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ANALYSING THE COMPLICATEDNESS OF CHARACTERS IN GOTHIC LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Gothic literature is filled with clichés like tyrants, villains, bandits, maniacs, Byronic heroes, persecuted maidens, femmes fatales, monks, nuns, madwomen, magicians, vampires, werewolves, monsters, demons, angels, fallen angels, revenants, ghosts, perambulating skeletons, the Wandering Jew, and the Devil himself.

Gothic literature puts a strong emphasis on atmosphere, combining the setting and the reader's language to create tension and dread. In Gothic literature, melodrama and parody have also long been commonplace. Gothic fiction is characterised by dread (both psychological and physical), mystery, the paranormal, ghosts, haunted homes, castles, darkness, death, decay, doubles, madness, secrets, and generational curses.

In this paper, the work by both the writers' that are, Horace Walpole and Jane Austen is being analysed on the grounds of Supernatural elements, dark humour and tragedy and how the authors complicate the characters.

Keywords: Supernatural elements, Dark humour, Tragedy, Thriller

INTRODUCTION

A pioneer in his field, Horace Walpole, followed the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, gothic romance became popular in English literature, and his mansion in Twickenham helped launch a rebirth in gothic architecture. He was successful in bringing back the romance to modern fiction with *The Castle of Otranto*. He created the framework for a literary subgenre that offered a haven for the craziest fantasies there.

Also, he produced the incest-themed tragedy *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), as well as amateur historical conjectures like *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third* (1768) and a four-volume treatise on art history called *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762–71).

The sole child of Manfred, the lord of Otranto, is killed just before his wedding when he is trampled to death by a mysteriously large helmet. Manfred makes the decision to send his wife to a nun and wed his son's chosen bride after connecting this incident to a prophecy that the castle will pass from his family. But his ambition to leave an heir has

tragic results, demonstrating the grim lesson that "the crimes of fathers are punished on their children."

English author Jane Austen is most known for her six major works, which analyse, criticise, and remark on the landed aristocracy in Great Britain towards the end of the 18th century. The dependence of women on marriage in the quest of a favourable social standing and financial security is frequently explored in Austen's stories. Her combination of stinging irony, realism, and social critique has won her praise from reviewers and academics.

In *Northanger Abbey*, a Gothic horror story is combined with satire on traditional books about genteel society. The unspoilt daughter of a country parson, Catherine Morland is the naive outsider who picks up life's lessons first in Bath's sophisticated society and later at *Northanger Abbey* itself, where she discovers that reading Gothic thrillers shouldn't be her primary source of worldly wisdom. Her future husband, the confident and subtly sardonic Henry Tilney, serves as her tutor and adviser.

OBJECTIVE

This paper tries to identify the complication of characters put in gothic novels by the authors. The two novels taken by different authors that are 'The Castle of Otranto' by Horace Walpole and 'Northanger Abbey' by Jane Austen focuses on the supernatural elements, dark humour, tragedy and the complicated characters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Without considering the two novels that established the genre— *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen—a comprehensive discussion of tragedy and supernatural elements as a genre of literature is impossible.

The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole cites himself as the author of the piece and defends his use of comedy and tragedy, which are connected to the two social groups represented in the narrative. The lower-class characters are connected with comedy and the upper-class characters with tragedy in the author's comedy-tragic play, which is based on Shakespeare's plays.

The aristocracy, such as Hippolita and Frederic, are portrayed as dignified, eloquent, bright, moral, and level-headed, whereas the peasants, such as Bianca and Diego, are frequently depicted as gullible, inarticulate, morally deficient, and prone to superstition. When Theodore observes a resemblance between the enormous helmet that kills Conrad and the helmet that was previously on Conrad, Manfred accuses him of witchcraft and treason, which is one instance of this behavioural differentiation.

A blood difference between the nobility and the peasantry is suggested by the roles and attitudes of Theodore and Manfred. Although Theodore is initially shown as a

peasant, his extraordinary bravery, articulation, and resolve to do good define him as a noble, a truth that is subsequently proven when Jerome discloses his true origins. Likewise, although being initially portrayed as a nobleman, Manfred's fury, malevolent plots, and frequent verbal

Incoherence undermines his claim to nobility, especially his assertion that he is the legitimate king of Otranto (and in fact, of course, Manfred is the grandson of a non-noble man who rose to the throne only through murder and treachery).

Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen includes two distinct parts which differ mostly in settings. The first section takes place in Bath, while the second section is set in Northanger Abbey, the main heroine's enigmatic home. Catherine Morland, the primary character, is a 17-year-old girl who was raised in a modest household in the rural Hampshire village of Fullerton.

In addition to describing Catherine to the reader in the first paragraph of the first chapter, a subtle irony also describes what she is not. Austen focuses on the romantic heroine's great beauty and skill. The reader discovers later in the text that a girl might be born without this remarkable beauty and talent. Catherine is invited to stay in Bath with the Allens, friends of the Morlands, for six weeks.

With a small gift from her father, Catherine accepts their invitation and departs for Bath. Visits to friends and attending balls occupy her time. She is initially introduced to Henry Tilney, a young clergyman from a prominent family in Gloucestershire, who flirts with Catherine. At first, she has no partner for dancing.

Tragedy in the Castle of Otranto

The tragedy of supernatural interactions is undoubtedly present in the Otranto Castle. The three instances under consideration had supernatural origins. These terrible events include the unsolved death of Alfonso the Good, the tragic death of Conrad, and Matilda's murder.

In fact, the inexplicable passing of Alfonso, the prince of Otranto, is a huge tragedy that paves the way for other disasters. Alfonso the Good and Richardo, his chamberlain, had visited the Holy Land. Although a powerful storm separates them, it is later discovered that Alfonso died from poison.

Young Conrad, the sole child of Manfred, the ruling prince of Otranto, is crushed to death on the day of his wedding under a peculiar helmet that is allegedly modelled after the one on the statue of Alfonso the Good at St. Nicholas Cathedral. The young peasant who makes this allusion is detained and, at Manfred's command, sentenced to death. But thanks to supernatural intervention, the little prince lives. The young peasant nearly murders the knight he smokes with outside the tunnel while he and Isabella, another victim of Manfred's oppression, hide in the castle vault. It is revealed that the guy is

Frederic, the Marquis of Vicenza and the father of Isabella, who the young peasant is attempting to assist.

Ultimately, Manfred kills Matilda in cod blond, his only child, out of small-minded envy. Theodore, the young peasant, and his adversary are reportedly conversing with a woman in the church, according to a report to Manfred. He assumes Isabella is the one who runs away from him to avoid getting married to him. He arrives at the location where he hears noises, but he is unsure of who is there. He hits with a rage that is blind, and the woman falls. It seems, regrettably, that Manfred spilt his own blood on the floor of St. Nicholas Church, which is a terrible tragedy.

Parody in Northanger Abbey

A parody, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, is a "'stylization,' that involves the appropriation of the utterances of others for the purposes of inserting a new orientation of meaning alongside the original point of view. The imitator [or the author] usually merges utterances so completely that one 'voice' is heard."

Throughout the book, particularly in the second half, Gothic books and their customs are mentioned. Henry delivers a comical imagined tale about Catherine's first night in the Abbey, complete with typical elements of a gothic book, while travelling from Bath to Northanger Abbey, the Tilney family home. He teasingly offers a summary of information from Radcliffe's novels.

Since it parodies the structure and tenets of Gothic novels that were common at the period when Jane Austen wrote her book, *The Northanger Abbey* is regarded as a gothic parody. The *Mysteries of Udolpho*, a dark tale by Anne Radcliffe, was Austen's target. By bringing up Anne Radcliffe, she openly derides the genre.

Throughout *Northanger Abbey*, Radcliffe's books are eagerly read by Catherine, the primary character. Whilst in Bath, she reads. Her gradual realisation of the distinction between such fiction and day-to-day reality is described in the book *Northanger Abbey*.

The difference between the real world and the romantics' imaginary worlds, whom Jane Austen set out to mock, is demonstrated throughout her works. She does this by drawing a comparison between a typical, good-natured girl and the romantic heroines of literature and by depicting a girl who is just a little bit impacted by romantic concepts.

CONCLUSION

Thus, it would be safe to conclude that in the paper "Analysing the complicatedness of characters in Gothic Literature" the characters taken by both the authors have something or the other complications within them either with supernatural elements or tragedy.

The Castle of Otranto is a real fantasy that anticipates the direction of writing in the contemporary period. The novel's main plot centres on the effects of stealing a person's inheritance rather than on any supernatural events. The novel also depicts societal standards, class distinction, and the passivity of women. By using fictional characters in the plot, the book makes good use of fantasy. Fantasy literature is significant in that it frequently has a close affinity for reality. A gothic picture or scenario is followed by another in the text. It is important to use fictitious characters because they cause viewers' minds to make associations.

In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen repeatedly makes the case that the book's primary goal is not to advance moral standards but rather to portray human nature. This goal is best outlined in the "defence of the novel," when the (probably female) narrator addresses the stigma against novels and the women who read them. The passage's use of exclamation points highlights the novel's greatest strength: its ability to capture the nuances and quirks of human nature. The narrator never suggests that books are a suitable medium for moral instruction in this list of the novel's virtues. The book excels in describing human behaviour rather than outlining ideal human behaviour.

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