

Gothick Darkness & Freedom's Light

by Don Webb

A tide of darkness is rising in the world. It wears dark clothes and is young and rebellious. This is as it should be. Darkness is the womb of the new, the psyche's symbol for that which is about to unfold. This new tide of darkness also expresses itself in literature from the most serious of work by William T. Vollman to great popular writing such as by Poppy Z. Brite to new comix going where no comix have ever gone before such as Neil Gaiman's *_Death_* and James O'Barr's *_The Crow_*. This too is as it should be, since darkness has always been the truly inspiring elements in the psychic alchemy called writing.

The world of the Internet has likewise been touched with alt.goth, alt.satanism, alt.horror, alt.vampires, and web pages like Gateway to Darkness (<http://coe1.engr.umbc.edu/~vijayz/home.html>), or the clubs listing section at (<http://gothic.acs.csulb.edu:8080/Gothic>). This too is as it should be, darkness is one of the ways our souls process the Internet, and those folk who are most afraid of the dark, that is to say the Unknown, are afraid of the Internet. The forces of stupidity always use the pressure of the status quo to repress the new -- and if the new doesn't express itself in political and cultural arenas, the forces of stupidity win.

Interestingly all of these varied manifestations of darkness have been grouped under the name Gothic. This term applied to an artistic style and to an ancient Germanic people holds some secrets to what people are seeking from it. Why does someone dress up like a creature of the night? To transform themselves. The oldest and most significant transformation -- that of the shaman -- began with changing clothing, flaunting the conventions of dress to show that the shaman was entering into the divine realm. Most of the travelers through the current Goth scene will stay about four years. Four years is about as long as most people have the internal strength to try self change. These tiny rebellions end because inspiration fails, and looking spooky just isn't enough to carry the strain against the grain of society.

However if we were to look at the word, Goth, we would find the original meaning of God's sons. The god in question being Odhinn, god of the Runes. The original Goths came out of the far North (from present-day Gotland in Sweden) and swept down into southern Europe beginning about 150 CE. They split into two major groups along the way: the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths. In the south they established kingdoms in present-day Italy (with its capital in Ravenna) and southern France (with its capital in present-day Toulouse). This latter kingdom, under pressure from the Franks, moved its capital to the present-day Spanish city of Toledo. In all of these regions the Goths established many secret traditions at the highest levels of society. Many names current among Spanish-speaking people -- such as Ricardo -- are of Gothic origin. This idea of rulership connected with the mysterious and dark activity of the Goths had a major effect on shaping the modern world -- especially opening the way for the intellectual freedom of the Renaissance.

The Spanish claimed precedence over the English at the Council of Basil in 1434 on the basis that they (the Spanish) were identical with the Goths -- and therefore the older nation. The return of Gothickism seems to be unconnected (or at least very loosely connected) with racial identity. The new Goths are indeed the children of a dark mysterious god, and as a god's children will not show their strength by calling on dad to protect them (such practices merely broaden the gap between gods and men) but will cross over that boundary and learn to act in the divine realm. Modern Goths may look silly to outsiders, just as SF fans who lived as semidivine beings with the "Fans are Slans!" slogans of the 40s. But the SF fans of the 40s determine our culture today as a brief glimpse at the TV Guide will show. The Goths have a chance because of their resonance with earlier (and therefore more potent) aspects of psychic history to have a greater cultural/political impact -- if they don't forget themselves on the way.

It is typical of Gothick thinking -- whether of this latest remanifestation or the early theories of such Gothickists as Johannes Bureus or Ole Worm, that potential is seen as something within, something Hidden that when unlocked will change the world. This seems to be becoming the ruling paradigm of our time-- in such disparate places as "Empowerment Seminars" to the Goth movement. The new Goths have the greatest chance of Realizing this idea -- of taking from the place of their dreams and making it Real. Essentially they would prove themselves the children of god, by acting as gods -- creators here on this world.

The Northern people would have said that three factors empower the soul-body complex in its deeds of power. The first is *ond* -- inspiration. Most modern Goths have that. Inspiration, a true excitement at living, is what people use if they don't use the other two parts -- *hugh*, rational thinking, and *minni*, memory. If you want to stay a Goth, push your powers of mind to the fullest. Society's cards are stacked against someone with a nose piercing -- don't let it be stacked against you because you haven't trained your mind.

The Punk and Hippy movements died because they were dumbed down. Hollywood does a great job of making counter cultural images look stupid -- so that stupidity becomes a role model in the counterculture. Make your own art, don't consume corporate America's. And make yourself smart. Haunt those night classes!

The second word *minni* doesn't mean your personal memory. It means the memory of the spirit. The memory of myth and archetypical consciousness. Look for the patterns hidden in mythology -- and make them the patterns of your life. Twentieth century American thinking failed because its models of the soul were recent untried models from Freud and Jung.

Learn the soulcraft of ancient folk.

If you are brave of heart (*Ond*), sharp of mind (*Hugh*) and deep of memory (*Minni*), your journey won't be a short one -- and all the world may look upon

your progress with true wonder.

Three resources for your trip. These three and a few friends to talk with, a few businesses to network with, and all of the fierceness of yourself -- you can do anything, truly fulfilling the dream of personal freedom with a respect for what lies in the Essence of all men and women.

Trust no one.

Fight hard.

Recommended Reading

The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales - by Chris Baldick, Oxford University Press paperback, 1993.

A wonder-filled and moody introduction to the aesthetic of Gothicism -- explaining the development of the Gothick tale (your spiritual heritage) and giving great examples from 1773 to 1991. This feeds the *Ond*.

Northern Magic - by Edred Thorsson, Lewellyn 1992.

This is an introduction to the special understanding that the Gothic peoples have of their world. The study of magic can bring you into contact with the living archetypes of your own consciousness. These are the forces inherent in the revival in all Western European cultures (including those in such colonies as America and Australia) called Gothick. This feeds the *Minni*. Thorssons titles, together with some of his books deemed too "dark" for mainstream presses may be obtained via Runa-Raven Press, P.O.Box 557 Smithville, TX 78957 USA.

Political Thinking - by Glen Tinder, Little Brown and Co. 1986.

This is a book of questions which cause the reader to come up with her or his own answers to the great political/philosophical issues of history, with information on how the major political thinkers addressed these questions. The questions are opened-ended so that reading and discussing the book becomes an active mental exercise, not passive indoctrination. This book feeds the *Hugh*.