# The Gothic Tradition in contemporary society

 Even though Gothic literature can be traced to the 1800s, within the last 20 years or so there has been a tremendous spike in the amount of Gothic tradition displayed in the form of contemporary texts, movies, video games, and varying cultural artifacts. This resurgence in Gothic literature is displayed in the rapid evolution of gothic tradition in the contemporary society (Lightman, & Zon, 2014). Numerous films and video games have also been produced that have Gothic traditions. These traits give evidence of the current huge wave that has swept the world as well as the adoption of current cultural and social anxieties and issues and expresses them through gothic literature. This paper will work to explain the elements of gothic as can be viewed in the Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern and the movie based on the book, Perfume. Moreover, it will delve into the evolution of the Gothic tradition in the past two decades.
 The Night Circus is a fantasy novel published in Erin Morgenstern in the year 2011. The book is set in a historical Victorian London with an indulgence into a circus that was known to open at night, from sunset to sunrise daily. The circus was known as the Le Cirque des Rêves, ‘Circus of Dreams’ as it was made up of numerous wonders. It involved ice gardens, risk-taking acrobats, and a wondrous maze that transported patrons. The circus was known to appear without notice and had no specific schedule. They preferred a disguised mode of transportation, choosing to move around in a coal line. Their fans, popularly known as “dreamers” were also featured as they formed an important part of the book. The dreamers identified themselves through red paint splashes to match the black and white décor of the circus tents. The circus has an illusionist and a fortune teller, who are highly praised.
 The Night Circus can be described as Gothic literature as it contains numerous elements of gothic. First, it is set in a mystical manner. This can be viewed through the fact that the circus has no particular schedule and appears at any time. This portrays its mystical nature. Additionally, the mystical nature of the literature is complimented by the wonders of the circus tents itself which is made up of a garden made of ice, acrobats who are willing to take up risk by avoiding the use of nets, and the patron’s moving maze. On the other hand, the book can be viewed as gothic as it runs high with emotions (Lightman, & Zon, 2014). The protagonists in the story are made to play along in a game against each other. This throws the people in the rest of the circus off-balance. The book also has romance as shown through the main acts, Celia and Marco who fall in love, a fete that has dangerous consequences for both them and their crew.
  *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* is a film that came out in 2006. It is based on the novel Perfume by Patrick Suskind, A German writer in 1985, which can be described as a gothic contemporary novel. The Film is set in the 1700s whereby the main character, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, is a French peasant born with an extraordinarily high sense of smell. The film explains Jean-Baptiste’s upbringing from his abandonment as a baby to his years in the orphanage and working in the fish market. Jean-Baptiste develops a perfume and is taken in by a perfume expert in Paris. His obsession with a red-headed plum seller causes him to unintentionally kill her by suffocation (Spooner, 2007). His recreation of her smell is what attracts the Italian perfume expert. The movie goes on to explore the protagonist’s quest to recreate thirteen scents and the murders he commits in his quest to achieve his goal. His success in the creation of the perfume allows him to rule the world but eventually prevents him from gaining true love. Upon this discovery, it saddens him so much that he decides to go to the fish market he grew up and pour the bottle of perfume and let the crowd devour him.
 The film can be described as a gothic a sit has several elements of gothic. The damsel in distress phenomenon can be viewed clearly in the way Jean-Baptiste hunted down Laura Richis as he required her to be the linchpin of his perfume. Furthermore, the protagonist was emotionally isolated from the rest of the world for a majority of his life. This translated into the grim nature of his thoughts and actions in his adult life. In addition to these elements of gothic, the film is set in the 18th century and the protagonist takes part in numerous grisly murders in his quest to achieve his twisted goal (Spooner, 2007). The love that Jean-Baptiste has for perfume and his self-loathing are several other factors that transform this book into a completely gothic item.
 The 19th century saw a wave of gothic literature sweep through the people. In today’s society, gothic film has made a huge impact and taken over a huge part of the film industry as more people are drawn to this kind of film. One concept that has been hugely mixed up is the fact that there is a difference between gothic film and horror. The Gothic film is majorly film that is associate with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Other than gothic films, the gothic tradition in the last twenty years has evolved to include fantasy and thriller films that have an aspect of gothic sensibility (Whatley, 2002). The current gothic tradition can be termed as period and majorly consists of classic monsters as displayed in films such as The Mummy, The X-Files, and Frankenstein. Vampires can still be classified as part of the current gothic craze and romantic fete as viewed in the popular series Twilight. Supernatural parts of the gothic tradition can still be viewed in various films and series.
 The Gothic tradition is known to have originated in the eighteenth century Europe. The concepts developed in these films and literature are thus a depiction of society during the time for them to be viewed as realistic. The fears and social concepts explored were used then and the cultural and societal fears that existed then are incorporated into the film as well. Furthermore, the racial differences, oppression, gender roles, and tradition is also featured. Gothic tradition implies that villains and monsters can be discovered through a specific set of physical traits including: heavy eyebrows, dark complexion, and dark eyes. This has a huge effect on the current racial debate as it is majorly translated into the use of Black Americans in the role of Villains and monsters which bring out a negative depiction of the race. On the other hand, women in Gothic literature have been perceived a slowly and of little importance (Whatley, 2002). In the recent wave of the gothic film, there has been an increase in the role of women and the roles they are given within the films. This has helped improved the gender equality war that has been going on.
 In conclusion, gothic films and literature are a huge part of today’s society. With the current trend, there is a huge possibility that gothic is unlikely to leave the scene. There has been a huge demand for gothic especially among the youth who seem to need to understand the background of the film and literature as well as simply enjoy the thrill of the plots developed (Whatley, 2002). A lot of work goes into the development of these films and this will mean that more should be taken into account and the trends in current gothic tradition should be developed to represent the current sociocultural issues facing the modern society.

##  **References**

Lightman, B., & Zon, B. (2014). *Evolution and Victorian Culture* (1st ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spooner, C. (2007). Introduction: Gothic in Contemporary Popular Culture. *Gothic Studies*, *9*(1), 1-4.

Whatley, J. (2002). Introduction: Gothic Cults and Gothic Cultures 1: Modern and Postmodern Gothic. *Gothic Studies*, *4*(2), 91-98.