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The Evolution of the Gothic Novel in English Literature

Ghada Fayez Refaat Abu Enein 

Department of English Language, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts, UNRWA, Amman 11623, Jordan

ABSTRACT

This study explores the development of the Gothic novel in English literature from a stylistic and cognitive-linguistic perspective. It examines the structure of Gothic narrative discourse and its expressive strategies, highlighting the pivotal role of cognitive metaphor in shaping themes of horror, mystery, and existential anxiety. Drawing on the philosophy of language, the study reveals how Gothic language encodes and reproduces cultural and psychological constructs that reflect the self's confrontation with the irrational and the unknown. Through critical readings of seminal Gothic texts, the study traces the dynamic interplay between language and aesthetic experience, demonstrating how Gothic fiction reflects evolving artistic, social, and intellectual paradigms. It discusses how early Gothic narratives, characterized by medieval settings and dark, enclosed spaces, responded to their social and political environments, particularly the tensions of modernity and class transformation. In later developments, the Gothic style deepened its philosophical and psychological concerns, engaging with notions of creation, morality, madness, and the limits of humanity. The study concludes that the Gothic novel constantly reinvents itself, maintaining its literary vitality and cultural significance through continuous adaptation to new contexts. This capacity for transformation has allowed the Gothic style to remain a resonant form of artistic expression, transcending the boundaries between reason and chaos, reality and imagination, thus ensuring its enduring presence and importance in contemporary literary discourse.

Keywords: Evolution; Gothic Novel; English Literature; Linguistic Stylistics; Cognitive Metaphor

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Ghada Fayez Refaat Abu Enein, Department of English Language, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts, UNRWA, Amman 11623, Jordan;
Email: ghabualenien@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

The Gothic novel in English literature is one of the most prominent literary genres that had a great influence on English literature, shaping the concepts of fear, evil, the unknown, and psychological tension in Western literature. Although its beginnings were in the eighteenth century, its influence remained powerful in English literature for more than two centuries.

The development of the Gothic novel in English literature is examined from an integrated linguistic, stylistic, and cognitive perspective. It focuses on how Gothic narrative structures and stylistic choices influence the expression of fear, mystery, and existential anxiety. To analyze these dimensions, the study employs a combination of modern linguistic theories, most notably textual world theory, which provides a cognitive framework for studying how readers construct mental representations of fictional worlds; narrative stylistics, which explores the interaction between narrative techniques and linguistic form; and text stylistics, which allows for the identification of recurring linguistic patterns in Gothic texts that contribute to the genre's emotional and thematic atmosphere. In addition, this approach emphasizes how language serves as a mediating tool between narrative content and reader cognition, shaping both the intensity of affective responses and the depth of thematic engagement. By examining lexical choices, syntactic structures, and cohesive devices, the study highlights the mechanisms through which Gothic texts generate suspense and ambiguity. Furthermore, this methodology allows for a more systematic exploration of how linguistic cues guide the reader's immersion in Gothic fictional worlds, thereby bridging literary interpretation with cognitive stylistics and opening new pathways for understanding the genre's enduring resonance.

The philosophy of language has been based on exploring insights into how metaphor in Gothic fiction serves not only aesthetic purposes but also reflects deeper cultural and cognitive structures. By employing cognitive metaphor theory, the study examines how Gothic discourse influences the reader's psychological engagement with themes of horror, the uncanny, and the irrational. This theoretical approach ultimately aims to clarify how language in Gothic literature functions as an effective means of expressing and reproducing complex human experiences and cultural anxieties.

The Gothic novel flourished for a limited period until it became a thing of the past in the early nineteenth century, but the elements of the Gothic novel remained widely present in the novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Gothic novel is a reformation of a novelistic style pioneered by the writer Horace Walpole with his novel.

The *Castle of Otranto* by Walpole was very influential in the process of interest in the Gothic, which emerged in the eighteenth century, and this can be seen as evidence of the manifestations of Romanticism in its tendency to use wild, strange, and terrifying elements, all of which are associated with the Middle Ages.

Gothic literature is still of great importance in contemporary society. Despite its seemingly ancient nature and its reputation as a highly unsophisticated literary form, it is incredibly persistent and innovative, having been in production for over 250 years^[1].

Although Gothic literature is still popular today, there are many variations on the subject, not all of which have been identified in this way. To understand the place of Gothic literature in contemporary society, one must first look back to the genre's beginnings and development in order to identify its distinguishing features, and one must also apply these features to contemporary Gothic writing.

The Gothic novel emerged as a sign of the revival of the need for the sacred and the transcendent in the context of an enlightened secular world that denied the supernatural and its existence. It was also seen as a kind of imaginative rebellion against the dominance of rationalism. Beyond this, the Gothic text functioned as a cultural response to the suppression of emotions and the marginalization of the irrational, offering a symbolic space where the uncanny and the forbidden could be explored. The interplay between terror and the sublime in these works reflected a deep psychological dimension, allowing readers to confront hidden fears and suppressed desires within a narrative framework. In this sense, the Gothic became not only a mode of entertainment but also a discursive arena in which existential concerns, religious doubt, and anxieties about social transformation were dramatized. This dual role—both aesthetic and cultural—helped establish the Gothic as a lasting literary form that continues to evolve in response to shifting historical and intellectual contexts.

The development of modern historical studies has made it possible to place this literary genre in a more specific frame-

work, as it was closely linked to the emergence of the middle class and the development of the novel as one of the most prominent manifestations of this class, as pointed out in particular by the thinker Ian Watt. On the other hand, Gothic literature was linked to the attempt to rebel against the aesthetic ideals of the neoclassical system, which imposed strict unity, in an attempt to restore the repressed primitive and barbaric imaginative freedom. Moreover, Gothic narratives became a symbolic space where social anxieties, such as the fear of industrialization, the decline of religious authority, and the disruption of traditional family structures, could be explored through metaphor and allegory. This gave the genre its unique ability to negotiate between cultural continuity and radical change, making it not only a literary phenomenon but also a cultural discourse that reflected and shaped the tensions of its time.

2. Study Problem

The Gothic novel has undergone a significant transformation since its emergence in the late 18th century. Initially characterized by supernatural elements, medieval settings, and psychological horror, the genre evolved in response to shifting cultural, social, and philosophical contexts. Despite its rich literary history and ongoing influence in contemporary fiction and media, the Gothic novel's developmental trajectory remains a subject requiring deeper scholarly analysis.

This study seeks to investigate how the Gothic novel in English literature has evolved, what factors influenced its transformation, and how its themes, narrative techniques, and functions have adapted to different historical and literary movements.

The current study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the defining characteristics of the classic Gothic novel in English literature?
2. What historical, cultural, and social factors contributed to the evolution of the Gothic novel?
3. How have narrative techniques and thematic concerns in Gothic fiction changed over time?
4. In what ways do modern Gothic novels differ from their classical predecessors?
5. How did major literary movements (e.g., Romanticism, Modernism, Postmodernism) shape the Gothic tradi-

tion?

6. What roles do identity, gender, madness, and the supernatural play in the evolution of the genre?

2.1. Study Importance

The importance of the study lies in its statement of one of the most important literary genres that had a great influence on English and world literature, as it will clarify how the Gothic novel contributed to the development of English literature, and the extent to which the cultural and social transformation was reflected in the Gothic novel. This study will also contribute to shedding light on the extent of the influence of novels on contemporary literature, as the Gothic novel and its influence are clearly evident in many modern literary and artistic works.

2.2. Study Objectives

This study seeks to achieve many objectives and to the extent of its contribution to understanding the development of the Gothic novel in English literature, and in its statement and presentation of a comprehensive analysis of this literary genre. Therefore, the most important objectives of this study can be summarized in the following points:

1. To trace the historical development of the Gothic novel in English literature from its origins to the present day.
2. To analyze the stylistic and thematic transformations within Gothic fiction over time.
3. To explore the influence of social, cultural, and philosophical contexts on the evolution of the Gothic novel.
4. To examine recurring and emerging motifs, such as horror, isolation, identity, and transgression.
5. To assess the interaction between the Gothic genre and major literary movements.
6. To understand the relevance and adaptation of Gothic elements in contemporary literature and popular culture.⁹

2.3. Previous Studies

2.3.1. Irina's Study (2014) Entitled "An Overview of Gothic Fiction"

This article deals with the subject of the Gothic literature genre and its place in culture. Gothic fiction is an

interesting literary genre, and while some believe that the Gothic genre ended in the nineteenth century, then the period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represents only the first of Gothic fiction. In their opinion, the Gothic genre did not actually end in the end, but history, and changed to reflect different realities. The Gothic genre turns into multiple types of damage to other types. This Spanish language tries to look at the period of Gothic fiction in general up to the present day, and to identify the themes of the cover fiction, with its triumph.

2.3.2. Qais and Mahmoud's Study (2020) Entitled "Integrating the Prevailing Gothic Elements in Victorian Fiction"

The study discussed the integration of Gothic literature elements in a prevalent manner in Victorian narrative literature by referring to the novel *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole. The researcher begins by presenting a brief introduction to the Gothic literature movement and then presents the hypotheses, the most important of which is that Victorian narrative literature was greatly influenced by the Gothic movement, as its elements became an integral part of the characteristics of Victorian literature, in addition to the fact that *The Castle of Otranto* is considered a Gothic literary work because it contains a wealth of elements and characteristics of this movement. In order for the researcher to prove these hypotheses, he raised important questions, which are: What are the elements of Gothic literature? How did they overlap with Victorian literature? From what perspective is the *Castle of Otranto* considered a Gothic literary work? In this study, the researcher relied on the doctrines of deductive analysis that are consistent with the subject and then reached some results, the most important of which are: The Gothic literature movement appeared in the late Victorian era and at the beginning of the eighteenth century, where it overlapped with Victorian narrative literature. The researcher recommends that other researchers in this field research work in this field and the extent to which Horace was influenced by Gothic traditions.

3. Gothic Novel

The Gothic novel is considered an extreme extension of the Romantic school that emerged in late 18th-century Europe, as a reaction against the Industrial Revolution, the

aristocratic social and political rules of the Enlightenment, and the scientific understanding of nature that shaped the features of modernity. Although the Gothic novel shares with the Romantic school its focus on feelings, emotions, and individualism, it added its own touch of darkness and pessimism, as it was characterized by a dark and terrifying atmosphere filled with ghosts, madness, and superstitions. It was given this name because of the focus on ancient buildings and ruins dating back to the Middle Ages, such as castles and monasteries, which include secret passages, dark balconies, false walls, and hidden doors.

3.1. Review of Related Literature

The word "gothic" offers various implications based on different contexts. In architecture, although the term was coined during the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries (Renaissance), it is used to refer to French architecture that flourished between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. This type of construction was present in cathedrals and churches, as it offered a sense of greatness^[2]. Later, this style started to disappear until the rebirth of these old-fashioned reconstructions. The revival of these reconstructions was considered a tool to idealize the past, and it paved the way for Gothic as a literary model to be cultivated.

However, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Romantics in Britain contested the concept of Gothic, arguing that human experiences could not be understood through cold, impersonal rationalism. They believed that a person's emotions and imagination were tied to real-life experiences, rather than to mysterious or unexplained events^[3].

Romantic poets such as Keats, Shelley, and Byron considered the Gothic to be closely related to their considerations, which was evident in their use of the "Gothic" to explore, at varying levels of explicitness, the role that the apparently irrational can play in criticizing the quasi-rational account of experience^[3].

Hence, the genre of Gothic literature can be viewed as a form of the darkest form of Dark Romanticism, where the reader finds extreme reactions towards self-destruction and immorality combined with utter horror, psychosis, and paranormal elements^[2].

At the end of the eighteenth century, Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* followed, which was also set in an old church, tackles themes off religion, supernatural, and entrapment.

Fast forward to 1816, the birth of vampires in English Literature took place through John Polidori's *The Vampyre*^[4].

The story introduced an immortal supernatural being who sustains itself on blood and does not age—traits commonly associated with vampires—which helped Gothic literature flourish even further. In the same year, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was released. *Frankenstein* played a pivotal role in shaping the Gothic genre by presenting the disturbing image of a modern Prometheus brought back to life through science. Shelley's exploration of sublimity in *Frankenstein* provides a clear example of how a Gothic narrative challenges conventional ideas^[3].

A few years later, in 1840, Edgar Allan Poe's short stories "Grotesque" and "Arabesque" featured several elements that are now considered traditional to Gothic literature.

3.2. The Development of Gothic Literature

Since ancient times, the unknown has been a major source of fear for humans. Medieval tales helped establish a framework for this fear, depicting it in places such as abandoned castles, cemeteries, and places with mysterious changes in appearance. These ideas were drawn from a variety of stories and beliefs in the ancient world, and later became the basis for Gothic literature. Romantic writers' interest in nature and the metaphysical world revived a sense of exploration and investigation into the unknown in their literary works.

The English writer and historian Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is considered the first Gothic novel, in which its characters are trapped in mysterious and frightening passages. This literary sub-movement spread to English-speaking regions through works such as *Vatic* (1786) by William Thomas Beckford, as well as the works of Samuel Coleridge, Lord Byron, and Margaret Shelley, who used fantasy as a primary method in the genre. As William Blake notes, "Gothic is a living form," and the horror stories in Gothic literature are a way of re-evoking the past and embodying its fears.

4. Characteristics of Gothic Novels

In Gothic literature, the main setting is often an ancient castle cursed by the sins of its ancestors, an essential element in Gothic fiction, as it provides a dark and eerie backdrop.

In such stories, the heroine frequently encounters terrifying events that make her scream or faint. When the context is medieval, the heroine is typically portrayed as a damsel in distress, imprisoned in a castle and pursued by a sadistic and evil aristocrat.

The story is dominated by a constant sense of threat, with tension heightened by the unknown. The narrative often includes family secrets, false identities, and false imprisonments. Sometimes, the villain is more than just a monstrous figure from the characters' nightmares; he may transform into a shape-shifting creature, as seen in novels like *The Metamorphosis*, for example.

Sudden flashes of lightning, thunder, and heavy rain often accompany these events, serving as omens for the appearance of a character or the beginning of a significant event in the story. In Gothic fiction, aristocratic characters tend to be gentle, moody, isolated, and sarcastic, with events unfolding in secrecy and shadow, and contradictory, alluring male characters frequently appearing.

Emotions in Gothic literature build dramatically, reflecting an escalating sense of tension and drama. Women often faint due to terror and inner turmoil, while men are depicted in fits of rage from unseen suffering.

5. History of Gothic Literature

It is extremely difficult to find precise examples of the history of Gothic literature. The Gothic style was thought to be unique to the second half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. This time frame began in 1764 with the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and ended in 1820 with *Melmoth, the Wanderer* by Charles Maturin. However, since these works bring Gothic literature to a conclusion, critics have been left with the dilemma of needing to create new categories of works that support the Gothic legacy. Because of this, some critics believe that the Gothic genre faded away after 1820^[5].

These critics include Montague Summers, Edith Birkhead, Robert Mayo, and Devendra Varma. David Richter asserts that the Gothic style was "virtually extinct by 1822," and Richter goes to great lengths to prove this. On the other hand, critics such as David Punter, Franz J. Potter, and Catherine Spooner believe that the Gothic style never really died out, but rather evolved as a group of arts^[6].

Richter goes to great lengths to claim this. On the other hand, critics such as David Punter, Franz J. Potter, and Catherine Spooner believe that the Gothic never really died but rather evolved to represent a set of realities. They consider the years 1764 to 1820 to be part of the classical Gothic period. However, novels such as Sheridan Lovano's *Uncle Silas* (1864), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1823) are not the creation of the past but rather the historical development of the Gothic novel^[7].

The second wave of Gothic fiction can therefore be interpreted as a revival that occurred in the 1890s, sometimes referred to as the Decadence Age. Many literary masterpieces were published during this time period, such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). The Victorian Gothic subgenre grew out of well-known themes in Gothic literature from the 17th century.

The novel included elements of madness, duplicity, psychological and physical horror, and inherited curses. The Gothic novels that were very popular in the 19th century gave rise to this subgenre of novels. These Gothic elements-which gave the book a more terrifying and realistic quality-were influenced by Victorian ideas about science and death, especially Darwin's theory of evolution. These elements made the writing seem more terrifying and realistic.

Novels such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the *Last Man*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* were written as a result of the growing interest in the novels mentioned above.

The Gothic tradition has been marked by its enduring depth, its influence extending into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and into modern literature, film, and television. Through its distinctive exploration of the dark side of the human psyche, Gothic literature has left an indelible mark on contemporary storytelling, which in turn has shaped the way we deal with themes such as fear, mystery, and the unknown^[8].

The ideas and themes of Gothic literature and fiction still resonate. Often, authors have drawn on Gothic ele-

ments to create psychologically evocative and horror novels that delve into the complexities of the human mind. Unreliable narrators' use of haunted settings and exploration of taboo subjects remains central to many of their contemporary works, reflecting the continuing importance of the Gothic tradition. Stephen King, Shirley Caggison, and Anne Rice have drawn on Gothic influences to explore the boundaries between reason, madness, reality, and the supernatural, echoing the dissent of their Gothic predecessors^[9].

Many literary studies have shown that there is no clear and fixed definition of the term (Gothic). On the one hand, it has existential shades, while on the other hand, it is linked to the world of fantasy, mysticism, and unreality. The English encyclopedias have interpreted the Gothic language as an incomplete cognitive characteristic of barbarians^[10].

The age of enlightenment emerged in Europe during the eighteenth century. This philosophical movement stressed that the source of legitimacy and authority is reason and scientific inquiry. To believers of this movement, everything can be explained scientifically and rationally. Krauze states that enlightenment principle was "order and progress". Considering literary works, especially novels, which fell under the umbrella of this movement, most narrations were placed in a setting that aligned with daily social life. Likewise, during the same period, the concept of Gothic literature started emerging and opposed this stigma. Gothic literature came as an antithetical that focused on feelings, thoughts, and emotions rather than reason. Gothic literature explored feelings such as terror, fear, horror, and panic through inhuman and irrational features. Gothic style writing was given an impelling force to strive and flourish through the emergence of enlightenment beliefs in rationality and reason^[3].

The researcher Denysiuk (2006)^[11] equated the Gothic novel with the horror novel, but with the definition of this concept, it was limited to the specificity of the place, such as a medieval castle, or an abandoned house), and in the classification of the Gothic hero, the aristocratic criminal and the young heroine, and to the presence of specific decorations such as revenge and the secret of the origin of the hero of the novel, and the victory of good over evil, and therefore many scholars considered the dominance of existential horror to be the defining feature of Gothic and they classified it as emotional^[11].

The literary critic Cavallaro^[12] and Summers^[13] cre-

ated a kind of mental map of Gothic literature, and highlighted the geographical and ideological connotations, such as darkness in the Middle Ages, pagan Protestantism, Christianity, feudalism, capitalism, psychology, strangeness, grotesque, unconsciousness, psychosis, stylistics, grotesque, absurd comedy, dreams, exaggeration, and the physical connotations of Gothic literature. As for Gamer, he interpreted Gothic literature and considered it not an epic genre, but rather an aesthetic opposite of classicism.

In this regard, the geographical and ideological connotations (darkness in the Middle Ages, associated with Protestantism and paganism, and feudalism, associated with capitalism), and the physical connotations of Gothic literature were highlighted. In contrast, the researcher Gamer^[14] interpreted Gothic literature as not an epic genre, but rather an aesthetic opposite of classicism^[14].

The scientists have made a significant contribution to the study of the Gothic novel in English. By studying the characteristics of the chronotope in the Gothic prose of Charles Dickens, they have shown a trend of parallel development of the Gothic and psychological spaces. The Gothic tradition in the works of Charles Dickens serves only an auxiliary function and not an end in itself, but its role and significance should not be underestimated^[15].

The researcher Yefymenko^[16] has investigated the reflections of images in the Gothic novel in English. Her remark is relevant: “An important aspect of Gothic poetry is its multi-level kinship with myth as a specific way of concentrating the worldview, which is built according to a certain, stable model and forms a certain type of consciousness, a kind of understanding of reality that finds expression in the characteristic way of organizing the worldview, in a certain ideology, images and themes”^[16].

5.1. The Gothic Place as a Linguistic and Cognitive Construction

The Gothic novel abounds with metaphorical structures that function not merely as literary embellishments but as deeply embedded linguistic and cognitive mechanisms through which psychological and cultural anxieties are encoded. Chief among these is the recurring and symbolically saturated metaphor of the “haunted place”, which transcends its narrative role as setting to become a semiotic matrix where language, emotion, and ideology converge.

Building on Conceptual Metaphor Theory as formulated by Lakoff and Johnson^[17], metaphors are understood not as rhetorical flourishes, but as fundamental to human cognition and language. Within Gothic literature, this theoretical lens reveals the haunted space as a cognitive mapping that links material domains (e.g., architecture, geography) to psychological or emotional states (e.g., repression, trauma, madness). Thus, the haunted house, castle, or room becomes not merely a backdrop, but a linguistically encoded expression of inner conflict and psychic disturbance^[17].

5.2. Lexical Fields and the Semantics of Haunting

The haunted quality of space in Gothic fiction is articulated through specific lexicosemantic fields that conjure affective atmospheres of dread, liminality, and unease. These fields are lexically constructed through the repeated use of terms that connote:

- **Decay and decomposition:** crumbling, rotting, damp, dust-laden, mildewed
- **Obscurity and concealment:** shadowy, shrouded, dim, veiled, secretive
- **Abandonment and silence:** desolate, forsaken, void, hollow, echoing
- **Entrapment and disorientation:** labyrinthine, sealed, cramped, subterranean, impenetrable

These lexical patterns do not simply describe physical characteristics; they construct a symbolic space charged with psychological resonance. As Baldick and Mighall^[18] note, the Gothic setting frequently operates as “a metaphor for a psychological interiority—the architecture of the self”^[19].

5.3. Cognitive Mapping: From Architecture to Emotion

Haunted spaces function as cognitive metaphors that embody psychological and emotional turmoil. A central mapping in Gothic texts may be rendered as the following.

5.3.1. The Mind is a Haunted Space

Locked chambers, echoing hallways, and crumbling mansions serve as externalized manifestations of internal states—fear, repression, guilt, or suppressed memories. In

The Fall of the House of Usher^[20], for instance, the decaying mansion is not merely the setting of the narrative but a material correlative of Roderick Usher's mental disintegration. Likewise, in *Jane Eyre*^[21], the "Red Room" becomes a symbolic container of trauma, encapsulating Jane's early experiences of social exclusion and emotional repression.

Stockwell's^[22] application of Text World Theory affirms this interpretation by suggesting that Gothic texts construct "textual micro-worlds" where the material environment mirrors and refracts cognitive and affective processes.

5.3.2. Stylistic Realization: Grammar and Spatial Metaphor

Beyond vocabulary, Gothic handedness is stylistically realized through grammatical and rhetorical structures that intensify affective dissonance and thematic density:

- **Passive voice constructions** ("The house was deserted"; "The hallway was filled with shadows") obscure agency and enhance the sense of **ominous inertia**.
- **Extended noun phrases**, often densely adjectival, slow the narrative rhythm and produce a claustrophobic texture (e.g., "the long, narrow, dust-choked hallway lined with ancestral portraits").
- **Adverbial and prepositional layering** ("behind the curtain", "beneath the staircase", "within the chamber") generate spatial complexity and suggest concealed or forbidden knowledge.

These stylistic features reinforce core Gothic themes of hiddenness, confinement, and psychological fragmentation, aligning form with meaning^[23].

5.3.3. Philosophical and Ideological Dimensions

From the perspective of the philosophy of language, the haunted space is not only a fictional construct but a discursive formation in the Foucauldian sense^[24], wherein language shapes and is shaped by social ideologies. Haunted spaces reflect both individual psychic trauma and collective cultural anxieties surrounding gender, class, sexuality, and mortality.

As Wolfreys^[25] and Kövecses^[26] assert, "Gothic architecture is a text of cultural haunting," one in which the material environment becomes inscribed with cultural memory and repression. Thus, the haunted space becomes not

merely a motif but a linguistic event, a site where language materializes the unspoken, the buried, and the repressed.

6. Conclusion

The Gothic novel in English literature witnessed a continuous development from its inception in the eighteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century, as it was linked to a series of social and intellectual transformations that occurred in Europe during those periods, such as the Industrial Revolution, the Age of Enlightenment, and the conflict between reason and emotion. The Gothic novel began as a critical response to modernity, showing opposition to the new industrial society and its values, in addition to being influenced by myths, legends, and elements of horror. Although the Gothic novel initially focused on excessive emotions and tormented characters in dark atmospheres, it evolved to incorporate elements of philosophy, the human spirit, and science fiction, which allowed it to diversify its themes and styles.

1. The study reveals that the Gothic novel evolved from traditional forms centered on horror, the supernatural, and medieval settings (e.g., castles, ruins) to more psychologically and socially complex narratives reflecting modern anxieties and identities.
2. Major historical events—such as the Industrial Revolution, world wars, and the rise of philosophical movements (e.g., existentialism, modernism)—played a crucial role in reshaping Gothic themes, making them more grounded in reality and human psychology.
3. The study highlights the increasing presence of themes such as female agency, identity formation, and gender roles, especially in the works of authors like Mary Shelley and Emily Brontë, continuing into feminist Gothic literature.
4. Despite significant changes, the Gothic genre has retained core elements—such as psychological horror, ambiguity, and suspense—while adapting them into new forms such as psychological thrillers, postmodern fiction, and even science fiction.
5. The Gothic narrative moved from linear storytelling to more complex structures, including non-linear timelines, multiple narrators, unreliable narration, and metafictional techniques.

7. Recommendations

1. Promote further comparative research between classical and modern Gothic novels, focusing on narrative development, symbolism, and thematic shifts.
2. Include Gothic literature in English literature and cultural studies programs, due to its literary importance and reflection of historical and psychological shifts.
3. Apply modern critical perspectives (e.g., gender studies, postcolonialism, cultural criticism) to reinterpret classical Gothic texts.
4. Combine literary analysis with insights from psychology, history, philosophy, and media studies to explore the full dimensions of the Gothic genre.
5. Study how Gothic themes have been adapted and transformed in film, television, and video games, contributing to their continued relevance.
6. Encourage translation of Gothic works and critical studies into Arabic to enhance cross-cultural understanding and stimulate academic interest in the Arab world.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards and principles of academic integrity applicable to research in the humanities and literary studies. As the research does not involve human or animal subjects, nor the collection of personal or behavioral data, a formal ethical review does not apply to this type of study.

The researcher has adhered to all methodological and academic recommendations suggested by the review committees, maintaining full commitment to scholarly honesty, precision, and ethical research practices.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable. The study is a literary and theoretical analysis that does not include human subjects, surveys, or interviews; therefore, informed consent was not required.

Data Availability Statement

No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Therefore, data sharing is not applicable. All materials used in the research are publicly available literary texts and scholarly sources properly cited in the references.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest. The study was conducted independently, and there were no external funders involved in the design of the research; in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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