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World of Gothic Literature: Through perspective of Different sexes

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Abstract

The generic term "Female Gothic" more perfectly describes the political aims of second-wave feminist literary criticism than the narratives of early women Gothic writers, argues this article, which examines the entrancing history of women-authored Gothic texts from the 1800s and early nineteenth century. While numerous detractors although attempts have been made to undercut the term "Female Gothic," it is still used to refer to works in which the female protagonists are trapped in the home realm and tormented by abduction, assault, and child brides. This essay questions why criticism insists on viewing this genre as a type that glorifies female victimization although there is an abundance of textual material that paints a significantly nuanced picture of how women use and interact with the Gothic style. According to the theory, the response to this question may well be discovered by examining how early nineteenth-century readers responded to Gothic female writings and how that tradition of reception influenced the discursive techniques used by second-wave feminist literary critics.

Introduction

The generic term "Female Gothic" more perfectly describes the political aims of second-wave feminist literary criticism than the narratives of early women Gothic writers, argues this article, which examines the entrancing history of women-authored Gothic texts from the 1800s and early nineteenth century. While numerous detractors although attempts have been made to undercut the term "Female Gothic," it is still used to refer to works in which the female protagonists are trapped in the home realm and tormented by abduction, assault, and child brides. This essay questions why criticism insists on viewing this genre as a type that glorifies female victimization although there is an abundance of textual material that paints a significantly nuanced picture of how women use and interact with the Gothic style. According to the theory, the response to this question may well be discovered by examining how early nineteenth-century readers responded to Gothic female writings and how that tradition of reception influenced the discursive techniques used by second-wave feminist literary critics Gothic literature is the art of expressing the feeling of fear and haunt. There is a predefined structure of defining the male protagonist as a symbol of horror whereas the female protagonist expresses the terror that comes from the mystery of the character. Previous researchers use this concept and try to explain the male being shown as the superior character displaying bloodshed and complete horror, and the female character displays the need of being saved and a story lying behind which turns into a happy ending at last, then comes the definitions which authors have given to female gothic while dividing it based on the sex of the writer and the protagonist. While all these things beg the question, is there a fine line between male and female gothic? because it's been seen that rules are being overruled by writers, and they're still in the category of female

gothic. The results of this question will state whether issues are being put out, in female gothic or if it's just a source of adding the amusement of mystery of terror to the story.

The value of the "Female Gothic" as a distinct literary genre or category has been hotly contested since the early 1990s, nevertheless. Other terminologies have been proposed, some alternative and some more precise: Lesbian, feminist, and women's Gothic," "Gothic feminism," and most recently, "postfeminist Gothic" have all been used. Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall have argued in a recent critique that the construction of the largely universalizing category of the "female Gothic" since the 1970s, as an embodiment of some invariable female "experience" or of the archetypal "female principle," leads straight out of history into the timeless melodrama in which (wicked) "male Gothic" texts always express the terror of the eternal "(M)other" while (good) female Gothic texts are revealed to be Anne Williams claims – not just 'empowering' but 'revolutionary'.

Several analysts had remarked on the classification concerns discussed by terminology that connects a reliable gender concept to a famously shaky literary genre. This conversation assumes a slightly adopts different approach and inquires as to why such a contentious term has had such a long-lasting and significant influence on feminist literary criticism to this day. It speaks to the welcome area Although numerous critics—among them, Robert Miles, Alison Milbank, Emma Clery, and Diane Hoeveler—have worked to improve the term Female Gothic, its use has constrained how researchers study women's Gothic fiction. Although several critics have attempted to hone the word "Female Gothic," including Robert Miles, Alison Milbank, Emma Clery, and Diane Hoeveler, its usage has not yet changed much restricting the methods by which academics study women's Gothic writing. The "Female Gothic" tropes—a troubled heroine, domestic confinement, threats of sexual abuse, worry about monstrous or absent mothers—that do not appear in works by women authors are frequently given little critical attention. However, as I and others have argued elsewhere, women's early Gothic writing is much more aesthetically, politically, thematically, and generically diverse than the Female Gothic categorization suggests (Kelly, 2003, Wright, 2003, Potter, 2005, Coykendall, 2005, Ledoux, 2013). A large portion of this writing is only accessible to us because of the recovery work of feminist scholars.

What is Female Gothic?

The term female gothic was introduced by **Ellen Moers** in her work **Literary Women**, "this term female gothic is easily defined: the work that women writer has done in the literary mode that, since the Eighteenth century, we have called The Gothic". According to Ellen Moers, the term female gothic contains the work of women writers, texts like Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Jean Rhys Wide Sargasso Sea, Emilie Bronte's Wuthering Heights, and Anne Rice's Interview With The Vampire included in her book. Margaret Carol Davidson coined the word female protagonist in her work of gothic literature in the following sense "Perhaps the most useful and uncontroversial definition of this classification be limited to its narrative focus – namely, on a female, as opposed to a male, protagonist", which means that irrespective of the sex of the writer, narrative focus is seen to be the determining factor. This disproves the previous statement of removing books like **Mary Shelley's Frankenstein** and **Elizabeth Gaskell's Doom Of The Griffiths** in which they have used the male protagonist **Victor Frankenstein** and **Owen Griffiths** from the definition.

Another term used by E.J. Clery and Anne Williams is the Female Reader which points to the idea of female gothic as a form written by and for women, but men read forms to which the label "female gothic" is often applied. For example in Northanger Abbey, Jane Austen portrays two male characters in different aspects - When Catherine asks Mr. Thrope whether he has read udolpho he said "Udolpho! Oh, Lord! Not I; I never read novels; I have something else to do." But when she asked Henry Tilney, he said: "I have read Mrs. Radcliffe's works and most of them with great pleasure. The Mysteries of Udolpho, when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again; I remember finishing it in two days- my hair standing on end the whole time" Which disproves the fact that it's not always the case that novels written for women will be read-only by women it depends on taste which disproves the statement given by E.J Clery and Anne Williams.

Female Experience and Subtext: "More specifically, however, the one plot that seems to be concealed in most of the nineteenth-century literature by women which will concern us here is in some senses a story of the women writer's quest for her own story; it's the story, in other words, of the women's quest for self-definition", " NARRATING PATRIARCHAL OPPERESSION: Dramatization of imprisonment and escape are so all–pervasive in nineteenth-century literature by women that we believe they represent uniquely female

tradition in this period" by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in The Madwoman in the Attic.

"GENDER INFLECTED SOCIAL COMMENTARY: The Female Gothic spoke back to the 'mainstream' Gothic form a specific, gender–aware perspective" by Margaret Carol Davidson in Gothic Literature.

"WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF LOVE, DOMESTICITY, MARRIAGE, AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP: Her (Radcliffe's) novels established an enduring Female Gothic recipe that explored the conjunction between love and terror, called women"s domestic roles and ideals into question, and contested property – related issues. Despite several recent claims about her tame and conservative standpoint, Radcliffe dared to imagine a Wollstonecraftian world where women retained control over their fictional affairs." By Davidson

"FEMALE EXPERIENCE OF PASSION: what happens if we lay aside our assumptions about women's writings and look again at women's Gothic? What we find there suggests the need for another story: wild passions, the sublime, supernatural phenomena, violent conflict, murder and torture, sexual excess and perversion, outlandish settings, strange mingling's of history and fantasy." By E.J. Clery. These above definitions try to explain the experiences faced by women in day-to-day life and universalize these in categories like patriarchal oppression and domestic affairs. How can we differentiate between Female Gothic and an almost identical novel written by a man? For example, we can see in the Romance of The Forest written by Anna Radcliff, and in TJ Horsley Curtie's the House of Fitz-Auburn that most of their characteristics are similar: both have heroines in distress and through all the hardships hero and heroine get together.

"Scholarship on the genericism of the gothic has tended to emphasis the difference between 'female' terror Gothic popularised by Radcliffe and the 'male' horror Gothic pioneered by Matthew Lewis in The Monk (1796) in many ways reproducing as fact the distinction polemically drawn by Radcliffe herself in Posthumously published essay 'On Supernatural in Poetry (1826). Yet this scholarly emphasis arguably distorts historical practice, since Lewis and most 'horror' Gothic writers themselves reproduced the 'terror' Gothic conventions that Radcliffe's novels popularised and hence less authored a rival Gothic genre than added elements of graphic 'horror' and/or actual supernatural events to the conventions that Radcliffe herself popularised." By Edward Jacobs in Radcliffe, Genericism, and gender. It says how female gothic works on creating the element of terror through suspense and allowing readers to expect, whereas in the male gothic-like in The Monk by Lewis, the element of real supernatural can be seen which expresses the horror.

Female Gothic Vs Male Gothic

The "explained supernatural style," made popular by Radcliffe, in which otherworldly occurrences are threatened but then explained, has been intimately linked to the Female Gothic. This literary genre stands in contrast to the "Male Gothic," made popular by Horace Walpole and Matthew Lewis, in which ghosts, demons, and other supernatural occurrences call on the reader to willfully suspend their disbelief (Milbank, 1998: 54; Hogle, 2002: 9–10). However, notable Gothic authors like Clara Reeve, Charlotte Dacre, and Mary Shelley all write in what is referred to as the "masculine" style. An author's gender typically does not correlate with the "female/male" aesthetic dichotomy, even though it is uncommon for male authors to write in the "female" manner (Miles, 2000)

Moers explores two different types of "Female Gothic" in Literary Women, including what she refers to as the "traveling heroinism" of Ann Radcliffe's novels (chapter 7) and the "birth myth" of Frankenstein (1831). (chapter 5). We now tend to define the origins of "Female Gothic" as Radcliffe's works, which have heroines fleeing from male dictators through strange landscapes and searching for lost moms imprisoned in womb-like prisons under patriarchal castles. As Moers herself points out, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is in many respects more similar to the literature of the male overreacher and, as a result, to what critics have more recently referred to as "Male Gothic." Radcliffe, Shelley, George Sand, Rossetti, Emily Bronte, Diane Arbus, Robin Morgan, and Sylvia Plath are all covered in Moers' chapters on the Gothic. The relationships she in the backdrop of "the new wave of feminism called women's liberation," the connections formed amongst such various women writers gave new ways of understanding and appreciating them. It also served as an example for other critics who saw the Feminine Gothic as a politically subversive genre that expressed women's frustration with patriarchal norms and provided a coded way for them to convey their anxieties about being trapped in the home sphere and the female body.

Ann Radcliffe's theory on Female Gothic

The career of Ann Radcliffe (1789–1826) in the nineteenth century served as a sort of literary flashpoint for cultural anxiety around the position of the Gothic novel and women's growing literacy writings. As some have made out, Radcliffe did not become the first woman to release a popular Gothic book, and other well-known female authors, like Frances Burney and Joanna Baillie, frequently used themes that would later come to be known as "Radcliffean" in their writing. However, her gift for exquisite description bolstered the authenticity of the evolving novel and raised concerns about whether the artistic value of the Gothic romance should earn more acclaim.

The most significant voice in establishing Ann Radcliffe's literary fame was Walter Scott. The 50-volume collection The British Novelists (1810)'s prefaces by Anna Barbauld started the process of Scott's Lives of the Novelists (1827), which established the book's prominence as a literary form and, most significantly, featured Gothic romances as a part of that tradition, helped to legitimize the novel (Robertson, 1994). Scott makes a highly shady claim about Radcliffe in the "Mrs. Radcliffe" chapter, calling him the creator and master of the Gothic novel: As a writer, Mrs. Radcliffe has the strongest case for being counted among the select few who have achieved distinction as a class or school founders. The author of The Family of Montorio may be the only person to have achieved or come close to the excellence of the original invention as she pioneered a peculiar writing style that had a strong psychological impact on readers (Scott, 1906: 319).

Radcliffe receives even more hesitant praise in George Moir's Treatise on Poetry and Modern Romance (1839), which also uses an indirect approach to rank her among her counterparts who are men. This particular genre of romance writing was arguably perfected by Mrs. Radcliffe, who has never been surpassed. Whatever the exact sequence of precedence in the fiction calendar, we believe that justice has rarely been done to the true genius that she threw into the style of fiction she chose to adopt. She is the only other brilliant writer who has decorated it, with just two exceptions. The truth is that the touches of sarcasm directed at Mrs. Radcliffe's childish fears should have been kept to a minimum. Scholars commemorated Ann Radcliffe's 250th birthday in 2014 with several academic activities meant to reexamine Radcliffe's significance. These comprised a "Study Day" at Chawton House Library and a special edition of Radcliffe's work in women's literature. Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism, and the Gothic, an essay collection edited by Dale Townshend and Angela Wright and released by Oxford in January 2014, celebrated its release in June 2014 during the "Radcliffe at 250" conference held at the University of Sheffield.

Conclusion

According to Freud, the fear of death is always perceived as being "outward as something foreign to [the subject]" (358). Bowen's story serves as an example of how both sexes project their fears onto the other sex by portraying it as the most "foreign" or "Other" and hence the most dangerous to their own identity. The female becomes a symbol for the male in the Male Gothic while the masculine performs the same role in the Female Gothic, the feminine connotes dissolution/death. But as these tales demonstrate, the terror of the male Other is doubly complex in the Female Gothic. First of all, it is made more intense by the physical and spiritual "ghosting" power that men in patriarchal societies have over women. Furthermore, because of each authors' use of unclear gender images. According to Gaskell and Sinclair, the "Other" for women can be either a man or a woman. Because women typically provide the majority of the care in our society, the Other is also the (m)other for both men and women. This contrast may help to explain why female writers are so drawn to Gothic literature, a style that can convey such ambiguity. These bizarre tales provide particularly rich and profound analyses of women's fantasies, desires, and dreads. As I hope this entire essay will demonstrate, taking into account just this one instance of a missed avenue of impact implies that the emergence of a women's Gothic tradition was a considerably more gradual process compared to what Scott, his contemporaries, and later second-wave feminist critics described, and more organic process.

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