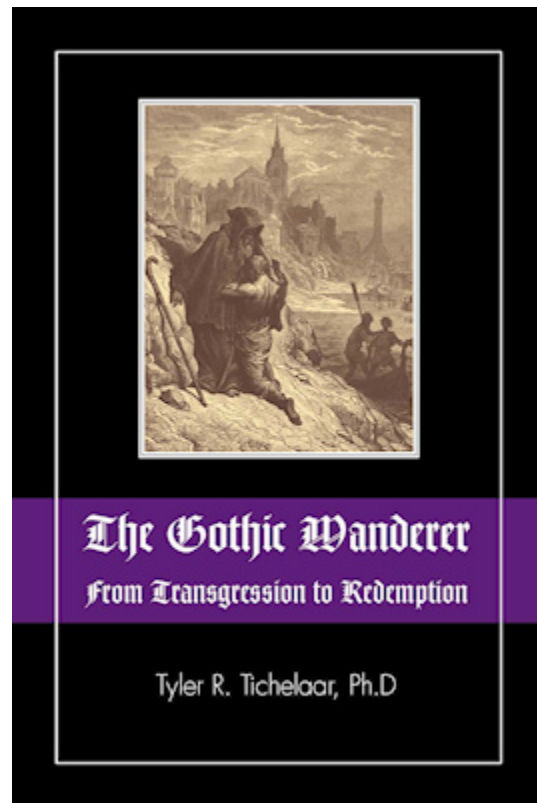


*The Gothic Wanderer: From Transgression to Redemption*  
*Gothic Fiction 1794-Present*

A Discussion Guide for Students and Instructors



by Tyler R. Tichelaar Ph.D.

Modern History Press

Copyright 2012 Tyler R. Tichelaar, Ph.D.

Instructors may obtain a desk copy or review copy by contacting Modern History Press at [info@modernhistorypress.com](mailto:info@modernhistorypress.com).

This work is published under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License.

You are free to copy, distribute, and transmit the work.

The following conditions apply:

Attribution - You must attribute the work to Tyler R. Tichelaar and mention our web address [www.GothicWanderer.com](http://www.GothicWanderer.com)

Noncommercial - You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

## Foreword

This instructor's manual is intended to assist the teacher of Gothic studies with questions for classroom discussion. The questions pertain to the various pieces of Gothic literature discussed in *The Gothic Wanderer*, as well as various Gothic elements and themes highlighted, and perhaps most importantly, Gothic literature's value and relevance to contemporary students' lives and to the twenty-first century.

The increased interest in the Gothic in recent years has led to it permeating people's lives in numerous ways from popular films and books to fashion and even the Goth lifestyle. Horrific events in recent years—the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks; the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; the revolutions in Libya, Egypt, and elsewhere; fears of biological weapons; the swine and bird flu; criminal behavior by politicians, corporations, and clergy; school shootings; bombings; and countless other terrors—have led to many people having more cynical, existential, and pessimistic views of the world. Students may feel attracted to the Gothic from a sense of identifying with it as reflecting the real world around them. Therefore, the Gothic remains intensely relevant to our lives today.

My wish is that this instructor's manual will allow educators to introduce their students to the Gothic in a way that brushes away the cobwebs on what may be perceived as old, dusty texts from two centuries ago. Students will hopefully awaken to the realization that the Gothic captures the beginnings of the modern world and all the fears that accompanied it as monarchy was replaced with democracy and the agrarian world was replaced by an industrial and more recently a technological one. The same fears that initiated Gothic fiction remain with us today: To what extent is man able to experiment with Nature? Is there a God watching over us, and if so will He punish us for our mistakes? Is there such a place as home and where can one find it? Is the family a sacred unit, and what happens when it falls apart?

Any student who has known the effects of divorce in his or her life, who has lost a loved one, who has watched his best efforts result in failure, who has experienced a broken heart, who has known any feeling of pain or suffering, will identify with the Gothic tradition if it is introduced as significantly speaking to his or her life just as it spoke to the lives of its eighteenth and nineteenth century readers. In some sense, we are all Gothic wanderers, looking for some source of meaning and purpose in our lives, regretting our mistakes and hoping for the best for our futures. If the Gothic does not give us a balm to ease our suffering, it gives us room to discuss it, and in the discussion, perhaps meaning will be found.

Tyler R. Tichelaar, Ph.D.

Marquette, Michigan

October 21, 2012

## **Introduction: Our Long Love Affair with the Gothic**

1. Tyler Tichelaar's interest in the Gothic began early as a child. Can you relate to any of his experiences—did you have favorite movies, books, toys that made you interested in the Gothic even if you didn't at the time know it by that term?
2. The Gothic holds our attention for its suspense and an underlying desire in us to be frightened. Why do you think people enjoy being scared?
3. Tyler uses the Gothic as a metaphor for difficult times in life—what times in your life have seemed like moments of horror and how did you get through them?
4. Do you see society today as Gothic in any way?

## **PART I**

### **Creating the Gothic Wanderer**

## **Chapter I: The Gothic Wanderer's Origins in the French Revolution**

1. The Gothic depicts and fears transgressions against patriarchy. What if any forms of patriarchy and patriarchal institutions exist in the world today?
2. Today we hear a lot about family values and conservative politics generally cite anything they disagree with in relation to hurting the family, such as gay marriage. To what extent do you think the family is a central unit of society that must be protected at all costs? What is capable of destroying the family unit?
3. Arguments against the French Revolution included that a rebellion against the king and government was equivalent to a rebellion against God. Was there any truth to this argument? Do you feel God concerns Himself with political factions or governments, whether they are right or wrong?
4. Conspiracy theories surrounded the French Revolution. What kinds of conspiracies are you aware of today? To what extent do you think they are a form of paranoia, and to what extent might they be true?
5. From what you know about the French Revolution, do you think it was justified, and do you think it ultimately made life better or worse for the French people?

## Chapter II: *Paradise Lost* and the Legitimacy of Transgression

1. William Blake said that Milton was “of the Devil’s party without knowing it.” Do you feel that Satan’s arguments in *Paradise Lost* are reasonable and his rebellion against God in any way justified?
2. An act of transgression is one of committing wrongdoing against some higher moral or institutional law. How would you define transgression or sin? Are there absolutes that count as transgressions, or are they all subject to gray areas. For example, would murdering a king be a sin no matter whether or not the king was a tyrant?
3. Eve’s sin is that she ate the apple and sought forbidden knowledge. Do you believe such a thing as forbidden knowledge exists? What today might be perceived as a form of forbidden knowledge?
4. Tichelaar argues that the feminine Gothic justifies Eve’s quest for forbidden knowledge. Do you feel she was justified?
5. Lewis and Radcliffe, in terms of writing masculine and feminine Gothics, may be seen as having different world views. What would you describe as their world views? Which one is closer to your own world view?

### **Chapter III: The Wandering Jew**

1. The Wandering Jew figure was popular in the nineteenth century but today would be seen as politically incorrect. Do you feel the figure deserves attention regardless? Does it shed any light on Christian and Jewish relationships from the past?
2. Have you ever committed a transgression, crime, or simply done something you regretted that ate away at you like the Ancient Mariner experiences? To what extent is such guilt healthy or unhealthy?
3. Living in the twenty-first century when many no longer go to church, do you feel the religious themes that permeate Gothic texts are exaggerations and no longer depict realistic concerns? Were they realistic in their depictions of religion at the time they were written?
4. Could a novel about the Wandering Jew today be effective?
5. Transgressions are frequently depicted on television in the form of crime dramas. Cain's sin was one of murder—is there any room for sympathy for murderers in the twenty-first century and are they viewed differently from how the Gothic depicts them in the nineteenth century?



## Chapter IV: The Rosicrucian Gothic Wanderer

1. The Rosicrucian movement is not as popular as it once was, but what other secret society type groups, such as the Masons, are you familiar with? Do you think such organizations really have secrets that would aid society? Or are they unorthodox and to be avoided?
2. Much of what the Rosicrucians believed in was a striving to help humans be better. Today they might be considered New Age or spiritual as opposed to religious. Many people today will identify themselves as being spiritual but not religious. What do you think is the difference? Is there any danger in holding your own spiritual beliefs without being associated with an orthodox religion?
3. St. Leon strives to use his knowledge to help the Hungarian people, to relieve their suffering, but his efforts largely backfire on him and he is aware that his desire to help others is largely due to his own yearning to be loved and admired. Do you feel St. Leon was a good or a selfish person? Do you think most humanitarians today are truly selfless or do we need to be concerned about their ulterior motives?
4. In a lengthy passage describing his relationship with Bethlem Gabor, St. Leon describes the impossibility of finding a true friend—that ultimately people are too different and in the end “we finish with a distant respect, where we looked for a commingling soul.” Do you think St. Leon describes friendship accurately? Is it the human condition to be fated never to be able to connect wholly with another person, which leaves us feeling like solitary wanderers upon the earth?
5. If you possessed the Rosicrucian secrets of the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life, could you have done better than St. Leon or the other Rosicrucian characters in this chapter? What do you perceive as their flaws that hold them back from truly being benefactors to themselves and mankind?
6. Do you feel the Gothic exaggerates the curses associated with the Rosicrucian secrets—would immortality or extreme wealth be a curse truly, or is the Gothic’s Christian worldview what colors them to seem like curses?

## Chapter V: Gambling as Gothic Transgression

1. Today gambling is a popular form of entertainment. Do you feel the Gothic view of gambling as a transgression to be extreme?
2. Do you know anyone who gambles extensively to the ruin of his own or his family's destruction?
3. Gambling can occur in many ways, not only in terms of money, but any time we take a risk or rely upon chance. When have you made a gamble in your life?
4. Do you feel any moral stigma should be associated with gambling? Is a person who earns money through hard work a better person than one who receives it by the luck of gambling?
5. Could the argument against gambling be seen as a way for the upper class to keep down the lower class whose members may have no other hope than gambling to raise its social status? Is the transgression argument then false and merely another way to keep people in their place?
6. Do you agree that gambling can offer an escape from the boredom and anxieties of life just like an addiction to drugs, alcohol, or sex? While addictions are harmful, are they truly transgressions or simply human shortcomings that deserve sympathy and proper treatment?

## **PART II**

### **Subversive Gothic Wanderers**

## Chapter VI: “A Wandering Jewess”: Fanny Burney’s *The Wanderer* as Gothic Novel

1. A major theme in Burney’s *The Wanderer* is the difficulty for women to find rewarding work or even work that pays a fair wage. What work experiences have you had that might be comparable to those depicted in *The Wanderer*?
2. Do you feel *The Wanderer* contains sufficient Gothic elements to be termed a Gothic novel?
3. When Juliet first arrives in England, she is largely mistreated by the other women who feel themselves superior to her. What experiences have you had that might be similar, where you have been mistreated by those who think themselves your social superiors, or have you ever mistreated someone the way Juliet was treated, and why?
4. *The Wanderer* is the first novel to use Gothic elements that is set in the contemporary period rather than decades or centuries earlier. Do you think this difference made Burney’s novel more or less powerful to readers? Is a Gothic novel set in the twenty-first century more or less frightening to you than one set in the eighteenth century?
5. Why do you think *The Wanderer* has been largely forgotten and ignored by readers and critics for nearly two centuries?
6. Is Burney justified in her depictions of Juliet rejecting Romantic views of Nature and pastoral life?
7. Do you feel the Gothic offers a more realistic view of life than Romanticism?

## Chapter VII: The Existential Gothic Wanderer: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*

1. Why do you think *Frankenstein* has remained in the popular imagination while other Gothic novels previously treated in this study have not?
2. *Frankenstein*'s themes about science trying to play God in terms of creating life remain relevant today. Arguments against cloning and stem cell research also suggest man is trying to play God. Do you agree and do you think the disasters that resulted for Victor Frankenstein in creating a Monster are believable as devastating results similar to what might happen today?
3. Many Gothic novels—*Frankenstein* and *Melmoth the Wanderer* for example—use frames with stories inside of stories. Why do you think the Gothic lends itself to this form, and do you feel it is effective?
4. Many modern critics have compared the plague in *The Last Man* to the AIDS epidemic and other diseases like the swine flu or to biological warfare. Do you feel human extinction is a real possibility and how does that possibility affect your view of life?
5. Tichelaar describes Shelley as writing within the Existential or Negative Romanticism traditions. Do you think Romanticism or Negative Romanticism and Existentialism offer a more truthful view of the world?

## **PART III**

### **From Transgression to Redemption**

## Chapter VIII: Teufelsdröckh as Gothic Wanderer and Everyman: Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*

1. Many Gothic works contain “fragments.” To what extent do you think the fragments collected in *Sartor Resartus* are an attempt to create meaning from what is otherwise confusing or scattered. Would you agree or disagree that life itself is a series of fragmented episodes we try to weave together from which we make meaning? Could meaning just be a mental construct, and if so, is there any truth to it?
2. Teufelsdröckh goes through very difficult times in his life, moving into the Everlasting No, the Centre of Indifference, and then The Everlasting Yea. Have you ever gone through a similar time of hopeless despair and did you reach your own Everlasting Yea? How did your Everlasting Yea differ from or mirror what Teufelsdröckh experiences?
3. Do you agree with Carlyle that Christianity must be reclothed, made new. Is Christianity holding the human race back in any way? What should be changed? How should it be renewed?
4. Do you believe the world is a reflection of Natural Supernaturalism—that we are ourselves ghosts, and consequently, we need not fear the seemingly Gothic world because we have a heavenly home to return to?
5. Carlyle proposes the Gospel of Work as the solution to human problems. Do you agree? Considering the trials and tribulations Juliet experienced in the workforce in *The Wanderer*, do you think fulfilling work is possible, and if it is, is it the end all? Is it more important than human relationships?

**Chapter IX: The Gothic Wanderer Redeemed: Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni* and Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities***

1. Do you feel Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni* is an improvement on the depiction of Rosicrucians by his Gothic predecessors?
2. Dickens depicts the Industrial Revolution as a place of Gothic horrors in such works as *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Do you feel such comparisons are warranted?
3. Dickens depicts the French Revolution as full of horror, yet in the end Sidney Carton has a vision of a great new land and people rising from its ruins. Do you feel Carton is realistic in his vision?
4. Tichelaar does not emphasize Madame Defarge's role in *A Tale of Two Cities*, but her desire for revenge for her sister's rape triggers the danger to Darnay and Carton's sacrifice. To what extent do you believe Madame Defarge's behavior justified? Is her death justified? Is she, while not a transgressor, a more Gothic horror than the transgressors themselves?
5. What parallels might you draw between the French Revolution and more recent revolutions such as those in the Middle East? Are they similar in their goals or results? Are they justifiable?
6. Dickens' famous opening line "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" refers to the years just prior to the French Revolution. Might the same statement be used to discuss our world today? Is the world becoming better or worse, more or less Gothic?



## Chapter X: The Gothic Wanderer at Rest: *Dracula* and the Vampiric Tradition

1. Do you believe Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* is of any value in understanding the Gothic tradition? Is it of literary value or just an angry diatribe against Lord Byron? Is a romantic relationship that goes wrong a fair comparison to a Gothic experience?
2. In Polidori's *The Vampyre*, money and blood are correlated. What correlations can you find between the two in the modern world? For example, would you agree that capitalism is akin to vampirism? What about socialism?
3. *Varney the Vampyre* was a penny dreadful and one of numerous Victorian works that were serialized. Today television programs and even serialized e-books continue this tradition. Do you feel the Gothic lends itself well to this format?
4. Why do you think Bram Stoker relied so much on Catholicism in *Dracula* when it was derided so much in earlier Gothic works?
5. Tichelaar's subtitle *From Transgression to Redemption* suggests that the Gothic Wanderer figure is able to be redeemed by the end of the nineteenth century—do you feel *Dracula* or other Victorian works such as *Varney the Vampyre* or *A Tale of Two Cities* offer sufficient redemption for the Gothic Wanderer figure?
6. *Dracula* remains arguably the most popular and most influential Gothic novel of all time. Why do you think it retains a hold on our imaginations while other novels like *Melmoth the Wanderer*, *St. Leon*, or even *The Mysteries of Udolpho* have been largely forgotten?

## Chapter XI: Modern Interpretations: from Wanderer to Superhero

1. Tichelaar suggests, citing *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*, that the discovery of evolution may have been the most horrifying Gothic experience possible for the Victorians. Does evolution in any way frighten you, or specifically, the notion that perhaps God is not watching over man or that man was created in God's image? If God does not exist, is the world a Gothic place as a result?
2. Tichelaar briefly discusses the imperial Gothic—foreign lands lent themselves to Gothic fiction because they were unfamiliar to readers. To what extent do you think what we fear is really the result of our lack of knowledge about it?
3. Do you agree with Tichelaar that superheroes are literary descendants of the Gothic tradition? How about comic book villains?
4. To what extent do you see authors like Anne Rice and Stephenie Meyer writing within the Gothic's vampire tradition, and what are their significant departures from it?
5. Tichelaar does not discuss zombie fiction. Where do you feel it fits into the Gothic tradition and is it part of the Gothic evolution, or is the zombie figure less effective than other Gothic figures?
6. Do you think the Gothic is more relevant today than it was in the past?
7. What additional Gothic works are you familiar with that were not included in this study but would add to the discussion?
8. In what direction do you believe the Gothic will go as society continues to change? Do you believe its popularity will increase or lessen?

## About the Author



Tyler R. Tichelaar holds a Ph.D. in Literature from Western Michigan University, and Bachelor and Master's Degrees in English from Northern Michigan University. He has penned numerous historical novels, including *The Marquette Trilogy*, the award-winning *Narrow Lives*, and *Spirit of the North: a paranormal romance*. His other scholarly works include *King Arthur's Children: a Study in Fiction and Tradition*. He is currently working on an Arthurian historical fantasy series, beginning with *King Arthur's Legacy*, in which he intends to weave many Gothic elements, based upon his research in writing *The Gothic Wanderer*.

For more information about Tyler R. Tichelaar and his books, visit him at:

[www.GothicWanderer.com](http://www.GothicWanderer.com)

[www.MarquetteFiction.com](http://www.MarquetteFiction.com)

[www.ChildrenofArthur.com](http://www.ChildrenofArthur.com)

