A GOTHIC DICTIONARY

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Abstract: The present work takes into consideration the *Historical Dictionary of Gothic Literature* which was compiled by William Hughes in 2013. Since this is a historical dictionary of literature, the entries encapsulate both concepts and the names of significant figures or works, all alphabetically organized, but lack any descriptions of lexical category or morphological features, focusing instead on the vast context in which each item could and should be used within this specialized context. Following the premise that the Gothic should be considered a "language" rather than a literary genre, this article analyses, within the parameters of metalexicography, the features of the eclectic entries, as well as the importance of William Hughes' choices for the field of the Gothic in general. Moreover, the second part of this work deals with Hughes's explanations for controversial terms in the field of the Gothic, which should be read as prescriptive comments for the literature.

Keywords: Gothic, literary dictionary, metalexicography, prescriptive comments

1. Introduction

Visions of monsters, ghouls and apocalyptic landscapes permeate contemporary society, from the light-hearted and "low-brow" shows on streaming platforms, to the pages of award-winning novels. Original horror stories or dark retellings of old plots, blood-chilling screams by horrendous monsters or introspective and remorseful discourses from humanized supernaturals, classic villains or modern and not so helpless heroines – all of these come together to make up what is commonly known as the Gothic[1]. From the perspective of a contemporary audience, this is a language we have all come to at least recognize if not to speak. Still, the Gothic feeds on a history which is longer and rather more rigid than might be assumed at first glance.

As a specialist in the field, William Hughes was most surely cognizant of this fact and, consequently, he approached the Gothic from multiple angles and put together this dictionary as a guide not only for researchers but also for anyone interested in the topic of the Gothic. Probably aiming for comprehensiveness and coherence, William Hughes's *Dictionary* still provides an interesting perspective into the field of Gothic studies.

In fact, this dictionary was published precisely a decade ago, which may not seem such a distant moment in the past, but in a dynamic research field, many things have changed and settled since the publication of this dictionary. What needs to be pointed out from the beginning is the fact that Hughes's dictionary came at a time of debate and relative confusion in the field of Gothic studies, since previous incarnations of the Gothic seemed to be less frequent, in fiction and on the screen, yet certain tropes, images and motifs kept appearing with different associations and now carrying a symbolic baggage,

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[1] The use of the capital letter and the definite article are intentional and will be maintained throughout this paper, since they reflect a growing trend in Gothic studies meant to shift focus on the unity and coherence of *the Gothic*. However, this is a terminological stance that Hughes only sometimes adopts throughout his work.

as it were, completely different from that of the past. A simple example, which will also be discussed in the second part of this article, is that of the vampire: the ultimate symbol of otherness from early Gothic texts has now become an object of desire and a humanized version of its former self. But this, along with a short overview of the shifts in the field of Gothic studies will be a separate topic within this article.

In this context, the present work will be structured in five main parts which follow a pattern from general to specific. The first two parts of this paper will deal with the description of the theoretical context, the nature of the Gothic and the implications of a Gothic dictionary, while the third part constitutes the analysis of the corpus of the dictionary, which will take into account both the micro- and macrostructure (Bogaards 2022). Finally, the last two sections of this article will be comprised of observations and conclusions which are directly connected to the examples provided in the third section.

The Gothic is a notoriously shiftable literary and cultural concept, and therefore, the aim of this article is to answer two questions about the role of William Hughes's 2013 work. The first question would be whether, a decade later, this dictionary is still relevant to present-day Gothic enthusiasts, while the second derives from a theory which is becoming increasingly popular in Gothic studies, namely that this is not a "genre" or a "mode" or just a literary "tradition", but rather "a language". And if the Gothic is to be comparable to a language, could Hughes's dictionary transcend its status as dictionary of literature and become something more? Could it help its readership become fluent in the Gothic? And, coming back to the initial question, the problem arises whether Hughes's prescriptive comments are still of value in present day Gothic studies. In short, the conclusion which needs to be drawn is closely related to the role and influence of this *Dictionary of Gothic Literature* in contemporary Gothic studies.

2. A context for the Gothic

The starting point of this paper is a two-part introductory section which will clarify the context of the Gothic, its position, and its nature in the contemporary world. The first sub-section will present a brief overview of modern-day Gothic, as a literary and cinematic phenomenon, then it will shortly explain two distinct approaches within Gothic criticism. Meanwhile, the second sub-section will focus on the most appropriate definition for this elusive term.

2.1 The Gothic in contemporary understanding

When talking about the Gothic, Fred Botting famously called it the unifying and pervasively characteristic thread of British literature, or "its stain" (1999: 16). His seminal eponymous volume from the last decade of the twentieth century seemed to follow the very popular train of thought at the time, which claimed that the Gothic has always been the marginal or oppositional cultural and literary expression throughout the centuries. This opinion, along with its proponents, David Punter (2013) and Alexandra Warwick (2007), to name only two, seemed to become less influential with the turn of the twenty-first century, as much of what was believed to have characterized the Gothic – the

horror and the terror, the transgressions and the cathartic violent outbursts of excess feelings- were gradually left aside in favour of images of monsters and almost stereotypically Gothic motifs which have taken centre stage in contemporary imagination, especially in film, television and popular imagination.

The shift from marginal to central was one of the most defining, but also problematic transitions in the history of contemporary Gothic as a whole. Mostly, the problematic nature of this change in the sense that what was once the locus of terror is slowly morphing at the turn of the century into just another facet of the human experience. Monsters were now guilt-ridden with their existence or simply part and parcel of a mundane life.

It was at around this time of transition that critics loosely coalesced into two distinct sides: there were those who bemoaned the change and snubbed these newer forms. After seeing the Coppola filmic adaptation of *Dracula*, Fred Botting went so far as to declare that the Gothic was dead (Botting 1999), but then, in the face of such an onslaught of un-terrifying monsters, he was forced to come up with a new category, which he dubbed "Candy Gothic" (Botting 2001). Alexandra Warwick (2007) was similarly preoccupied with the change in the field, but she was not as vehement as Botting. The critic merely warned the Gothic was poised to become unrecognizable in its shift from the shadows to the centre. By taking the example of the protagonist in Ann Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, she argued that the perpetuation of such topoi as the confessing vampires would bring about the demise of the Gothic through the sympathy such characters engendered in the readers. Monsters were supposed to be violent and frightening, not brooding or introspective.

Still, other critics in the field either ignored the change or embraced it fully. The latter group argued that the core trait of the Gothic was neither the horror/terror it portrayed, nor the marginal nature of giving voice to society's fears, but rather its ability to change with the times. Taking this as a guiding principle, Catherine Spooner (2006) is one of the staunchest supporters and avid researchers when it comes to the newest incarnations of the Gothic, in fiction, film or across media. In addition, it was also Spooner (2017) who contributed to the theoretical framework for what is now called Post-Millennial Gothic.

As a critical category, Post-Millennial Gothic is the most recurring and commonly used terminology at present, since it gives legitimacy to previously neglected forms such as parodies with Gothic imagery or young-adult novels with vampires, werewolves and witches. Moreover, this new critical approach accounts for the current unique situation in which everyone has heard of the Gothic, knows a bit about what it entails, but the essence of what makes it a coherent and resilient force is still somewhat difficult to pinpoint. This is especially the case now when the Gothic has spread its field of influence far beyond the literary – there is after all a recognizable form of Gothic lifestyle, subculture, tourism[2] or marketing.

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[2] Gothic tourism, which is mentioned here, refers to various real-life tours of grave-yards or murder scenes, and is not to be mistaken for tourist Gothic, a concept coined by Hughes himself and referring to the theme of fictional characters wandering into seemingly modern environments which ultimately prove to be not so civilized. The latter is a separate entry in the dictionary.

2.2 Defining the Gothic

With such a plethora of possible directions, the same question of "what exactly the Gothic is" still remains unanswered. The common consensus has generally been that the Gothic needed to be considered a "genre", much like Realism or Romanticism. Still, many critics in the field omitted a definition altogether or chose to be purposefully vague, since "genre" does not precisely encompass everything the Gothic entails.

If it as not referred to as a genre, the Gothic was considered "a mode", "a phenomenon" or "a tradition". Alternatively, it was defined as "a plot, a trope, a topos, a discourse, a mode of representation, conventions of characterization, or a composite of all these aspects" (Mulvey-Roberts 1998: xvi). However, irrespective of explanations or terminology, definitions for the Gothic have tended to focus on either specific traits or the circumstances of its inception as a concept. In fact, David Punter (2013: 16) explains that there are several methods of defining the Gothic, depending on the approach the critic wishes to pursue. The Gothic should be thus considered "a mode that exceeds genre and categories, restricted neither to a literary school nor to a historical period" (Punter 2013: 14).

Punter's strategy of defining the Gothic as a "mode" was taken up by several critics but it was ultimately either abandoned in favour of the old "genre" or not insisted upon enough eventually becoming part of the common Gothic terminology. And, while "mode" was losing ground, another definition was beginning to take shape. The approach taken in several recent critical studies is to proclaim that the Gothic is "a language" (Sage & Lloyd Smith 1996, Spooner 2017), which makes for the underlying premise of this article as well.

As often happens in these situations, the two definitions of the Gothic – "genre" or "language" – have co-existed for some time, with compelling arguments for both sides. Even if, realistically, on a global scale, the latter definition is not necessarily more popular among critics than the former, I believe that the Gothic is better served with the term "language", as this definition provides several advantages both in the realm of Gothic studies and in the economy of this work. Notwithstanding the fact that the coherence and unitary nature of the Gothic is emphasized through the definition of "language", this particular term would also account for the constant shifts the Gothic has undergone, the most recent of which was described in the previous sub-section. In brief, the themes, images, motifs, and loci which make up the Gothic would be expected to behave just as the units of a language which can shift and change both their meaning and use over time.

This is not to say that the Gothic should be considered a language per se, rather that understanding the behaviour and mechanisms of the Gothic by comparing it to a language would clarify certain aspects which have been seemingly contradictory or baffling to Gothic enthusiasts for quite some time. Defined as a language rather than a genre, the Gothic appears more cohesive and more pattern-oriented throughout its development.

3. A dictionary

In a rather confusing critical context, the only Gothic dictionary to date is published by William Hughes in 2013, as a *Historical Dictionary of Gothic Literature*. It

is no wonder that this text is compiled by William Hughes, who is one of the most well-respected researchers in the field of Gothic studies, and who has written, contributed to and edited numerous volumes on various theoretical and practical aspects of the Gothic.

Although the field of Gothic studies abounds in companions, encyclopaedias and edited volumes constructed around one relevant or topical subject or another, Hughes's remains the single work entitled "dictionary". This, of course, might be a mere gimmick of coinage or a marketing strategy, but, most likely, the title is in accordance with the intentions and plans of the author.

With the aim to understand the status of Hughes's work within lexicographic parameters, this section will focus first on a minimal theoretical framework on the subject and then it will shift its attention to the dictionary itself, providing details about both its macro- and microstructure.

3.1 On the study of dictionaries

As repositories of human knowledge, dictionaries have been a subject of study almost from their very inception. Certainly, when talking about commonly vast bodies of work, a multitude of perspectives and elements come into play. Yet this sub-section only takes into account lexicographic aspects and notions which are relevant to Hughes's historical dictionary and the purpose of this article.

Putting aside current debates and inquiries into the nature of lexicological theory or the terminology in this field (Piotrowski 2022), what is important to establish from the start is the fact that both lexicography and metalexicography can rely on but are ultimately independent from linguistics, since they encapsulate a plethora of aspects, from information about society, science or literature in the present case, to the publishing process and history (Jackson 2022: 2). Even with this departure from linguistics, there are still a host of elements to be taken into account when analysing any dictionary. In this sense, the present discussion will be focused on only three which will aid in the following corpus analysis: typology, structure, and the presence or absence of prescriptivism in the compiling of a dictionary.

First of all, dictionaries can be classified by employing a number of criteria ranging from size to the number of languages or the intended users, but the one which is most pertinent to this article is the criterion of coverage, which differentiates between general language dictionaries, those dealing with terminology or a specific area of language, and those which have predominantly encyclopaedic or cultural material (Atkins & Rundell 2008). Under this classification, Hughes's dictionary falls clearly into the latter category, with specialized entries in the field of the Gothic.

Secondly, the structure of a dictionary needs to be included in this analysis. Drawing from previous works, Bogaards (2022) introduces and explains this important dimension for the study of dictionaries through four crucial terms, which should provide a comprehensive image when considered together. Simply put, the first two, macrostructure and microstructure, refer to the list of entries and the nature of the entries' definitions and examples, respectively. The other two terms are newer and take into account the internal framework of reference, which is the mediostructure, or the presence and information acquired from prefaces, introductions, and lists or appendices provided in the dictionary, which makes up the megastructure (Bogaards 2022: 8-9).

The third and last element to be taken into consideration regards the approach of the author or team compiling the list of entries, and the oscillation between descriptivism, in which researchers view change as "a natural and inevitable part of any living language", and prescriptivism, in which they identify the change as something to be fixed and regulated (Curzan 2014: 1-2). Theoretically, one of these two approaches governs or is the intended aim of any dictionary, but in practice, situations are seldom so clear since various other elements might skew the author's view and approach.

3.2 A Gothic dictionary

From the information gathered in the sub-section above, it is clear that Hughes's dictionary covers encyclopaedic and cultural material as a historical dictionary of literature. And it is the role of any historic dictionary to tell the story of linguistic, but also social and cultural evolution within a language (Brewer 2022: 375). Therefore, after a few preliminary observations about the structure of this dictionary, the following section will delve deeper into the analysis of the corpus selection and its implications.

From the point of view of macro- and microstructure, this Gothic dictionary consists of 130 distinct, carefully-selected and thoroughly explained entries. The entries are alphabetically ordered, and all letters are covered with at least one item, as in the case of "Q" with "Queer Gothic". The explanations for all of these entries are clear and, on the whole, packed with historical and critical information, which allows the user to take full advantage of and make associations with the numerous internal and external references coded within every single entry.

In fact, each entry is bolded not only when it functions as a headword, but also wherever it may occur within the entirety of the corpus, thus making cross-references easy to follow. Interconnected concepts are usually also specified within the text and at the end of each relevant explanation. As such, items need to be sometimes analysed in pairs or groups of three, as will be exemplified in the following section. What emerges is that, with these elements in place, the mediostructure is one of the most successful achievements of this dictionary.

Similarly, if the megastructure is to be taken as a topic of discussion, this dictionary boasts a significant and comprehensive chronology and introduction about the Gothic form, which makes it rather easy for anyone to follow the logical pattern of the evolution of ideas within the Gothic from the eighteenth century onwards. Nevertheless, for a better understanding of the context, the chronological list and the introduction both start from the earliest usage of the term "Gothic", when the adjective was associated with the Visigoths and it was meant to be read and used in direct opposition with what was Western, modern and civilized. Both appendices then follow the historical line and report on the transformations the term underwent and how literary Gothic shifted as a concept through the centuries. Needless to say, the combined forces of the chronology and introduction put the Gothic into perspective, for both researchers and novices.

The megastructure is also rounded up by a list of critical references at the end of the dictionary. The bibliography provided by Hughes is a lengthy appendix and is made up of an Introduction to the section, an opportunity for the author to bring several pages' worth of additional information on the evolution of Gothic studies, and several

bibliographical sections that start with the general history of Gothic criticism, continue with detailed topical references and end with suggested works for the most influential Gothic authors and titles. This clearly suggests that Hughes divides the terms of the corpus into two logical categories: the authors and the topics of the Gothic. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this paper, the latter category will be further sub-divided, which means that four main categories instead of two will be the focus of the following section. This extra sub-division of terms follows logical lines of research in Gothic studies and has the benefit of allowing for a more detailed analysis in the subsequent section.

4. The corpus of the Gothic dictionary

Although, as previously mentioned, the terms in this dictionary are conventionally arranged in alphabetical order, they could be interpreted as loosely falling under four main categories which will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent sub-sections. Although a clear-cut distinction between the categories is not always possible, the four sub-groups were chosen because they will aid in the analysis and they pertain to names of authors and critics, as well as places or titles of representative works, socio-cultural or historical events, theoretical concepts and, finally, the general themes, images and motifs associated with the Gothic.

4.1 Names and titles

As this is a historical dictionary of literature, it is only natural that the majority of entries here be comprised of various author names and literary titles. What Hughes offers in addition to the literary aspect of the Gothic are titles from popular and exclusively lowbrow cinematic works. The decision to include the cinematic dimension to this dictionary of Gothic literature is explained in the entry for Cinema, and it justly relies on the strong connection between the Gothic and film as a medium (Hughes 2013: 66-9).

Striking a good balance between historical figures, such as Horace Walpole or Bram Stoker, and contemporary authors like Stephen King or Ann Rice, the Gothic dictionary introduces a plethora of major and minor players whose contributions have shaped the general understanding of the Gothic. Moreover, for a fuller image of the social context of the Gothic at a particularly crucial time, the names selected and elucidated need to be taken by twos or threes. Take for example the entries for Marry Wollstonecraft Shelley (Hughes 2013: 225-226) and Percy Bysshe Shelley (Hughes 2013: 226-227). Anyone would expect to find these two names linked in one form or another, and, in any case, present in any critical work dealing with the Gothic. Still, as clear and comprehensive as these two entries are, especially Mary Shelley's, Hughes offers additional information through the much smaller mention of Polidori, which reads as follows:

> Physician to **Lord Byron**, and present at the gathering at the Villa Diodati that saw the genesis of *Frankenstein* by **Mary Shelley**, Polidori was the author of *The Vampyre*–a highly influential, but by no means utterly novel, exercise in European

vampire fiction. Polidori is known for little else than this short narrative and his status as a spy for Byron's publisher, John Murray, during the poet's travels in Europe. Possibly a homosexual associate of his employer (*The Vampyre* betrays elements of **Queer Gothic**), Polidori eventually fell from favour with his patron, practised medicine in the city of Norwich in the east of England, and died by his own hand, swallowing a tumbler of prussic acid. (Hughes 2013: 200-1)

This is a name which is generally recognized only by people who have made the Gothic their field of research. And as such, for the general public, the mention of Shelley's doctor and author of *The Vampyre* (work which has its own distinct entry) might bring something new and cohesive pertaining to a crucial moment in the evolution of the Gothic, while for specialists it might function as a reminder of the circumstances in which *Frankenstein* was conceptualized. Furthermore, the name of Villa Diodati has a similar role, and its further mention in the entries for Byron (Hughes 2013: 55-56), Mary Shelley, Percy Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Hughes 2013: 103-106) and the initial chronology for the Gothic should describe the event as momentous in the mind of a Gothic novice. The Villa Diodati is in fact important enough for the Gothic that it is here used as a temporal reference for the play *The Vampire, or the Bride of the Isles* within the entry for Scottish Gothic (Hughes 2013: 222).

Another observation about the abovementioned entry is the addition of personal or intimate details for this author, and most authors in this dictionary. Although comments about the nature of the information are not especially pertinent for this article, what should be noted is the interconnectedness of all the elements in the entries: speculation about an author's personal life leads to a reference about their work, which is then included within a critical framework. This is not a singular instance. Most often, Hughes will bring a selection of household names and round up their entries with additional information about either their convictions and opinions, social phenomena or other related notable literary figures.

In another example, we could talk about the entry for Jane Austen (2013: 33), whose very short mention should be read, in the context of this dictionary, in conjunction to both the entry for *Northanger Abbey* (Hugheds 2013: 191) and the critical mentions of Female Gothic (Hughes 2013: 99-101) and Comic Gothic (Hughes 2013: 79). *Jane Austen* and *Northanger Abbey* are clearly to be read together as one entity in the history of the Gothic, but their more important role in the economy of this dictionary is to exemplify the two theoretical concepts Hughes associated them with. On the one hand, the reference to Ann Radcliffe and the Female Gothic is utterly essential, as is the link to another possibly less-known entry, namely the "Horrid" Novels (Hughes 2013: 136) Austen mentions in her posthumous novel. Similarly, the use of Austen's *Northanger Abbey* as a concrete example for the concept of metafiction through Comic Gothic brings new layers of meaning to the entries.

Seen from a different angle, most of the many authors' names are unequivocally associated with the Gothic. Take for instance the likes of Horace Walpole or Ann Radcliffe, Joseph Le Fanu or Daphne du Maurier, Ann Rice or Stephen King, these are the canonical names which could not be left out. On the other hand, just as in the case of Jane Austen, there are many other names which are only partially or topically associated

with the Gothic. Writing within the young adult medium, Stephenie Meyer is mentioned here because of only one aspect: she is an integral part of the shift from the marginal and horrible, terrible monster to the central, understandable or even enviable supernatural. This change in Gothic representation, which Ann Rice also notably contributed to from the very beginning, represents the basis for the critical confusion at the time of this dictionary's publication. To take another example, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (Hughes 2013: 117-8) is mentioned here only because of his early associations with the cultural and literary phenomenon of *Sturm und Drang*[3], which produced *Faust*, this author's closest brush with the Gothic proper.

Here Hughes's selection skews in favour of British and American Gothic. There are Irish, Scottish and a few Welsh names, as well, but their works are all written in English. This conspicuously Anglocentric approach is explained by Hughes in his introductory remarks on Bibliography in which he states that the "British origins of the Gothic have inevitably shaped the linguistic bias of critical publication on the genre." (Hughes 2013: 272) This bias seems to extend to or blend with the literary and the cinematic. Still, a few notable literary exceptions are the French Gaston Leroux (Hughes 2013: 171) and German speaking and writing Goethe, E.T.A Hoffmann (Hughes 2013: 134) and Johann von Schiller (Hughes 2013: 219).

When it comes to the titles of various Gothic literary and cinematic works, the entries Hughes curated range from highbrow, if the Gothic could ever be described as "highbrow", to lowbrow entries. Historical literary mentions include both Gothic classics, like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Hughes 2013: 185-6), *Carmilla* (2013: 62), *Frankenstein* or *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Hughes 2013: 178-9), as well as less famous entries like *Recess* (Hughes 2013: 210), which was an inspiration for Ann Radcliffe or *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Hughes 2013: 201-2), written by James Hogg and part of the Scottish canon. When it comes to late twentieth or twenty-first century titles, most include popular children's shows (*The Addams Family, Scooby Doo, The Munsters*) or television hits (*Dark Shadows*, *X-Files*, *Twin Peaks*). One of the few recent novels to make the cut is Ann Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (Hughes 2013: 148-9), Stephenie Meyer's young adult novels series *Twilight* lacking its own distinct entry. This omission is quite understandable, even if others, like the movie Bram Stoker's *Dracula* or F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* to name just two, may be less so. Still, these two films, along with a consistent number of other international classics are mentioned throughout the corpus, but especially in the entries for Cinema (2013: 66-9) and, to a lesser extent, Television (Hughes 2013: 239).

On the other hand, the omission of contemporary influential novels or series in favour of the titles of TV shows is both inspired and telling. It is inspired because it reflects not only the recent proliferation of the Gothic on the big and small screen, but also the close connection of the Gothic and various visual means of expression, from vaudeville performances to silent movies and then to adaptations and countess retellings

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[3] Sturm und Drang, translatable to 'Storm and Stress', is only mentioned and explained briefly in the entries which pertain to Goethe and German Gothic, while lacking its own independent mention. It is not bolded and not highly correlated to entries throughout the dictionary. This omission is again understandable due to space constraints, still it supports the Anglocentric nature of the study.

of Gothic stories on screen. Moreover, it is telling because it supports the author's decision to include three terms, namely Cinema (Hughes 2013: 66-9), Television (Hughes 2013: 239) and Theatre (Hughes 2013: 240) into the discussion about the Gothic. This inclusion of terms which are apparently of no direct concern to the Gothic will be explained in more detail in the following section and will help establish Hughes's approach to this dictionary.

The last observation in this sub-section is related to the entries of locations. These will in fact also make for a good transition to the following sub-section, since the names of places which have been selected for the corpus of this dictionary always have an additional layer of conceptual meaning. Unlike Villa Diodati, the example mentioned above, Strawberry Hill (Hughes 2013: 234) boasts its own short entry which clarifies not only the importance of Walpole's house, its transformation and status as a Gothic fixture in and of itself, but also the connection between Gothic architecture and the Gothic.

Alternatively, within the context of the Gothic, some of these terms are, as Hughes himself explains, representations of locations in the Western imagination, not real geographical sites (Hughes 2013: 95). For instance, India (Hughes 2013: 145-7) or Egypt (Hughes 2013: 95-7) are introduced as sources of wildness, lore, and the thrill of fear, a perfect pretext or setting for a Gothic tale. Similarly, Wales corresponds to a dark, mysterious place within the Gothic framework, but unlike the case of India and Egypt, Welsh folklore and supernatural stories are a closer source of inspiration, especially in the case of nineteenth century Gothic (Hughes 2013: 255).

4.2 Socio-cultural and historic events

When it comes to sheer numbers, this is the least sizeable group, counting significantly fewer entries than the other three. What is more, the entries making up this sub-section might resemble a mishmash of terms which stand for important events, practices or even details in the history of the Gothic – a motley assortment of all and any events of significance. However, the chronology that heads the dictionary gives structure and coherence to these offerings by putting some of them in the larger historical context.

Just as in the case of the previous grouping, the selection includes everything from historical milestones like the Inquisition (Hughes 2013: 147-8) and the French Revolution (Hughes 2013: 108-9), to less-known miscellanea which a modern reader might be ignorant of, since they describe smaller or more localized cultural and historical phenomena. Some examples might be phrenology (Hughes 2013: 198), or the Cock Lane Ghost (Hughes 2013:70). Or, perhaps, the Horrid Novels that rounded up the understanding of our previous example entries about Jane Austen and *Northanger Abbey*.

A specific detail about the entries of this group is that often enough more encompassing or general concepts can be paired with their own concrete example, within the same category. If we consider the Gothic fascination with Secret Societies (Hughes 2013: 223-4) both in fiction and in real life, then a concrete example for this would be the Golden Dawn, which was a magical secret society which was founded in London around 1887 (Hughes 2013: 118). The same principle applies to the generalized phenomenon of Circulating Libraries (Hughes 2013: 69) and one of the specific types of books which would have been on offer at these libraries, namely the Blue Books (Hughes 2013: 43).

In both cases, as in many entries throughout the dictionary, Hughes chooses to explain the terms with a connection to the present. The fascination with secret societies continues "in the age of conspiracy theories and alleged government cover-ups", while the blue books are the 'pirated' retellings of Gothic novels, a tradition which lives on in the twenty-first century "through the adaptation of classic and modern Gothic works into graphic novels" (Hughes 2013: 224)

Most of the terms included in this category refer to events and practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which are explained in such a manner as to leave little doubt to their contemporary relevance. Still, a Gothic indulgence modern audiences have appreciated for quite some time now appears in this work under the entry of Psychic Entertainment, that is a type of television show "in the English-speaking world" in which spectacle is combined with "the serious observation of purportedly occult phenomena." (Hughes 2013: 214)

Even if some entries in this category may seem humorous or light-hearted, most events or phenomena described here represent the well-researched sources for the terror which plays out in different incarnations of the Gothic, just as Robert Mighall (1999) argues. These entries may be independent from the Gothic, but they have still played an important part in the shaping of the literary Gothic. Anti-Semitism (Hughes 2013: 28-30), the previously mentioned French Revolution and Inquisition, the AIDS crisis (Hughes 2013: 21-23) or Slavery (Husges 2013: 227-228) are some examples of these possible sources, with the latter being arguably one of the building blocks of Southern Gothic, if not the whole of American Gothic (Goddu 1997). Similarly, Protestantism (2013: 202-3) and Roman Catholicism (Hughes 2013: 212-3) need to be part of this corpus, as religion in general, and these two in particular, have played an important part in the shaping of not only Irish or Scottish Gothic, but of the Gothic as a global phenomenon.

4.3 Theoretical framework and critical entries

A substantial and very well-rounded category could be described as having entries which pertain to the critical and theoretical framework for the Gothic. The proviso that prefaced the previous two sub-sections is still the same. Some of the terms which have been included here firmly belong in this category, while others, like Science Fiction (Hughes 2013: 219-220), Melodrama (Hughes 2013: 179) or Cyberpunk (Hughes 2013: 75) could be considered self-standing concepts, rather than exclusive means of understanding the Gothic. Still, since the connection between the Gothic and these concepts is thoroughly explained within the entries, they have been included in this category.

Nevertheless, irrespective of how the entries are divided or sub-divided into larger categories, the theoretical framework is one of the best achievements of this dictionary. The sub-genres of the Gothic are well explained and clearly exemplified. Moreover, they account for most of the English-speaking incarnations of the Gothic: American Gothic (Hughes 2013: 24-8), which is further quantified by the entries regarding New England Gothic (Hughes 2013: 188-9) and Southern Gothic (Hughes 2013: 229-230), Australian Gothic (Hughes 2013: 33-5), British, Canadian, Irish, Scottish and Welsh Gothic (Hughes 2013: 45-49, 59-61; 150-153, 221-223).

The Anglocentric tendency is visible here as well, but for a richer understanding, French and German Gothic (Hughes 2013: 106-107; 111-112) are also included, along with a minimal explanation for Russian Gothic (Hughes 2013: 214). Furthermore, Imperial Gothic, Ecocriticism, Nazi Gothic, Urban Gothic and the Gothic of the Normal are all addressed throughout Hughes's work (Hughes 2013: 141-142, 93-94, 187-188, 246-247, 127-128). They offer concrete facets into the Gothic, which are thematically, rather than geographically chosen.

Female Gothic (Hughes 2013: 99-101), with the interconnected entry for Women in Gothic Fiction (Hughes 2013: 262-263), accounts for a very well-studied part of the field, and here it is done justice not only by the comprehensive explanations, but also by the slew of cross-references to various famous female authors and concepts. The only entry for Q, Queer Gothic is also present in the dictionary, despite it being a rather new avenue of study within the literature at that time.

In addition to sub-genres of the Gothic, this dictionary also provides entries for some of the most commonly used critical concepts within the Gothic: Abjection (Hughes 2013: 19-21), the Sublime (Hughes 2013: 235-7) and the Uncanny (Hughes 2013: 245-6). Although, at first glance, some key critical elements seem to be missing, a closer read of the source material will clearly reveal they are present, albeit in a different form or lacking an independent entry. For example, the Other – central to contemporary interpretations of Gothic research – does not have an independent entry, rather it is explained in detail under Orientalism (Hughes 2013: 193-194) and is present in entries regarding race or religion. Much the same is the case for the notions of excess or the grotesque, which do not have distinct entries dedicated to them, but whose meaning and usage can be quite easily inferred from the splinters of explanations present in other entries.

The notion of transgression that Botting (1999) insists upon is notably absent from the list of entries. For Botting, transgression of natural laws is the indispensable triggering factor for most, if not all, Gothic narratives. Moreover, the transgression of rules or limits serves "to reassert the values of society, virtue and propriety" (Botting 1999: 7) when order is finally restored at the end of the Gothic story. This complex notion does not feature an entry of its own in Hughes's dictionary, yet the general theme of Taboo (Hughes 2013: 239), as both a locus of secrets and a transgression of the rules, could be considered a partial and less complex substitute for Botting's concept.

However, the only absence which matters is the term itself, the Gothic. One reason for this absence could be that, after explaining the development of the Gothic so thoroughly in the Introduction of the dictionary, Hughes considered it superfluous to have a distinct entry for this. Moreover, in the same Introduction the author dubs the Gothic a "genre" and gives a few of its characteristics (Hughes 2013: 15-16). This, coupled with the fact that Gothic Criticism is the lengthiest entry (Hughes 2013: 121-126) might suggest that Hughes avoided the thorny issue of defining the Gothic in favour of presenting the implications of its conceptual and theoretical evolution.

4.4 Themes, motifs and specific images

Much like the second category discussed in this section, the fourth and final one is a collection of images, themes and motifs specific to Gothic narratives. All of them can be traced back to either critical entries or to various examples of literary and cinematic works, enriching the mediostructure of the dictionary considerably.

These items are as varied as the ones mentioned in each category so far, ranging from types of monsters such as the Mummy (Hughes 2013: 184-185), Wendigo (Hughes 2013: 258), Golem (Hughes 2013: 119), Pan (Hughes 2013: 195-196), Werewolf (Hughes 2013: 258-259) or Vampire (Hughes 2013: 249-251), to the familiar themes of Decadence (Hughes 2013: 78-79), Degeneration (Hughes 2013: 80-81), Fictional Editorship (Hughes 2013: 94-95) or Hypnotism (Hughes 2013: 137-140). Others might be described as stereotypically Gothic figures and characters: the faithful Servants (Hughes 2013: 224-225), the Wandering Jew (Hughes 2013: 256), the Psychic Doctor (Hughes 2013: 203-4) or the Gothic Hero (Hughes 2013: 126-7).

As diverse as they are, these entries are perhaps the most interesting because they are the most recognizable or the more stereotypically Gothic elements in the corpus. And in this position, they are the closest thing to words, or units of communication, that the contemporary Gothic has. When Kristeva's Abject is mentioned, only someone with a certain level of critical background will understand what this concept means in terms of Gothic discourses, but when a vampire appears on film or a labyrinth is described in a novel, anyone can potentially recognize these elements of the Gothic.

Some of these images can shift their meaning or interpretation according to different contexts or in relation to different eras. The example which was mentioned in the first part of this article was the image of the vampire, which has undergone quite a dramatic shift. As an entry in Hughes's dictionary, Vampire has one of the longer explanations, which starts with claims of a possible eighteenth-century origin for the vampire and then describes famous literary vampire characters. What is important to note here, especially considering the following section, is that Hughes draws attention to the change in aspect and symbolism both in this entry and in the paratext of the work. In fact, in the "Introduction", Hughes (2013: 15)states that through this shift, the image of the vampire challenges "the respective places of the human and the monstrous in the contemporary consciousness".

5. Observations

This section, which will be based mostly on the examples analysed above, will be divided into two avenues of inquiry. The first sub-section will deal with the corpus as a whole and will emphasize the characteristic traits of Hughes's dictionary, while the second sub-section will focus on the author's approach to the source material.

5.1 On the corpus of the Gothic dictionary

As a first observation drawn from the systematization of the commentaries which were made in the previous four sub-sections, the most striking trait of the dictionary is its highly systematic mediostructure. The entries are quite frequently interconnected or even interdependent, and it is this interconnectedness that creates a network of references within the text of the dictionary. It is a common occurrence for two or more terms to be conceptualised and presented as pieces which round up information about the same phenomenon, aspect or event. Moreover, the entries are richer in content than they appear at first, with little-known details, concrete examples, and plenty of bibliographical references in the final appendix of the work.

The selection of the corpus is eclectic, with terms spanning four possible categories, but well-chosen in terms of relevance and cohesion. These entries bring to the fore both canonical works or moments in the Gothic and newer avenues of research in the field; they include literary masters and classical novels, as well as contemporary popular shows and book series, such as *X-files, Scooby-Doo, Buffy, the Vampire Slayer, Twilight*, with the addition of cinematic forms of Gothic being a particularly inspired decision.

At first glance, there seem to be some notable absences when it comes to the critical framework, however, upon closer inspection, important concepts which do not have a separate entry, such as the Other, transgression, excess or the grotesque, can be found in the lengthier explanations of other terms. Ultimately, the only important exception to this remains an entry for the Gothic, which is lacking from the corpus. Nonetheless, a definition of sorts for the Gothic is provided in the Introduction. Lastly, another defining feature of this dictionary is the obvious Anglocentric perspective on the works selected, which persists in the case of the terms and their etymology as well. Some exceptions do exist, but only a few such as Flâneur (Hughes 2013: 102) or Fin de Siècle (Hughes 2013: 101-2).

5.2 On prescriptivism

As in the case of any other similar work, Hughes's attitude when it comes to this dictionary cannot subscribe utterly to either descriptivism or prescriptivism. Hughes acknowledges the changes that have occurred in the history of the Gothic and states that the Gothic will change even more in the future, as it is its nature (Hughes 2013: 16). This would prompt a descriptivist aim on his part; however, if read between the lines, prescriptivist comments appear in various term explanations or in some of the choices Hughes makes.

On the one hand, the Anglocentric tendency which has been discussed in previous sections is problematic and could be construed as prescriptivist in nature. This does not entirely go against the grain when it comes to the exploding critical phenomenon of Global Gothic, but it does slightly take away from the dictionary's relevance to present-day Gothic studies. Similarly, the introduction of the Gothic as a "genre" seems to exclude all other critical theories available at the time of publication, making Hughes's approach skew more towards a form of prescriptivism.

On the other hand, even if the shift in Gothic criticism which was discussed in the first section of the article is not overtly supported in Hughes's work, there are many hints peppered throughout the explanations of terms that this change is already underway. The comments made above about the explanation of Vampire are an argument in favour and an example of these hints. Moreover, the entries for Stephenie Meyer and Ann Rice deal with the same issue of the changing nature of the Gothic vampire. In this, Hughes merely describes what is happening in his field of study, without condemning or encouraging one facet of the vampire over the another. Ultimately, this is his consistent approach for most of the entries in the corpus.

6. Conclusions

After taking into consideration all the elements mentioned above, it is perhaps best to return to the questions from the beginning of this article in order to see whether their answer is more readily available. First of all, can this dictionary still be considered relevant after so much upheaval in the case of both Gothic works and Gothic criticism? Despite the issues which have been mentioned above, the answer, I believe, should be a resounding yes. Both researchers and the newer viewership and readership of Gothic material can rely on William Hughes's dictionary as an important reference book for the understanding of the Gothic as a whole. It is true that newer theories have gained control, if not monopoly, over the field of Gothic studies, but the *Historical Dictionary of Gothic Literature* remains a fixture, and a highly useable one at that. It is as Hughes (Hughes 2013: 276) himself claims, volumes in any field tend to lag behind, so a passionate researcher should always consult the journals for the latest critical developments.

The second question deals with whether, shifting the terminological premise that the Gothic is a language and not a genre, Hughes's dictionary can transcend boundaries and be considered something more than a strictly labelled dictionary of literature. The answer to this is harder to gauge. Although it is true that the author draws attention to specific cases and points out the shifts in meaning for some of the terms, this work is ultimately only what it claims to be: a historical dictionary. Even though it will not teach us to speak the Gothic more fluently, it will unequivocally help us understand the story of its development.

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