the theme of alienation, in particular, "Artistic/Creative" alienation as it is identified by (Gunn, 1997b, p. 8), because Porter (1997b, p. 1) also claims that "Goth happens to be a group of creative individuals, most are artists in some way." Gothic subculture and gothic music are expressions of alienation as it is felt by individuals within a society that is perceived to be on the brink of (self) destruction.

Should this (self) destruction of society actually occur, it could take the form of a complete reversal of the 'norm'. That is, the outcasts of society could become the society. For Cave, deviants and freaks, murderers and 'monsters' already populate the world. For example, the song "The Carny" (Cave, 1988, p. 139) describes the members of a travelling show as "Dog-boy, Atlas, Half-man, The Geeks, the hired hands / . . . . The Bird-Girl flapping and squawking around. . . . / Freak and brute creation". Even among these outcasts there is a sense of boundaries that should not be transgressed. So that when "the carny" apparently transgresses these boundaries by absconding from the "company", "There was not one among them that did not cast an eye behind / In the hope that the carny would return to his own kind" (Cave, 1988, p. 139). And once the boundary has been transgressed by the carny "leaving his own kind" an apocalyptic scene ensues in the form of a torrential rain bearing down and washing everything away:

Until nothing was left, nothing at all
Except the body of Sorrow [the carny's dead horse]
That rose in time
To float upon the surface of the eaten soil.
(Cave, 1988, p. 140)
Again the images are apocalyptic, but with a hint of survival. That is, the freaks of the carnival survive by fleeing the rain sodden valley. Only the carny's van and his dead horse, Sorrow, are left both facing an imminent total demise:

And a murder of crows did circle round
First one, then the others flapping blackly down.

And the carny's van still sat upon the edge
Tilting slowly as the firm ground turned to sludge.

And the rain it hammered down.

And no-one saw the carny go
I say it's funny how things go.
(Cave, 1988, p. 140)

Those who are left to maybe survive are all the 'freaks' of the carnival. That is, the outcasts of society become society.

However, the one who steps outside the boundaries of (his/her) society is seen to be doomed. The carny, in this case, is one such individual. Again, the Gothic theme of the plight of the transgressive individual arises. Whether the society is crumbling around that individual or not, it is seen to be to the detriment of that individual to step outside the boundaries or prohibitions that the society sets for all its subjects. To this effect, the Gothic images adopted by gothic subculture both embrace and reject the transgressive individual. The subculture appears to attract those who already feel they exist 'outside' the prohibitions of mainstream society, but at the same time, the elements of parody, self-parody and performance within gothic subculture suggest uneasiness with the very images that are adopted. In other words, gothic subculture personifies "the very ambivalence of Gothic fictions to prohibitions" (Graham, 1989, p. xiii).
This ambivalence presents a paradox of its own creation. That is, gothic subculture expresses the same uneasiness about being the 'Other' as mainstream society expresses towards the 'Other'. The psychological effect of this is an unconscious critique of the social changes and/or restrictions that at once created this desire to transgress and become the feared 'Other' and the very fear of that transgressive 'Other'. And the motifs and themes that have been developed in the various incarnations of Gothic fiction provide a vehicle for expressing both the fear and desire of the individual to be or not be caught in the paradox of transgression.

Effectively, 'gothic' expresses the psychological effect that rapidly changing social situations and values may have upon the individual subject within society and the subsequent effect of a breakdown in individual relationships and communications. This is nowhere more adequately expressed than in the failure of Cave's alienated (male) characters and narrators to communicate or interact with their (female) contemporaries-come-adversaries. Hence, for Cave, the alienated individual is left feeling nothing and with nowhere to go:

Where Do We Go Now But Nowhere

I remember a girl so very well
The carnival drums all mad in the air
Grim reapers and skeletons and a missionary bell
O where do we go now but nowhere

In a colonial hotel we fucked up the sun
And then we fucked it down again
Well the sun comes up and the sun goes down
Going round and round to nowhere

The kitten that padded and purred on my lap
Now swipes at my face with the paw of a bear
I turn the other cheek and you lay into that
O where do we go now but nowhere

O wake up, my love, my lover wake up
O wake up, my love, my lover wake up

Across clinical benches with nothing to talk
Breathing tea and biscuits and the Serenity Prayer
While the bones of our child crumble like chalk
O where do we go now but nowhere

I remember a girl so bold and so bright
Loose-limbed and laughing and brazen and bare
Sits gnawing her knuckles in the chemical light
O where do we go now but nowhere

You come for me now with a cake that you've made
Ravaged avenger with a clip in your hair
Full of glass and bleach and my old razorblades
O where do we go now but nowhere

O wake up, my love, my lover wake up
O wake up, my love, my lover wake up

If they'd give my clothes back then I could go home
From this fresh, this clean, antiseptic air
Behind the locked gates an old donkey moans
O where do we go now but nowhere

Around the duck pond we grimly mope
Gloomily and mournfully we go rounds again
And one more doomed time and without much hope
Going round and around to nowhere

From the balcony we watched the carnival band
The crack of the drum a little child did scare
I can still feel his fingers pressed in my hand
O where do we go now but nowhere

If I could relive one day of my life
If I could relive just a single one
You on the balcony, my future wife
O who could have known, but no one

O wake up, my love, my lover wake up
O wake up, my love, my lover wake up

(Cave, 1997, pp. 154-155)
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

EXAMPLES OF ALBUM COVERS AND ARTWORK

Photograph of *Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds* that was included in the song lyric booklet accompanying the *Henry's Dream* compact disc.

Art direction and photography: Anton Corbijn

Design: Area


Cover artwork of *Henry's Dream* compact disc.
Centrefold artwork in the booklet accompanying the *Henry's Dream* compact disc.

Cover design for the *Let Love In* compact disc.

Design by Nick Cave and Robert Hales.

Photography by Polly Borland.

London: Mute Records.