

Appendix B

History of the Word "Gothic" and its Connotations

The word "Gothic" is evocative. It is likely that many readers first picked up this book with no real understanding of the ancient Germanic tribes which belonged to the Gothic nation. Rather they thought of girls in whiteface make up and black dress with multiple facial piercings. The current connotations of "Gothic" run in the direction of fanciful medieval architecture or horror and vampire fiction. How did this happen? Is there a legitimate connection between and among the various connotations of the word "Goth" or "Gothic"? To answer these questions in context we will have to make a thorough study of the words "Goth" and "Gothic" through history.

The history of the word in antiquity is well discussed by Wolfram Herwig (1988, pp. 19-35). The name "Goths" first appears in Latin writings in the early first century CE. It first turns up as a reflection of a derivative weak noun, *Gutones*, which could mean either "the young Goths," or "the great Goths." A strong form, *Guti*, appears in writing around 150 CE. The former is used in the *Germania* of Tacitus, where the Gothones are located east of the lower Vistula river. The weak form with the -one suffix soon disappeared from the record, and only the strong form without the suffix persisted.

In pre-Christian antiquity the Goths connoted no more than one of the any Germanic "barbarians." The name did tend to replace the designation "Scythian" which had been used for peoples of the Russian steppe since the time of Herodotus. This first lent the Goths an aura of ferocity and cultural greatness, as the Scythians had been so considered by the Greeks. This "confusion" of the Goths with North Iranian peoples (Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans, Getae) was somewhat justified in that the Goths did to some extent meld with these peoples, however, the Gothic language, law and religion tended to dominate the symbiotic group.

For the most part during the ancient and medieval periods, the name Goth first denoted the Gothic people, an East Germanic tribal group. But beyond this it connoted two different things south and north of the Alps. To the south what was "Gothic" was fierce, warlike and destructive of civilization. Why? Because the Goths had defeated the Romans at Adrianople and killed the Emperor Valens, had sacked the Eternal City of Rome itself, had come to dominate the ancient Roman heartland under Theodoric, and had established their own non-Roman kingdoms in Italy, Gaul and Iberia. In short, the Goths were historical villains because they had overcome Rome in some symbolic sense. As Rome was symbolically identical with all things good and right—

regardless of whether pagan or Christian — the Goths must therefore represent the opposite. (This point psychologically indicates also the degree to which the Roman Catholic Church was merely another representation of *Romanitas*, or Roman imperial policy in a cultural sense.)

In the Middle Ages these opinions lingered, but Gothic prestige was also recognized in the south, most especially in Spain. The attitudes expressed at the 1434 ecclesiastical conference in Basel, where Spanish and Swedish delegates argued their countries' relative merits based on how "Gothic" they were, already demonstrates the persistence of this idea from antiquity.

With the Italian Renaissance, beginning in the 15th century, writers began to use the terms Goth and Gothic in increasingly negative ways. The Goth was the "anti-Roman," or anti-Classical symbol *par excellence*. Again proponents of Classical aesthetics made historical and cultural villains of the Goths. In the 1600s a "Goth" could mean a "rude, uncivilized, or ignorant person, one devoid of culture and taste." (*Oxford English Dictionary*) In this vein the particular "northern" style of medieval architecture which swept out of the north after around 1200 was also first called "Gothic" in the 1600s.

So in the 17th century we see that the term "Gothic," besides including the Germanic tribes of ancient history, also denoted 1) uncivilized, 2) Germanic in general, 3) medieval (non-classical), and 4) a style of architecture with pointed arches and tall pointed spires as well as a style of printed written character that looked like medieval letters.

Taking this into account, many political and social philosophers and reformers gravitated toward the new-found positive aspects of this set of ideas which were originally formulated to be largely pejorative. The Goth continued to be the quintessential anti-Roman symbol to Protestant thinkers of northern Europe who were critical of the Roman Catholic Church of the day. The Goth stood for the individual and liberty, the Roman for tyranny and absolutism. This historical-political symbology was more prominent in people's minds in the 1600–1700s than were the aesthetic labels.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s these ideas continued, but as the 19th century wore on, the Gothic revolutionary zeal was increasingly replaced by dark romantic longings. The Gothic became synonymous with the North. Northern Europeans, the English, Germans and Scandinavians, all to one degree or another identified themselves ancestrally with the Goths (even if this was only understood as a more Romantic term for "Germanic" in general). The Age of Romanticism idealized the "noble savage," so even if one accepted the (historically erroneous) idea that the Goths were violent savages, one could now all the more idealize them. They were our dark and half forgotten ancestors, they lived in a past age made dim with the mists of time,

they were free and natural men, their sense of beauty was tinged with the sublime, and the Romantic sought to evoke this almost lost spirit.

Gothic literature, that category of literature comprising notions of Gothic romance and Gothic horror, can be said to begin with Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*, subtitled "a Gothic story." This style of literature only became in any sense popular in the 1790s with such "bestsellers" as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk* (1796). Such literature is characterized by certain themes, settings, characters, aesthetic sense or philosophical viewpoints. The most typical set of circumstances in an archetypal Gothic novel include a strong-willed and intelligent young heroine who goes to live in an ancient palatial mansion in the remote countryside, where a powerful and mysterious nobleman resides, both enthralling and terrifying her. Prominent themes include a pervading atmosphere of darkness, the mysterious, and the supernatural, the presence of some ancestral hereditary sin or curse affecting the present. The atmosphere is charged with emotional extremes of passion and terror— both psychological and physical. The setting is most usually a gloomy and crumbling old house, or even a medieval castle or ruined monastery, and most often in a rural location. The remote locations evoked the heathen past, the outsider existence, beyond the bounds of civilization. The anti-Roman Gothic sentiment even found expression in the idea of the medieval Catholic Church being supported by cruel laws and exquisite tortures used to enforce that law, coupled with superstitious rituals. Gothic novels are populated with a series of often archetypal characters: a heroine who is often a governess or new bride, the brooding demonic and darkly handsome Byronic hero/villain, misfit servants, precocious children, and sometimes a mad relative in the attic or basement. Of course, the ghosts of dead ancestors also not seldom walk the halls. The aesthetic sense projected in these novels is one which emphasizes darkness and the inevitable decay of human creations. The sense of beauty is clearly that of the *sublime*— something which stimulates fascination and horror at the same time. Here the philosophy underlying the Gothic romance becomes more obvious. It is linked to the remote (ancient/ancestral) world, ruled by strong emotion, rejecting the "enlightened" smugness of the Age of Reason, and embracing the wild inner landscapes of nightmare and imagination.

The period of dominance for the Gothic aesthetic spanned the century between the 1790s and 1890s. However, the genre and all its thematic variations continued to find lively voices in the 20th century. Germanic Gothic influences were strongly felt in early horror films, especially those made in Germany and those produced in the United States at Universal Studios under the German immigrant Carl Laemmle.

The ideas of Gothic romance informed new generations of writers of novels as well. But more and more it was the horrific elements of the Gothic which resonated with the generation known as "monster kids" (those whose imaginations were formed between about 1950 and 1968). These went on to create dark visions which inspired yet a younger generation of neo-Romantics and "Goth girls."

In summary, the word "Gothic" went from describing an ancient Germanic tribe, to being a general designation for all such ancestral tribes, to becoming a metaphor for all things pertaining to the dim, mysterious past. It became synonymous with "a metaphysical North." One set of philosophical thinkers used this symbol to describe freedom-loving, individualistic Northman as opposed to the Roman who is content living under tyrannical slavery. On the other hand more artistic thinkers took this idea of the North and emphasized the emotional, inner (dark) world of the ancestral soul slumbering deeply within and awaiting rediscovery. In a sense there was a psychogeography at work— that which was Northern was dark, inward and remote — unconscious — while that which as Southern was bright, outward and present— conscious. The Romantic Gothicists embraced the inner world of their souls and its dark imaginings.

Appendix C The Spiritual Heritage of the Goths

By Bishop X, GCG

The ancient ways of the Goths provide for us an esoteric context for understanding an essential part of our own heritage. The nature of these ancient traditions should be reviewed and focused upon if the message of Edred's present work is to be understood for what it is, or can be. In this work we see both the principle of development and tradition. That is, there is *development* over time, which allows for adaptation to existing and changing conditions, and there is the *essence* of tradition which hones in on the eternal values which are transmitted over time. At present the Gothic heritage is at a low point in its long history. Forgotten more than ever among the peoples in the traditional lands of the final Gothic stands — southern France and northern Spain — the heritage awaits a new awakening.

To describe the essence of the Gothic heritage, we must look at certain essential elements: the *anseis*, *stabeis*, the nature of God, the nature of the world, the nature of man as well as the institutions in the present world which are prepared to receive and carry on this heritage. Despite the hundreds of details which might be chalked up to the Gothic spirit, these are the elements which are essential, which we cannot live without in the Gothic realms.

The *anseis* are the ancestral gods. They are embodiments of the divine and they are encoded in the flesh of their descendants, as alluded to in Edred's seminal article "The Gothick God of Darkness." (There I feel sure that he meant "darkness" as a symbol of the *inner* world, not really anything "sinister.") The *anseis* are divine in that they are immortal and greater in being and consciousness than mortal and ignorant men. Yet they dwell not only above us, but also within us. The *anseis* are our spiritual selves. They can become incarnate in the world and carry out special missions. Each Goth carries within himself a divine nature, that of the *anseis*— a nature of which he remains more or less ignorant until he undertakes heroic-spiritual work.

The *stabeis* — the elemental letters of the Gothic alphabet — are seen as a roadmap to the world and self. They are the objects of study undertaken by the individual in order to become more aware of the divine-heroic nature slumbering within. The letters are specific and particular *Gothic* expressions of the secrets or mysteries expressed in the ancestral runes. In order to gain the deepest possible understanding

of letters, they must be meditated upon both in their own right and to some extent in connection with the older runes and the Greek letters. (However, it would be a mistake to try to understand the *stabeis* entirely in terms of the runes— the *stabeis* are culturally universal signs.)

In the Gothic tradition the nature of God is grasped in the following way. God is the good (*þiub*). God is the One— in it is everything and nothing. God is the Father (origin) of all. God is light. His absolute godhead is transcendent, immortal and unchanging. That is, it is an absolute state of independence, permanence and perfection. From its fortress the Father engendered a first Son, who created everything that is good in the world and he used in his construction the plan inherent in the Holy Spirit— the eternal framework of being. This is the triad of the divine, the Father-Son and Holy Spirit. The Son gave rise to an innumerable — but not infinite — number of spirits who are the *anseis*.

The Son also gave rise to the world through an act of self-sacrifice before time began. The crucifixion and resurrection of the Son was a cosmic event before it was ever a “historical” one. This Son has become an incarnate being at various times in the past, present and will so again in times to come as humanity Needs him and his Message.

The Gothic tradition says this about the nature of the world in which we live: Humanity lives in the midst of the world. This middle-position — *midjungards* — is not related to physical space, but rather to abstract and moral being. There is a realm which is superior to the middle and one that is inferior to it.

The character of mankind is seen thusly in the Gothic tradition: Each individual is endowed with a divine spark, this is the *ansus* within. The individual is also endowed with the freedom to chose good or evil at every moment of life. We know that our homeland is above, with God, but the Evil One and its minions often fool us into believing it is below, in destruction. Every individual is destined to return to his divinity. In order to learn or our true natures it is necessary to have Teachers, leading-men or heroes, who show us the way.

Part of the past of our tradition is the subject of Edred’s present book. I would be remiss if I did not at least mention the institutions which carry forth the Gothic tradition in its present form in the world today. These institutions have in the recent past been virtually secret, truly esoteric bodies. Some are members of them who are as yet unaware of their places in these bodies. It is hoped that this book will awaken their spirits. One such institution is the Gothic Church of God. It has twenty-seven living bishops around the world, many of whom remain hidden and unknown. If the contents of this book have awakened you to the knowledge that you may be one of these, write to the publisher of this book for further direction.

The structure of the GCG is made up on twenty-seven bishops and any number of parish priests with independent congregations. Priests are ordained by bishops. The teachings of the church can to some extent be gleaned from this book, and most especially from this appendix. But some of it remains secret.

This book has shown the secret of the Goths to be evidenced in their persistent identity and solidarity in the face of adversity and hostility in the world— history awaits a new generation of Gothic heroes to make manifest once more this ancestral spiritual heritage.

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Appendix D

The Gothic Mission Today

Today in the western world we find ourselves in a state of decay, of anomie and confusion. We have lost our own authentic ways and are thus threatened all around and from within by hostile forces. The situation we find ourselves in is not unlike that of the collapsing Roman Empire. Some Fundamentalist Christian sects like to point to this fact as a "sign" that their historicized, and "dumbed-down," Apocalypse is neigh. Their sci-fi vision is the least likely. More likely is a repeat of what happened at the collapse of the actual Roman Empire. We have seen how an authentic tribal group, the Goths, were then able to pick up the broken pieces of the Empire and forge a new world from a synthesis of what remained and their own authentic elements. This process was one deeply imbued with the idea of Mystery — of *Rûna* — which led to new discoveries and which in turn was expressed in the well-known and much documented *heroic action* of the Goths.

How does Mystery lead to Action?

This is the new mission of the Goths in the present world.

The mysteries of the Goths raise more questions than answers. As such they are true mysteries, not merely conventional secrets. A true mystery inspires the subject, and thereby informs the subject in subtle ways which transcend mere factual information. A mystery is a mode of inspiring subjective, inner, excitement which fuels a quest for discovery.

Such a quest, undertaken rightly, inevitably leads to the discovery of many objective facts and realities. New lands are discovered and conquered during the ensuing migrations. Thus was the spirit of the ancient Goths. It is this spirit which today moves those inspired by the Goths of old to undertake their own mysterious voyages of discovery and great migrations of the soul. By delving into the specifically Gothic image and lore in history the voyager will discover the Germanic system of values.

Once this discovery is made a mysterious force moves the subject to action. The first sort of action required is inner. It requires the subject to come to a deep conviction of the rightness and genuineness of his feelings. This inner conviction is nurtured and facilitated by an infinite number of objective facts discovered along the way, but it takes on a life of its own deep within the soul. Such a conviction becomes the unshakable foundation of the person's being. This inner life is at the root of what appears to be a Gothic cultural obsession. Nothing else quite explains the centuries of utter fascination of western culture with the shadowy image of the Goths. From this inner foundation — and

only from this inner foundation — effective outward action becomes possible. The historical Goths were a people of action— they did things. They moved across vast expanses, they fought in wars, they transformed religions and empires. But their secret, their mystery, lies in the idea that this action was motivated by an eternal source of life.

The mission of the Goths in the world today is the same as it was then. To follow the Gothic way is to seek the mysterious, be inspired to discover the unknown. Beyond this, however, the Gothic spirit calls upon us to act heroically on what it is we actually discover and to act in full awareness that one is remanifesting out of the shadows what is real and eternally valid and vital.

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