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A genealogy of The Addams family: from gothic to comic

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sous la direction de

Jocelyn DUPONT, MCF

**A GENEALOGY OF *THE ADDAMS FAMILY*:
FROM GOTHIC TO COMIC**

Soutenu le 25/05/2020 devant un jury composé de

Jocelyn DUPONT, MCF

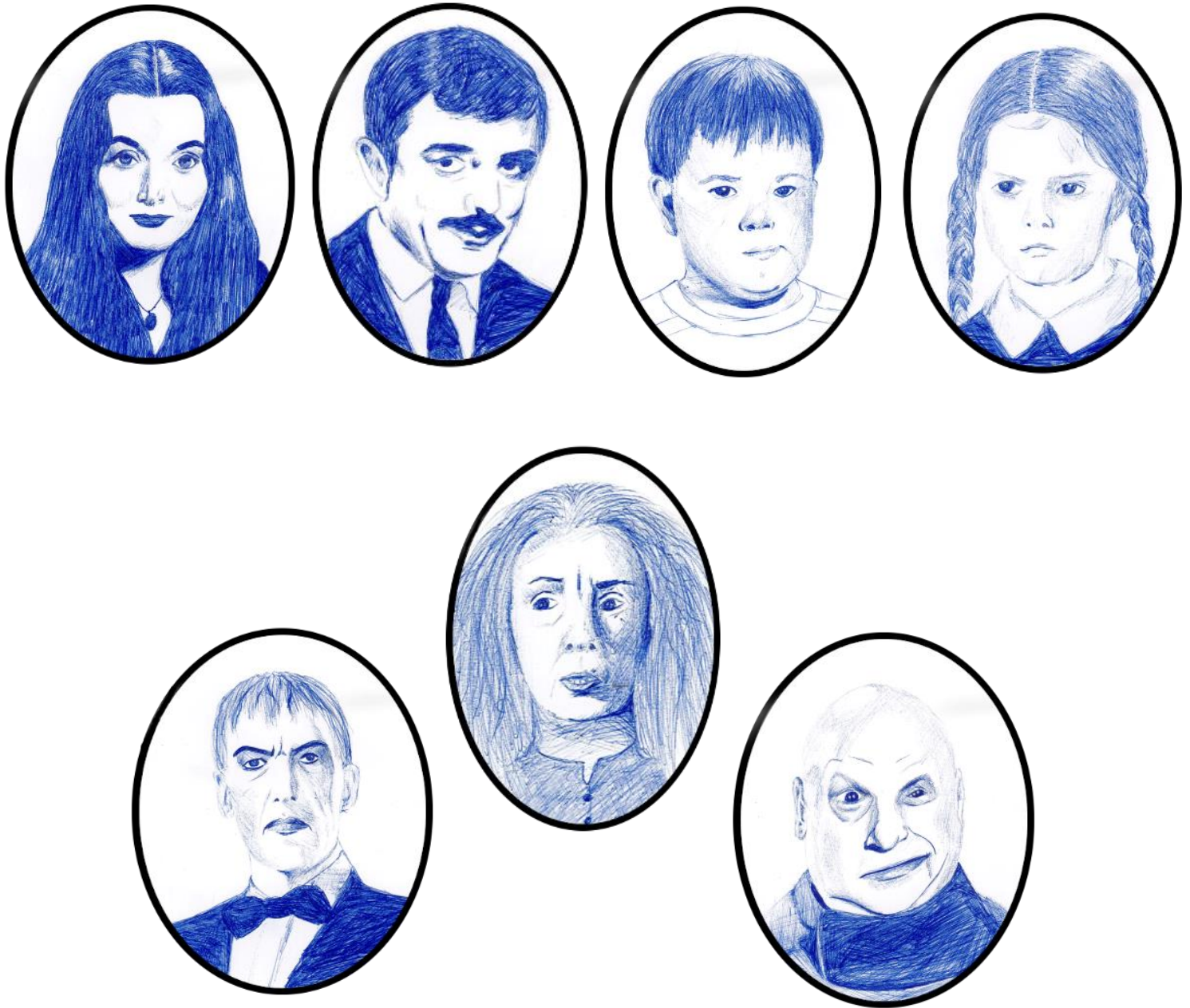
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Abstract

This first volume of a master's dissertation in two parts analyses the generic aspects of a genealogy of *The Addams Family*. This research looks into the Gothic tropes and comic contraptions at play within different versions of the franchise which make it a Neo-Gothic pastiche. It defines the Comic Gothic genre and how Gothic tropes are used for comic purposes, especially by way of inversion, in *The Addams Family*.

Volume 1

A Genealogy of *The Addams Family*: from Gothic to Comic



1

¹ Dessin réalisé par Sonja Böttger.

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To look at the appendices please contact me at andrea1romani@gmail.com

“I never saw anything funny that wasn’t terrible.”

W. C. Fields

What is really *The Addams Family*? Most baby boomers would say it is a family friendly American show. After all, mid-20th century Americans do tend to remember this odd band of outcasts from Vic Mizzy’s 1964 series “catchy theme tune and associated finger clicks²”. However, for future generations, millennials included, the 1991 film remains the most popular manifestation of the franchise. Indeed, the latter adaptation’s higher budget and more modern stance conquered the audience right away, unlike its small screen predecessor. Nevertheless, Charles Samuel Addams (1912-1988), the creator of this ghastly family which will be the focus of the following work, first portrayed the characters in cartoon form, with his *New Yorker* one-panel comic strip publications. Charles Addams, or Chas as he used to sign his drawings, bore the nickname “master of black humour”. He was born in Westfield, New Jersey, in 1912, and died in New York, in 1988. He made his debut in 1932 and created the first Addams character in 1938. He came to be known as a great cartoonist thanks to his macabre yet amusing drawings, the Addamses remaining to this day, his most famous characters.

The work of Charles Addams was the result of his fruitful imagination and otherworldly fantasies, but it was also inspired by real life events and experiences. His comic strips were always tuned to reality and reflecting the sombre truths of his time with a never faltering dark sense of humour. Some of his inspirations are compiled in his *Dear Dead Days*³ book, a collection of photographs, articles and other such media that influenced him throughout the years. The book implicitly shows the passing of time, each chapter’s title chosen carefully as to reflect a different stage of life (for example, “Childhood”, “Killing Time”, “R” meaning “prescription”, probably standing for times of illness, or “Fiends and Relations”, a play on words with the word “friends”, the perfect representation of Chas’ uncanny sense of humour). In other words, the book represents the span of a life, probably Charles’, with pictures and news articles which struck him during his life. It encompasses what his work represents, the revelation of the uncanny within society, the will to show that the peculiar and freakish exists and does not only reside in the realms of like-minded gloomy imaginations such as his own.

² OWEN Dan, “An Addams Family History”, *Dan’s Media Digest*, October 12th 2019, <https://dansmediadigest.co.uk/an-addams-family-history-eb270f90a19b>.

³ ADDAMS Charles, *Dear Dead Days: A Family Album*, P. Hamlyn, 1959.

Originally, Charles Addams' comic strips, and the re-creations that they generated, inherited many traits from the Gothic genre. That is to say, a bleak and dreary aesthetic with forlorn settings and murky characters: "In the most general terms, Gothic literature can be defined as a writing that employs dark and picturesque sceneries, startling and melodramatic narrative devices, and an overall atmosphere of exoticism, mystery, fear, and dread⁴." Actually, the Addamses do everything that others do, albeit with a Gothic twist. They bake, they tend to their garden, they borrow things from their neighbours, they decorate the house for the holidays, they enjoy the view from their window, they spend time together, they have guests come over, they have pets, they go to school, and they read. However, it is how they do those normal things that makes them Gothic. Indeed, all characters behave in uncanny ways. Grandmama carves the letters "RIP" into her cake. Morticia asks her neighbours for cyanide (poison) instead of eggs. They put bats on their decaying Christmas tree. They live in front of a cemetery. They look at pictures of dead people instead of playing board games. Fester grows body parts instead of fruits and vegetables, and takes scalding showers. They ask their guests to scream if they need something as if they ran a madhouse. Their pets are monstrous (scary reptiles and vultures). Pugsley even builds a coffin during an arts and craft class, and Fester reads toxicology books instead of novels, to only state a few of their oddities. In other words, they are far from normal although they do normal things⁵.

Moreover, in many Gothic works of fiction, one can find archetypal characters such as that of the "mad scientist". In *The Addams Family*, such characters are recycled. Indeed, Pugsley could be said to represent the Gothic "mad scientist" since he creates many odd machines. However, he is just a child which makes his character less valid and reliable, and by extension, more comic. It is this notion of comic within the recycling of the Gothic that makes Chas' work so much more interesting. Chas definitely added his own funny twist to the dismal Gothic ambience; something that requires further investigation and will be tackled later in this dissertation, but he did keep core elements of Gothic works of fiction, making *The Addams Family* into a Neo-Gothic household.

Looking back to Chas' beginnings, the art form that he decided to adopt could not have been in better accordance with his style. Indeed, as Yaszek explains, even though the original goal of comic strips was to boost newspaper circulation (it was accessible to a larger public: illiterates or uneducated people, such as the working class or immigrants), and they often

⁴ THOUGHTCO, "Gothic Literature", n.d., <https://www.thoughtco.com/gothic-literature-2207825>.

⁵ Appendix 1, pp. 2, 4 and 5.

reflected “the moral climate of the day⁶”. As mentioned earlier, Addams was always fond of disclosing matters said to be taboo, making comic strips the perfect medium for him to express his controversial art. The rise of the comic strip brought about two new elements to the journalistic sphere: the never before encountered combination of graphic and text, a very innovative method, and a new dangerous political weapon. All in all, the cartoon format did bring about a wave of irreverent content in newspapers, fomenting societal disrespect and insubordination.

Notwithstanding, not only did Charles Addams use a socially transgressive medium, he also implemented a cross-generic approach to his art with the combination of comic and Gothic. This only heightened his already awry style, soon standing out as a specialist of what came to be known as “black humour”, at least as long as comic strips are concerned. Chas was never afraid to trespass the barriers of propriety and breached most of the codes of his time with provocative content. This outright affront to decorum did not go unnoticed and sparked the curiosity of many, David Levy amongst them. Levy, who was working for ABC TV channel at the time of this discovery, was captivated by Addam’s originality. This was to be the start of *The Addams Family* franchise, the first screen adaptation of Chas’ eerie characters. The characters only became a family after Charles had agreed to making the TV series. Before, they were related but no real family structure had been established. 1964 thus marked the beginning of *The Addams Family* as we now know it. Charles’ merger of comic and Gothic elements swiftly adapted to screen, becoming what Tredy calls a “monster-com⁷”, the union of sitcoms and the Gothic genre.

At the time of the show’s release, TV channels were wrestling to get the highest ratings. ABC’s main competitor was CBS, who produced another famous monster-com: *The Munsters*. *The Addams Family* was born in the middle of a network war, with supernatural sitcoms, borrowing heavily from major works of Gothic literature, being the strongest weapon to win said war. Both series were satirical inversions of the American ideal sitcom family. The Addamses, which are the focal point of this research, being strange misfits that somehow managed to thrive in the upper middle-class. Actually, the Addamses did not borrow much from literary sources, they simply took elements from the Gothic in broad strokes, relying on concepts and commonly held knowledge of the Gothic rather than specific literary works. In

⁶ YASZEK Lisa, “‘Them Damn Pictures’: Americanization and the Comic Strip in the Progressive Era”, *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, April 1994, p. 23.

⁷ TREDY Dennis, “Light Shadows: Loose Adaptations of Gothic Literature in American TV Series of the 1960s and Early 1970s”, *TV/Series*, no. 12, September 2017, p. 8.

other words, Chas borrowed the more obvious and *cliché* traits of the Gothic that would be familiar to most, if not all, readers instead of choosing one sole Gothic work as his Gothic inspiration. In any case, just like comic strips stirred the 19th century, monster-coms shook the 20th. According to Tredy, “the tranquil and extremely conventional television landscape was disrupted by the raucous intrusion of these monstermashes⁸”.

Even though the first screen adaptation of the family was not as much of a success as everyone had expected, at least when it came to ratings, many more followed. Withal, for close analysis purposes, this paper will only focus on the original comic strips, the 1964 sitcom, 1973 cartoon, 1991 and 1993 films, and the 2019 film.

In 1972 the Addamses made a short appearance on television, this time in animated form, guest starring in an episode of *Scooby-Doo*. Only one year later, the family would get their own animated series, a more children-oriented adaptation but still imprinted with Addam’s macabre humour and showcasing adult life concerns. Two decades later, the first big screen adaptation of the Addamses, the 1991 film, would come about, portraying a contemporary copy to the 1964 version, with later-day concerns and better-quality image.

Throughout the years and across the media, the Addamses managed to remain the same aloof and eccentric members of the upper middle-class. They believe that they are pillars of the community, oblivious to the harm and pain they cause others. This negative depiction of the wealthy is true to reality, revealing the superiority complex and elitist behaviour that most rich people adopt. This is in the spirit of the original cartoons by Addams and is displayed in all the formats of *The Addams Family*. The Addamses are unapologetic and unconcerned, a cruel yet authentic description of the higher ups who flatter themselves with a feeling of flawlessness. Moreover, the members of the family all hold some bizarre ability or curious physical particularity. **Gomez Addams** (Repelli in the comic strips) is a sadistic, a witless and easily scammed man who always seems to be smiling. He enjoys smoking cigars and can magically light them. He is the breadwinner of the family, a millionaire entrepreneur. **Morticia Addams** is a slender and cadaver-like wife (she allegedly resembles Charles Addam’s first wife). Charming and intelligent, she is the problem-solver of the family. She likes cutting the heads of roses to display only the stems and can light candles with her fingers. **Uncle Fester** (Morticia’s uncle in the sitcom, and Gomez’ brother in the 1991 film) is a bald and bug-eyed madman with a devilish grin and even more devilish intentions. He can light a lightbulb by putting it in his mouth and enjoys being tortured as well as playing with explosives. He probably

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 2 and 9.

is the most ignorant of the family, the simpleton. **Grandmama** (Granny Frump in the original version) is a snarly old witch who cooks up failed magic potions. She is Gomez' mother in the 1964 series, and Morticia's in the 1991 film. **Wednesday Addams**, likely named after the line "Wednesday's child is full of woe"⁹, is a severe-looking little girl who chops off the heads of her dolls and never smiles or shows any signs of joy. She can throw an adult across the room in a single judo move. **Pugsley Addams** (originally named Pubert) is a relatively kind kid who loves wreaking havoc. He is a child genius, and much like his uncle Fester, enjoys torture and explosives. **Cousin Itt** is a small hairy man who talks gibberish only an Addams can understand. Unlike the other characters he does not live with the family. **Lurch** is the butler of the house, a groaning, super-strong and tall monster who could be Frankenstein's twin if it did not infringe copyright laws. Last but not least is **Thing**, a servant who is actually a disembodied hand that pops out of boxes, shakes hands, speaks in Morse Code, plays chess and delivers mail. Before *The Addams Family* was ever adapted to screen, Thing was most often represented as a ghoul hiding in some comic strips. It appeared leaning over a balustrade or lurking in the shadows of a partially opened door¹⁰. With curious eyes and long hair, the creature seemed more like another crawling family pet to add to the Addamses' already big collection. As a matter of fact, the family has many pets in all their versions, from strangling, and human eating, house plants, to an alligator, a lion, a vulture, an octopus, a jaguar, piranhas, and even a tarantula. The Addamses take everything above and beyond, embodying both the grimness of the Gothic, the zaniness of comic, and the hyperbolic nature of both genres.

Charles Addams did not reinvent the Gothic but recycled its patterns in a specific context and medium which was later adapted into other media. Much like serials nicknames "penny dreadfuls" or "penny bloods"¹¹; which were cartoons published in the press during the 19th century, used Gothic archetypes of horror and the uncanny, Chas used Gothic elements to create *The Addams Family*. Spooner explains that "penny dreadfuls" are often omitted from histories of the Gothic thus obscuring a part of Gothic history. However, this shows that the Gothic has always been associated with popular culture and that Addams was not the first to use the Gothic in his work. Still, the fact that he created characters both comic and Gothic is quite innovative. Exaggeration, inversion and comic situations are some of the key elements to the comic effect found in *The Addams Family*. It both makes the public laugh and reflect, they enjoy the amusing

⁹ From the nursery rhyme "Monday's Child".

¹⁰ Appendix 1, pp. 3 and 4.

¹¹ SPOONER Catherine, "Popular Culture", *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, p. 504.

characters and at the same time, are made aware of the problems of society through implicit *critique*. That being so, one can see a pattern emerge in Addams' work. The marriage of Gothic and comic presents *The Addams Family* as both a Gothic production and a comic one. The family members are both funny and biting, as well as sometimes accidentally, and others deliberately, sardonic. The Addamses seem to be telling a story about life, mirroring the wrong in society, while paradoxically advocating for acceptance and progress. They are both uncomfortable to look at and impossible to ignore, captivating the public as it tries to look away. Indeed, Van Elferen explains that "Gothic is a transgressive gesture [...] transgressions are depicted so vividly that audiences almost viscerally see, feel and experience them¹²." The idea of the Gothic being a gesture is very important. Indeed, it implies that the Gothic acts on its audience, it forces them to look into what it transgresses, be it the boundary between "life and death, fantasy and reality, or good and evil". However, this also makes the audience want to deny what they see, to look away.

With these contradictions the Addamses became so popular that they are still celebrated to this day. In 2012, Google commemorated *The Addams Family* by showcasing a Google logo cartoon version of the family on their main page (figure 1).



Figure 1

During Halloween season every year at least one celebrity dresses as an Addams family member. In 2019, a new Addams Family animated film was released, showing that the franchise is still popular in the 21st century. The family became so very famous that people, not even just fans, associate quotes to the Addamses which they did not even say. For example, the sentence "Normal is an illusion. What is normal for the spider is chaos for the fly" is given to Morticia

¹² EDWARDS Justin D. and SOLTYSIK MONNET Agnieszka, *The Gothic in Contemporary Literature and Popular Culture: Pop Goth*, Routledge, 2012, p. 135.

Addams, although there is no proof of the character ever saying it. This pop-cultural osmosis¹³ effect was so strong that for the 2009 musical version of *The Addams Family*, the producer Andrew Lippa decided to include this now famous sentence in the script. *The Addams Family* phenomenon spread across the internet like black powder during the last decade, with the rise of social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram or Tumblr. The advent of memes (figure 2) and gifs only fomented this nonpareil family's popularity, a variety of them can be found on all social networks and are still used daily.



Figure 2

Yet, how did this Addams craze even begin, when Chas' creation was inspired by a genre and began with a media, which even if popular, were the object of harsh *critique*? For the Gothic was originally subjected to antipathy, seen as a lesser genre meant mostly for women. It was believed to be filled with mad and crooked ideas which would pervert the foolish. As for the comic strip format, it was seen as a new vehicle to promote deviation and vulgar indecency. Moreover, on account of the paradoxes stated above, which are embodied by the Addamses (abhorrent yet amusing, appalling while alluring, as shockingly dreadful as they are reassuring), one could wonder how this curious family elevated to its legendary position. Likewise, why are the Addamses considered as another revival of the Gothic when in fact they pastiche most, if not all, Gothic conventions? How is the Gothic used to a comic effect? What is really so charmingly funny about *The Addams Family*? Above all, how is dark humour used as a satirical weapon, first with comic strips and later, with screen adaptations? These questions bring forth a bigger one, which is going to be central to this dissertation: what precisely is the goal of this Gothic re-creation, is it to arouse laughter or to cause indignation?

¹³ TV TROPES, "Pop-Cultural Osmosis", n.d., <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/PopculturalOsmosis>.

In order to answer these questions it is important to create a solid framework by defining both the Gothic and comic. Therefore, part I will lay out the groundwork of this dissertation by defining these terms in detail. Then, it will be easier to understand how the Gothic and comic work together to allow for the Comic Gothic subgenre. Thus, part II will show with several examples that *The Addams Family* is oxymoronic since it reconciles expectations with tipsy turvy antiques. Indeed, it uses the Gothic genre, and at the same time debunks its horrific nature by associating it with the comic mode. In volume 2 of this dissertation, thanks to the knowledge acquired through the understanding of the terms above, the more critical and accusatory goal of *The Addams Family* will be tackled in detail. First, with the analysis of an implicit societal *critique* in a post-modern context. Then, with a study of *The Addams Family*'s challenge to gender norms. In fact, chapter I of volume 2 will endeavour to show how this eerie family manages to subvert society with the Comic Gothic. To begin, the chapter will lay out the American context, then it will highlight how the Gothic plays out into the disruption of American ideals, and eventually it will establish the sine qua non role of the comic in further unsettling certain figures and notions of US history. To finish, chapter II will highlight the importance of female characters in *The Addams Family* and how they move away from classic female roles.

I) A Writing of Excess: Defining the Comic Gothic

A- A Definition of the Gothic

1. The Origins of the Word “Gothic”

1.1. The Significance of the Word “Gothic”

“Le ‘gothique’ se cuisine à toutes les sauces¹⁴” states Raviez. Meaning that the Gothic genre can be dished up in many shapes. “Gothic” is a word that most people use without knowing its real meaning. Steele explains that “Gothic is obsessed with the past¹⁵”, which is why it is important to know the origins of this word “Gothic”. Those who study literature, especially British or American, may have some elements of the answer: The Gothic is a literary genre. However, much like the many people who do not know what the Gothic is, or at best associate it to an architectural style, they do not grasp the full scope of what the Gothic symbolizes and encompasses.

Ermida¹⁶ explains that what we call “the Gothic” nowadays, has nothing to do with what the Gothic used to be in the very beginning. She explains that this “literary label” covers a wide range of expression in today’s culture and art. She argues that “Italian art historians of the early Renaissance first used it to refer to pointed-arch and ribbed-vault styles of medieval architecture” which were to be replaced by more elegant neoclassical trends. However, she points out that the origin of the word “Goth” has nothing to do with the architecture. Indeed, it takes its root in a much older history, that of the barbaric Goths. Although Goths and Gothic architecture are two very different things, Ermida claims that “the equation of the Gothic with the barbarous extended to medieval culture, which was deemed ignorant and superstitious” as opposed to “knowledge and sophistication”. In other words, Goths seem to have not only given their name to a medieval architectural trend, but also to have left behind a heritage of negative reception.

¹⁴ NEIVA Saulo and MONTANDON Alain, *Dictionnaire Raisonné de la Caducité des Genres Littéraires*, Librairie Droz, 2014, p. 855.

¹⁵ ROUND Julia, *Gothic in Comics and Graphic Novels: a Critical Approach*, McFarland & Company, 2014, p. 140.

¹⁶ ERMIDA Isabel, *Dracula and the Gothic in Literature, Pop Culture and the Arts*, Brill Rodopi, 2016, p. 1.

Botting¹⁷ adds that the word “Gothic” assumed both a powerful and a negative significance during the 18th century. He claims that “the word ‘Gothic’ [...] condenses a variety of historical elements and meanings opposed to the categories valued in the 18th century”. In this respect, the real history of the Gothic could be said to have begun in the 18th century. To Botting, the Gothic signifies a “barbaric” and “supernatural” past, used derogatively about “art, architecture and writing that failed to conform to the standards of neoclassical taste”. That is to say, the Gothic goes against reason, morality and customs, it breaches the foundations set by the Enlightenment. Dan Adams¹⁸ gives a more simplified, yet accurate, definition of the Gothic. He shows the different manifestations of the Gothic through time, giving context to this worn-out word. Like Ermida, he explains that the word “Gothic” derives from “Goths”, a nation set against the Roman Empire¹⁹.

1.2. Goths

Actually, the word “Goths” is given to many nations which belonged to the “barbaric North²⁰”. Mason²¹ explains that the original Goths were “a warlike, Teutonic tribe who cut a swathe across Western Europe in the 4th century”. Indeed, Goths played a huge role in the collapse of the Roman Empire and signed the beginning of the Dark Ages which Mason calls “a tempestuous period of conflict and unrest”. She claims that as a result, “Goth” became a “byword for all that is savage and uncouth”. She sites one Edwardian dictionary which defines a Goth as “a rude or uncivilized person, a barbarian”, terms which would be used to define Gothic architecture centuries later.

1.3. Gothic Architecture

Hogle²² explains that the medieval Gothic architecture was wrongfully named after Goths for sharing their barbarity: “a misnomer applied by later neo-classicists to the ‘barbarity’ of pointed-arch buildings [...] which were wrongly linked to the 5th century Goths”. Stevens

¹⁷ PUNTER David, *A New Companion to the Gothic*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 28.

¹⁸ TED-ED, *A Brief History of Gothic*, YouTube, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STOJfiffOqs&t=214s>.

¹⁹ PROCOPE DE CESAREE, *Histoire des Goths*, in Janick Auberger (ed.), *Les Belles Lettres*, 2015, p. 30.

²⁰ WOLFRAM Herwig and RICHÉ Pierre, *Histoire des Goths*, Albin Michel, 1990, p. 31.

²¹ MASON Diane, “Goth”, *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, p. 238.

²² HOGLE Jerrold E., “Introduction: Modernity and the Proliferation of the Gothic”, *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 3.

Curl seems to agree as he claims that “Gothic” is “the unfortunate epithet given to an architectural style, properly called ‘pointed’²³”. Thus, Gothic architecture was named Gothic after Goths, but even though the name lived on, the two do not have anything in common apart from their alleged barbarity.

Indeed, with time, the Gothic decanted into something different, impinging on different art forms, the first one being architectonics, with the notorious architectural Gothic trend. Wilson²⁴ explains that Gothic architecture has been the subject of “intensive scrutiny” for centuries and was later propelled by Gothic literature. The characteristic pointed stained-glass windows and arches of churches, cathedrals, mansions and abbeys would have such an impact that they would be used later as one of the vital organs of the Gothic literary body. There are no classic Gothic texts without at least one Gothic monument. Horace Walpole even had his house remodelled in “Gothick” style before bringing the architectural trend into his literature. This “faux medievalism”, as Round²⁵ calls it, is linked to Steele’s idea that Gothic refers to the past. The Gothic is based on the restoration of past elements, a sort of “false nostalgia”. This is how the Gothic was brought from one art onto another.

2. Gothic Literature and Popular Culture

2.1. The Critique of the Gothic

The Gothic is a unique genre that is not secluded within the boundaries of a time frame. Like the Romantic genre; which breached the rules of the deeply ingrained classicist movement during the Renaissance, the Gothic is transgressive. As mentioned before, the word Gothic has had the opportunity to change through the centuries. Still, when it comes to the popular yet disregarded Gothic literary genre; which is said to have marked the Romantic era with a dark stain, one can see an apparent outline. Botting²⁶ explains that, after all, during the 18th century the Gothic was either disregarded as an idle waste of time or shunned as a perverse genre. Horner and Zlosnik²⁷ even claim that the Gothic was “for long dismissed as the dark and

²³ CURL James Stevens, “Architecture, Gothic”, *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, p. 38.

²⁴ DAUSSY Stéphanie Diane and TIMBERT Arnaud (ed.), *Architecture et Sculpture Gothiques: Renouveau des Méthodes et des Regards : Actes du IIe Colloque International de Noyon, 19-20 juin 2009*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, p. 9.

²⁵ ROUND Julia, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

²⁶ BOTTING Fred, *Gothic*, Routledge, 1996, p. 2.

²⁷ HORNER Avril and ZLOSNIK Sue, “Gothic Configurations of Gender”, *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 56.

dissolute underside of Romantic writing”. Indeed, it was late in becoming an object of serious study because it was labelled as a vulgar and horrid genre which clashed with the reasoned ideas of the Enlightenment. Ermida²⁸ explains that in literature, the Gothic assumed a “counterfeit and divisive” nature from its very emergence since it challenged the ideas of the Enlightenment (use of primary sources, reason, the primacy of scientific knowledge, or progress).

Baldick and Mighall²⁹ argue that until the 1930s, most accounts of the Gothic were negative and Gothic fiction was associated with an “undistinguished curiosity of literary evolution”, as if the genre was just a mistake that appeared as an evil to counter the Enlightenment. Still, they add that the Gothic still received some scholarly treatment of its sources and generic features. Actually, after the Gothic gained some momentum, critics who viewed Gothic fiction as unimportant were defied, their disregard for the Gothic seen as “shamefaced antiquarianism”. Indeed, the Gothic attracted “partisans and champions who advanced bold claims for its value”.

Therefore, the Gothic was slowly acknowledged as it became a bigger part of popular culture. Spooner³⁰ explains that popular culture refers to “the culture of the people” as opposed to that of the ruling classes. In this case, popular culture is represented by the Gothic and the ruling classes by the Enlightenment. She adds that popular culture exists outside the “authorized”, “intellectually legitimized” and “official” culture of any given period. She argues that the Gothic has always been viewed as a “popular” genre: “it is non canonical”; meaning that it does not use scientific articles, or other such encyclopaedic sources, as references, “eschews notions of literary value”, meaning that it does not respect literary codes, forms or norms, and “is concerned with a mass readership”, meaning that it is indeed, popular. She explains that Gothic texts did not gain literary respectability when they first came out. Nowadays, Gothic novels are studied and acknowledged as proper literary works, but that was not the case until the late 20th century. Thus, the Gothic joined the “official culture” very late.

2.2. The Different Types of Gothic and their Characteristics

Nevertheless, Botting³¹ actually claims that classic Gothic literature can be divided into two categories: 18th century works of fiction and 19th century ones. During the 18th century,

²⁸ ERMIDA Isabel, *loc. cit.*

²⁹ PUNTER David, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

³⁰ SPOONER Catherine, “Popular Culture”, *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, p. 503.

³¹ BOTTING FRED, *loc. cit.*

Gothic literary works were mostly “tales of darkness, desire and power which embodied cultural anxieties”. Strictly speaking, early Gothic works of fiction had romance narratives but with a darker twist, they ran on mystery and spookiness: horrible images, inexplicable incidents, fainting heroines and life-threatening pursuits pushing the boundaries of reality with the appearance of spectres and monsters. Some prevailing settings dominated these pioneering Gothic novels: awe-inspiring landscapes with dark forests, abandoned abbeys and crumbling castles. These tropes are used consistently in early Gothic works such as Lewis’ *The Monk*. Another main trait of the Gothic is the sublime: a synonym to “beautiful”, except it involves a magnified image of beauty through the supernatural, the idea of an “otherworldly magnificence”. Last but not least, the element of fear was prominent in the prime of the Gothic. De Courville Nicol³² classifies fear in categories such as: the fear of evil (satanic), the fear of nature (epidemics), the fear of the state (absolutism) or the fear of hunger (famines). According to her, fear is necessary to the development of the human mind. Therefore, Gothic literature could be said to free the soul of “pre-epistemological fear”, meaning repressed fears. It could also be said that the Gothic has both a pedagogical role; in that it teaches readers to withstand fear, and a preventing role, almost parental, since it warns of the dangers of social transgression by presenting vice in its darkest form. De Courville Nicol adds that the word “monster” comes from the Latin “monstrare”, itself derived from “moner” which means “to warn”. According to this definition, the goal of monsters in Gothic fiction would be to show the consequences of immorality.

By the 19th century, Gothic literature transformed and took a new, important, turn towards a more scientific approach. With on the one hand, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* representing the inclusion of modern science and on the other, Edgar Allan Poe’s notion of madness. This more modern Gothic would keep the Gothic essence, for example, the Brontë sisters managed to portray the relatively new notion of insanity in traditional Gothic settings with *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Still, more modern apprehensions would be tackled, such as industrialisation or urbanisation. However, the Gothic seemed to have always been meant for such a change. Duperray³³ explains that in France, Gothic works were called “macabre novels” or “Gothic romances”. Hence the Gothic’s “nickname”: the dark part of the Enlightenment. The Gothic was always considered as para-literature (secondary to the great literature of encyclopaedias), and the addition of science to its narrative did not improve its

³² DE COURVILLE NICOL Valérie, *Le Soupçon Gothique: L’Intériorisation de la Peur en Occident*, Presses de l’Université Laval, 2004, p. 92.

³³ DUPERRAY Max, *Le Roman Noir Anglais Dit « Gothique »*, Ellipses, 2000, p. 6.

debased image. Be that as it may, the Gothic used science (as well as religion) to display the undersides of these acclaimed concepts. It made use of counter-narratives, creating supernatural threats to metaphorically represent real-life troublesome situations. “Gothic literature has always been known for making explicit things which are often held back in more conventional types of writing³⁴.” By way of explanation, the goal of Gothic literature, no matter the century, remains to produce irrational responses in the readers. To excite, not to inform, to chill the readers’ blood and to “delight their suspicious fancies”. It is exactly why Gothic works of fiction were attacked by critics: “they invigorated unlicensed passions³⁵”. In fact, Botting enumerates some of the most usual patterns that can be found in Gothic works across the eras: dark magical forces, delusions of the mind, religious and human evil, social transgression and spiritual corruption, and all these notions are on display in the many versions of *The Addams Family*. Indeed, the members seem to possess some sort of magic or another in all their versions, are unaware of their insanity, are made outcasts by human prejudice, transgress social norms with their unruly behaviour, and celebrate unholy holidays.

Furthermore, Botting³⁶ explains that Horace Walpole’s novel *The Castle of Otranto*, the first Gothic story, introduces many of the features that came to define this “new genre of fiction”. This genre required a Gothic architectural setting; in *The Addams Family*, their mansion, and ghostly or supernatural machinations and creatures, in *The Addams Family*, most if not all family members are not fully human and behave dubiously. Thus, *The Addams Family* inherited Gothic literary traits, bringing back ancient, and often decrepit, elements into the modern world.

3. Modern Gothic

3.1. The Adaptability of the Gothic

Hogle³⁷ explains that the Gothic; with its “set of linked elements”; which makes it an unfixed genre, has crept throughout the world, and while managing to maintain its initial features, has also entered “a wide array of media: film, television, surreal art, comic books and graphic novels”. Botting claims that “the pleasure of horror came from the reappearance of

³⁴ THE BRITISH LIBRARY, *The Gothic*, YouTube, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNohDegnaQQ>.

³⁵ BOTTING Fred, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

³⁶ PUNTER David, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

³⁷ HOGLE Jerrold, E., *loc. cit.*

figures long gone³⁸". That is to say, the Gothic survived by recycling its early 18th and 19th century characters and giving them a new twist, or showing them in a more modern light. The Gothic's best trait would therefore be its adaptability. This is why the Gothic is one of the few genres that has survived for centuries and still lives on. The Gothic has always belonged to popular culture, a scapegoat for critics yet loved by many, trespassing the rules of its time in all the eras it lived. More modern incarnations of the Gothic appeared in the form of underground music (metal) and dark fashion style. Nevertheless, it is the transformations of Gothic literature which are of particular interest to this research. How Gothic fiction translates into other media, how it melts or shifts into other genres, is very important. Botting explains that Gothic traces can be found in "a multiplicity of different genres and media". He focusses mainly on cinema, which is the one medium which has perpetuated the genre best. In changing the vehicle (from novels to films), the Gothic genre also altered, deviating towards two Neo-Gothic alternatives: Horror Gothic and Comic Gothic. Although it is a marginalised genre, it has always been part of popular fiction. Moreover, since it does not have a precise era is it not restricted to a specific and fixed period. Therefore, it does not have a fixed essence either. Gothic literature evolved from classic Gothic to a more scientific Gothic. The Gothic itself continues evolving to this day, by adopting different media and decanting into several neo-subgenres. On top of everything, the Gothic has undeniably been kept alive through popular culture, slowly moving away from the original "crummy" novels, a negative conception of Gothic literature which followed it across the media. There are many examples of Gothic mutations. Duperray³⁹ names the scientific and fantastic turns, two hybrid categories of the Gothic which would later become more famous than their Gothic forefather: science-fiction and fantasy.

Moreover, Fradley⁴⁰ argues that "an enduring truism about the cultural phenomenon known as the Gothic is that it simply will not die". For Spooner, the continued popularity of this "darkly romantic" genre goes beyond the "superficial allure of gloom and cheap thrills". Instead, she explains that the Gothic's allure is due to its adaptability, its capacity to resonate with "contemporary fears, desires and anxieties". She explains that "Gothic narratives have escaped the confines of literature and spread across disciplinary boundaries to infect all kinds of media". To her, the Gothic's survival is due to its "level-headedness" with other mainstream genres. The Gothic's malleability renders it a best seller: "where once Gothic provided a space

³⁸ BOTTING Fred, *op. cit.*, pp. 2 and 156.

³⁹ DUPERRAY Max (ed.), *Fenêtres sur l'Obscur: Imaginaires, Gothique, Néo-gothique, Contre-Utopie: Littérature et Cinéma du Domaine Anglo-saxon: Textes*, Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2001, p. 88.

⁴⁰ FRADLEY Martin, "Contemporary Gothic, by Catherine Spooner", *Transformative Works and Cultures*, vol. 4, 2010.

in which the dark dreams of the Enlightenment could be realized, now it simply exposes the void at the heart of an advanced consumer culture”. That is to say, the Gothic used to challenge the Enlightenment by exposing the true nature and desires of people, and it has now adapted to reveal the problems of a more modern world. Armit⁴¹ adds that the Gothic in its literary or more modern forms exposes the world’s secrets and its sick desires, which is the main reason it manages to enthrall new generations.

3.2. Gothic Theatre: an Overlooked Mutation

Nevertheless, Coupková⁴² explains that one important aspect of the Gothic genre is theatre. Gothic drama is often overlooked; however it also played a role in the genre moving to screen. After all, the supernatural elements in Gothic plays are the ancestors to special effects in Gothic films. Coupková adds that how ghosts and other supernatural beings were introduced in Gothic plays played “a key role in establishing the enormous success and popularity of the genre in the 18th and 19th centuries”. Theatrical machinery and staging methods made the Gothic’s supernatural elements more alluring. However, just like the novels, Gothic plays mainly appealed to the middle and lower-middle classes. Coupková also explains that the physical depiction of the supernatural events was varied on stage: “vocal and mobile portraits, veiled statues that come to life, animated skeletons and other animated objects, secret messages delivered by spectres, forbidden chambers and casket lids seen in the act of rising”. All of these elements then translated to screen, be it in films or TV shows. *The Addams Family* screen adaptations inherited these supernatural effects from Gothic theatre too.

3.3. The Lasting Effects of the Gothic

Wheatley⁴³ argues that adaptations of Gothic novels help entertain the ghost of childhood memories. She outlines the origins of those half-remembered dreadful sounds and images: Gothic stories (both in novels and screen adaptations) and how their uncanny elements tend to get under one’s skin. Even though they may not be liked, complimented or respected by critics, they do tend to have lasting effects on the public. According to Wheatley, the mood of

⁴¹ ARMITT Lucie, “The Gothic and Magical Realism”, *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 224.

⁴² ERMIDA Isabel, *op. cit.*, pp. 180 and 181.

⁴³ WHEATLEY Helen, “Uncanny Children Haunted Houses, Hidden Rooms: Children’s Gothic Television Adaptations in the 1970s and 1980s”, *Visual Culture in Britain*, Routledge, 2012, p. 384.

terror that they inspire has in fact, a didactic effect, a “good scare” being formative during childhood. This suggests that the Gothic addresses children, not only adults. Strictly speaking, the Gothic is a bridge between the supernatural and reality (by showcasing the uncanny within reality, by creating unrealistic characters and situations in a realistic world), but also between childhood and adulthood: “Adults long to return to childhood by diving into unrealistic plots meanwhile, children use these same plots as road maps to help them navigate life”. Thus, the Gothic leaves residual traces on children’s adult lives. Just like the haunted characters in the books they read and in the TV shows they watch, the readers and viewers are destined to be haunted by the memories of the Gothic. Wheatley calls the children who lived during the time of the first Gothic screen adaptations such as *The Addams Family*: the haunted generation. Such TV series contain highly stereotyped characters and plots derived from the Gothic. They also usually portray some representation of the supernatural in whatever shape or form.

3.4. The Return of Gothic Monsters: Causes and Consequences

Bronfen⁴⁴ argues that cinema came late to Gothic culture. Still, the Gothic’s “proximity to the spectacle of the supernatural” (special effects) has made Gothic films natural successors to the literary tradition of “ghosts, revenants, and demonic forces”. However, she notes that “there is no delimited or demonstrable genre specific to film called the Gothic”. Indeed, the Gothic seems to fit in a large scope of categories when it comes to screen adaptations: thriller, horror, or terror, without having one term to call its own. Carver⁴⁵ explains that Gothic films are difficult to categorize. As explained before, they fit in with the “horror” genre but also with “fantasy” or “science-fiction”. Still, following a “long tradition of Romantic art and literature, phantasmagorical theatre and melodrama”, Gothic films do have a recognizable *mise-en-scène*. In other words, even though there is no genre properly called the Gothic, it is quite easy to know if a film is Gothic by noting the Gothic patterns inherited from novels. There needs to be an “archetypal setting” and “archetypal characters”. Some visuals, such as the vampire-like image of Morticia in *The Addams Family*, or their decaying mansion, make for such archetypes. Carver calls these archetypes “Otranto-esque” and uncanny. To him, “the synergy of the literary

⁴⁴ BRONFEN Elisabeth, “Cinema of the Gothic Extreme”, *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 107 and 112.

⁴⁵ CARVER Stephen, “Film”, *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, pp. 236, 237 and 239.

Gothic and stage melodrama is the foundation of Gothic film”, and later became that of TV adaptations.

Actually, *The Addams Family* and other such Gothic TV adaptations can be directly associated with monster movies, a colloquial term for a subgenre within horror films⁴⁶. Indeed, monster movies are characterized by “the threat of something large and frightening or a bunch of small ones”. Furthermore, “monsters” are usually dumb animals. The Addamses seem to correspond to this definition as they inspire fear in their neighbours and seem to be witless. This shows the direct link between Gothic films and Gothic sitcoms.

The Gothic’s portrayal on TV and in cinema is very vast, and it inspired many future genres. For instance, Gothic sitcoms, nicknames “idiot-coms⁴⁷”, gave way to fantasy sitcoms. Children seemed to identify with Gothic-com and fantasy-com characters, showing that the supernatural and reality can co-exist. Children are drawn to ghouls and other horror icons; thus, displaying these monsters in a familiar setting, portraying their lives similarly and showing that they share their same life worries, allowed for an even greater interest. At any rate, Charles Addams with his comic strips, CBS and ABC channels during the 1960s, and film producers in the later part of the 20th century, all believed that success lay in bringing back classic Gothic monsters to the table.

Having been introduced to horror films in the 1930s, the viewers’ expectations were not shattered by the arrival of monster-coms to their TV screens. Still, in bringing monsters to more familiar settings and giving them a comic twist, the TV channels were expecting a boom in their audiences. The intention may have been to make comic strips, television and cinema more entertaining by having all these monsters randomly end up living in realistic settings, but by reviving Gothic they brought back all the controversies that came with it. As explained before, the Gothic taste did not come out of nowhere: the Gothic became popular across time and media. Horror cinema is only one of several adaptations of Gothic novels and stage melodrama. Spooner⁴⁸ explains that by the late 20th century, television was one of the most widespread models for popular dissemination of the Gothic, so it was only natural that the genre adapted itself to it like it did with other media in the past. This is how *The Addams Family* (1964) was born on television. Anyhow, Owen⁴⁹ claims that Charles Addams regretted that the first series of the Addamses was not as macabre as his cartoons. Therefore, it would be very interesting to

⁴⁶ CARVER Stephen, “Monster Movies”, *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, p. 454.

⁴⁷ TREDY Dennis, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ SPOONER Catherine, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

⁴⁹ OWEN Dan, *loc. cit.*

see how gloomy Chas' first use of Gothic (with comic strips) was, and how different later adaptations are, or how close to the Gothic classics they remain.

3.5. "The Gothic Is Everywhere"

Warwick⁵⁰ argues that "the Gothic is everywhere, out in the light and at the centre of things". In other words, although it has always been considered to belong to the dark part of culture, it resides in the shadows of everything. Warwick actually states that "most contemporary popular culture is Gothic". Meanwhile, Levasseur⁵¹ explains that "any contemporary work which takes inspiration from Gothic features is Neo-Gothic". Thus, many works are Neo-Gothic. For example, a film does not need to have a vampire or a mad scientist to be considered Gothic, some less obvious features can also be inherited from the Gothic. Furthermore, Levasseur explains what "mock Gothic" is. She takes *Scooby-Doo* as an example since it uses Gothic elements in a comic way. This shows that modern Gothic adaptations (in animated or other forms) can be comic. Hopkins⁵² confirms this statement as she says that screening a novel (or another media) can alter its genre, much like the 1973 animated version of the Addamses is more child oriented. She explains that the Gothic can literally be removed from a film (she uses the word "drain"). In other words, the usual effects of the Gothic, such as fear, are altered by the change of medium. For example, in the case of the 1973 Addams cartoon, the Gothic becomes merrier, "cuter", to fit a younger audience. Therefore, when adapted, the Gothic changes, for example, by becoming less Gothic, or more comic.

⁵⁰ WARWICK Alexandra, "Feeling Gothicky?", *Gothic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2007, pp. 5-6.

⁵¹ LEVASSEUR Pamela, *Neo-victorianism in Today's Cinema*, Université de Haute-Alsace, 2010, p. 57.

⁵² HOPKINS Lisa, *Screening the Gothic*, University of Texas Press, 2005, p. 59.

B- Is the Gothic a Parody in Itself ?

1. Definition and History of Parody as a Byword of Comic

In order to understand the comic turn of the Gothic, and by extension *The Addams Family*, one first needs to comprehend the different ways to use the comic element. At the centre of the comic sphere is parody. According to Sangsue⁵³, parody is often the victim of amalgam. Indeed, we associate it to overall ideas such as “simulacrum” or “deceptive imitation”. It is, as Sangsue explains, a sort of “critical master key”, since it is used to open all the rooms of hidden *critique* disguised with laughter. In other words, a comic work will almost always be tagged as a parody, the word being overused without it necessarily being true. On the contrary, as Sangsue specifies, other comic words have clearer definitions. For example, caricature is seen as a means of resistance, and satire is associated with the ridicule of an entire society. Still, these parody “by-products”, as he calls them, have all been despised throughout time because they are linked to plagiarism. Parodic writers are seen as literary thieves, ignorant people who lack creativity and are therefore, forced to steal others’ work, incapable of creating their own.

Although we will later see that *The Addams Family* does hold many implicit *critiques*, Chas’ work cannot be considered a parody for the following reason: parodic works are texts based on texts and *The Addams Family* is based on overall Victorian Gothic patterns, not a concrete novel, and even in its original comic strip form, is not a text per se. By the end of the 20th century, offbeat humour is seen as a fatality, for the belief that everything has already been invented is paramount. However, Sangsue states that parody is a lot more codified than satire. Satire would then be more durable since it deals with wider subjects: customs, institutions, religious abuses and so on. In other words, it has a contextual target, not a precise literary one.

2. What Is a Pastiche and what Are its Tools ?

2.1. Definition of the Word Pastiche as Opposed to Parody

Tran-Gervat⁵⁴ explains the origins of the word “pastiche” clearly enough. It is derived from a French word meaning “a work of art imitating another author’s style”. The French word itself, derived from the Italian “pasticcio”, meaning a musical form made of various parts, an

⁵³ SANGSUE Daniel, *La Parodie*, Hachette, 1994, pp. 7-9.

⁵⁴ TRAN-GERVAT Yen-Mai, *Pastiche*, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2014, p. 2.

imitation of other composers' style. The Literary Devices website⁵⁵ also defines pastiche in a similar way: "an artistic work in a style that imitates that of another work, artist or period." In other words, unlike parody, pastiched works can consist of a variety of different styles and can imitate an entire genre.

However, Gallix⁵⁶ specifies that pastiche is not clearly defined which is why it is often confused for parody. Indeed, both use others' work to create their own, which is why they are labelled "word stealers". To Heydari, the practice of pastiche marks a lack of style. "Style" she argues, is to be understood as what stands out in each artist, something that is very personal. The fact that pastiche lacks style highlights its dearth of originality.

Furthermore, Tran-Gervat claims that pastiche is a kind of imitation "that you are meant to know is an imitation". In other words, for pastiche to be understood, one needs to know what work or larger theme the pastiche is based on (in the case of *The Addams Family*: the Gothic). Umberto Eco calls this knowledge that is required from the reader to understand some literary work (in this case pastiche) the "encyclopaedia of the reader". Thus, the comic element of pastiche comes from a derisive comparison of the original work through the copied one. Still, Tran-Gervat counters that not all pastiches need to be humorous. He divides pastiche into several categories, but the one that is of special interest to this research is humorous pastiche: a deliberate imitation of a style or genre with amusing effects. Strictly speaking, pastiche is based on the principle of hypertextuality⁵⁷. That is to say, a relationship that unites a text A (hypotext) to a text B (hypertext). The hypertext is grafted from the hypotext in another way than via commentary: imitation. This characterization of pastiche is in alignment with the earlier reception of parody, the idea that both pastiched and parodied works are derivations from other works. This holds a negative connotation. Many critics have looked down on pastiche as well, viewing it as unoriginal. In any case, *The Addams Family* can be said to be a pastiche rather than a parody since it does not transform but uses instead this "art of imitation". Moreover, while parody focusses on the differences between its hypotext and its hypertext, pastiche plays on similarities.

⁵⁵ LITERARY DEVICES, "Pastiche Examples and Definition", n.d., <http://www.literarydevices.com/pastiche/>.

⁵⁶ DUPONT Jocelyn and WALEZAK Emilie (ed.), *L'Intertextualité dans le Roman Anglophone Contemporain: « A Myriad of Literary Impression s»*, Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2010, pp. 142 and 29.

⁵⁷ TRAN-GERVAT Yen-Mai, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

2.2. The Goal of Humour

Hutcheon⁵⁸ baptizes “ethos” the process that consists in arousing feelings in the readers. This pragmatic method encompasses various techniques: from derogatory mockery to respectful tribute. The goal is, to make the audience laugh, either in a critical or a casual way, through the imitation of things that are familiar. The public seems to enjoy laughing at what they know. Playing on what is known is key to the comic effect of both parody and pastiche. Indeed, in order to create comic contrasts the work on which the pastiche is based needs to be accessible to the public. It requires not only skill from the author but knowledge from the public. As Chamayou⁵⁹ states: “laughter is always the laughter of a group”.

Dordain⁶⁰ claims that humour is, still today, omnipresent. TV, ads, political speeches, all try to master the elusive principle of humour. Humour is put to use in many cases, for example, for entertaining or convincing purposes. To Pollock⁶¹, something funny is something unexpected and weird said in such a grave tone that it is made serious. He explains that the trick of humour is to turn situations that should make the audience cry into ridicule. In other words, humorous effects spark from the use of inversions. Laughter comes from deceived expectation: the audience expects to see something, and they are surprised with the opposite. For example, the public is awaiting the death of a character, expecting to be saddened but instead, the death is so exaggerated or happens in such derisive circumstances that they cannot help but laugh. Debunking the public’s expectations is a prominent tool of comic. Humour can be portrayed in many ways, and it is very visual. Representations of moods such as anger or joy in uncommon ways, or the use of burlesque and grotesque methods, are some of many devices used in humour.

2.3. The Grotesque

As listed above, the grotesque is one of the tools of humour. Iehl⁶² explains that the grotesque comes from the mixing of comic and tragic, of laughter and fear. But most importantly, the grotesque makes use of language to a comic effect. The paltry use of language is used to show both that something is wrong and to create a hilarious response in the audience.

⁵⁸ SANGSUE Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁵⁹ CHAMAYOU Anne, *Le Rire Européen: Actes du Colloque International « Le Rire Européen: Echanges et Confrontations »*, Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2010, p. 155.

⁶⁰ DORDAIN Gaëlle, *L’Humour dans la Littérature de Science-fiction: Identification et Spécification de ses Contours, ses Attributs, ses Techniques et ses Variations*, Université de Bourgogne, 2014, p. 3.

⁶¹ POLLOCK Jonathan, *Qu’Est-ce que l’Humour?*, Klincksieck, 2001, pp. 76 and 103.

⁶² IEHL Dominique, *Le Grotesque*, Presses Univ. de France, 1997, p. 3.

For example, in *The Addams Family*, Cousin Itt's language embodies this dual characteristic of the grotesque language, since only the Addamses are capable of understanding him. Thing also uses unconventional means of speech since it communicates with sign language or in Morse code. Parrino⁶³ explains that the grotesque deals with "distorted or unnatural forms set in an extravagant arrangement aiming at a disturbing comic effect". Here one can see the odd link created by the grotesque between the uncanny and the comic. Actually, she explains that the grotesque originates from an artistic mode of the Roman period. It referred to a decorative technique that combined the human and the animal in ways that "infringed the usual picture of the natural world". This proves, that in its origin, the word grotesque already signified the breaching of norms, the mixing of things that should not, or could not, be mixed in the normal world. Actually this mural fashion of "covering walls with monsters" was criticized and disregarded as it transgressed realistic proportions and the law of nature. Parrino herself claims that the grotesque and the Gothic are alike since they were both "similarly characterized by representing hybrid creatures and generation controversial appraisals." Then, during the 17th century, the grotesque became related to more comic notions such as the ridicule. Still, this idea of something bizarre, almost uncanny, remained in its essence.

Parrino explains that the grotesque continued to be criticized during the 19th and 20th century, treated as "a lower and vulgar variety of the comic". Anyhow, the grotesque was said to encompass both "the ludicrous with the monstrous, the disgusting with the horrifying" through "exaggerated buffoonery". And is it not exactly what *The Addams Family* does? The characters are disproportionate (Morticia's body is cadaverous, Gomez is very small, Lurch is a neo-Frankenstein) and they inspire fear around them. Yet, they make the audience laugh at their disproportions, at their monstrosity. Parrino makes the link between the grotesque and the Gothic by showing how transgressive both genres are. The two breach natural boundaries, mixing the tragic and the trivial, the serious and the monstrous, the frightening and the humorous. The grotesque challenges the ideas of the Enlightenment much like the Gothic, going against the rules of realism and beauty. This shows that the union between fear and laughter already exists within the comic and is only made more obvious within the Comic Gothic. Just like the grotesque deals with the "physically abnormal⁶⁴" and "questions the border between normality and ab-normality", the Comic Gothic also represents what is other in a comic light. Monsters like the Addamses often turn out to be more civilized than normal humans, and the

⁶³ PARRINO Marino, "The Grotesque", *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, pp. 306, 307 and 308.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 309.

viewers tend to identify more with these freaks than their normal neighbours, which proves Parrino's claim that the repulsive can be both comic and alluring.

2.4. The Burlesque

According to Dreux⁶⁵ only the French use the term "burlesque", whereas the Anglo-Saxons favour the term "slapstick comedy". It was first used in reference to physical violence used in comic situations, and later for burlesque cinema. Dreux claims that in both cases, the comic in which jokes prevail upon the progression of the plot is at the heart of the burlesque. He explains that the burlesque does not care about realism, and the action does not even require a plotline, since burlesque gags occupy so much space in the narrative. However, to Dreux the articulation of narration and burlesque tropes and gags, rests upon a coexisting principle. Sometimes, gags interrupt the plot, but these interruptions actually help to subvert certain themes which the comic narrative targets. Faroult⁶⁶ states that comic cinema reveals class relations and ruling social practices. However, he distinguishes comedy from burlesque cinema in that the latter "exhausts situations". That is to say, the burlesque works on repetitions, it uses certain tropes repeatedly to the point where it exhausts it, creating a hyperbolic aura. This is exactly what *The Addams Family* does since they pastiche Gothic tropes excessively. For example, their entire house is filled with so many ancient objects that instead of looking like museum it looks like a disorderly closet.

As for the burlesque, another modality of the comic, the key point of such a device is to portray important subjects in a vulgar way. Genette⁶⁷ calls it "travesty". Indeed, important subjects such as schooling in *The Addams Family* are disregarded as unimportant, tackled in a trivial way. Moreover, the burlesque sometimes also portrays trifling matters in a high style. It highlights trivial, everyday life incidents, in an over exaggerated way, making it comic. *The Addams Family* also uses this second form of the burlesque since they seem to give importance to things that would normally not have any, such as Friday the 13th. Fielding⁶⁸ also establishes that the burlesque exposes what is monstrous and anti-natural. In fact, the burlesque has a lot to do with the notion of carnival. Indeed, it seems to disguise in the form of monsters in order to

⁶⁵ DREUX Emmanuel, *Le Cinéma Burlesque ou la Subversion par le Geste*, Editions L'Harmattan, 2007, p. 1.

⁶⁶ FAROULT David and LIVIO Boni, *Le Dispositif-cinéma Entre Dérèglement Burlesque et Contre-courant Avant-gardiste*, Cahier Louis-Lumière no. 4, 2006, p. 17.

⁶⁷ GENETTE Gérard, *Palimpsestes: La Littérature au Second Degré*, Éditions du Seuil, 1982, p. 73.

⁶⁸ DUROT-BOUCE Elizabeth, "Parodie, Burlesque, Pastiche: Décadence du Genre XVII-XVIII", *Revue de la Société d'Etudes Anglo-américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles*, vol. 58, no. 1, 2004, p. 203.

portray real life issues in a lighter tone. Much like the Gothic, the burlesque cares about the unravelling of the truths through excess. After all, Jones⁶⁹ describes the Gothic as “performatively dark [...] as an expression of cultural malaise”. Both the Gothic and the burlesque seem to share this form of performative pretence with the use of comic excess. Thus, *The Addams Family* seems to use grotesque and burlesque methods for humorous purposes, while remaining a pastiche.

2.5. Transcontextualisation and other Methods Used in Pastiche

It has been established that *The Addams Family* is primarily a pastiche of the Gothic genre tropes and conventions. In pastiche, the imitation must be recognizable, and it is apparent that the Addamses pastiche the Gothic. They are openly uncanny, in such an exaggerated way that it is made funny, showing a transparent Gothic imitation.

Pastiche uses many methods such as comic of gestures or comic situations. As Tran-Gervat states: “gestures at which we never dreamt of laughing become laughable when imitated by another individual⁷⁰”. Or through what Hutcheon calls “transcontextualisation⁷¹”: giving a new context to objects. For example, in one comic strip, Wednesday is drawn using a guillotine to behead her dolls. In another, a guest gives a present to the children and it is in fact a rope with a noose, instead of a toy. Gomez is even sketched teaching the children how to build a torture table instead of a normal table as other fathers would, thus, weapons become toys and commodities⁷². Markus⁷³ explains what transcontextualisation is. When an element is copied like a quote from one text onto a parody or a pastiche, which is similar to plagiarism, it can be called transcontextualisation. However, she explains that the interpretation of the transposed element varies even though it has been copied without any modification. That is to say, that when an element has gone through transcontextualisation it necessarily alters its meaning. Indeed, even though the element is unaltered when copied, the context it is transposed into is totally different. Although transcontextualisation deals with text to text relationships, this rule could also apply to elements transposed from one work into another across media. For example, even though in *The Addams Family* 1991 film Grandmama’s cauldron is portrayed as a normal

⁶⁹ JONES Timothy, *The Gothic and the Carnavalesque in American Culture*, University of Wales Press, 2015, p. 179.

⁷⁰ TRAN-GERVAT Yen-Mai, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-8.

⁷¹ SANGSUE Daniel, *loc. cit.*

⁷² Appendix 1, p. 6.

⁷³ MARKUS Sasa, *La Parodia en el Cine Posmoderno*, Editorial UOC, 2011, p. 100.

witch cauldron, she uses it for cooking and not for making elixirs and other magic potions. The same goes for Wednesday's guillotine or her makeshift teeterboard made with a broom⁷⁴.

2.6. A Dark Pastiche

What is hard to understand is that pastiched works can both be comic and serious. *The Addams Family* is most definitely a comic family, however they do talk about serious matters such as inheritance. It is how serious matters are treated that makes the difference between a serious work and a comic one.

Tran-Gervat states that the difference between pastiche and satire is a matter of degree. "Pastiche is more neutral and less satirical in purpose." Heydari⁷⁵ would agree since she explains that pastiche is "amputated from the satiric impulsion proper to parody". That is to say, that pastiche is supposed to be less critical than parody. Pastiche usually maintains a playful rather than a satirical tone, what he calls a "blank parody", after Frederic Jameson, since it does not mean to arm or criticize specifically. However, although *The Addams Family* does seem to have a very strong entertaining purpose, on a second look, one can see an underlying *critique*. Thus, *The Addams Family* could be called a "dark pastiche" as opposed to a "blank parody": the Addamses embody the pastiche of the macabre. They use humour, grotesque, and burlesque devices to make the audience laugh, and hold an implicit critical aspect. They seem to be a mish and mash of comic methods, a patchwork of bleak and humorous elements, imitating the Gothic genre comically. They represent the Comic Gothic.

3. An Introduction to the Gothic's Hybridity

Now that the different comic processes and derivations have been established, it is relevant for this research to explore the comic at play within the Gothic genre. Indeed, just like there seems to be a marriage of convenience of sorts between fantasy and the Gothic; with fantasy keeping the Gothic alive while Gothic lends it some of its aspects, there also is one between the Gothic and comic. The Gothic, with its hyperbolic nature, has always been an easy target for comic intrusion. As Lévy⁷⁶ explains, the Gothic has a hybrid nature. It is this very

⁷⁴ Appendix 1, p. 5.

⁷⁵ DUPONT Jocelyn and WALEZAK Emilie (ed.), *loc. cit.*

⁷⁶ LEVY Maurice, *Le Roman « Gothique » Anglais, 1764-1824*, A. Michel, 1995, p. 91.

hybridity that allows the Gothic to outlive many other genres, changing, adapting and melding into other versions of itself.

Comic within the Gothic first appeared in literary form with parody. A perfect example would be Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817). Duperray⁷⁷ argues that Austen felt forced to criticize Gothic conventions. Its many hyperboles were so shocking that she could not help but turn the genre into parody. Many authors would later follow in her footsteps for the same reason. Thus, hyperboles are one of the main reasons for the comic within the Gothic. Mellier⁷⁸ explains that the Gothic is the meeting between terror and the sublime. Abusing the limits of reality is what makes the readers shiver. However, "there is a high risk that fear could turn into its contrary". In other words, the principal danger of the use of horror elements is excess. According to him, hyperboles through "horrific hyperrealism", and the excessive use of other rhetorical figures such as oxymora and understatements, "haunt the fantastic aesthetic". Comic is therefore present in the essence of the Gothic, altering its frightening goal. Thus, the Gothic moves away from the path of horror and walks towards comic.

To put it simply, the Gothic is the middle ground where contraries reunite. Botting⁷⁹ would state that the "Gothic formulae" can "produce both laughter as abundantly as horror and terror." These "formulae" are so used that they become familiar, making the Gothic into a *cliché*, a genre easy to parody. Moreover, Botting explains that one of the key formulae of the Gothic is inversion, also one of the main tools of pastiche. In fact, inversions are used so often in *The Addams Family* that it makes it that much more recognisable as a pastiche.

4. The Gothic Comic Turn, a Result of Self-parody ?

Horner explains that most definitions of the Gothic ignore its comic aspect: "the value of the Gothic comic turn has been overlooked, dismissed as parody in its lowest form⁸⁰". To her, "once we accept that the roots of the Gothic lie in the comic as well as the tragic, we are able to see Gothic texts rather differently⁸¹". The Gothic concerns itself with opposing ideas, much like comic uses inversions, the Gothic uses oppositions (pain and pleasure, natural and

⁷⁷ DUPERRAY Max, *op. cit.*, p.6.

⁷⁸ MELLIER Denis, *L'écriture de l'Excès: Fiction Fantastique et Poétique de la Terreur*, Honoré Champion éditeur, 1999, p. 188.

⁷⁹ BOTTING Fred, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

⁸⁰ HORNER Avril and ZLOSLNIK Sue, *Gothic and the Comic Turn*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 165, 3, 6, 5, 13 and 45.

⁸¹ ZLOSLNIK Sue and HORNER Avril, "Comic Gothic", *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, p. 123.

supernatural, real and unreal, etc.) The Gothic's original aim is to inspire fear, or at least evoke subjects that would normally inspire such a feeling, which is why it has had the need to adapt itself to more modern issues. What scared the 18th century does not scare modern societies anymore, or not in the same vein. The 18th century was actually the time when writers began to become more and more conscious of their readership. They started considering what the public would like with the rise of theorists of reception. Authors wanted to interact with their readers, so they adapted their writing to suit their tastes. The Gothic comic turn could then be considered a result of an "audience campaign" intended to sway the public with the alluringly entertaining tactics of comic. The Comic Gothic could be seen as a sudden challenge to status quo, but as explained, comic has actually always been a part of the Gothic genre.

Like Lévy, Horner also calls the Gothic a "hybrid genre". The juxtaposition of incongruous elements is what opens the unexpected possibility of the comic in such a terrifying setting. She specifies that "harlequinades" are often used in the Gothic. For example, a dramatic situation where characters are more worried about trivial things than their own lives. The comic turn is not actually a turn per se, but rather a new way to explore the comic side of the Gothic. She calls the comic turn "Gothic's doppelgänger" and explains that at the time, "the excess that induces laughter was seen as a threat to the Gothic novel". Indeed, back then the mixing of "buffoonery" with "solemnity" was intolerable. Humour itself, is often seen as something negative after all, associated with malice. This fact alone already creates an affinity between comic and the Gothic, as the Gothic also represents negative ideas. This negative image of humour makes the link between comic and the Gothic all the more apparent. In fact, Horner says that the Gothic "has a tendency to self-parody", which already puts it on its way to being parodied (or pastiched) and turned to comic.

Katsanos⁸² states that a tradition of Gothic literary parody began as early as the end of the 18th century. Thus, it is no wonder that it was also turned to comic in later adaptations. Moreover, Sangsue⁸³ explains that "parody is the deformed reproduction of reality". Since the Gothic depicts unrealistic happenings, it could be considered the parody of reality. According to this, one could say that the Gothic is, in its very essence, comic. However, comic within the Gothic was not well received; even though as mentioned above, it had in fact, always been there, and the Gothic itself was not well received for being unintentionally comic. Durot-

⁸² KATSANOS Filippou, "Le Roman Gothique Britannique et la Muse Parodique de Paul Féval: Ann Radcliffe dans 'La Ville-Vampire'", *L'Ecrivain Personnage de Fiction*, Jean-Christophe Valtat, 2015, p. 1

⁸³ SANGSUE Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

Boucée⁸⁴ explains that at the end of the 18th century, *critiques* of the Gothic seemed to multiply. The “disciplines of roman noir”, as she calls them, meant to make the readers afraid without giving importance to the credibility of its characters, happenings or storyline. This is why, the Gothic novels were derided. The Gothic comic turn was actually a solution to keep the genre alive, this time, meant to be purposely comic. Still, it ended up being as heavily criticized as its “authentic” Gothic predecessor.

Durot-Boucée also claims that the Gothic is simply “meant for parody”. She lists the processes that make the Gothic, comic in its essence: the accumulations of horror and the mechanical aspect of its plots (always in the same pattern) amongst them. These processes signed its own condemnation, dismissing the Gothic as a serious genre, turning it into its contrary: comic. This make Durot-Boucée wonder what the true intentions of Gothic authors are, they who pretend to thrive towards a cult of fear but make the readers laugh instead. This interrogation only highlights the belief that the Gothic could actually be just a parody.

Other authors also claim that the Gothic and comic are a pair. For example, Botting⁸⁵ states that the Gothic’s hyperbolic nature renders it comic. He says that the Gothic is “as ridiculous as it is supernatural, fantastically absurd”. He calls the Gothic “a writing of excess” because it evokes both terror and laughter, making something terrible comic by exaggeration. To this day, as Hogle and Smith⁸⁶ explain, the Gothic is seen as a “cross-generic” genre which still disturbs and violates the norm. Round also agrees with the idea that comic in the Gothic sparks from excess. She states that “Gothic narratives often rely upon notions of excess⁸⁷”. Its style, structure and themes all contributing to this. Gothic novels are unreliable, often “indescribable” or “beyond comprehension”. All of these factors can be reencountered in the Comic Gothic, *The Addams Family* included.

Round explains that “Gothic flirts with parody”, however it seems to end its flirting and begin a proper relationship with the comic turn, becoming Comic Gothic. The Comic Gothic, unlike the Gothic, does not pretend to be serious or meant to be believed (nor inspire fear). It seems to only mean to make the readers laugh. With devices such as the grotesque, the Comic Gothic manages to mix laughter and horror, using horror as a tool for comic.

⁸⁴ DUROT-BOUCÉE Elizabeth, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

⁸⁵ BOTTING Fred, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁸⁶ HOGLE Jerrold E. and Smith Andrew, “Revisiting the Gothic and Theory: An Introduction”, *Gothic Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2009, p. 5.

⁸⁷ ROUND Julia, *op. cit.*, pp. 76 and 12.

5. Gothic VS Comic

We have seen so far that the blending of the Gothic and comic was not much liked by the audience. One could argue that the Gothic and comic are actually not to be mixed. For example, Gothic literature shows the limits of humans who cannot resist forces beyond their control and are sometimes forced to do things they wished they did not. The Comic Gothic shows on the contrary, characters which do not even try to resist these immoral urges, like the Addamses. The idea of the “pleasure of governing one-self” through restriction, exposed by De Courville Nicol⁸⁸, is not present in the Comic Gothic. The comic turn brings about a new representation of pleasure: unrestrained to begin with (so without a need to break barriers) and unapologetic.

Aristotle would have probably agreed as he himself, loathed generic amalgamation. Indeed, he demanded that each genre remain distinct from the others⁸⁹ (Tragedy and Comedy) and proffered that is was the natural thing to do. The fact that the octopus in *The Addams Family* sitcom is called Aristotle could either be a tribute to his intelligence (for octopuses are said to be very smart), or a comic reference to the hybridity of *The Addams Family* as something that Aristotle would have questioned. However, Garin argues that Aristotle’s prescriptive literary principles were bound to be replaced⁹⁰.

Still, to Horner⁹¹, there is no “serious Gothic” versus “Comic Gothic”. She claims that the two should not be separated since they are both part of a wider spectrum with on the one side: “horror writing with moments of comic hysteria” and on the other: “a work which should not be taken seriously but still holds some horrific elements”. *The Addams Family* seems to belong to the latter.

According to Round⁹², the Gothic entertains “intertextual” relations since Gothic works “copy” one another. She explains that “when a text is absorbed in a Gothic manner, the act is bidirectional”. That is to say that the Gothic gives and takes. The Gothic takes a new form and in exchange gives some of its features. Thus, the Gothic should not be opposed to comic, the two genres lend each other some traits, exchanging features with the comic turn, and uniting into the hybrid genre of Comic Gothic.

⁸⁸ DE COURVILLE NICOL Valérie, *op. cit.*, p. 93

⁸⁹ ARISTOTLE, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997, p. 62.

⁹⁰ DOWD Garin, *Genre Matters: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, Intellect, 2006, p. 44.

⁹¹ HORNER Avril and ZLOSNIK Sue, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁹² ROUND Julia, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

However, Germanà⁹³ explains that the Gothic is “distinctively characterised by excess, the Gothic is often concerned with the limits of humanity and its transgression.” Thus, although excess often results in comic in Gothic works of fiction, its primary goal often is relatively more derogative.

6. The Paramount Goal of Entertainment

As is often the case in horror literature and film, the explosive, gross-out horror is postponed; in fact, it never arrives in any really graphic form. [...] Its horror issues from a kind of low-level but intensifying anxiety deriving precisely from a sense of things profoundly unravelling⁹⁴. (71)

According to this definition of Gothic horror, the Gothic’s goal was to inspire dread and loss by restraining from portraying said dread and loss. The implicit is what made Gothic horror so much more horrific than it used to be. Humour is very similar, once explained, a joke loses its comic potential. The implicit is thus, one of the most important elements in comic, a recreational instrument. *The Addams Family* embodies both the Gothic and the comic and therefore, uses the implicit just as much. It is never bloody or gore because its goal is not to inspire fear but to entertain.

Gothic features are used in the Comic Gothic as comic processes. As Weiss⁹⁵ explains: “a touch of macabre [...] accentuates the spice of life”. Therefore, the macabre, and other components of the Gothic are used to arouse laughter. It will be shown that *The Addams Family* is no exception.

⁹³ EDWARDS Justin D. and Soltysik Monnet Agnieszka, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁹⁴ MORGAN Jack, *The Biology of Horror: Gothic Literature and Film*, Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.

⁹⁵ ADDAMS Charles, *Chas Addams Half-Baked Cookbook: Culinary Cartoons for the Humorously Famished*, Simon & Schuster, 2012, p. 7.

II) Why Is *The Addams Family* a Comic Gothic Work ?

A- *The Addams Family* or Gothic Imitation

1. A Gothic Format

Walton⁹⁶ argues that horror in comics “has been there from the very beginning”. He states that early horror comics drew their inspiration from classic literature for horror elements, more specifically, from the Gothic: “Gothic inspired comics with authors such as Bram Stoker, Edgar Allan Poe or Oscar Wilde.” He explains that horror comics used to be called “weird fantasy”, showcasing the hybrid nature of the Gothic which inspired other genres such as fantasy. Although *The Addams Family* belongs to the Comic Gothic genre rather than to horror; as the dissertation will demonstrate below, both genres seem to have used Gothic literature as inspiration for their comics.

Furthermore, the critic Mc Cloud⁹⁷ explains that pictures are received information while words are perceived information, which means that words require more interpretation than images. According to this statement, the Gothic is more evident when shown in pictures while it may be harder to imagine Gothic scenes relying solely on words. Therefore, images and words seem to complement one another, which is why Chas’ comic strips and the screen adaptations that followed are engaging objects of study.

Since *The Addams Family*’s original medium is comic strips, the family is Gothic in its very essence. Indeed, Round⁹⁸ explains that comics are drawings which copy reality but are not real. That is something that Gothic characters do every so often: that is, pretend to be human or appear human without actually being human. That is the case for both Dracula and Frankenstein. Round claims that “comics create a self-conscious alterity, one that is depicted with conscious falsity and can reinforce the fantastic content”. In other words, drawings, and especially comic strips, with their unruly proportions and purposely unrealistic style, make their story supernatural in itself. In screen adaptations, makeup, costumes and special effects can be said to play a similar role. Thus, Chas may have drawn his characters knowing that the public would not believe such characters could actually exist in real life. Still, he made them behave

⁹⁶ WALTON Michael, *The Horror Comic Never Dies: A Grisly History*, McFarland & Company, 2019, pp. 24, 26 and 34.

⁹⁷ ROUND Julia, *op. cit.*, pp. 78 and 79.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 82 and 83.

as normal humans, as if despite their supernaturality they could exist and fit in. Nonetheless, the medium he chose in itself makes his characters Gothic not only in essence and in shape, but also in their nature as drawings. If his original medium had been theatre, then perhaps his characters would not have appeared as inherently supernatural, the human nature of actors cancelling this innate supernatural characteristic that comic strips bestow.

Furthermore, Round talks about the “treachery of images”, the way drawings can fool people into believing things that are not real. For example, the famous painting by Magritte reading “This is not a pipe”; with a very realistic drawing of a pipe, but with the drawing remaining precisely but a drawing, illustrates this deceptive nature of images. Likewise, *The Addams Family* tricks the viewers by behaving so much like a normal family that the viewer would almost expect any other family to behave like them.

2. Broadly Gothic

2.1. A Gothic Heritage

Evans and Gaudet⁹⁹ argue that cartoons have always been seen as a genre and not as a medium, labelled as childish, unintellectual or minor. Originally, the Gothic also was an undermined genre. The Gothic comic turn was also seen, at least at first, as something that should not have been, something unstructured: as proven by the negative *critiques* Gothic tales received when they dived into exaggeration that resembled comic and later, by the low TV rankings monster-coms adapted from Gothic fiction received when they were just released. In other words, everything that *The Addams Family* is, both in its original and derived forms, was initially looked down upon. Still, the Gothic was very popular despite the criticism and so were the Addamses. Similarly to the Gothic, *The Addams Family* is today remembered by many as a true icon, still popular on social media. Generation Z (post-Internet age) may not have lived through the rise of Gothic adaptations, but they were the first to recycle the Gothic to adapt it to social media. Nowadays, on Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram and other such apps, one can see the heritage that *The Addams Family* left behind. Indeed, a lot of fanart has been created around *The Addams Family*¹⁰⁰. Charles Addams characters had a cross-generational impact much like the Gothic genre itself had.

⁹⁹ EVANS Christophe and GAUDET Françoise, *La Lecture de Bandes Dessinées*, Département des Etudes, de la Prospective et des Statistiques, 2015, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ See introduction.

Tredy¹⁰¹ seems to agree as he explains that when *The Addams Family* first came out as a series it failed to reach the audience. However, that is the paradox of *The Addams Family*, since it garnered as much love a few decades later as the Gothic genre did in popular culture. Tredy claims that *The Addams Family* has today achieved a “cult status”. Moreover, much like the 1930s horror films’ popularity paved the way for Gothic TV screen adaptations, *The Addams Family* did for later Neo-Gothic adaptations such as *Penny Dreadful*. In other words, there seems to be a bridge between the different “generations” of Gothic adaptations, *The Addams Family* being on both the receiving and the giving side of said bridge.

2.2. To what Amounts *The Addams Family*’s “Gothicness” ?

The Addams Family is undeniably Gothic. They embody one of the many revivals of the Gothic with the familiar classic settings from Gothic novels (the haunted manor and the forest amongst others), the portrayal of the supernatural (the characters’ magical abilities and the existence of non-human beings) and the 19th century notion of irrationality; brought about by authors such as Edgar Allan Poe. Even their wardrobe is composed of what 21st century viewers would associate with the Gothic style; which as explained in part I, is another derivation from the Gothic.

Botting’s list¹⁰² of Gothic tropes is respected by *The Addams Family*. Indeed, it seems that Gothic traits and approaches are reflected in the Addamses’ mentality, surroundings and lifestyle. The family members are linked to the occult, and all use some sort of wizardry. In *An Eviltion*¹⁰³ and its French counterpart *A l’Origine du Mythe*¹⁰⁴, Charles Addams’ process of character creation is laid out. As explained in the introduction, the family actually was not a family at first, its members were isolated characters from various comic strips of his, Uncle Fester being the one which appeared most often, and which Chas identified the most with. It is claimed that when the characters still did not have names, Chas was inspired by the yellow page listing morticians for Morticia’s name. This already highlights the uncanny and morbid nature that the family would take. Miserochi calls the Addamses a “cheerfully creepy clan” and explains that they have a “delightful wickedness”. This also sets the tone to the family’s aura and labels them Gothic. Addams himself referred to his characters as “Addams’ evils”. This

¹⁰¹ TREDY Dennis, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁰² Refer to part I-A 2.2.

¹⁰³ MISEROCCHI Kevin, *Chas Addams: The Addams Family, an Eviltion*, Pomegranate Communications, 2010, pp. 10 and 13.

¹⁰⁴ MISEROCCHI Kevin, *La Famille Addams, à l’Origine du Mythe*, Hugginn & Munnin, 2016, p. 10.

only comes to underline the supernatural, and by extension, Gothic nature of the family. Indeed, the word “evils” could refer to an array of monsters, such as vampires, which emphasizes the Addamses’ link to the Gothic.

2.3. Gothic Tropes at Play in *The Addams Family*

Furthermore, another recurrent feature of the Gothic is the portrayal of figures that are not human but look like them, such as dolls or vampires¹⁰⁵. *The Addams Family* borrows this technique from the Gothic and even builds on it. Indeed, creatures that are not fully human do look like humans in *The Addams Family*. For instance, Morticia seems to be human only in part. Indeed, she has witch-like abilities and looks as undead as a vampire, which her Gothic attire could have hinted at. Besides, Cousin Itt and Thing prove that *The Addams Family* also portrays non-human beings behaving like humans. For instance, Thing is a literal helping hand in the household, a creature which should not be existing. In one comic strip “it” can be seen changing vinyls¹⁰⁶. Moreover, characters which appear human are also treated like animals. For instance, in another comic strip, Gomez asks the children not to feed grandma at the table as if she were a dog¹⁰⁷.

The evil nature of all human beings, which is another main trait of the Gothic, is also reflected in all screen adaptations of the Addamses. For example, the fact that the Addamses’ neighbours hold prejudice against them and covet their riches is representative of human sinful behaviour. Not to mention the obvious detached and unconcerned evil that the Addamses themselves show and express towards others. For example, in one of Chas’ cartoons the family is drawn attempting to dump a pot of boiling liquid (probably oil) on a group of carollers¹⁰⁸. (This scene is even re-enacted in the 1991 film.) Although this creates a comic effect rather than a frightening one (the latter is usually the result in Gothic fiction), the fact that the Addamses enjoy such evil actions is still, to some extent, representative of the Gothic.

Last but not least, the Gothic notion of suggestion is also used in *The Addams Family*. Indeed, in Gothic works many things are insinuated instead of being plainly described in order to increment both tension and anticipation. In *The Addams Family* sitcom this mechanism is

¹⁰⁵ THE BRITISH LIBRARY, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁶ Appendix 1, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Appendix 3, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Appendix 2, p. 8.

also used. For example, at the beginning of episode 2 Morticia's shadow appears before she does, which makes for an obscure aesthetic and can generate an apprehensive feeling.

2.4. The Addams Family's Relationship to the Past

Moreover, the Gothic also concerns itself with inheritance problems. As explained before¹⁰⁹, histories of the past are a main point of focus in Gothic works and *The Addams Family* is no different. For example, in episode 5 (1964 sitcom), the Addamses call a genealogist to uncover their family tree. In that same episode, Gomez and a neighbour discuss land possession and ancestors. Likewise, in the 1991 film, the question of to whom family property should go to is tackled.

Besides, Bowen¹¹⁰ explains that in Gothic novels there is often a link between the modern world and the archaic world, much like in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In *The Addams Family* past and present also mingle, showing yet another eerie union. However, while *Dracula* brought modern characters to historical settings, *The Addams Family* brings archaic characters to a modern society. Time seems to have a very important role within the Gothic. The word "uncanny" itself, which embodies the definition of the Gothic genre, was actually developed by Freud. He argues that "the "uncanny" is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something "long known to us, once very familiar"¹¹¹". This implies that the notion of the uncanny allows for new characters and objects (terrifying ones such as the Addamses) to remind the audience of historical elements, which once used to be familiar (such as antique furniture or old-fashioned clothes). Therefore, the uncanny, and by extension the Gothic (including the Addams family members with their Gothic traits), can sometimes take us back in time. It represents the strangely familiar as opposed to the simply mysterious.

Morowitz¹¹² explains that from the very beginning the audience understood the 1964 series in a broader context of monster culture. However, she adds that this fascination with the monstrous at the time came from a much older heritage, again, we can see a link between past and present. The monstrous is what makes the Gothic essence, and this can also be found in *The Addams Family*. For example, in episode 3 season 1 of *The New Scooby-Doo Movies* from

¹⁰⁹ See part 1.3, p.

¹¹⁰ THE BRITISH LIBRARY, *loc. cit.*

¹¹¹ SIGMUND Freud, "The 'Uncanny'", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, James Strachey, 1919, p. 220.

¹¹² MOROWITZ Laura, "The Monster Within: The Munsters, The Addams Family and the American Family in the 1960s", *Critical Studies in Television*, vol. 2, no. 1, mars 2007, p. 38.

1972; where the Addams family are featured in their first animated screen adaptation, the *Scooby-Doo* gang keeps saying that the home of the Addamses looks eerie. They also repeat several times that they have seen this house before. This *déjà-vu* effect can hold two meanings: a reference to the 1964 series (as more will be made later in the episode) or, that the house reminds them of classic Gothic settings. Moreover, other characters from the episode say that strange things are going on in the house, “too strange to tell about”. This implies that some things need to be witnessed first-hand. Indeed, shock can sometimes not be put into words. This very notion of the “unexplainable” is also used in Gothic novels. A similar situation happens in the 1964 series, when in episode 1 a guest of the family cannot explain what he saw inside the house. Actually, Mellier¹¹³ explains that when the Gothic moves from horror to excess, it can create a sort of “hysteric shine” that cannot be put into words. This shows that the notion of the indescribable uncanny is not exclusive to early Gothic works and was in fact recycled in Neo-Gothic ones such as *The Addams Family*.

2.5. Gothic References

In *The Addams Family* sitcom there are very evident references to the Gothic genre. For example, in episode 2 Morticia reads a bedtime story to Pugsley and it happens to be Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Raven*. The fact that this Gothic poem is mentioned in another Gothic work makes for a *mise en abime*. Moreover, the family in both the comic strips and the sitcom have pet ravens which could be another reference to the famous American Gothic author, a second embedding.

However, there are other less evident metatextual references. For instance, in episode 5 (1964 sitcom) there is an allusion to Bluebeard. This legendary French folklore villain is not Gothic per se, but he does hold some Gothic characteristics such as murder instincts and hidden secrets. The fact that the Addamses mention Bluebeard as if he had really existed breaches yet again the thin barrier present in *The Addams Family*’s world between fantasy and reality.

Moreover, there are references to the Gothic genre itself rather than to Gothic works or Gothic characters. For example, the family members use a lot of Gothic vocabulary in all their versions. Adjectives such as “bleak” or “dismal” are used profusely. Furthermore, they are often associated with opposite notions (for example: “nice and dismal”) which create oxymora. The use of Gothic vocabulary in such a way makes the Gothic stand out.

¹¹³ MELLIER Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

In episode 7 (1964 sitcom) the family members are reciting poetry and Fester ends up chanting “Come vicious vampire”. This is yet another example of how language is used to refer to Gothic tropes. Besides, not only language but images are also used to refer to the Gothic. For example, in episode 2, Pugsley wears a scout’s uniform that reads the number 999. Read upside down the number becomes 666 which refers to the devil. These small details may appear insignificant on their own but put together, they create an uncanny atmosphere that alludes to *The Addams Family*’s “Gothicness”.

2.6. Happy Gothic

Spooner¹¹⁴ explains that the Gothic is often linked to “trauma, fear and cultural and social anxiety”. This is why it was often called “the dark side of the Enlightenment”. However, many Gothic works do not fit in this approach and are overlooked. She calls these neglected works “happy Gothic”. With the neologism “happy Gothic”, Spooner argues that comedy and romance became part of the Gothic as it evolved throughout the centuries. *The Addams Family* could be considered “happy Gothic” since it holds classic Gothic patterns but is still very different from other Gothic works with its comic turn. Moreover, the Gothic has adapted itself and there are now many versions of the genre. Thus, many new forms of the Gothic do not hold all Gothic tropes. *The Addams Family* could therefore be considered as part of the post-modern Gothic, the “happy Gothic” and the Comic Gothic.

Scruggs¹¹⁵ explains that the first Gothic screen adaptations favoured spatial images, meaning that setting played a big role in such films. The idea of home, or the absence of it, was also central to Gothic films. Sobchack¹¹⁶ claims that although there are houses in films noirs, “there are hardly any homes”. On the contrary, *The Addams Family* and *The Munsters* do have homes which could be considered another trait of happy Gothic works.

2.7. “Candy Gothic”

“In the current climate of literary experimentalism, ‘Gothic’ may seem to some, an anachronistic term. Having spent most of the nineties as a buzz-word in literature and culture,

¹¹⁴ SPOONER Catherine, *Post-millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of Happy Gothic*, Bloomsbury, 2017, p. 249.

¹¹⁵ SCRUGGS Charles, “American Film Noir”, *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 123 and 126.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 125.

its haunting presence appears to have faded somewhat¹¹⁷.” However, Gothic is still very much present nowadays, actually, according to Beville, it “exploded” in the post-modernist era. As mentioned before, it changed formats and adapted to more modern forms of entertainment: music, film, television, and even the internet. Beville claims that the fact that it is no longer properly literary has made many consider the genre as “diluted”. *The Addams Family*, first as comic strips, then as a sitcom, as a cartoon, and eventually as films; even more so since it is cross-generic in its Comic-Gothic nature, could be said to participate to this “diffusion of the genre”. However, no matter its medium or its evolution, the Gothic remains one of the best ways to “voice the terrors of post-modernity”.

The Gothic is a term that has been over-used and over-creatively interpreted in recent times. Due to this misrecognition of the Gothic, it is less obviously distinguishable in post-modern works in which its more subtle qualities come to the fore. Popular culture and its critics alike seem to have immersed themselves in a romantic notion of Gothic as a style or aesthetic defined by a number of emotive characteristics and standard devices¹¹⁸. (8)

The term that Beville borrows from Botting to define this pop-cultured Gothic which has “lost its older intensity” is “Candy Gothic”. To Beville, the post-modern audience who used to consume older Gothic works will view Candy Gothic as superficial, and the original terror of the genre overlooked. *The Addams Family* 2019 film could be dubbed Candy Gothic, but despite this it portrays modern fears, and in that sense is the Gothic essence not preserved? For example, it tackles issues such as not making friends at school, being a single mother raising a child while working, or being filmed unawares. Beville seems to truly believe that the Gothic essence still transpires in modern Gothic works, since she claims that Gothic post-modernism is the same as classic Gothic, and she even advocates that Gothic post-modernism is “an amplification of the Gothic language of terror to encompass the more recent terrors of our postmodern age”. There are some conventions of the Gothic post-modern which fit into its characterisation as a proper genre, for example, “the blurring of the borders that exist between the real and the fictional, which results in narrative self-consciousness and an interplay between the supernatural and the metafictional”. Of course, Beville applies this notion to written text, but it could also be used for *The Addams Family* in its sitcom format. For example, when Lurch looks at the camera in the very first episode of the series, isn’t it a form of interaction with the public, and thus, a crossing of the boundary between the real and the fictional?

More specifically, Gothic-postmodernism can be understood as a distinct genre by its own self-consciousness. Within the genre, multiple levels of self-irony tender a unique set of meta-discourses

¹¹⁷ BEVILLE Maria, *Gothic-Postmodernism: Voicing the Terrors of Postmodernity*, Rodopi, 2009, p. 7.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 8, 9, and 15.

which run subversively against mainstream society and the literature that claims to represent it. Its meta-narratives operate to disrupt the dominating narrow accounts of history, religion, culture and identity by referring to inverted versions of the same, often implied by fantastic devices. [...] As a result, in a single term it is possible to communicate the extent to which the two literary ideologies, the Gothic and the post-modernist, have come to be intertwined into a controversial mode of writing that could be referred to as a literary monster. Its fascination with terror, the negative and the irrational, and its hostility toward accepted codes of reality, place it firmly in the realm of revolution. What is often terrifying is that this revolution is against humanity itself, a humanity that has become increasingly secular and that has become too familiar with overarching concepts of the transcendent. Through the terror of Gothic post-modernist texts, we can question our own unconscious fears, beliefs and prejudices, not only in terms of the desire that instigates them, but also in terms of the repercussions for society in general¹¹⁹. (16)

In other words, Candy Gothic works such as *The Addams Family*, which mixes Gothicism and post-modernism, exist in part to show that abnormalities are a part of everyone, that humans can be perverse and “to destabilise accepted oppositions such as self/other, and good/evil”. Candy Gothic is different from Gothic since its post-modernist point of view allows it to reach deeper into the psyche of the modern citizen. It explores gender, sexual and racially based prejudices, as well as the notion of a multi-cultural society, which are all post-modern concerns. “When the two concepts, Gothicism and post-modernism, come together it is necessary to imagine them in a condition of hypostasis¹²⁰.” Here Beville means to explain that the accumulation of Gothic’s second-guessing of society, and of the post-modernist thought, has a symbiotic and intensifying effect which in turn, allows for a better questioning of the institutions, values, and rules of society. “To sum up, Gothic-postmodernist works, by displaying a fascination with the ‘negative’, ‘irrational’, ‘immoral’, and ‘fantastic’, take post-modernism to another, more sceptical level, where all concepts of reality are tinged by the darkness and horror of transgression.” *The Addams Family* does exactly that, as will be shown later in this dissertation.

Another genre which could be used to describe *The Addams Family* is the Urban Gothic. Urban Gothic is set in the modern world unlike classic Gothic literature which was much more rural¹²¹. By bringing the Gothic to modern settings it becomes much easier to criticize society.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 56, 59 and 60.

¹²¹ LUCK Chad. “George Lippard and the Rise of the Urban Gothic”. *A Companion to American Gothic*, in Charles L. Crow (ed.), John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2014, p. 125.

3. Gothic Settings and Objects

3.1. Gothic Space

It has now been established that *The Addams Family* is indeed Gothic. This dissertation will now dig more into what makes it so. To begin with, the family members live in a Gothic setting. Lacôte¹²² explains that the Gothic has a specific “architectural locus”. That is to say, there is a recurring number of settings that are used and recycled in Gothic works. She calls these places “Gothic villains abodes”. They are typically “isolated and decrepit buildings” and embody the features of their inhabitants. She adds that these elements are so present that they become *clichés*. Moreover, she states that Gothic places are ambiguous. They do not only “play the role of an asylum or refuge for its elusive tenants, but also provide a base for all kinds of far-fetched situations and are sites for vice and excess”. In other words, Gothic spaces stand out from the rest because of their frightening outer appearance, and this outer appearance happens to represent who lives inside, and what happens inside. Indeed, the Addams family fit in this definition since they are as old fashioned and eccentric as their home. For example, in episode 10 (1973 cartoon series), a character states that the Addamses bring along a haunted house of their own with them. The character explains that he does not know “what they are”, meaning that he does not believe them to be human. This shows the link between the Addamses’ Gothic appearance and their Gothic home. Round¹²³ also explains that “the idea of a Gothic ‘place’ indicates a location haunted with significance”. That is to say, a place like the Addamses’ home, which is built on Gothic patterns, cannot look Gothic without being Gothic: the family home is Gothic in appearance and hence, the characters that live in the house can be expected to behave according to Gothic rules. The family members are uncanny because they live in an eerie manor, they are Gothic because even though they live in a modern setting they brought their Gothic home with them. This shows the important link uniting the Gothic with space.

Besides, their address is “0001 Cemetery Lane” in the 1964 series. The name of their street immediately propels the viewers into a Gothic atmosphere. Of course, their mansion looks uncanny in all its versions. Miserocchi¹²⁴ explains that Charles Addams loved architecture. He actually employed a variety of styles, inspired both by fantasy and reality. In *Dear Dead*

¹²² ERMIDA Isabel, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

¹²³ ROUND Julia, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹²⁴ MISEROCCHI H. Kevin, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-212.

*Days*¹²⁵, there are some pictures of the buildings that inspired him to create the Addamses' home (figure 3) and one can see that he was deeply inspired by Gothic architecture.

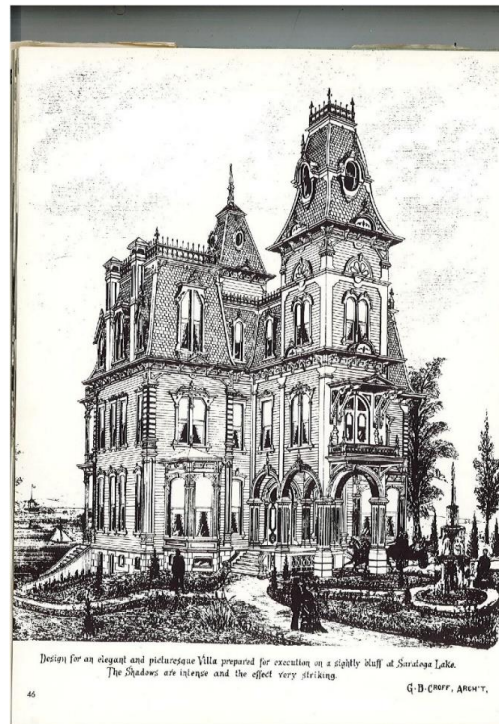


Figure 3

Topliss¹²⁶ even explains that it was “very unusual among cartoonists” to have a “special interest” in architecture. He defines the Addams family house as “old beyond its actual years, gloomy, dark, secretive, forbidding and threatening”, all the characteristics that would make for a perfect setting in any Gothic novel. Moreover, he claims that the family house contrasts with “the comfort of contemporary suburban homes or homely small houses” showing two other Gothic traits. On the one hand, the breaching capacity of the Addamses' home, since the Gothic setting invades the contemporary setting, and on the other hand, the link between past and present, with an old mansion in a modern world: an element that is present in most Gothic tales. In the comic strips, *The Addams Family*'s background often mixes old and new¹²⁷, the landscapes that Chas' used to draw embodying this key element of the Gothic. Moreover, the family has modern objects; such as a telephone¹²⁸, and they use them in their old-fashioned home creating yet another contrast.

¹²⁵ CHARLES Addams, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹²⁶ TOPLISS Iain, *The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005, p. 140.

¹²⁷ Appendix 1, p. 6.

¹²⁸ Appendix 3, p. 10.

Hogle¹²⁹ explains that the Gothic setting features include antiquated settings which clash with the urban and the suburban. Furthermore, ghostly or monstrous figures are expected to invade these settings. The Addams family can be considered as invaders of these modern settings, even more so when their equally monstrous relatives come to visit. Indeed, characters such as Cousin Itt, who does not live in the Addamses home but sometimes enters their home, also look like monsters.

Nevertheless, Wheatley¹³⁰ explains that it is not only the setting that is important but how the characters move around those Gothic settings. For example, Morticia Addams does not walk through her garden like any normal woman would. First, the garden is actually a graveyard in all versions of *The Addams Family*. Second, the flowers are roses with only their stems left, since Morticia has cut off their heads like her daughter does the heads of her dolls. Both mother, with her garden, and daughter, with her playground, do not behave according to society's expectations. Within the Gothic space dwell Gothic characters, and because they are Gothic they behave differently from the rest of the population. Moreover, these Gothic characters do not behave oddly only within the confined area of their family home but everywhere else too. For example, in episode 1 (1973 cartoon series), the Addamses behave like their Gothic selves, even though they are in a modern setting (New York city). This highlights the breaching capacity of the Gothic which allows its characters to "travel" not only their Gothic space but the contemporary one outside their home. Therefore, the Gothic enters the modern realm through the trespassing from one setting: the Gothic one, onto another, the modern one.

3.2. The Representation of Gothic Settings on Screen

In *The Addams Family* screen adaptations there is a difference between the spaces the audience sees and the spaces they hear about. Some places such as the family cave, which in the sitcom is said to be a special place where Morticia and Gomez go to have intimacy, are only referred to in passing. However, the places the audience does get to see are even more revealing of the family's "Gothicness".

It is important to pay attention to the outside of the family home. For example, in the 1991 film a shot of the moon appears right before a scene where Morticia and Gomez are sitting on a sofa in their makeshift graveyard made garden (figure 4). Even though the moon is shown for only a few seconds it is enough to prepare the viewers for an upcoming gloomy scene.

¹²⁹ HOGLE Jerrold E., *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹³⁰ WHEATLEY Helen, *loc. cit.*



Figure 4

In the sitcom, there are very similar shots which create ghastly Gothic atmospheres. For instance, in episode 2 (1964 sitcom) the opening credits are followed by a most dreary scene. The manor stands in the background, it is night-time, thunder is thrashing, and the rain is pouring (figure 5). The camera slowly zooms in on the house before a transition into the inside of the family home. The shot of the manor, set in darkness and with such weather, would have been enough to make the setting Gothic. But the zoom in plays a major role in increasing the sombre tone of said scene. The manor seems more and more dull as the camera gets closer.



Figure 5

Besides, other classic Gothic traits are often recycled in *The Addams Family* when it comes to setting. In episode 9 (1964 sitcom) Morticia and Gomez admit that when they first moved into their home as newlyweds they believed the manor to be haunted. Most Gothic works have haunted settings or settings which appear to be haunted (take *Jane Eyre*). The couple even share their disappointment at finding out that it actually was not haunted. This only highlights their desire to find the Gothic in everything since they find attractive the possibility of a place

resounding with “Gothicness”. After all, in both the film and the sitcom their house is full of spiderwebs, relics and other most mysterious objects.

3.3. Trespassing Setting: Finding Gothic in Everything

The Addams family seems to love the morbid, especially the women of the family. Grandmama’s cooking looks more like poison made with dark spells, Morticia’s garden seems as alive as she looks dead, and Wednesday’s doll cemetery shows another odd fetish. Just like the 1972 *Scooby-Doo* featuring shows, it is not only their classic Gothic house that is haunted but the characters themselves. However, the characters are not the only ones who seem to be affected by the Gothic setting, the elements of the house are as well. Botting explains that the Gothic is also fascinated by “bad” objects and practices. This is clearly reflected in *The Addams Family*. They do not only behave strangely, but also use peculiar and spooky objects. For example, in the 1991 film we can see Grandmama using a cauldron for cooking, an object associated with witchcraft. The children also use torture instruments instead of toys in all versions of *The Addams Family*.

In the sitcom one can also find many objects which hint at the “Gothicness” of the family. For example, the bell they use to call for Lurch is in fact a rope with a noose and Morticia happens to use a broken mirror when pampering herself. These objects, much like the toy weapons, make the Addams family home grimmer and more forbidding. However, apart from the obvious fascination all the family members share for the horrid in all its shapes and forms. Pugsley even attempts to gift a tarantula to a friend for his birthday in the sitcom (episode 5), they also use objects which are not scary but refer to the past.

This dissertation has shown that the Gothic holds a strong relationship to the past, this is also reflected in the possessions of the Addamses. For example, although the family seems to have the means to buy a car they still ride a chariot in the sitcom. Moreover, in episode 9 (1964 sitcom) many ancient objects are displayed in the home of the family, the viewers can even glimpse a very peculiar statue: the Roman she-wolf. The fact that they would have such a specific statue, well known to most, shows that the intention probably is for the audience to grasp the references to the past.

However, the Addamses do not only use Gothic objects, but objects seem to be made Gothic because they are the ones using them. For example, in episode 9 their cups seem to be smoking like cauldrons, it might be because the setting affects them or the Addamses do, either

way, a cup which would usually be considered a normal object becomes Gothic when held in an Addams' hand.

Miserocchi¹³¹ explains that some characters seem to become part of the house, almost as if they too, were Gothic objects instead of Gothic characters. For example, in the comic strips Lurch appears nowhere outside the setting of the family house. He seems to exist only within the walls of the Gothic mansions, as if such a Gothic being could not possibly exist outside of it. Thing seems to become even more of an object when adapted. In the comic strips one could see Thing hiding in dark corners, lurking through balustrades, or crawling from beneath the snow to spy on the family like on the *Dear Dead Days* book cover (figure 6). Still, “it” usually had a body and a face. However, from the 1964 series onwards, it becomes truly just a helping hand. The viewers do not know where it comes from, if it has a family, or even a soul. Moreover, in both one of Chas' comic strips¹³² and the 1964 series there is a sign in front of the Addams family house reading “beware of the Thing” as if it were a dog. This only further highlights the non-human nature of Thing.

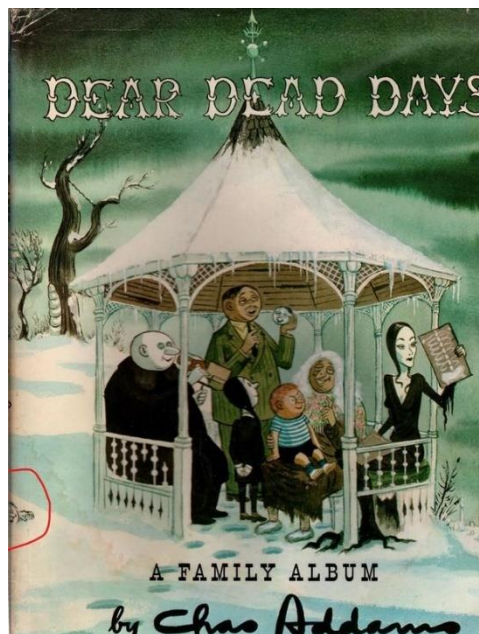


Figure 6

The comic strips and the 1964 series are all Chas' creations. Miserocchi explains that he had absolute control of his creation. He was able to suggest himself, intimate psychological and emotional qualities for his characters¹³³. He drew the comic strips and when it comes to the 1964 series, he conceived and painted the setting himself, wrote the scenarios, imagined the

¹³¹ MISEROCCHI H. Kevin, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 182 and 185.

¹³² Appendix 3, p. 13.

¹³³ MISEROCCHI H. Kevin., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

costumes and even recruited the actors. Chas built a strong Gothic setting with characters which hold Gothic traits familiar enough for the viewers to recognise. He included Gothic objects to make the Gothic atmosphere even more obvious, unintentionally making it easier for later adapters to take over his work.

4. The Supernatural and Monstrosity

4.1. Magic as a Manifestation of Gothic Supernaturality

Todorov¹³⁴ defines the Gothic's inauthenticity as a condition for the *fantastique*. That is to say, the Gothic needs to breach the rules of realism in order to include magic. It is the inadequacy with reality that makes the Gothic *fantastique*. *The Addams Family's* weirdness disturbing a suburban neighbourhood is, therefore, a condition for the 1964 series, as well as for the other versions, to be Gothic.

The Addams Family actually holds many references to the supernatural. For example, in one comic strip we can see the entire family "moon tanning" as any normal person would suntan¹³⁵. This could be seen as an implicit reference to their not-quite-human nature since vampires are said to be afraid of the sun and werewolves to only turn on a full moon. Although it is most probable that the goal of this supernatural allusion was to create a comic effect, the fact remains that the Addamses become somewhat supernatural with the use of such an inversion. Moreover, in the 1973 cartoon the children have powers, such as chanting an incantation for the rain to pour. This shows that *The Addams Family* makes use of the supernatural in both the original comic strips and its future adaptations, assuredly with a comic aim, but making use of it all the same.

The supernatural also manifests in the form of magic or witchcraft in *The Addams Family*. Freeman¹³⁶ makes a distinction between witchcraft, which tends to be associated with women's magic, and "black magic", an evil type of magic usually wielded by male figures. Freeman reveals that contrary to magic, witchcraft has a "less significant presence" in Gothic works than in folktales, children's literature and other various genres of fantasy. However, he adds that witchcraft has "loomed larger in Gothic film and television than in literature".

¹³⁴ ROUND Julia, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

¹³⁵ Appendix 1, p. 5.

¹³⁶ FREEMAN Nick, "Witchcraft", *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, pp. 745 and 746.

Therefore, in the words of Freeman, it would seem witchcraft has been introduced to a more modern Gothic, much like ghosts, vampires and traumatized protagonists migrated from historical settings to contemporary ones. Thus, it is no surprise that Morticia and Grandmama in *The Addams Family* (a more modern incarnation of the Gothic with comic strips, sitcom and film forms) are capable of witchcraft. Moreover, they are both women and they seem to be the only ones capable of witchcraft in both the 1964 series and the 1991 film which would confirm Freeman's theory of witchcraft being chiefly a women's type of magic. On a first look basis, their magic appears to be meant for negative endeavours such as poisoning. However, although they do intend to inflict real harm on people they never actually do, which only asserts Freeman's claims that female magic is usually associated with a more benevolent magic (used by teachers, healers and mothers).

4.2. The Addamses as Gothic Monsters

Monstrosity also plays a role in the supernatural dimension of the Gothic. Hogle¹³⁷ explains that monsters in the Gothic were fabricated by iconic characters such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Of course, he specifies that "there have been numerous variations on monsters before and after these", however, this pair "has set a defining standard for Gothic monstrosity because both figures [...] are partly alive and partly dead". Likewise, the Addamses seem to be, like *Frankenstein's* monster and *Dracula*, only partly alive, but they do not imitate Shelley's and Stoker's characters as such. However, they do tap into their pop cultural heritage. Indeed, Lurch looks and behaves like a neo-*Frankenstein* (he heavily borrows from Whale's *Frankenstein* incarnated by Boris Karloff) and Morticia looks as undead as *Dracula*, and other *Dracula*-inspired vampire figures.

The monstrous nature of the family is made apparent by the adjoining of several monster-like characteristics. In the sitcom, they are disgusted by the mere mention of the word "sun", hinting at their monstrous natures as beings who roam the night. Moreover, in episode 9, Morticia imitates a frog and also makes smoke appear out of nowhere which only highlights her abnormality. In the same episode there is talk of a certain cousin named Bleak (a very Gothic name) who happens to have three eyes, which certainly makes for a monster trait. Later, in episode 17, another cousin who has three heads is mentioned, proving that their "Gothicness" extends to their relatives. Furthermore, in several episodes Gomez is witnessed kissing Morticia

¹³⁷ HOGLE Jerrold E., "Monstrosity", *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, pp. 455 and 456.

so passionately it almost looks like he is drinking her blood, suggesting he might in fact be a vampire-like creature (figure 7).



Figure 7

4.3. Gothic Sounds in American Homes

Sound effects, whether it be written comic onomatopoeias such as “BOOM”, or actual sounds in screen adaptations, also render things that are not real. Such sounds are often exaggerated, making them unrealistic. Inasmuch, sounds could be seen as tools to blur the barriers of reality. It is the same for sounds which do not belong to the setting. For example, the unnatural sound that the Addams family doorbell makes in the 1964 series is unique, no other family in the neighbourhood would have a similar one. Lurch’s unprecedentedly deep voice or Cousin Itt’s speech also make for sounds which disengage the audience from reality.

Moreover, other sounds help to sustain the Gothic atmosphere in both the film and the sitcom. For example, in almost every episode (1964 sitcom), Lurch is either seen or heard playing sombre tunes on the piano. Those melodies sound more like those of an organ than of a piano, enhancing the gloominess of the house. In the film sombre music also accompanies the characters, it can often be heard during murky scenes such as shots of the manor. Thunder, gunshots and other loud noises also emphasize the frightful nature of *The Addams Family*. However, sounds which would normally be harmless become scary in *The Addams Family*. For example, in the first scene of the film when the carollers sing, their singing, which is usually associated with happiness, becomes ominous much like the melodies of music boxes or circus music in horror films.

To Wheatley, Gothic TV is characterised by the meeting of two houses: “the textual domestic spaces of Gothic television (haunted houses, decaying mansions), and the extra-textual domestic spaces of the medium (the homes in which Gothic television is viewed.)”¹³⁸ To her, this is a way for the uncanny to take a more profound root in nuclear family portrayals. And in fact, to Van Elferen, the uncanny aspect of sitcoms is due in part, to the “sounds that pervade the Gothic¹³⁹”. Contrarily to novels, Gothic films and series possess the added element of sound. There are a series of leitmotifs in all screened Gothic works, such as “hollow footsteps and ghostly melodies, piercingly high violin tones or disembodied child songs”. To her, this also participates in the Gothic invasion of the home.

The spectrality and uncanniness of the televisual viewing situation have resulted in the emergence of a specifically televisual Gothic. Helen Wheatley has argued that the television, because of its situatedness within the domestic sphere, can literally make the home unhomely and thus embody the uncanny. Much more even than television adaptations of Gothic ghost stories, two genres are striking for their Gothicising potential. The situation comedy can offer a Gothic doubling of family life and, by inverting its structures, expose the fear that the safe home is not what it seems. The repetitive structure of the sitcom can function as a televisual form of the return of the repressed, as it also does in serial drama, the genre that Wheatley identifies as the most Gothic of televisual Gothic. The specificities of television and its natural affinity to a domestic uncanny has led to the development of a range of overlapping Gothic subgenres. The Gothic sitcom often presents a parodic doubling of the sitcom genre¹⁴⁰. (75-76)

In short, to Van Elferen and Wheatley, televised Gothic is uncanny in its very structure. Van Elferen adds that eerie soundtracks emphasize the domestic uncanniness. For example, television music often highlights a character or situation by using strongly connoted sounds and by Mickey Mousing¹⁴¹. Moreover, television music, since sitcom episodes are much shorter than films, needs to fit into a very short time slot. Compositing music for television thus demands that “as much musical information as possible” be put in short musical sequences. But to Van Elferen this is actually an advantage since it forces musical branding, that is to say musical units which are catchy and familiar. *The Addams Family* finger clap intro to the 1964 sitcom is one example.

The formulaic and repetitive nature of Gothic style is the operative factor in *The Addams Family*. Like the visual imagery and the plot, the musical scoring to this serial plays with Gothic style but not with a Gothic gesture: the butler Lurch, for instance, plays the ‘spooky’ harpsichord, but the theme music, which remains famous almost forty years after the serial’s original broadcast – is cheerful and happy, in stark contrast to the family’s appearance. There is nothing scary about this show, but when the laughter has

¹³⁸ WHEATLEY Helen, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-165.

¹³⁹ VAN ELFEREN Isabella Van, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, Univ. of Wales Press, 2012, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ “Mickey Mousing” is a film technique that syncs the accompanying music with the actions on screen.

died out the Gothic mirror it holds up to everyday American life can have uncanny after-effects. *The Addams Family* shows that the television, which is such a big part of the American lifestyle that it parodies, is able to invade the family home in seemingly innocent but ultimately haunting ways.¹⁴² (82-83)

To Van Elferen, *The Addams Family*'s "over the top"¹⁴³ style in the landscape of televisual Gothic cannot avoid being critical. Bronfen believes that the reason why *The Addams Family* can so easily criticize society without it being shocking is because it does it under the guise of seeming fictional. "By virtue of an embodied, yet also spectralised, performance"¹⁴⁴ it can address specific cultural concerns.

5. Irrational and Gothic Behaviours

The supernatural is not the only Gothic element present in *The Addams Family*. Indeed, as mentioned before, the notion of "the uncanny" was also recycled by Charles Addams. Expanding upon Freud's original notion of the *Unheimlich* or "un-homely", Masschelein¹⁴⁵ defines "the uncanny" as "a mild form of anxiety and alienation that arises when something familiar suddenly appears strange". The anxiety caused by the Addamses to their neighbours is very representative of the uncanny. Indeed, they are unfamiliar to the normal suburban inhabitants and appear "strange" to them, as well as possibly frightening. For example, in episode 9 (1964 sitcom) the Addamses have new neighbours. These neighbours are immediately frightened by the looks and behaviour of the family. Likewise, in episode 2 when Morticia and Gomez go to the psychologist to discuss their son's odd behaviour, the latter first believes they have come because they themselves, have a problem, judging by their looks. This proves that they are perceived by outsiders as eccentric and sinister people.

Moreover, Tredy¹⁴⁶ explains that the Addamses like to inflict real harm on unsuspecting guests and neighbours and are oblivious to it, they laugh off any pain they inflict. He specifies that in addition to the family's "penchant for violence", they extend pain infliction to themselves. They associate pain with pleasure, showing that they are as "gleefully masochist" as they are sadistic. This twisted mindset reflects another Gothic trait: the notion of deviance.

¹⁴² VAN ELFEREN Isabelle, *op. cit.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 96.

¹⁴⁴ BRONFEN Elisabeth, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁵ MASSCHELEIN Anneleen, "The Uncanny", *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, in William Hughes, David Punter and Andrew Smith (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, p. 699.

¹⁴⁶ Dennis, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

It is not only how the Addamses look, but how they act that makes them Gothic. For example, in the film Wednesday sleeps with her arms crossed like a vampire would. It looks as if she is laying in a coffin which makes her look eerie. Even their shocked faces look scary since they are so exaggerated they end up looking almost deranged, especially Grandmama with her head lopsided (figure 8).



Figure 8

The Addamses also appear Gothic because they do not behave according to their time. Indeed, here the notion of time (with past and present becoming one) is again crucial. For example, Gomez uses a sword in the film and in episode 5 Fester even suggests he settles a problem with the neighbours with a gunfight, something that did not happen anymore in the 20th century. In the 2019 film this notion is recycled since Pugsley must demonstrate his courage by becoming a proper swordsman. Thus, it seems like the male characters sometimes borrow Gothic hero traits by becoming brave and agile.

B- Devices to Undermine the Aesthetics of Terror within *The Addams Family*

1. Both Gothic and Comic

Critics have shown that the Gothic is in itself a hybrid genre, and can be intrinsically comic. The Comic Gothic is a branch from the Gothic, a sub-genre promoting the comic parts of the Gothic rather than the darker, more horrific, ones. According to the *Collins Online Dictionary*¹⁴⁷, something is described as comic when it makes people laugh, when it is entertaining or contains jokes. However, it is important to note that the word “comic” also refers to comic strips and cartoons: “stories told in pictures”. Therefore, *The Addams Family* is not only hybrid due to its cross-generic nature but also due to its dual characteristic as a Comic Gothic comic strip. Addams’ work was described as both demonic and humorous, it is the bridge between the two that is going to be of great importance to this dissertation.

Messenger Davies¹⁴⁸ explains that “children’s drama is less bound by the constraints of realism than adults”. The Gothic is exactly the same, it does not care for realism. However, she adds that there are two types of Gothic: the Gothic that uses the supernatural and expects the audience to believe in it, and the other, which portrays it all the same but gives a natural and logical explanation to these supernatural happenings. Ann Radcliffe’s novels belong to the latter category; much like Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, her ghosts always have a natural explanation to their existence. *The Addams Family* though, and perhaps it is once again due to its comic nature, belongs to none of the above categories. It portrays supernatural happenings, does not give any explanation for their existence, but does not expect the audience to believe in those happenings either. That is because supernatural elements in the Comic Gothic have a different aim than to cause fear: to arouse laughter.

Topliss¹⁴⁹ argues that when the Gothic meets comic, “the frightening becomes cosy”. According to Round¹⁵⁰ horror and comics are also “old friends”. Indeed, in 19th century England, comics which contained horror were called “penny dreadfuls”, fictional papers that provided serialised pulp entertainment¹⁵¹. Furthermore, she explains that comics also use an aesthetic of excess¹⁵². This only highlights how difficult it is to define the Gothic, since it

¹⁴⁷ COLLINS ONLINE DICTIONARY, “Comic”, n.d., <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/es/diccionario/ingles/comic>.

¹⁴⁸ WHEATLEY Helen, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

¹⁴⁹ TOPLISS Iain, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

¹⁵⁰ ROUND Julia, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁵¹ Refer to the introduction for more information.

¹⁵² ROUND Julia, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

manifests in other genres such as horror (thus, bearing several names) and constantly changes to suit its time. Eventually, creeping terror gave way to other sorts of Gothic such as Chas' now famous Comic Gothic characters: the Addamses.

When adapted to television, Addams' creation becomes something else. The combination of the classic sitcom structure and the comic characteristics, inherited from both the Gothic and comic strips, give way to another kind of hybridity. The change in formats brings about the consolidation of the notion of the Comic Gothic, mixing dark aesthetics with a comic medium.

One particular comic strip could actually represent Chas' Comic Gothic aesthetic. Indeed, Addams drew Uncle Fester laughing in the cinema while everyone else appears shocked and afraid at whatever is shown on the screen¹⁵³. The fact that Fester is enjoying the film differently from the others is very representative of the entire mindset of the family. He is different in both an intimidating and frightening way, as well as in a comic one. He makes others uncomfortable, yet they cannot help but find his quirkiness amusing.

2. An Introduction to *The Addams Family's* Comic Elements

According to Pollock's definition¹⁵⁴, "real humour" involves strange circumstances emphasized by an incongruous light. That is to say, an uncanny situation; such as the arrival of the Addams family in a normal suburban neighbourhood, emphasized by an even stranger situation; for example, the fact that the Addamses behave like normal human beings when they appear otherwise. The family members are weird, but do not seem to realize they are, and on the contrary, believe it is the others who are weird. Their contradictive point of view represents the "incongruous light" mentioned above. This is actually representative of the entire comic atmosphere in *The Addams Family*. In the 1964 series the first episode already sets the tone for the rest of the season. From the very beginning, there are many comic inversions, which is one of Chas' favoured comic methods. These inversions are thoroughly used in the pilot just like they were in the comic strips. There will be examples of inversions shown later in the dissertation.

Moreover, laughter can be heard in the background of all episodes from the 1964 series, which is a traditional sitcom characteristic. This reveals the comic nature of the show and sets a clear goal: to make the viewers laugh. Apart from inversions, other techniques are used in

¹⁵³ Appendix 3, p. 10.

¹⁵⁴ POLLOCK Jonathan, *op. cit.*, p.66.

order to amuse the viewers. For instance, hyperboles. Hyperboles are used for a variety of purposes: to make something seem fantastic like in Gothic literature, or to exaggerate something to the point of laughter, like in sitcoms. For example, the Addams family house looks very Gothic, being gloomy and old-fashioned. However, the carpet groans like a bear when someone steps on it, and absolutely everything is broken and misshapen, creating an excessively Gothic atmosphere, so excessive it becomes comic. In later adaptations such as the 1973 cartoon, hyperboles are also used. For example, Gomez' weird laugh in this cartoon screen adaptation is so exaggerated that it becomes comic.

Weiss¹⁵⁵ explains that *The Addams Family* possesses a sort of “uncanny joie de vivre”. They also use what he calls “black humour sensitivity”. In other words, the characters are happy for reasons that would make others sad, and they find amusing what others would find either despicable or heart wrenching. The characters seem to live by way of inversions. Weiss goes as far as creating the term “addamesque” to describe what they represent: the uncanny by way of inversions, excess that ensues in hilarity.

Miserocchi¹⁵⁶ makes the readers remark that even in the description that Chas originally made of them for the 1964 series, the characters are made ridiculous and laughable. Gomez is described as a puckish, rube, scruffy and greasy man who has more money than wits or brains. Moreover, Uncle Fester's name in itself induces laughter since it literally means “rotten guy”. All of these elements already show the comic nature of *The Addams Family*.

3. How Are Gothic Patterns Used to a Comic Effect ?

3.1. A Chronology of Inversions in *The Addams Family*'s Different Versions

Horner¹⁵⁷ claims that *The Addams Family* is a “spoof rendering of Gothic”. This idea implicates that *The Addams Family* is in fact Gothic, but also that it has a comic twist. However, how exactly do the Gothic and comic work together? To better understand how the Gothic can be used to arouse laughter, some examples of the Gothic turned to comic with the use of inversions; in the different version of *The Addams Family*, will be exposed.

To begin, in the original comic strips, one can see that the members of the Addams family are often portrayed celebrating holidays. For example, they do celebrate Christmas.

¹⁵⁵ ADDAMS Charles, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 5 and 6.

¹⁵⁶ MISEROCCHI H. Kevin, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹⁵⁷ HORNER Avril and ZLOSLNIK Sue, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

However, they do not celebrate it like any other normal family would. In one comic strip the children are drawn setting fire to the chimney with the caption: “The little dears! They still believe in Santa Claus¹⁵⁸”. The fact that they are lighting the chimney instead of baking cookies for Santa reveals their will to hurt him rather than welcome him. This inversion that turns children into little devils is very Gothic since it represents malevolent intentions on their behalf. However, the situation appears so otherworldly that it becomes comic.

Moreover, the Addams family also celebrate certain days which usually have a negative connotation. In one comic strip we can see Morticia speaking on the phone with a caption reading “Oh, I couldn’t make it Friday. I’ve so many things to do. It’s the thirteenth, you know¹⁵⁹”. This is another example of a Gothic pattern turned to comic since Morticia, instead of fearing Friday the 13th as a bad omen, implies that she has so much to do since it is a busy day for her, a day made for entertainment. Furthermore, Miserocchi¹⁶⁰ explains that Lurch was said to guard the children against “good influences”, instead of guarding them against bad ones. This shows once again, the will of the Addams family to breed and encourage evil. These kinds of situations are made amusing because they seem so out of touch with reality that they become unexpectedly comic. Thus, the comic primarily seems to stem from a sense of surprise, from witnessing something different within everyday life.

Many more inversions can be found in Chas’ comic strips. The Addams family seems to find pleasing what others would find displeasing. For example, they enjoy bad weather and loathe good weather¹⁶¹. They commend bad behaviour in their children and in return their children hate being rewarded for good conduct¹⁶². They simply do things contrarily to everyone else, even taking family pictures. Indeed, in one comic strip, Morticia asks her children to sneer for the picture instead of smile¹⁶³.

Inversions seem to be the main tool used to turn the Gothic to comic, both in the comic strips and in the 1964 series. Indeed, in the sitcom things that are normal also feel odd to the Addamses and vice versa. For example, in episode 7 they dress as normal people for Halloween, or in episode 2, when Morticia is outraged that her son is being kind to their neighbours and wearing a scout’s uniform. She says that he should be playing with his octopus at his age. As a comparison she even says: “Thank heaven Thing is still normal” when he is in fact, the oddest

¹⁵⁸ Appendix 2, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ Appendix 3, p. 10.

¹⁶⁰ MISEROCCHI H. Kevin, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

¹⁶¹ Appendix 3, p. 13.

¹⁶² Appendix 3, p. 12.

¹⁶³ Appendix 3, p. 11.

of the Addamses. In parallel, things that should be important and shocking become trifling matters. For example, still in episode 2, Morticia claims that setting a house on fire is a boyish prank. And just like awful things seem normal to the Addamses, normal things such as a puppy become scary to them. Morticia spells out the word “puppy” (episode 2) as if it were the most horrid thing.

Likewise, in episode 1 the children are forced to go to school by their parents and one day when they return from school they are devastated by a story their teacher has told them. It is the story of a dragon which is killed by a knight in shining armour. However, instead of congratulating the knight, the children take pity upon the “poor dragon” who they qualify as “defenceless”. This inversion is very similar to another one from a comic strip where Grandmama tells Wednesday a bedtime story of a dragon who lived “happily ever after”¹⁶⁴. This inversion where the “good guy” of the story is despised, and the “bad guy” is grieved and celebrated shows that the Addams family has a penchant for the evil. Furthermore, in the first episode of the sitcom, towards the end of the episode, Fester is accused of not cheating during a game. In a comic strip, it is Grandmama who is accused of not cheating, as if it were expected of her¹⁶⁵. Thus, not only do the Addamses support evil characters but they also enjoy playing dirty and behaving dubiously themselves. In classic Gothic literature, the idea of the evil existing within everyone, and of exposing this evilness, is often present (for example, in Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories, or in Stevenson’s novella *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*). In both the comic strips and the first screen adaptation of the franchise, the Addamses openly showcase their “evil” nature. It is how they showcase it that is comic, since they are unapologetically and heedlessly different.

Furthermore, in later adaptations such as the 1972 *Scooby-Doo* featuring, many inversions are also used. For example, Morticia explains to the *Scooby-Doo* gang how sad she is that their daughter is turning into a happy young lady, as if being happy was negative. Morticia also explains that she will get an “ugly nap” instead of a “beauty nap”. It is the absurdity of the idea of an ugly nap or of unhappiness having positive benefits that renders the situation comic.

In the 1973 cartoon, the offbeat humour of *The Addams Family* remains untouched. From the very beginning there are inversions. In the first episode the family decides to go to New York. When they are crossing a tunnel Grandmama believes they have already arrived in the city and says: “New York is nothing but a dark cave, I like it already”. This inversion shows

¹⁶⁴ Appendix 3, p. 12.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

once again how fond the Addamses are of things which would seem displeasing to normal people, such as darkness. There are many more inversions during this first episode, such as Fester who seems more than happy at the thought of spending 20 years locked up in a gloomy prison; or when Morticia tells her children “not stay in the sunlight too long” since it might “make them healthy”.

Therefore, inversions are present in all the family’s apparitions, be it the comic strips or the screen adaptations. Gothic patterns of “the evil” or “the ugly” are turned into comic ones through these inversions. However, even though the family members seem evil they act kindly towards others and are very selfless. This inversion shows another Gothic feature: everything is not always what it seems. After all, one would expect monstrous characters to act monstrously.

In the 1973 cartoon there are also some inversions etched with the burlesque. In episode 6 for example, losing money in the stock market (arguably a serious matter), is made comic when Morticia; after winning a baking prize, claims “I haven’t been this happy since you lost 10 thousand dollars in the stock market”. A happening supposed to result in unhappiness produces the contrary effect. The expectation of the audience is thus overturned, creating a humorous outcome. On the contrary, in the 1991 film, there are some inversions about trivial matters. For example, Morticia orders Wednesday to play with her food. Therefore, inversions seem to be a leitmotiv in all the versions of *The Addams Family*.

Thus, even though *The Addams Family*’s “Gothicness” is also illustrated by their attachment to evil, when the Addamses commit evil deeds; such as attempting to burn Santa Claus alive, removing street signs, moving objects to cause accidents, or disguising to frighten others¹⁶⁶, the inherent goal seems to be to arouse laughter through the inversion of cultural values (like the inversion of important notions such as good and evil). This is even more evident when faced with biblical references. For example, the family members seem to have faith; however they do not worship God but Evil instead. In one comic strip, Morticia tells Grandmama that she wishes to give her children biblical names but instead of Marie and Joseph she likes Cain and Ananias¹⁶⁷ (two characters that represent evil).

¹⁶⁶ Appendix 2, p. 8.

¹⁶⁷ Appendix 3, p. 10.

3.2. Excess

Excess is another main feature of *The Addams Family*. Indeed, the comic is not only portrayed through the overbearing use of inversions but also through exaggerations. Thus, things that are meant to be horrifying become comic when magnified. For example, in episode 2 (1964 sitcom) Lurch is playing the piano and looks so intimidating that it becomes comic. He looks into the camera with one eyebrow raised and it feels as if he is looking at the audience, but the scene seems to stretch, and Lurch's stern look becomes laughable. He looks so engrossed in his music that he loses his frightening characteristic, he even closes his eyes at some point which makes the scene more comic.

Excess is also at play in the 1991 film. For example, Pugsley and Wednesday take part in a school play. They use so much fake blood that the play turns into a macabre chaos. The fact that the play was supposed to be peaceful and turns out to be excessively gore only adds to this comic effect.

3.3. The Grotesque at Play within *The Addams Family*

There are numerous situations made grotesque by the Addamses in all their versions, but this seems especially noticeable in the 1973 cartoon. Indeed, in all the episodes there are grotesque incidents. For example, in episode 3 physical abnormality is made comic with the creation of the world's most adorable monster, the Boola Boola¹⁶⁸. In episode 2 it is Lurch who is deprived of his monstrosity when he cries. Such monsters showing human characteristics makes for a grotesque effect. In episode 5 it is the Addamses' pet alligator which shows signs of humanity when it happens to save people. This repetitive method which consists in giving human traits to non-human beings is representative of the comic effect of the grotesque.

Moreover, in episode 4, Gothic motifs are also made comic. Indeed, the Addamses go to "Coffin county" where they cross "Lake Eerie". The names of these locations are loaded with Gothic connotations, and they also stay true to their names. The lake is more like a dreary swamp bordered by a decaying forest unlike the real Lake Erie. The fact that Lake Erie actually exists adds to this comic effect since its name is turned into the Gothic adjective "eerie". (figure 9).

¹⁶⁸ A made-up cute breed of monster.



Figure 9

Besides, when the Family is driving through said lake, Morticia remarks that there is a black rainbow in the distance. An element which usually inspires joy is made gloomy. Here it is a natural phenomenon which is made Gothic. In other words, it is both the transformation of elements from normal to Gothic and from Gothic to normal which create this grotesque aesthetic: a two-way process with the goal of tipping the world over with the use of Gothic elements. The grotesque consists in adorning normalcy with supernatural, or otherwise Gothic, elements. Thus, turning a normal lake into an eerie one, or a colourful rainbow into a dark one, is to use Gothic ingredients to create grotesque imagery.

4. Language: the Optimal Comic Tool

4.1. The Comic Speech: Inversions and Puns, both Written and Voiced

Language is a preponderant comic tool. It can be used for different purposes. First, to reflect sanity or on the contrary, insanity¹⁶⁹. If the language is monstrous or not understandable; like Cousin Itt's or Lurch's, then it displays underlying problems such as inhumanity. However, language can also be used to a comic effect by making use of irony and other such methods. In *The Addams Family*, no matter the version, both adult and children take part in this linguistic comic turn.

¹⁶⁹ DE COURVILLE NICOL Valérie, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

For instance, in the 1964 series, inversions are often expressed through dialogue. In episode 1, Gomez exclaims “Don’t send the children to school, I will be lost without them”. This is an inversion since Gomez is an adult, but he is the one who seems to be relying on his children. More of these inversions are shown through dialogues, in the same episode Morticia asks Gomez “What’s the matter with your friend?” to what Gomez answers “I don’t know, weird isn’t he?”. The fact that the Addamses find the guest weird when they obviously are the weird ones is again, comic. Or later, when Fester says: “I never went to school, look how I turned out”, to what Gomez answers “Looks aren’t everything”. The fact that both Fester and his family members believe him to be smart and handsome, when he is the complete opposite, makes for another comic inversion.

There are more linguistic methods to create comic situations, such as linguistic borrowings: for instance, both in the sitcom and in the 1973 cartoon the Addamses use some foreign vocabulary: Gomez often calls Morticia “querida” in the sitcom and the cartoon, and the pet octopus is called Ocho in the cartoon. Moreover, in the sitcom when Morticia speaks French Gomez goes into a frenzy. Of course, these cultural twists were made to appeal to foreigners and minorities. Still, they happen to also play in the comic effect of their interactions when used repeatedly. Another method is the use of oppositions: for example, in episode 1, Wednesday claims “We like it, it’s so nice and gloomy” referring to her house. The oxymoron “nice and gloomy” creates another comic effect. In the 1973 cartoon series (episode 6) there is a similar oxymoron with the words “magnificent ugliness”. These oxymora portray the use of words which usually refer to Gothic aesthetics (namely “gloomy” and “ugliness”) with opposing words to create a comic after effect. Furthermore, it is not only the words but the way they are pronounced that makes them comic. The fact that the family members say these things in a serious rather than humorous tone, showing that they believe in these absurdities they utter, makes their interactions all the more comic.

In the comic strips, dialogues are also used for comic purposes: in the captions underneath each comic strip. For instance, in one specific comic strip, the caption reads a conversation between Gomez who asks Morticia if she is “unhappy” instead of inquiring after her happiness¹⁷⁰. Inversions through dialogue are also showcases in the 1973 cartoon adaptation of *The Addams Family*. In episode 1 Morticia says that she can find “all the discomforts of home” in their current location.

¹⁷⁰ Appendix 3, p. 13.

Besides, other techniques are used to create comic effects through dialogues. Puns seem to be the most recurrent. In the same episode there is a one with the famous Empire State Building which is turned to “Vampire State Building”. Then Morticia also claims that Gomez is the only “strange man” for her instead of saying that he is the “only man”. In episode 3 there is even a play on word with the saying “Where there’s a will there’s a way” which becomes “Where there’s a will there’s a Boola Boola”. This change within a famous idiomatic phrase creates a similar comic effect.

However, comic is not only expressed through oral speech. For instance, the family’s car plate number reads “RIP”, showing that written words can also make for similar comic effects. The use of such disarranged language; which is totally inappropriate for the situation, creates a comic atmosphere.

Puns, much like inversions, were already used in Chas’ comic strips. Indeed, in earlier versions *The Addams Family* already used dialogues to invite laughter. Two notable puns which remain famous to this day are “kick daddy goodnight¹⁷¹” (“kick” instead of “kiss”) and “this is it speaking” (“It” as an actual name makes for the pun “it” instead of “him”).

4.2. Sound Effects

However, it is not just language but sound effects in general which play a significant role in turning Gothic elements to comic. This dissertation has shown that the Gothic became very popular with the rise of horror films. As Preston Leonard¹⁷² explains, these films offered Gothic “the opportunity to exploit the new medium to the fullest, showing off special effects and creating ghosts, phantoms and dancing skeletons”. However, Van Elferen¹⁷³ states that sound plays a huge role in those films. She claims that the Gothic can transport the viewer in the darkness of its settings. Once the viewer dives in the film, he relies on his ears since Gothic settings are “deprived of sight”. It is what the viewer hears that makes the experience all the more Gothic. She continues on arguing that while books “describe creaks and whispers permeating uncanny silences”, film and television soundtracks “deploy cello tremolos, swooshing white noise and eerie children’s voices to convey the terror that something is lurking in the dark”. Therefore, sound can be used in the Gothic to arouse fear.

¹⁷¹ Appendix 3, pp. 10 and 11.

¹⁷² PUNTER David, *The Edinburgh Companion to Gothic and the Arts*, Edinburgh University Press, 2019, p. 189.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 229.

On the contrary, in *The Addams Family*, and by extension in the Comic Gothic, sounds which would be frightening in Gothic works become amusing. For example, Lurch's deep voice would feel threatening if the character were not so polite and well-behaved. However, because such a monstrous character acts like a human it becomes comic. Likewise, in the sitcom, Fester's voice is so high pitched that it clashes with his monstrous image, counterbalancing his "Gothicness" and turning him into a Comic Gothic character.

Van Elferen¹⁷⁴ explains that "transgression in Gothic is often signalled by sound or music. Whether in Gothic literature, cinema, television [...] music is insistently represented as the herald of other realities". That is to say, music is a channel for fantasy within reality, sound is a gateway for the supernatural to enter the real world. The types of sound in the Gothic often seem out of place and are emitted in unfamiliar tones and rhythms. For instance, the Addams family doorbell seems at odds with the sounds of other doorbells and so is Lurch's voice, as opposed to normal people's. This shows that sounds are also used in the Comic Gothic to arouse reactions in the viewers except they have a surprising and amusing effect rather than a discomforting, even frightening, one. Sounds are used to disrupt the audience, to make them lose their footing and stumble deeper into fantasy.

5. The Sitcom Meets the Gothic

5.1. The Sitcom Structure

A sitcom is a half-hour series focused on episodes involving recurrent characters within the same premise. That is, each week we encounter the same people in essentially the same setting. The episodes are finite; what happens in a given episode is generally closed off, explained, reconciled, solved at the end of the half hour [...] the most important feature of the sitcom structure is the cyclical nature of the normalcy of the premise undergoing stress or threat of change and becoming restored. This faculty for the 'happy ending' is, of course, one of the staples of comedy¹⁷⁵. (28)

The Addams Family 1964 series strictly corresponds to Mills' definition of a typical sitcom since the family stays in the same setting together. The fact that *The Addams Family* was adapted into a sitcom, a genre that strives for happy endings, only reinforces the dual nature of Chas' creation. Indeed, as opposed to Gothic endings, sitcoms' endings are happy ones. However, sitcoms and the Gothic do have one thing in common: they are unrealistic. Clarke-

¹⁷⁴ EDWARDS Justin D. and SOLTYSIK MONNET Agnieszka, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

¹⁷⁵ MILLS Brett, *The Sitcom*, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. 28.

Jervoise¹⁷⁶ argues that sitcoms are often “distinct from reality precisely because the need to make the audiences laugh is paramount”. She explains that people do not look for accuracy when watching sitcoms.

Moreover, Gehring¹⁷⁷ lists the six prominent characteristics of sitcom characters: being “shtick”, “physical/visual gags”, “incompetent”, “nomads”, “sidekicks”, and having a “downtrodden background/upbringing”. *The Addams Family* seems to garner almost all of the above characteristics. Uncle Fester, Lurch and Cousin Itt’s physiques are gags in themselves, Gomez is incompetent, Thing could be considered a sidekick, and all of the family members are shtick. In other words, *The Addams Family* is not just Gothic, but also comic, and its first change of format only reasserts this fact.

Furthermore, Dalton and Linder¹⁷⁸ explain that *The Addams Family* is often associated with “magicoms¹⁷⁹”, but they claim that “it is not a proper fit”. That is because *The Addams Family*; unlike other magicoms where “the strange and supernatural are springboards from which to depart from reality”, portrays “everyday amusement in an alternative universe” where monsters live in the suburbs. Dalton and Linder explain that “the family seeks nothing more than to roam the nooks and crannies of their haunted houses and enjoy the simple pleasures of monsterdom” such as cultivating dead plants. This shows that all sitcoms are different; that there are several categories of sitcoms, and that *The Addams Family* sitcom is quite unique in itself.

5.2. Comic Situations: A Sitcom Feature

Comic situations are the optimal middle ground for the classic Gothic tropes to intertwine with the sitcom structure. In episode 1 (1964 sitcom), and throughout the rest of the series, many moments cause comic situations. For example, Wednesday opens the front door to her house while her father; the adult figure, is playing with his train toys. The fact that it is Wednesday, a little girl, who welcomes a guest shows her maturity as opposed to her parents lack of it, and renders the situation comic. In another scene from the same episode, the guest is sent from one person to the next; each family member relegating the responsibility of attending to the guest to another member, in order to have his one question answered. This “tossing

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 25.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 37.

¹⁷⁸ DALTON Mary M. and LINDER Laura R., *The Sitcom Reader: America Re-viewed, Still Skewed*, State University of New York Press, 2016, p. 82.

¹⁷⁹ Sitcoms which portray magical or otherwise supernatural characters and happenings.

around” of the guest amongst the Addamses, as if he were a ball to play with, makes for another comic situation. In like manner, in episode 2 Morticia and Gomez have a psychiatrist come over to their home because their son started to play baseball and wear a scout’s uniform, which they find outrageous. However, when the psychiatrist visits, there is a misunderstanding, and he believes the outrageous things the couple are referring to are the dangerous objects in their house such as weapons. This comic situation emphasizes the comic nature of the family members.

Comic situations were actually already being used by Addams in his comic strips. For example, in one comic strip, the family members are drawn reading books¹⁸⁰. However, they read the oddest books. Wednesday is reading a book about sex even though she is just a kid. Morticia is reading a “foodless” recipe book and Uncle Fester a book entitled “Return to morality”. The fact that they appear normal, reading like any other middle-class family, but in fact read books that a normal middle-class family would never read, makes for a comic situation. This shows that *The Addams Family* was meant to be adapted into a sitcom in order to build onto the comic and find new ways to make the audience laugh.

5.3. Sitcoms Revamping Society

Mills explains that there is a common misconception that “sitcoms are made up of jokes¹⁸¹”. He argues that not just jokes but that factors such as narrative, characters and representation all help define the genre too. But it is more than that, the jokes are not merely jokes either, they also have an intrinsic satirical aspect. Indeed, to Dalton, although sitcoms are all too often dismissed as “craven televisual products”, meaning a-political, they actually mirror society more accurately than many other genres and serve as a “useful barometer for identifying ideas and points of view that would not otherwise be ready for prime time¹⁸²”. “The marriage of the American Gothic and television in the mid-twentieth century might be described by cultural critics, retrospectively as a “hell-inflected match made in networkers’ heaven¹⁸³”. Indeed, during the middle of the twentieth century there was a high number of Gothic television programs coming out. Davison describes the Gothic sitcom as a “bizarre progeny” born of the extreme popularity of the Gothic genre; which flourished after adapting itself to other media

¹⁸⁰ Appendix 1, p. 4.

¹⁸¹ MILLS Brett, *The Sitcom*, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. 24.

¹⁸² DALTON Mary M. and LINDER Laura R., *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹⁸³ DAVISON Carol Margaret, “The American Dream/The American Nightmare: American Gothic on the Small Screen”, *A Companion to American Gothic*, in Charles L. Crow (ed.), John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2014, p. 488.

than literature. According to Leslie Fiedler, “certain special guilts awaited projection in the Gothic form”. To him, Gothic on the small screen was sure to tackle issues of “gender, race, class, sex, religion, and national identity politics”. More than that, much like comic strips, Gothic TV has the power to be provocative and to allow reflexions on subjects such as the American Dream.

Critical debates about the suitability and effectiveness of the union of the Gothic and television have been contentious and ongoing. The union seems apposite and compelling given the American Gothic’s long-standing preoccupation with family values and the domestic sphere. According to Lenora Ledwon, television is an ideal medium for the Gothic, surpassing film, given its uncanny, ghostly effects: this ‘mysterious box is simultaneously inhabited by spirit images of ourselves and inhabiting our living rooms’. The disjunction between this apparently supernatural technology and our familiar domestic space marks a traditional Gothic collision¹⁸⁴. (490)

Davison explains that Gothic television came at a time when the US was preoccupied with “re-establishing its ideals”. The suburbs of course, were at the heart of this concern, since they represent “an iconic environment that serves as the repository of the American Dream¹⁸⁵”. Gothic sitcoms are transgressive not only because they rupture this ideal as well as invade suburban homes, but also because of their “socio-political critique of a xenophobic, parochial America”. Davison even uses *The Addams Family* as an example, arguing that they presented “typical middle-class concerns in a defamiliarized way”, since they are monsters trying to live a conventional life but appear deviant to the “intolerant suburbs”. Davison adds that *The Addams Family* shows social constructions through a “satirical lens”, thus, questioning normativity, American values, and pointing out one problematic contradiction of the American Dream: “that the hyper conformist suburbs were essentially anti-American given their xenophobia and constraints on individualism¹⁸⁶”.

Moreover, *The Addams Family* can be said to have played key roles in debunking the 1950s ideal of family life¹⁸⁷.

The 1950s ideal of the suburban family was no sooner launched than it came under attack. In many ways, the backlash against the suburbs occurred during its very creation. For all those who praised the easy, conflict-free lifestyle of the suburbs, there were critics who issued stern warnings on how the suburbs would be the ruin of American culture, family and citizenship¹⁸⁸. (37)

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.491.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.492.

¹⁸⁷ The period following World War II gave birth to the “domestic sitcom”, 400 sitcoms aired between 1948 and 1978, and over half were domestic in focus.

¹⁸⁸ MOROWITZ Laura, *op. cit.*

While the suburbs were said to foster family relations, the very tradition of “working husband” and “housewife”, which was being implemented by suburban life, was in fact destroying families. “Gone all day at city jobs, fathers functioned more like ‘overnight guests’¹⁸⁹.” Thus, Gothic sitcoms were a challenge since the viewers could see freaks invading and disrupting the suburbs. Yet perhaps they were also a way to salvage the American family.

Tredy questions the irreverence of such Gothic pastiches to have emerged in such a tranquil TV landscape. Nonetheless, the image of the American family was kept, showing that to gain American’s attention one had to show them a reflection of their everyday lives, something they could identify with. Tredy explains that children liked Gothic-coms all the more because they mocked the “conservative worlds of their parents”. As previously mentioned, when it came out, the 1964 TV adaptation of *The Addams Family* was in a one on one battle for ratings against *The Munsters* series. Tredy¹⁹⁰ explains that they both used the comic device of absolute reversal: “the good is bad, the ugly is beautiful and the disgusting is sublime”. However, *The Munsters* wasn’t nearly as subversive as *The Addams Family*. The latter used this “monsters-in-the-suburbs” premise to criticize society. Furthermore, it was not based on monster movie characters from the 1930s but on the “politically incorrect” one-panel comics by illustrator Charles Addams¹⁹¹. Much like *The Munsters*, *The Addams Family* also “portrayed a family whose values were the opposite of those one would expect from such a well-bred group of suburbanites and who also believed that their perverse world-view was the conventional one, and that everyone else was bizarre¹⁹²”. However, Charles Addams used these reversals for “harsher and more satirical attack on polite upper middle-class society”. Tredy states that these are the makings of “quite a shockingly Gothic inversion of the ideal family”. Moreover, he claims that there are constant references to the main couple’s lust and active sex life. Morticia and Gomez are “never afraid of public displays of affection, or even frenzied lust”, something that was most unusual at the time. Tredy acknowledges that this may have looked like simple mockery of the middle-class, with their pretended propriety and stifled emotions, but it was the only place on American TV at the time where viewers could witness such overt sexual references. In volume 2, this dissertation will pay closer attention to the portrayal of sex and women in *The Addams Family*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ TREDY Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁹¹ Charles Addams originally did not want to jump on this “monster-com bandwagon”, but he did as soon as he realised some of his ideas may be robbed by *The Munsters* series.

¹⁹² TREDY Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

Yet, to Morowitz¹⁹³, although *The Addams Family* does pastiche the conventions of the suburban sitcom, and by extension of society, in so doing, it not only shows a will to transgress but also a more subtle reaffirmation and reassurance to television viewers. That is because, although they “Gothically rebel¹⁹⁴”, as Smith puts it, they still have a desire for conformity. Wheatly notes that this is the very paradox of Gothic sitcoms, they portray alternative, definitely Gothic families, which both provide a model of the ideal nuclear family and turn it into a laughingstock. In the word of Wheatly, they “simultaneously support images of soap opera domesticity and critique them”. To her, in *The Addams Family*, there is a constant shift between wanting and struggling to fit into their suburban community, and rejecting “those who conform to its standards and values”.

Both series seemingly mock ideas of mainstream family life and although this is achieved with considerable comic effect, they also represent extended families which appear to be somewhat conventionally structured. Both series thus engage with the type of cultural ambivalence that is a feature of the Gothic¹⁹⁵. (162)

Indeed, being Gothic, *The Addams Family* is both a conservative and a transgressive program. The critique that is made of family values is very subtle, and Chas’ work has forever been defined as a pastiche, and yet, one cannot help but find a form of underlying *critique* in this sitcom. For example, in episode 2, Morticia and Gomez go to a psychiatrist to inquire after their son’s mental health. The psychiatrist tells them to cater to his whims and that it will pass. This advice from an alleged specialist is very ironic since it seems to lack professional input, and simply suggests that the Addams parents obey their children. This could be seen as a *critique* of one of the traits of the American suburban way of life, since as previously explained, children became very precious and a lot more attention was being paid to them after the 1950s.

¹⁹³ MOROWITZ Laura, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁹⁴ Smith Andrew, *Gothic Literature*, Edinburgh University Press, 2007, p. 162.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

TRANSITION

It has by now been demonstrated that *The Addams Family* – be it Charles Addams original comic strips; the very first adaptations of the characters in the 1964 monster-com, the first cartoon series of 1973; which combines its two ancestors but brings a new light upon the Addamses, the 1991 and 1993 films; the first big-budget incarnations of the franchise, or the 2019 film – is both a Gothic and a comic family. The characters are ludicrously hilarious, their setting is both old and new, they make any situation and subject comic, and they are monsters, but they may also act with more humanity than their normal neighbours. They belong to the Comic Gothic genre.

The word Gothic has proven to possess many meanings. Nevertheless, in its literary form it often embodies notions such as the monstrous, the mysterious and the uncanny. The Addams family members seem to have been made in the image of the Gothic genre, they could almost be said to incarnate the allegories of those three notions. Indeed, they are flawed characters with supernatural traits, baffling and obscure, and remarkably eerie. The Gothic genre is also known for its adaptability. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Comic Gothic crossovers such as *The Addams Family* appeared during the 20th century. Similarly to the Gothic, the comic genre has often been misunderstood and ill-defined. However, after reflecting on the different branches and the tools used in comic, *The Addams Family* has been identified as a pastiche. A pastiche which, as this dissertation has thrived to argue, uses Gothic tropes for comic purposes.

But other than their entertaining goal, haven't both the Gothic and comic proven to have other, more implicit, aims? After all, Gothic fiction has been signalled by many critics as a major outlet for the portrayal of sin. As a consequence, the Gothic was later said to demonstrate a derogatory attitude towards society. A similar label was assigned to the comic genre. Indeed, although it is undeniable that *The Addams Family* has an entertaining goal, there is always more to comic than what merely triggers laughter. The jokes in *The Addams Family* always hide some sort of truth and the comic is rarely used without at least a small amount of implied criticism. This is going to be the main point of the second volume of this dissertation. Once one understands how the Gothic is used to a comic effect in *The Addams Family*, one can detach the deeper underlayers of satire, the dark part of pastiche. To begin with, it will be important to expose the societal *critique* within *The Addams Family*. Then, a closer analysis of female characters will allow for a different insight into *The Addams Family's* often provocative approach to gender.

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