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Gothic, *adj.* and *n.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /'gɒθɪk/, U.S. /'gɑθɪk/

Forms: 16 **Gotic**, **Gotiq(ue)**, **Gothicke**, **Gottic**, **Gothi***q*, 16–17 **Gothique**, 16– **Gothic**.

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: < Latin *gothicus*, < *Gothi* (see **GOTH** *n.*). Compare French *gothique*.

A. *adj.*

1.

a. Of, pertaining to, or concerned with the Goths or their language.

- 1611 M. SMITH in *Bible* (King James) Transl. Pref. 5 Vlpilas is reported..to haue translated the Scriptures into the Gothicke tongue.
- 1776 E. GIBBON *Decline & Fall* I. x. 244 Cassiodorus gratified the inclination of the conquerors in a Gothic history.
- 1845 J. STODDART *Gram.* in *Encycl. Metrop.* 192/1 The Gothic substantive *leik*, body.
- 1892 WRIGHT (*title*) A Primer of the Gothic Language.

b. = **MOZARABIC** *adj.*

- 1867 tr. *P. Guéranger's Life St. Cecilia* xviii. 164 The Gothic Church of Spain, whose Liturgy was compiled by St. Leander, Archbishop of Seville.
- 1874 *Month* Feb. 223 The old Gothic or Mozarabic rite.
- 1911 E. B. O'REILLY *Heroic Spain* 235 The Christians who were under Moorish rule..kept to the old Gothic ritual.

†**2.** Formerly used in extended sense, now expressed by **TEUTONIC** *adj.* and *n.* or **GERMANIC** *adj.*¹ and *n.*

- 1647 N. BACON *Hist. Disc. Govt.* 96 Nor can any Nation upon earth shew so much of the ancient Gothique law as this Island hath.
- 1691 G. ETHEREGE *Let. to E. of M.* in *Hist. Adolphus* 72 A Taudry ill-bred Rump; Whose brawny Limbs, and martial Face Proclaim her of the Gothick Race.
- 1721 J. SWIFT *Let. to Pope* 10 Jan. in *Lett. Dr. Swift* (1741) 18 As to Parliaments, I adored the wisdom of that Gothic Institution, which made them Annual.
- 1735 VISCT. BOLINGBROKE *Diss. upon Parties* (ed. 2) 102 Maintaining the Freedom of our Gothick Institution of Government.
- 1832 F. PALGRAVE *Rise & Progr. Eng. Commonw.* I. 500 There is no Gothic feudality unless the parties

be connected by the mutual bond of Vassalage and Seigniory.

1837 J. R. McCulloch *Statist. Acct. Brit. Empire* I. II. 400 The Gothic blood would seem to have been preserved pretty pure in all the country to the north and east of the Severn and the Exe.

1857 F. D. Maurice *Epist. St. John* xx. 336 He raised up the Gothic or Teutonic race.

absolute.

1685 J. Dryden *Albion & Albanus* Pref. sig. (b) This Language [Italian] has in a manner been refin'd and purified from the Gothick, ever since the time of Dante.

3.

†**a.** Belonging to, or characteristic of, the Middle Ages; mediæval, 'romantic', as opposed to classical. In early use chiefly with reprobation: Belonging to the 'dark ages' (cf. sense **A. 4**). *Obsolete*. [Compare French *les siècles gothiques*.]

1695 [see sense **A. 4**].

1710 LD. Shaftesbury *Soliloquy* 65 [The Elizabethan dramatists] have withal been the first of Europeans, who since the Gothick Model of Poetry, attempted to throw off the horrid Discord of jingling Rhyme.

1762 R. Hurd *Lett. Chivalry & Romance* vii. 56 He [sc. Spenser] could have planned, no doubt, an heroic design on the exact classic model: Or, he might have trimmed between the Gothic and Classic, as his contemporary Tasso did... Under this idea then of a Gothic, not classical poem, the *Faery Queen* is to be read and criticized.

1765 H. Walpole (*title*) The Castle of Otranto, a Gothic Story.

1765 H. Walpole *Let. to Cole* 9 Mar. A very natural dream for a head filled like mine with gothic story.

1771 J. Beattie *Minstrel: Bk. 1st* xiii. 7 There lived in Gothic days, as legends tell, A shepherd-swain.

1771 J. Beattie *Minstrel: Bk. 1st* lxii. 32 Here pause, my Gothic lyre, a little while.

1773 S. Johnson *Let.* 21 Sept. (1992) II. 71 A Castle in Gothick romances.

1782 W. Cowper *Table Talk* in *Poems* 564 He sunk in Greece, in Italy he rose, And, tedious years of Gothic darkness past, Emerged all splendour in our isle at last.

b. A term for the style of architecture prevalent in Western Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, of which the chief characteristic is the pointed arch. Applied also to buildings, architectural details, and ornamentation. (Also *transferred* of the wing of an aeroplane).

The most usual names for the successive periods of this style in England are *Early English* (or *First Pointed*), *Decorated*, and *Perpendicular*.

Our quotations seem to show that the term was taken in the first instance from the French, and employed to denote any style of building that was not classical (Greek or Roman), but used by many writers as if derived immediately from sense **A. 2**.

c1660 J. Evelyn *Diary* anno 1641 (1955) II. 50 Harlem..hath one of the fairest Churches of the Gotique designe, I had ever seene.

- 1664 A. WOOD *Descr. Bampton Castle in Life & Times* (1892) II. Pl. 1 The cheife gate-house where is a ruined entrance, [and] an old gothick window over it.
- 1713 WREN in *Parentalia* (1750) 297 This we now call the Gothick Manner of Architecture (so the Italians called what was not after the Roman style).
- 1739 C. LABELYE *Short Acct. Piers Westm. Bridge* 44 Narrow Gothic Arches, supported by monstrous Piers.
- 1742 B. LANGLEY *Anc. Archit. Restored* Dissert. i Every ancient Building which is not in the Grecian Mode is called a Gothic Building.
- 1750 S. WREN in *Parentalia* 273 They had not yet fallen into the Gothick pointed-arch.
- 1783 *Crit. Rev. Public Buildings London* (new ed.) [The tower of St. Michael's, Cornhill, is] in the Gothic style of architecture.
- 1801 TELFORD & DOUGLAS *Acc. Improvem. Port London* 17 The whole external form of the bridge is to be composed of Gothic tracery.
- a1839 W. M. PRAED *Poems* (1864) I. 69 Some time-honoured Gothic pile.
- 1880 M. E. BRADDON *Just as I Am* vii The cosy chair beside the Gothic fire~place.
- 1881 *Trans. Amer. Inst. Mining Engineers 1880–1919* 142 *Gothic groove*, a groove of Gothic arch section in a roll.
- 1959 J. L. NAYLER *Dict. Aeronaut. Engin.* 121 *Gothic wing*, a wing whose plan form is like a Gothic window.
- 1961 *Flight* 80 966/2 The Super Caravelle wing is of gothic delta plan form with considerable leading edge camber.

c. Concerned with Gothic buildings.

Apparently an isolated use.

- 1875 J. RUSKIN *Mornings in Florence* II. 48 Our Gothic Firms now manufacture to order, a Madonna.

d. Gothic Revival n. the reintroduction of a Gothic style of architecture towards the middle of the 19th cent. Also *attributive*. So **Gothic Revivalist**.

- 1869 C. L. EASTLAKE *Hints Househ. Taste* (ed. 2) i. 32 The earliest promoters of the Gothic revival appreciated the superficial effect of such features... The glories of the 'fretted vault' were not unfrequently imitated in lath and plaster.
- 1934 A. HUXLEY *Beyond Mexique Bay* 114 The Gothic revival in England was a product of the Oxford Movement.
- 1950 *Oxoniensia* 15 118 Jackson witnessed the evolution of the Gothic Revival.
- 1950 *Oxoniensia* 15 118 They, the Gothic Revivalists, had got the old dead style on its legs and propped it up, but they could not make it walk.
- 1958 R. LIDDELL *Morea* III. ii. 243 A Gothic revival school building was a relic of the British protectorate.
- 1963 H. READ *Contrary Experience* III. ix. 276 The Gothic Revival was almost a spent force when Ruskin began to publish *The Stones of Venice* in 1851.

4. Barbarous, rude, uncouth, unpolished, in bad taste. Of temper: Savage.

- 1695 J. DRYDEN tr. R. de Piles in tr. C. A. Du Fresnoy *De Arte Graphica* 93 All that has nothing of the Ancient gust, is call'd a barbarous or Gothique manner.
- 1710 LD. SHAFTESBURY *Soliloquy* 116 We are not altogether so barbarous or Gothick as they pretend.
- a1715 BP. G. BURNET *Hist. Own Time* (1734) II. 394 His [sc. Chas. XII] Temper grew daily more fierce and Gothick.
- 1732 G. BERKELEY *Alciphron* I. v. xiii. 289 This Gothic Crime of Duelling.
- 1749 H. FIELDING *Tom Jones* III. vii. iii. 22 'O more than Gothic Ignorance,' answered the lady.
- 1782 F. BURNEY *Cecilia* II. iv. vi. 191 What he holds of all things to be most gothic, is gallantry to the women.
- 1812 P. B. SHELLEY *Lett.* in *Prose Wks.* (1888) II. 384 Enormities which gleam like comets through the darkness of gothic and superstitious ages.
- 1833 T. CHALMERS *On Power of God* (1835) I. ii. i. 173 Such a gothic spoliation as this.
- 1841 J. T. J. HEWLETT *Parish Clerk* I. 111 Dinner, which was eaten at the gothic hour of one o'clock.

5. Writing and Printing.

†a. Used for some kind of written character (? resembling black letter).

- c1660 J. EVELYN *Diary* anno 1644 (1955) II. 123 Some English words graven in Gotic Characters.
- a1684 J. EVELYN *Diary* anno 1658 (1955) III. 206 He could perfectly reade any of the English, Latine, french or Gottic letters.

b. In England, the name of the type commonly used for printing German, as distinguished from roman and italic characters. (Formerly, and still in non-technical use, equivalent to *black letter*.)

- 1781 T. WARTON *Hist. Eng. Poetry* III. Diss. iii. sig. a2^v This edition..is in the Gothic letter.
- 1824 J. JOHNSON *Typographia* II. i. 10 Black Letter. This letter, which is used in England, descended from the Gothic characters: it is called Gothic, by some; and Old English, by others.
- 1888 C. T. JACOBI *Printers' Vocab.* 54 *Gothic*, an antique character of type similar to black letter.
- 1895 W. A. COPINGER in *Trans. Bibl. Soc.* 2 ii. 111 Gothic type was the first in use..Roman character not being introduced till 1467.

c. Applied in the U.S. to the type called in England GROTESQUE *n.* and *adj.* (also *sans-ceriph*, and, by some type-founders, *doric*; formerly *stone letter*).

6. In combination with an adjective formed on a proper name: Gothic and; Gothic in connection with; as **Gothic-Finnish**, **Gothic-**

Sarmatian, Gothic-Scandinavian.

- 1928 C. DAWSON *Age of Gods* iv. 84 The Gothic-Sarmatian kingdom from the Crimea to the lower Danube.
- 1931 A. SENN in *Jrnl. Eng. & Germanic Philol.* **30** 143 (*title*) A contribution to Gothic-Finnish relations.
- 1965 *Language* **41** 36 The theory of a Gothic-Scandinavian linguistic community distinct from the West Germanic languages.

B. n. That which is Gothic.**a.** The Gothic language.

- 1757 SERENIUS *Eng. & Swed. Dict.* (ed. 2) Pref. 2 There are very few that have professedly treated the ancient Gothick.
- 1867 F. M. MÜLLER *Chips from German Workshop* II. xx. 189 Gothic, as a language, is more ancient than Icelandic.

b. A Gothic building.

- 1825 J. G. LOCKHART in W. Scott *Familiar Lett.* (1894) II. 308 Then to..the Castle Chapel—the best by far of all modern Gothicks.
- 1915 *Irish Eccl. Record* July 50 Some of these new Gothicks were designed by a priest.
- 1916 *Irish Eccl. Record* Sept. 209 The fine old walls..gave place to the Gothicks.

c. Gothic architecture or ornamentation.

- c1660 J. EVELYN *Diary* anno 1644 (1955) II. 111 The style of the magnificence then in fashion, which was with to<o> greate a mixture of the Gotic.
- 1726 G. LEONI tr. L. B. Alberti *Archit.* Life 4 Ornaments, which..have I know not what in them of Gothick.
- 1762 H. WALPOLE *Vertue's Anecd. Painting* I. v. 109 Imitations of the Gothic.
- 1762 H. WALPOLE *Vertue's Anecd. Painting* I. v. 112 The builders of Gothic.
- 1841 C. J. LEVER *Charles O'Malley* lxxxii. 395 Gazing steadfastly on the fretted gothic of the ceiling.

DERIVATIVES**Go'thicity** *n.* the quality of being Gothic.

1863 *Ecclesiologist* XXIV. 290 The absolute Gothicity of the general idea.

1889 *Athenæum* 16 Feb. 221/1 The crisp, sharp, and firm 'Gothicity' of the direct followers of the Van Eycks.

† '**Gothicly** *adv.* *Obsolete* in a Gothic manner, barbarously.

1777 W. DALRYMPLE *Trav. Spain & Portugal* xl The apartments are low..and Gothicly furnished.

'**Gothicky** *adj.* *colloquial* Gothic-like.

1893 K. D. WIGGIN *Cathedral Courtship* 36 She's going to build a Gothicky memorial chapel somewhere.

DRAFT ADDITIONS 1993

Of or pertaining to goth music or its followers: see [GOTH n. 3](#).

[1981 *Melody Maker* 4 July 9/6 Bauhaus are forced to rely on pure theatricality to further their reputation as Gothic-horror outlaw weirdos.]

1983 *New Musical Express* 24 Dec. 7/3 Why is this gothic glam so popular?

1986 *Q* Oct. 74/2 Love & Rockets used to be three quarters of Bauhaus..and are obviously finding life as gothic has-beens hard going.

1988 *Sunday Tel.* 6 Mar. 21/7 'The Gothic people will be pleased that black is still *in*,' remarked Miss Fackrell, who teaches hair and beauty studies. Gothic people? They are all the young folk who go around wearing black, apparently.

DRAFT ADDITIONS DECEMBER 2007

Of or designating a genre of fiction characterized by suspenseful, sensational plots involving supernatural or macabre elements and often (esp. in early use) having a medieval theme or setting.

The novel typically regarded as the first of this genre, *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) by Horace Walpole, is subtitled 'a Gothic story' (cf. [1765¹ at sense A. 3a](#)) in reference to its medieval setting; in this and similar early uses it is often difficult to distinguish between this sense and sense [A. 3a](#).

1825 W. SCOTT *Lives Novelists* I. 139 To this improvement upon the gothic romance there are so many objections, that we own ourselves inclined to prefer..the narrative of Walpole.

1853 G. S. HILLARD *Six Months in Italy* (1854) II. x. 233 The shapes and conceptions of Gothic fiction—the sheeted ghost gliding from the churchyard..—the groan mingling with the wind that sweeps

through the aisles of a ruined chapel.

- 1889 E. GOSSE *Hist. 18th. Cent. Lit.* ix. 301 This Gothic novel positively frightened grown-up people to the extent of making them unwilling to seek their beds.
- 1928 *Cent. Mag.* May 61/2 The evolution of the dime novel from the sixteenth century novella through the Gothic horror story of Monk Lewis or Mrs. Radcliffe.
- 1990 R. CRITCHFIELD *Among British* iv. 259 Britain is still supreme in the spy thriller, the detective story, the bestselling Gothic novel, and the bodice-ripper romance.

This entry has not yet been fully updated (first published 1900).

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