



Contemporary Gothic (Focus on Contemporary Issues (FOCI))

Catherine Spooner

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Modern Gothic culture alternately fascinates, horrifies, or bewilders many of us. We cringe at pictures of Marilyn Manson, cheer for Buffy in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and try not to stare at the pierced and tattooed teens we pass on the streets. But what is it about this dark and morbidly morose aesthetic that fascinates us today? In *Contemporary Gothic*, Catherine Spooner probes the reasons behind the prevalence of the Gothic in popular culture and how it has inspired innovative new work in film, literature, music, and art.

Spooner traces the emergence of the Gothic subculture over the past few decades and examines the various aspects of contemporary society that revolve around the grotesque, abject, and artificial. The Gothic is continually resituated in different spheres of culture, she reveals, as she explores the transplantation of the “street” Goth style to haute couture runway looks by fashion designers. The Gothic also appears in a number of surprisingly diverse representations, and Spooner considers them all, from the artistic excesses of Jake and Dinos Chapman to the fashions of Alexander McQueen, and from the mind-bending films of David Lynch to the abnormal postmodern subjects of Joel-Peter Witkin’s photography.

In an engaging way, *Contemporary Gothic* argues that this style ultimately balances a number of contradictions—the grotesque and incorporeal, authentic self-expression and campiness, mass popularity and cult appeal, comfort and outrage—and these contradictions make the Gothic a crucial expression of contemporary cultural currents. Whether seeking to understand the stories behind the TV show *Supernatural* or to extract deeper meanings from modern literature, *Contemporary Gothic* is a lively and virtually unparalleled study of the modern Gothic sensibility that pervades popular culture today.

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