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A genre of literature that came into being during this period is Gothic fiction. Writers whose works are characterised as Gothic “turn out to be those who bring us up against the boundaries of the civilised, who demonstrate to us the relative nature of ethical and behavioural codes and place over against the conventional world a different sphere in which these codes do not operate, or operate only in distorted forms” (Punter 405). In other words, these writers overcome the boundaries of what is normal and what is real and write about events that take place beyond these boundaries. Either through descriptions of uncivilised behaviour like murder or violence or through unreal situations based on superstition or supernatural aspects. In the Victorian era, the ghost story, as a form of Gothic fiction became very popular.

This was the case because “the ghost story allowed writers to explore the mystery of life after death without having to engage in religious controversy” (Smith and Hughes 106). Writers like Henry James and Oscar Wilde used the freedom they had within literature to explore this upcoming interest. Turning to the novels chosen for this thesis, *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* were both written towards the end of the Victorian Era and they both belong to the literary genre of Gothic fiction. The genre emerged at the beginning of the Victorian era which is why these two novels were written when the Gothic genre was already well-established. *The Woman in Black* was actually written in the twentieth-century and in the period of late modernism but it can still be described as gothic.

Within her research, Gina Wisker also argues that the novel contains gothic motifs, *The Woman in Black* uses many strategies of the conventional ghost

story: spectral visits, sounds in the night, empty rooms with the movements of the past continuing beyond the deaths of those who lived there, and an overwhelming, unidentifiable atmosphere of dread. It also reminds us of the narratives of the nineteenth century on which much of the plot is set, the emphasis on inheritance, houses, heredity, propriety. (Wisker 216) As an exception, *The Woman in Black* can therefore also be defined as gothic because it is written in a gothic style and it contains many gothic elements that are mentioned in the analytical part.

### III. Gothic Fiction

Gothic Fiction is a literary genre that was popular in England during the 18th and 19th century. In general, novels belonging to this genre combine topics like fiction, death, and horror.

Sometimes romantic elements are also added. During these centuries “Gothic stood for the old-fashioned as opposed to the modern; the barbaric as opposed to the civilised and crudity as opposed to elegance” (Punter 6) because it crossed the boundaries of a civilised society.