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Horace Walpole's 1764 novel the castle of Otranto: A gothic horror

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Abstract
"Gothic literature" redirects here. It may also refer to texts in the extinct Gothic language. Gothic fiction, sometimes called Gothic horror in the 20th century, is a loose literary aesthetic of fear and haunting. The name is a reference to Gothic architecture of the European Middle Ages, which was characteristic of the settings of early Gothic novels. The first work to call itself Gothic was Horace Walpole's 1764 novel The Castle of Otranto, later subtitled "A Gothic Story". Subsequent 18th century contributors included Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe, William Thomas Beckford and Matthew Lewis. The Gothic influence continued into the early 19th century, works by the Romantic poets, and novelists such as Mary Shelley, Walter Scott and E. T. A. Hoffmann frequently drew upon gothic motifs in their works. The early Victorian period continued the use of gothic, in novels by Charles Dickens and the Brontë sisters, as well as works by the American writers Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Later prominent works were Dracula by Bram Stoker, Richard Marsh's The Beetle and Robert Louis Stevenson's Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Twentieth-century contributors include Daphne du Maurier, Stephen King, Shirley Jackson, Anne Rice and Toni Morrison.

Keywords: Gothic fiction, romantic poets, 18th century, European middle ages

Introduction
The gothic novel was invented almost single-handedly by Horace Walpole, whose The Castle of Otranto (1764) contains essentially all the elements that constitute the genre. Walpole's novel was imitated not only in the eighteenth century and not only in the novel form, but it has influenced the novel, the short story, poetry, and even film making up to the present day.

Gothic elements include the following
1. Setting in a castle: The action takes place in and around an old castle, sometimes seemingly abandoned, sometimes occupied. The castle often contains secret passages, trap doors, secret rooms, dark or hidden staircases, and possibly ruined sections. The castle may be near or connected to caves, which lend their own haunting flavor with their branchings, claustrophobia, and mystery. (Translated into modern filmmaking, the setting might be in an old house or mansion--or even a new house--where unusual camera angles, sustained close ups during movement, and darkness or shadows create the same sense of claustrophobia and entrapment.)

2. An atmosphere of mystery and suspense: The work is pervaded by a threatening feeling, a fear enhanced by the unknown. Often the plot itself is built around a mystery, such as unknown parentage, a disappearance, or some other inexplicable event.

3. Elements 3, 4, and 5 below contribute to this atmosphere: (Again, in modern filmmaking, the inexplicable events are often murders.) 3. An ancient prophecy is connected with the castle or its inhabitants (either former or present). The prophecy is usually obscure, partial, or confusing. "What could it mean?" In more watered down modern examples, this may amount to merely a legend: "It's said that the ghost of old man Krebs still wanders these halls."

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4. Omens, portents, visions: A character may have a disturbing dream vision, or some phenomenon may be seen as a portent of coming events. For example, if the statue of the lord of the manor falls over, it may portend his death. In modern fiction, a character might see something (a shadowy figure stabbing another shadowy figure) and think that it was a dream. This might be thought of as an "imitation vision."

5. Supernatural or otherwise inexplicable events: Dramatic, amazing events occur, such as ghosts or giants walking, or inanimate objects (such as a suit of armor or painting) coming to life. In some works, the events are ultimately given a natural explanation, while in others the events are truly supernatural.

6. High, even overwrought emotion: The narration may be highly sentimental, and the characters are often overcome by anger, sorrow, surprise, and especially, terror. Characters suffer from raw nerves and a feeling of impending doom. Crying and emotional speeches are frequent. Breathlessness and panic are common. In the filmed gothic, screaming is common.

7. Women in distress: As an appeal to the pathos and sympathy of the reader, the female characters often face events that leave them fainting, terrified, screaming, and/or sobbing. A lonely, pensive, and oppressed heroine is often the central figure of the novel, so her sufferings are even more pronounced and the focus of attention. The women suffer all the more because they are often abandoned, left alone (either on purpose or by accident), and have no protector at times.

8. Women threatened by a powerful, impulsive, tyrannical male: One or more male characters has the power, as king, lord of the manor, father, or guardian, to demand that one or more of the female characters do something intolerable. The woman may be commanded to marry someone she does not love (it may even be the powerful male himself), or commit a crime.

9. The metonymy of gloom and horror: Metonymy is a subtype of metaphor, in which something (like rain) is used to stand for something else (like sorrow). For example, the film industry likes to use metonymy as a quick shorthand, so we often notice that it is raining in funeral scenes.
Note that the following metonymies for "doom and gloom" all suggest some element of mystery, danger, or the supernatural. wind, especially howling rain, especially blowing doors grating on rusty hinges sighs, moans, howls, eerie sounds footsteps approaching clanking chains lights in abandoned rooms gusts of wind blowing out lights characters trapped in a room doors suddenly slamming shut ruins of buildings baying of distant dogs (or wolves?) thunder and lightning crazed laughter

10. The vocabulary of the gothic: The constant use of the appropriate vocabulary set creates the atmosphere of the gothic. Using the right words maintains the dark-and-stimulated feel that defines the gothic. Here as an example are some of the words (in several categories) that help make up the vocabulary of the gothic in The Castle of Otranto:

Mystery: Diabolical, enchantment, ghost, goblins, haunted, infernal, magic, magician, miracle, necromancer, omens, ominous, portent, preternatural, prodigy, prophecy, secret, sorcerer, spectre, spirits, strangeness, talisman, vision

Fear, terror, or sorrow
afflicted, affliction, agony, anguish, apprehensions, apprehensive, commiseration, concern, despair, dismal, dismay, dread, dreaded, dreading, fearing, frantic, fright, frightened, grief, hopeless, horrid, horror, lamentable, melancholy, miserable, mournfully, panic, sadly, scared, shrieks, sorrow, sympathy, tears, terrible, terrified, terror, unhappy, wretched Surprise alarm, amazement, astonished, astonishment, shocking, staring,

Surprise	Surprised, thunderstruck, wonder
Haste	Anxious, breathless, flight, frantic, hastened, hastily, impatience, impatient, impatiently, impetuosity, precipitately, running, sudden, suddenly
Anger	Anger, angrily, choler, enraged, furious, fury, incense, incensed, provoked, rage, raving, resentment, temper, wrath, wrathful, wrathfully
Largeness	Enormous, gigantic, giant, large, tremendous, vast
Darkness	Dark, darkness, dismal, shaded, black, night

Walpole himself lays on most of these elements pretty thick (although he's a lot lighter on darkness than many modern gothic works), so it might be said that another element of the classic gothic is its intensity created by profuse employment of the vocabulary of the gothic. Consider this from Chapter 1 of The Castle of Otranto: The servant "came running back breathless, in a frantic manner, his eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth. He said nothing but pointed to the court. The company were struck with terror and amazement." Gets your interest up on page two, doesn't he? Then, "In the meantime, some of the company had run into the court, from whence was heard a confused noise of shrieks, horror, and surprise.

The castle of Otranto character list
Manfred: A lord? A familial dictator? Manfred is both. As *The Castle of Otranto*'s antagonist, Manfred the tyrannical husband of Hippolita and the obsessive father of Matilda and Conrad. The tyranny he inflicts upon his family and those visiting his castle make him a prime example of a Gothic villain. His passion obscures his ability to reason, and he becomes so obsessed with the death of his son that he feels he must divorce his wife and marry his deceased son's intended bride. The terror that ensues following his chase of Isabella is grotesque and morally reprehensible, but it is also the driving force behind the novel's suspenseful plot.

Isabella: Isabella, lovely, virtuous, and self-assured, is this novel's damsel in distress. Threatened by kidnapping, rape, and an overall unwanted marriage, she tries to escape from the castle after the death of her intended husband, Conrad. She narrowly escapes Manfred's grasp, preventing a nearly incestuous and non-consensual marriage from taking place. She is rescued by Theodore, the soon-to-be revealed

legitimate heir of Otranto, and marries him during the novel's resolution.

Conrad: The teenage son of Manfred and Hippolita, Conrad is betrothed to Isabella, but on the way to his wedding he is crushed to death by a symbol of the curse of the Otranto castle: a supernaturally-charged falling helmet.

Matilda: Manfred's ultimate display of tyranny occurs when he mistakenly stabs his daughter Matilda to death. Matilda, a young woman of extreme sympathy, virtue, and sentimentalism, falls in love with Theodore; however, unable to get approval from her parents to be with him, she is instead betrothed to Frederic, Isabella's lustful father.

Hippolita: The wife of a villainous lord and the mother to soon-to-be deceased children: these are Hippolita's roles. Manfred desires to divorce his wife because she cannot provide another heir, but he tries to justify the divorce by saying that the couple is actually related. Submissive, excessively religious, and depressed, Hippolita remains under the influence of her husband, catering to his whims despite her own longings for happiness.

Theodore: Theodore, the son of Friar Jerome and savior of Isabella, is the true heir of the Castle of Otranto. His initial role in the novel is to illustrate the relationship between the fallen helmet and the prophecy of the true heir being revealed. He helps Isabella escape from the castle during Manfred's suspenseful pursuit, while also attracting the attention of both Matilda and Isabella. He marries Isabella after the death of Matilda.

Friar Jerome: Isabella escapes to a monastery located outside of the castle where she finds Friar Jerome, the long-lost father of Theodore. Manfred tries to bend the friar to his will by employing the friar to legitimize the divorce, but the plan does not come to fruition. Jerome stands his ground and criticizes Manfred's incestuous and evil desires, saying that heaven does not approve of them.

Bianca: Matilda's tart-tongued and opinionated maidservant who encourages Matilda to marry.

Diego and Jaquez: Two servants in the household who report mysterious sightings of the giant.

The Hermit: Frederic discovers this dying hermit in the woods, who imparts a secret that St. Nicholas told hm about the dissolution of Manfred's claim to the Otranto principality.

Alfonso: The handsome and noble ancestor of the castle and principality of Otranto.
Theodore resembles him quite strongly.

Walpole Shaped a New Genre
Horace Walpole wrote The Castle of Otranto in l764. In doing so Walpole shaped a new genre; he made the first gothic novel. He invented all of the parts associated with a gothic novel. Many elements in gothic literature have been reproduced repeatedly over time. The main elements of it are: The setting is in a castle, an atmosphere f mystery and suspense, ancient prophecy, omens, the supernatural, high emotion, women in distress, women threatened by a tyrannical male, metaphors of gloom and terror, and vocabulary of the gothic.

Walpole's Imagination and Dreams
All of these elements encompass Walpole"s imagination and dreams, and they still hold true today in the same genre within the gothic realm, there are reoccurring themes of violent deaths and supernaturalism. Another fact is that the gothic novel would not be complete unless it intertwined love with terror. There has to be a forbidden love and a deceitful man who has to have his way. All of this happens while ghosts and omens linger over everyone"s head. However, gothic novels true to the form are essentially terror, and not horror. First, only terror is used in gothic genre. Terror means using the suspense of the unknown and supernatural in the plot, that certain words and phrases are used to heighten a reader"s sense of fear and curiosity. Horror on the other hand is all of the blood and guts that we see today. Most deaths that happen in horror are needless and do not have anything to do with the plot. Walpole"s novel The Castle of Otranto established all of the necessary elements to comprise the gothic novel, which survives today.

Veritable panoply of supernatural wonders
Walpole"s narrative, inspired by a dream, presents veritable panoply of supernatural wonders. Its first pages set the tone for the bizarre events that take place in a castle of horrors, where lives hang in the balance at every moment. Manfred, prince of Otranto, has contracted a marriage for his only son Conrad with the princess Isabella. The wedding ceremony is delayed by the absence of the bridegroom, who, after a frantic search, is found in the courtyard, dashed to pieces by an enormous helmet. That helmet mysteriously transported itself from a black marble statue of Alfonso, the former ruler of the principality, to the courtyard. Manfred is driven to a near state of distraction, not so much by his son"s death as by the fear that an ancient prophecy, dating from the time that Alfonso"s domains were usurped by Manfred"s ancestors, will at last be fulfilled. Although Alfonso was thought to have died of natural causes, he was in fact poisoned by
Manfred"s grandfather, Ricardo. A forged document declared Ricardo heir to the Castle of Otranto. Haunted by guilt, Ricardo re-turned to Otranto, confessed his sins, and was promised that his posterity would reign in Otranto "until the rightful owner should be grown too large to inhabit the castle, and as long as issue male from Ricardo"s loins should remain to enjoy it." The loss of his only male descendant suggests to Manfred that the prophecy is nearing fulfillment. Transported by fear and rage, he resolves to divorce his saintly, but now barren, wife and to wed the woman betrothed to his son.
Manfred"s attempts to ward off the fate threatening his house are in vain. The very measures he takes to ensure male offspring only provoke further portents that his reign is drawing to a close. A portrait descends bodily from its frame; blood drips from the nose of a statue; a skeleton in hermit"s cowl warns of danger; and a fantastic giant distributes his limbs about the castle. Manfred nonetheless refuses to be terrorized by these apparitions and clings tenaciously to the idea that he can circum-vent the prophecy by securing for himself a son.

The prophecy

For Manfred, the prophecy seems to lack authority without the presence of a male descendant on
Alfonso"s side. He is unaware that Alfonso has in fact left an heir who has found his way back from Sicily to the home of his fathers. Theodore, Alfonso"s grandson and thus the true heir to Otranto, seems to haunt the castle with the measured regularity of his ghostly ancestor. He is forever escaping from well-fortified prisons, rescuing damsels in distress, and stalking through the labyrinthian corridors of the castle. When he dons armor, he looks to Manfred like a "ghastly phantom" and fills his soul with "secret terrors" and "secret sensations." In his resemblance to Alfonso"s portrait, Theodore figures as a terrifyingly familiar presence. He exemplifies both literally and figuratively what Freud called "die Wiederkehr des Verdriingten," the return of what has been at once displaced (or usurped) and repressed. By incarnating Manfred"s fears and by bringing his deepest secrets to light, Theodore becomes an uncanny presence in the narrative and thus outstrips his ghostly ancestor"s power to haunt. What Manfred had sought to keep heimlich has emerged from the depths of psychic repression to confront him physically in Theodore"s unheimlich presence.

Walpole's creation

Important parts of Walpole"s creation are all of the different elements that comprise the genre. These elements are important because they provide a blueprint for the layout of a gothic novel. Such element of gothic novel is that the setting takes place in a castle. The Castle of Otranto includes an old castle which is passed down through the ages from family member to family member. The castle has a mysterious past, and secret underground passages that lead to a church.
The underground passages of the castle were described as "hollowed into several intricate cloisters and consisting of a long labyrinth of darkness" (Walpole 27).The castle element helps to add mystery to the story, and provides a reasonable place for supernatural beings to haunt.

An atmosphere of mystery and suspense

The second element that makes up the gothic novel is an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. Within the novel there should be some parts that give the readers a threatening feeling or fear of the supernatural. Situations that would help this mood are people disappearing r other unexplainable events. For example, when Manfred was trying to follow Isabella and ran into a ghost, he cried:

Gloom and terror

The ninth element is the aspect of using imagery for gloom and terror by incorporating it into the writing. Some of these phrases could involve howling wind, hearing footsteps, rusty hinges, moans or howls, and doors slamming shut. One example in The Castle of Otranto is when Isabella is running in the underground passages "An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which granting on the rusty hinges were re-echoed… ("W alpole 2 7). In the previous account, Walpole happened to use two cases of imagery for gloom and terror. One was the wind, and the other was the rusty hinges. All of the imagery adds to the atmosphere and mystery of the gothic novel.

The vocabulary of the gothic

The last element that makes up a gothic novel is using the vocabulary of the gothic. The gothic language is not that much different from today"s language, but it does have some words that are always incorporated in it. For example, if a writer were trying to express mystery, he or she would use words like enchantment, haunted, prophecy, omens, and vision. Another example would be using words like anguish, shrieks, wretched, despair and horrid to try to describe fear and sorrow. It does not seem like a big change, but the story would not sound right if it did not have these certain aspects to its language, That is why the element of vocabulary is imperative to the gothic novel.

The reoccurring themes in the gothic genre

Violent deaths and the supernatural seem to surround the reoccurring themes in the gothic genre. The deaths can be sudden and with no warning at all, like when Manfred accidentally kills his own daughter Matilda. It started when Manfred overheard Matilda saying "Manfred will never permit our union. No, this shall prevent it! cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger, and plunging it over her shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke-Ah me, I am slain! cried Matilda sinking" (Walpole 108). In addition, the ghosts tend to be there to bring out results, like pointing people in the right direction or passing a long message. They usually end up being related to somebody in the story. For example, the ghost of Manfred"s grandfather visits him when he least expects it. That ghost prevents Manfred from immediately catching Isabella. In the end, the ghost serves a valuable purpose in advancing the plot of the story.

Conclusion

Walpole invented a very valuable genre and also created all of the elements necessary to make it work. The genre was so well done, and liked, that it still exists today. He believed that he needed the concept of the supernatural: A god, or at least a ghost, was absolutely necessary, to frighten us out of too much sense. He explored us as human beings knowing we desire to be interested by terror. He blended mystery, love, and terror and called it gothic. The media in today"s society still takes elements from Walpole"s novel to use in their own works. It is in this sense why the genre still exists to this day. It is witty, creative, and bold enough to intrigue the readers.

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