

In the Darkness, Something will Grow

by [Andy Thomas](#) (September 2020)



The Tales of Hoffman, Hein Heckroth, 1950

In my early twenties, I was a Goth. I'd paint my face white with makeup I bought from a theatrical shop and paint around my eyes in black. I wasn't very good with the makeup and so would apply it with abandon and a shovel.

I got the idea from *Siouxsie and Banshees*. I knew nothing of their music and didn't even listen to it until much later. I just knew I loved the look, especially Siouxsie's

makeup—bold, uncompromising and no half measures. I guess it became a way for me to express something which wasn't allowed to be expressed back then—inner unhappiness and *rebellion* against all that caused it but which I did not understand.

However, the Banshees became about so much more than looks for me. If that's all they were, my interest would not have held. When I got around to listening to their music, I connected with it. There were hidden depths in the lyrics and a kind of Banshee signature in the riffs—all of which I loved.

Before I go any further, perhaps I have been a little remiss in allowing you think that I *used* to dress like this in my youth and I'm all grown up and completely normal now. So in the interests of full disclosure, when I feel I have had enough of sanity, I occasionally still do dress like this. As a side, it was only a few years ago that I learned that my Victorian-looking grandfather used to engage in similar antics back in the 60s and 70s, and I have to wonder whether I've inherited some weird genetic mutation from his side of the family.

More seriously, however, I feel that subcultures of various forms are an essential part of a healthy society, for they guard against culture becoming too conformist and too stagnant. (Countercultures, on the other hand, I would suggest are different because they ultimately advocate for the destruction of the host culture.) In more recent times I joined up with a friend of mine, Dark Angel (many of us have Gothic names), to produce a series of short subculture films of our own devising. Dark Angel runs a group for Goths in Manchester, but the wider Goth scene seems to be dying. She told me of how she had hoped that groups like hers would spread and I suggested that I had some ideas on the matter. So, together, we dreamt up what we called [The Gothic Alliance](#).

The films were made during lockdown with Dark Angel's narrative (below) recorded over a mobile phone. She is perhaps

one of only a few people I have met who can give a lengthy unscripted monologue like this, but I know it to be from the heart and that's important. I'm not exactly sure what these films are, but I suppose they are intended to express the need for something more than that offered by the way we are living now.

Much of what we wrote seems very poignant to me in light of recent events. However, The Gothic Alliance is meant to stand alone and not be connected with current affairs, so I feel it would be inappropriate of me to comment here on matters not related to its formation. I will say that much of it was envisioned toward the end of 2019 and we drew primarily on personal experience rather than current events. I know that Dark Angel would not mind if I were to say that we are both have an outsider's perspective on things. This does not mean that we are disassociated from all things, but neither of us regard ourselves to be "mainstream" –no Goth does.

For myself, I have long had the terrible sense that things which were once of value to human beings have been abandoned and (almost) no one can see it. It amuses to think that this would, perhaps, make the basis of a quintessential Gothic novel—an outsider who sees things others can't and so is imprisoned in an asylum where he realises, to his horror, that he is the only living human being who is actually sane.

Has it not become colder? Is it not more and more night coming on all the time? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? –Friedrich Nietzsche, The Parable of the Madman, *The Gay Science*, 1882

Indeed, we are still living with the consequences of 18th and 19th century science which brought enlightenment to

all that which was once mysterious. A revolution it certainly was, for we surpassed the ancients, discovered that the same laws which apply here on Earth apply in the heavens also, and we learned how to automate work and, in recent times, information. Things which once took effort, time and skill have been reduced to a “click” and a “like” and, no doubt, we could automate this as well.

As a child, I recall playing a “ghost themed” board game. It involved the throw of a dice and was based on snakes and ladders. I was just learning to program my 8-bit home computer at the time and enthusiastically took up the idea of implementing it as a computer game which you were to play against the computer. When it was your turn, you were to press a key and computer would throw an electronic dice and move your piece on the screen. Well, that was going to be the idea. However, I quickly realised that the requirement for a “key press” might just as well be skipped and the computer would simply play out the entire game on its own, in just a few seconds, without player involvement.

Ironic, isn't it? For what is a “ghost” if not that which has become disconnected from involvement?

I abandoned the project without quite understanding why it had lost its appeal—I only knew that the idea had begun to seem so utterly pointless.

How shall we, murderers of all murderers, console ourselves?

The Universe of Nietzsche's time was believed to be like “clockwork” and in uncovering its workings, as epitomised by *Laplace's Demon* of 1814, we destroyed mystery. However, despite its universal laws, the Universe is not like clockwork at all. Rather, it has infinite depth and lays down new levels of existence on top of the old once they become staid. It is a “magical” place where entropy can flow in reverse.

*The stars that shine and the stars that shrink
In the face of stagnation the water runs
Before your eyes –Dazzle, The Banshees*

New mysteries await us.

In the meantime, I long for things to be “real” and to mean something. I yearn for truth, hope and authenticity. By “truth”, I do not mean *divine absolute truth*—human truth will do provided it is honest.

In creating The Gothic Alliance, we eschewed any debate around what constitutes a “real Goth” and, instead, chose simply to define Goth as “the outsider”. However, it actually goes much deeper than that.

What gives rise to the outsider in the first place?

Gothic literature invariably centres around a mysterious figure who suffers dark terrors in some remote forbidding location, and no one epitomises Gothic this more so than the venerable Edgar Allan Poe.

In 1827, he penned *The Lake*:

*In spring of youth it was my lot
To haunt of the wide earth a spot
The which I could not love the less—
So lovely was the loneliness
Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
And the tall pines that tower'd around.*

*But when the Night had thrown her pall
Upon that spot, as upon all,
And the mystic wind went by
Murmuring in melody—
Then—ah then I would awake
To the terror of the lone lake.*

*Yet that terror was not fright,
But a tremulous delight—
A feeling not the jewelled mine
Could teach or bribe me to define—
Nor Love—although the Love were thine.*

*Death was in that poisonous wave,
And in its gulf a fitting grave
For him who thence could solace bring
To his lone imagining—
Whose solitary soul could make
An Eden of that dim lake.*

The apparent contradiction between the “solace” in and the “delight” of that which constitutes poison and terror may,

I guess, be open to interpretation. But I would suggest that Poe's sense of abandonment was imprinted in him at an early age, having lost his mother to consumption and discarded by his father while an infant. The spoiling and discipline he received later from his adopted parents were no substitute for love and belonging.

In the final stanza, we see laid bare the suffering of a haunted man who had come to be comforted by that which was, at least, the familiar. It is hard not to have compassion for Edgar. In the latter part of his life his young wife, Virginia, with whom by all accounts he had at last found a loving relationship, died a slow and agonising death having quite literally coughed out her lungs from consumption as his mother had. Edgar suffered bouts of alcoholism throughout his life and, while the true nature of his fate is not certain, one possible theory is that he fell victim to a cooping gang in 1849. [*]

Although Dark Angel and I recognise the macabre roots of Goth, The Gothic Alliance was itself conceived as an alternative to the romantic yet tragic narrative of Poe's poem—for its message is *not* to lie down and breath in the stagnant waters of *The Lake*, but to stand up and to stand tall! It is to stare long and hard into the abyss and not to plunge in but to step back! Death and adversity may indeed frame life, but we conceived of The Gothic Alliance as a celebration of life, not death. Our souls may be gnarled and knotted, perhaps, but we are all the more beautiful for it.

I cannot help but come to the conclusion that the choices we make actually matter in a way which is far more profound than we could possibly imagine, even when it appears that nothing matters. If existence lacks meaning, then it is

our role to create it. I think that is what we are put here to do.

[*] Cooping, common in the 1800s, was where people were kidnapped off the street and imprisoned, beaten and plied with alcohol in order to force them to participate in voting fraud.

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Andy Thomas is an independent software author and writer with working class roots in the north of England. He is what the liberal elites dislike: working class and largely self-educated. He holds a degree in Physics and Space Physics and began a career in spacecraft engineering but later moved into programming and telecommunications. He was among the first generation of school children who learned to program and was enthralled at the prospect of machine intelligence at a very young age. However, he regards much of what passes for “AI” in modern times as a nihilistic anathema. In more recent years, he has become interested in culture and the world of human affairs having rejected fashionable ideological notions of domestic violence. Instead, he subscribes to the understanding of inter-generational family abuse as offered by the works of Erin Pizzey. The current focus of his work is that of financial algorithmic trading. Despite this, or perhaps in part because of it, he is motivated by the philosophical

implications of science, the nature of nature, and the things in life which hold “value” and all that that means.

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