
High Culture/Popular Culture Debate In Relation To Romantic Gothic

High and Popular Gothic were classed as poisonous novels which were read in secret. Beattie criticises the reading of sensationalist gothic novels as a dangerous past time because “Romances are a dangerous recreation... and tend to corrupt the heart and simulate the passions” (Beattie, J, (1970), pp. 309-327). In this assignment, I will argue that the relationship between the two genres is shifting alignments of popular and literary fictions with cultural theories, consumption and representations of science. This argument will explore the ways in which these genres were aligned with the historical process of modernity – with the Gothic representing the negative aspects of vice and barbarism that accompanied the changing parameters of civilisation, while Romance clung on to traditional values, manners and feelings.

The hypothesis for my argument is to argue that popular culture does not make romance Gothic a rubbish genre. Most people like the genre because it can alert us as to how the past was lived, by people living periods before us. Haggerty argues what leaves the audience often lusting over the gothic characters while Brooks points out that a clever historian is all it takes to remould an event for the present reader rather than keeping a mundane theme dated back centuries ago. Although I agree with both Brooks because of the media applications we have today making events from centuries ago seem more appealing to a present-day audience and Haggerty, I find myself agreeing more with Haggerty because Gothic leaves nothing out. There is nothing left unexplored throughout because the motif of Gothic is darkness. Therefore, the reader will expect to read about dark things that are decayed and neglected because these are antonyms of Gothic. Hume also states that there are certain fixed properties within a Gothic narrative, such as a dark atmosphere and supernatural occurrences. We will never read a gothic novel which is colourful and where the sun is shining because this does not fit the structure of a gothic novel. Another criticism widely broadcasted is that Gothic fiction is now mass produced. Surely this can just be a good thing because it makes it more accessible and allows working class to read it. Gothic is therefore no longer an activity which just the upper classes of society can enjoy. I agree with Reeve that Gothic was an opposite of romantic and medieval, but within this now exists a subgenre of Romantic Gothic. Romantic novels are concerned with love and passion, Gothic on the other hand, is concerned with decayed emotion. An inconsistency in Gothic is that ‘Gothic novelists did not know how to release their own feelings of frustration and rebelliousness. Their fiction is both exploratory and fearful’ as Kilgour tells us. It usually results in the death of a villain. Miles has a valid point about how you cannot constrain Gothic to a particular type of text, preferring to class Gothic literature as a taste or preference. Overall, I will show that the reception of gothic writing-its institutional and commercial recognition as a kind of literature- played a fundamental role in shaping many of the ideological assumptions about high culture that we now associate with the term Romanticism.

The Gothic novel was first invented almost single-handedly by Walpole as *The Castle of Otranto* fits most of the classifications we see in Gothic today. ‘The Gothic, like any genre, depends on a system of classification, and because genres, as Derrida argues, are never pure, and systems of classification, according to Foucault, cannot be verified, one is pressed to investigate and contest the validity of the definitions and conceptions typically attributed to the term “Gothic”, a kind of writing that is evidently heterogeneous and impure’ (Alshatti, A. (2008).). Walpole’s

novel was imitated in the eighteenth century, but it was enjoyed widespread influence in the nineteenth century partly because of the era's understanding in dark and fascinating themes. He could be said to have been influenced by Shakespearean dramas because in *The Castle Of Otranto* he plays around with mental disturbances, where Manfred seeks to marry the soon to be wife of his dead son Conrad to keep his genes alive throughout generations. Lady Macbeth evidently suffers from a psychotic disorder with the misfortune of hallucinations which can be induced by extreme guilt. She has the sense of heavy guilt because her and her husband killed King Duncan in cold blood. Gothic, it can be argued, was instrumental in the decisive shift towards popular fiction in its modern form, aimed at a broad readership, commercially streamlined, formulaic, with the profit motive uppermost. The characterisation can change at times because it used to be the case where you would see the monster. Nowadays, it tends to be the case where the monster is hidden, so this shows a transformation in the way the novel is illustrated. The scene and characters are unchanging though as there is always a brutal atmosphere with the weather and as for characters there is always a villain and a hero. "The Gothic is an allusion to or characteristic of the Middle Ages, or, more obliquely, the medieval or romantic, both of which are positioned as opposite classics" (Reeve, 2012, p. 233). 'Though God cannot alter the past', the Victorian essayist Samuel Butler noted, 'historians can' (Brooks, 1999, p. 2). So, historians have the power to change segments of the history so it can mirror something closer to our lives we live now, instead of mirroring something which we would class as tasteless that happened many centuries ago. During the publication of Gothic texts there was a movement of clear distinction between praised Gothic novels and criticised Gothic novels.

The genre of gothic presupposes that it is a historically enclosed genre, which I believe to be a false claim because historians can play with time, making it similar to what happened, but perhaps not in the same way, as we would view this as being quite bland. "This narrow view of the history of the Gothic that separates the gothic novel from its non-novelistic counterparts and gothic novels from other gothic works by the same writer may partly be attributed to the ambivalence of the term "Gothic" itself, and partly to the Romantic ideology that dominated the Romantic canon for a considerable part of the twentieth century" (Alshatti, A (2008), p.10). "The decade of the French Revolution was also the period when the Gothic novel was at its most popular" (Botting, 1996, p. 6). This is why the gothic setting is a classic and never changes, the story is always set with a dark, stormy night. These Gothic trappings include haunted castles, supernatural occurrences (sometimes with natural explanations), secret panels and stairways, time-yellowed manuscripts, and poorly lighted midnight scenes" (Hume, 1969, p. 282). These features are commonly used to create the correct atmosphere for the piece. The Gothic motifs that are common are torture, imprisonment and terror. Researchers of novel history have submitted their general direction to Walpole and appropriated the expression 'gothic' for the popular books that overwhelmed the 1790s, and on the grounds that this move has concentrated basically on the novel, it has brought about the disregard of a substantial amount of gothic writing that showed up in sorts other than the novel. The affiliation of the Gothic with ladies' journalists has heightened this disregard since it was for quite a while the propensity in twentieth-century investigations of Romanticism to concentrate essentially on the poetical yield of six male artists: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats. Miles adds to the argument that Gothic fiction is not historically closed because "It as a literary historical solecism to equate the Gothic only with fiction. During it's initial phase (1750-1820) Gothic writing also encompassed drama and poetry, and before it was any of these Gothic was a taste, an aesthetic" (Alshatti, A, (2008), p.26). I agree with Ellis who argues that gothic fiction adopts and recycles gothic fiction in an attempt to posit a theory of history by presenting a fictive narrative

as a kind of history in *The History of Gothic Fiction*. The combination of history and fiction, along with the Romanticism creates a hybrid of the gothic narrative and as seen with *The Castle of Otranto*, Gothic eludes strict categorisation and defies generic formulations. For these reasons I believe that Gothic Literature cannot be delimited by genre or confined by discipline.

Gothic is also interesting because of how gender was viewed at the time some of the classics were written. "In no other century was woman such a dominating figure, the very essence of rococo being a female delicacy" (Alshatti, A, (2008), p.21). Gothic is also an interesting genre as it shares elements with various other genres. The weak and defenceless woman who is stuck until a knight hurries to her rescue shares the motif with a tragedy and a fairy-tale. This leads to the woman dominating and being in control when the knight saves her. This mix of intertextuality enriches Gothics stock elements. In evident Gothic style, limits are trespassed, explicitly love crossing the limit among life and demise and Heathcliff's transgressing social class and family ties. Brontë pursues Walpole and Radcliffe in depicting the oppressive regimes of the dad and the savageries of the male centric family and in reconstituting the family on non-male centric lines, despite the fact that no counterbalancing matron or matriarchal family is displayed. The climate pounded *Wuthering Heights* is the conventional mansion, and Catherine takes after Ann Radcliffe's courageous women in her valuation for nature. Like the traditional Gothic legend reprobate, Heathcliff is a puzzling figure who demolishes the lovely lady he seeks after and who usurps legacies, and with run of the mill Gothic overabundance he hammers his head against a tree. Heathcliff is below the standard of what Cathy is expected to marry into so she goes for Edgar. By the time Catherine undergoes the trials and tribulations of family life she is dead. Heathcliff tries to see her but is simply too late. Although, when Heathcliff is told by Lockwood, half in jest that *Wuthering Heights* is haunted, it seems to encompass the audience that the building is preyed upon by spirits. Considering the house is centred on in the play, it lets the audience find out that in order to enter the house you have to also enter the stories of those who had lived there before he entered. Ellen Moers feminist theory is "Women's proper sphere of activity is elsewhere [than writing]. Are there no husbands, lovers, brothers, friends to coddle and console? Are there no stockings to darn, no purses to make, no braces to embroider? My idea of a perfect woman is one who can write but won't" (-, (2016)). Moers criticises that women were not meant to write, they were not in a creative business industry, however the perfect woman in her eyes could write if the boundaries were shifted.

It is argued that some gothic writing was written for the working classes. It identifies and explores the consistent framing of sensation fiction as a pathological 'style of writing' by middle-class critics in the periodical press, revealing how such responses were moulded by new and emerging medical research into the nervous system, the cellular structure of the body, and the role played by germs in the transmission of diseases. "Where the classical was well ordered, the Gothic was chaotic, where the classical was simple and pure, Gothic was ornate and convoluted; where the classics offered a world of clear rules and limits, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and the uncivilised, a world that constantly tended to overflow cultural boundaries" (Punter, 2004, p. 7). If Hume is correct then Gothic romanticism could not have been written for working classes because if Gothic was a poor art, then it would require people of higher intellect to read it and to understand it properly. Gothic was often thought as a genre written for women, though it was said to make their brains rot, which is why they read it in secret. As Robert Miles recently put it, "Gender, one may say, is the law of the Gothic genre". The Gothic offers commentators the chance to examine the effect of female readership on the flavours of the distributing market, the development of an unmistakable ladylike talk in the open circle, and most critically, the complex connections which

exist among Gothic and sexual orientation. In any case, at the core of the gothic plot is the jeopardized courageous woman, assailed by the oppression of a man centric figure; in scholarly history the gothic novel has been related with ladies' essayists and female readership; yet incomprehensibly as an outcome of the strength of a Romantic belief system the non-novelistic assortments of Gothic delivered by authors other than the six male artists have been side-lined. Howard has also suggested that "Given the more or less fixed nature of many received views- about the rise of the novel and realism as its dominant form, about the marginal role and status of women writers, about the nature of genre itself and the Gothic as a 'popular' form with predictable textual properties- situating Gothic texts with greater precision against the dominant literary canon and other cultural texts seem an important task" (Howard, 1994, p. 2).

Many have acclaimed that "While gothic's contentious reception constituted it as a conspicuously "low" form against which romantic writers could oppose themselves, its immense popularity, economic promise, and sensational subject matter made this opposition a complex and ultimately conflicted and duplicitous endeavour" (Gamer, M, (2000), p.7). Gamer is suggesting that even though there is a great deal of overlap, they are not the same category. Yes, something can be gothic and also romantic, but this is not always the case. "The gothic perpetually haunts, as an aesthetic to be rejected, romanticism's construction of high literary culture" (Gamer, M (2000), p.7). Until 1970 women often hid the fact that they were reading excerpts from gothic novels or gothic novels themselves because at best they were considered a "novel slideshow of romanticism, and at worst an embarrassing and pervasive disease destructive to national culture and social fabric" (Gamer, M, (2000), p.8). Gamer argues here that people, especially women hid the fact that they read Gothic as ideas conjured up on it were classed as unfeminine and this had the power to break British culture. Miles states that "Gothic is a discursive site, a "carnavalesque" mode for representations of the fragmented subject. Both the generic multiplicity of the Gothic and what one might call its discursive primacy, effectively detach the Gothic from the tidy simplicity of thinking of it as so many predictable, fictional conventions". Again, romance fits in with Gothic and can tie in really well making Gothic Romantic novels and in turn these end up being very popular. Gothic novels are so popular because they evoke the emotion of fear about the supernatural rather than being about the supernatural itself. Another thing we like are character doubles. In Frankenstein, Viktor and the creature are doubles of each other. Both protagonists are heavily isolated which I can see at various stages in the book, firstly when Viktor states "I am now alone" in chapter three and later in the novel when the creature reflects Viktor's isolation "am I not alone, miserably alone?". I would argue that Frankenstein is not a Romantic work and is Gothic, because Viktor ends up killing Elizabeth. Veeder states that Viktor, has females as correspondents as opposed to companions. He cannot love Elizabeth as he does not unite with her, instead he 'substitutes her. He projects his male element outward in the monster, allows the female to become dominant in himself, and spends the rest of the novel seeking to make love to his self" (Ketterer, D, (1973), p.269). So, if Frankenstein can be classed as a Romantic novel, it is Romantic between Viktor and the creature, not Viktor and Elizabeth.

In comparison to Shelley's Frankenstein, is Stevenson's The Strange Case Of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in terms of popular culture in Gothic Romanticism. Both novels have monsters, but the difference is that the monster in Stevenson's novel is not artificially created from stitched-together body parts but fully emerges from the dark side of the human personality. The Gothic component of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is spoken to by means of the subject of multiplying. This is uncovered to the peruser by the stunning change of Dr Henry Jekyll into the atavistic killer Edward Hyde. The change is produced by the dread of relapse, as the two men are uncovered

to be a similar individual. Stevenson's portrayal of the decent man of honour Dr Jekyll as fit for the horrible conduct shown by Mr Hyde, is proof of his control of Victorian nerves and social feelings of trepidation. It broke the facade of class-adapted decency that secured and controlled the lives of good individuals from the populace. As the content illustrates, it isn't just the devastated, common laborers living in the ghetto territories of the city that are fit for perpetrating violations; offenders are additionally found in instructed, well off, and apparently decent echelons of society. Gothic fiction has seen many versions of doubles or sinister alter egos on various occasions but Stevenson's unique idea with Jekyll and Hyde was not only to portray dual natures of a singular man but to portray two sides of society in general, as a whole. Honesty is also shown portrayed against duplicity and abandonment against restraint. The topic of multiplying is symbolized all through the content. The city of London is part in two. The one side where Dr Jekyll, Mr Utterson and their counterparts live and work is spoken to as shrewd, well off and instructed zone, distinguished all things considered in Utterson's referral to Cavendish square - the home of Dr Lanyon - as 'that fortification of medication.' conversely, the opposite side of London is spoken to by the region of Soho, a ghetto region of the city that symbolizes an atavistic play area, where corrupt conduct is normal and in this way substantially less observable. The novel is now associated with the mental condition of a 'split personality', where two personalities of differing character reside in one person. As Darwin holds the sentiment that people advance from increasingly less difficult living beings after some time Mr. Hyde can be viewed as an increasingly basic living being of his mind who has a creature like appearance and depicted as the 'child of hell' in the novel. However, the text was written before the science of psychology was firmly established, and the novella itself appears to be influenced by a variety of scientific theories predominant in the late-Victorian era.

Overall, my judgement is that Romantic Gothic does create popularity. Popular characteristics of Gothic fiction are mystery, the supernatural, haunted houses, castles, darkness, death and decay, romance madness, monsters. Frankenstein is a popular novel therefore because it was published in the first half of the nineteenth century where a monster is created from Viktor and out of this a romance builds while he shifts his affections from Elizabeth to the create; ends up killing Elizabeth. Walpole's Castle Of Otranto could be said to have been influenced by Shakespearean dramas because in The Castle Of Otranto he plays around with mental disturbances, where Manfred seeks to marry the soon to be wife of his dead son Conrad to keep his genes alive throughout generations. Most mental disturbances seen throughout literature is present because of guilt in some form. The scene and characters are unchanging though as there is always a brutal atmosphere with the weather and as for characters there is always a villain and a hero. These stock characters are in every novel but are fleshed out for the sake of advancing in the novel. The genre of gothic is said to be historically closed, I disagree with this declarative because historians can play with time, making a tragedy from many centuries ago tasteful and appealing to the modern audience.

The French Revolution is what created the Gothic genre, this is how having a glum setting is attractive to a modern audience. Gothic literature in many cases is also a form of escapism, it is so far from our everyday life. Miles also adds that Gothic is a taste and is not just applied to novels. I believe this is the case that Gothic is a taste that does not belong to a certain time period and is certainly not enclosed. It cannot be an enclosed drama because of different types of media like dramas and poetry. Poetry and dramas are still being produced today with the same motifs. Also, relating it back to Walpole being inspired by Shakespeare's use of mental health, if Walpole used this because he recognised that an audience liked this type of genre, it cannot be enclosed because it has been done before. So, Walpole parodying Shakespeare's

work proves the Gothic genre cannot be an enclosed genre. Gender is viewed in Gothic where the woman typically waits for the man to rescue her and there afterwards is dominant. Heathcliff is below the standard of what Cathy is expected to marry into so she goes for Edgar. By the time Catherine undergoes the trials and tribulations of family life she is dead. Heathcliff tries to see her but is simply too late. Ellen Moers theory is true because women writers were not thought of as equal compared to Byron or Keats. It was not thought a woman's place to write or even make a living for themselves. She liked a woman that was capable of writing but did not choose to as this would not fit in well with society. Some believe that Gothic was written for working class, while some like Punter believe Gothic novels are rather chaotic compared to a classic which is well structured and well organised. My problem with this is if gothic novels were thought of as chaotic, surely it would take someone of higher intellect to understand it and get feelings of enjoyment from it, rather than being left in a bemused state by the genre. Mile's then goes on to say that gender is the law of Gothic genre.

By this does he mean that women cannot or should not be able to read Gothic? Surely, he cannot mean this because Gothic was said to be written for women to read secretly because it rotted their brains. However, in the 1790's when Gothic was a fairly new genre it was expensive to afford a gothic novel, so men would have to purchase them for women to read. This does not cut-off women from reading the genre though, if anything it would entice them, making them want to read it more. Gamer argues that women hid the fact that they read Gothic as ideas conjured up on it were classed as unfeminine and this had the power to break British culture. Romance fits in with Gothic and can tie in really well making Gothic Romantic novels and in turn these end up being very popular. Gothic novels are so popular because they evoke the emotion of fear about the supernatural rather than being about the supernatural itself. In Frankenstein, Viktor and the creature are doubles of each other. Both protagonists are heavily isolated and this could be why the bond seems to happen naturally. Veeder states that Viktor, has females as correspondents as opposed to companions. He cannot love Elizabeth as he does not unite with her, instead he 'substitutes her. He kills Elizabeth, and becomes the female himself allowing the monster to become masculine. So, if Frankenstein can be classed as a Romantic novel, it is Romantic between Viktor and the creature, not Viktor and Elizabeth. Darwin captured the idea of evolution, that we have grown from simple species. It could be said that Mr. Hyde is a small organism of his mind who has an animal-like appearance and is referred to as the 'child of hell' throughout the novel. This could fit with the split personality aspect and the duality because everything is not always as it meets the eye. He could get called the child of hell and look animal like but he could be intellectual and think highly of himself. Dr. Jekyll, the other half of Mr. Hyde says "With every day and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and intellectual, I thus drew steadily to that truth by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two". This clearly reveals his intelligence, so maybe Mr. Hyde's intellect is hidden. This is on the grounds that Dr. Jekyll in the last periods of his clarity perceives the threat that Mr. Hyde postures to society and benevolently chooses to get rid of himself. Stevenson appears to dispose of Christian ideas of monism and hold onto dualism as depicted previously. You need to be clever to be evil and pose a danger to society, so he clearly comes across as a child of hell when in reality he is smart enough to cause havoc for everyone that surrounds him in London.