



GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

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ABSTRACT

Gothic is an extremely complex and contentious term, from the mid-eighteen century onwards which has been applied to literary, aesthetic and architectural concepts and movements. Hardy's assimilation of the Gothic is through the setting, character, components of diction and thematic concerns. Hardy's expert and extensive knowledge of this contrast between Gothic and classic architecture or a kind of debate can be found in the novel, The Mayor of Casterbridge. The aim of this paper to analyze selected text from Gothic point of view, how haunted architectures, dark atmosphere and images of characters invoke readers with thriller and suspense.

Keywords: *Gothic, haunted architecture, darkness atmosphere, images of characters, thriller, etc.*

Introduction

Gothic is a extremely complex and contentious term from the mid-eighteen century onwards which has been applied to literary, aesthetic and architectural concepts and movements. Hardy's assimilation of the Gothic is through the setting, character, components of diction and thematic concerns. Hardy's expert and extensive knowledge of this contrast between Gothic and classic architecture or a kind of debate can be found in the novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

Historical dimension is also the central to the Gothic mode which reflects the tension between the old tradition and modernity. That we can see in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. A clash between the wagoners of the Farfrae and Henchard is symbolic representation of both which they represented as Henchard-old tradition and culture while Farfrae is reflected the modernity. As the driver meet on the cramped street outside of the High Place Hall. They



also indicate this but the confrontation is also between age and youth and past and present as well.

Gothic is also hunted by reading of history as dialectical process of alienation and restoration, dismembering and remembering. It's a version of secularized myth of fall and return. It is also "the perfect anonymous language for the particular unwillingness of the past to go away." (Sage, *Modern Gothic*, 3-4) Darkness and gloom are the foremost characteristics. A literature of 'tortures', fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images and life threatening pursuits enacted in the Gothic locality of "dark subterranean vaults, gloomy forests, mountains (jagged) and heavy raining in night or may be suspense includes these components as Gothic.

If we think as psychological shifting of emphasis transformed into Gothic world as guilt, despair, anxiety or may call it as high emotion. In Victorian period, mostly authors used to choose a specific place which was suitable for Gothic or location with unprogressive customs, uncivilization and unreasonable tendencies. Same in this novel, Hardy mesmerized of the overtly historical setting and locations. Thus, she transferred the meaning of terror or fear as Gothic and manifested it as urban Gothic with the contemporary realm and the heart of the modern capital.

I have divided this novel's plot and structure into three parts from Gothic point of view. First is character basis, second is architecture/location basis and third is atmosphere basis. In first on the character basis, if we take the example of Henchard and for that I will concern his deeds and character as Gothic anti-hero or sometimes villain. His tragic end enacted in that setting which has many common classic Gothic discourse. Mr. Fall is also represented his tragic end. Beside it, Mr. Henchard's face is also described many times as a combination of 'Red and Black'. He was racial white but suntanned made him almost 'blackened', in folk used this word. For red face, he cannot hide his emotion and his blood always rushing on his face whenever he gets angry. As it is narrated, "Henchard looked at him with a face stern and red." (15) for others, "His dark pupils which always seemed to have a red spark of light in them,.... figure. (10) Thus, this description of Henchard makes us weird and sound makes pretty scary. 'Dark eyes with a 'red spark' makes sound of almost demonic. Jopp is also a dark character in this novel. At once, his function also serves villain and catalyst of villainous behavior who feels joy to see his enemies in trouble. Unlike Mr. Fall, he appears in the darkness of the novel.

Other character who has Gothic features in her character is Mrs. Susan. She has yellowish face like Ghost, "Mrs Henchard was so pale that the boys called her "the Ghost" (88) In earlier chapters also, she has been described, "her face had lost much of its rotundity; her skin had undergone a textual change; and though her hair had not lost lost colour; it was considerably thinner than her to face" (---??). So, this description about her makes a scary



imagination. Her mourning dress is also making that kind of her gothic appearance.

For third character as I have picked up that “furnity old lady” who appears four times in the novel. She existed twice in the image of light and two other locations in the darkness to add the Gothic elements. She is also described “ over the pot stooped an old woman, haggard, wrinkled and almost in rags”as haggish creature which hanged over a large legged crock. (22)

Hardy describes Lucetta's house which was situated in “High Place Hall” in such the term of Gothic motif. High place hall is a 'Palladian' structure which like most architecture erected since the Gothic age was a compilation rather than design and also a symbol of Lucetta's past. She is from Jersey while her residence is Half-french and half-Indigenous origins. In High Place hall, where french is spoken on the one side of street and English on other hand and a mixed tongue in the middle of the road, with its reasonable exist ugly and grotesque passion. Passions are associated here as Gothic. It is also described as “The house was entirely of stone, and formed an example of dignity without great size... yet th eold fashioned stranger instructively said, “blood built it and wealth enjoys it.” (152-53) Some other qualities also represented in the queer old door which deals to the little used alleys of the town and is topped by a mask whose comic leer has changed with time and alter into such a ghostly appearance that Elizabeth could not bear to look at it. (152-53)

The place that Henchard has chosen to meet to Susan after 18 years, is a Roman amphitheater known as 'the Ring'. It is a place of violence where bloody incidents have occurred, is not for happy meeting. The Roman amphitheater was also known as Maumbury Ring and was located just south of the Dorchester. The Ring is an important setting for two scenes- first, reunion with Susan and his meeting with Lucetta is other one. The narrator uses the similarities in between two scenes. Its ancient history and facts that scenes repeat themselves. There is a suggestion that the ring might be an emblem for the way the past came back to hunt the present and characters cannot escape from it. This is described a barren and playground like monument, seems Gothic when Henchard asked Susan to meet him at 7pm. It is already dark with the atmosphere and night's darkness makes it more terrific and weird. Lucetta also thinks about Henchard in same place, “the man of mood, gloom, and superstitions.” (274) After knowing that Elizabeth is not his daughter but Newson's daughter. Henchard came to the road in a high depression and weather was also thundering and lighting that's also makes a Gothic scene in the novel.

The Three Mariners Inn is also described as Gothic component. In the chapter VI, all characters appeared and stayed in 'The Three Mariners Inn' but they didn't recognize each other, it might be due to darkness and it is after passed a long narrow road with dimly lit. At the end of the novel, all casterbridgians dethroned Henchard and leave him as rustic, elemental, grotesque, and Gothic chorus. Its plot is also Gothic that is destroying at a distance of years or even generations.



In the novel, elements of Gothic emphasized through its setting. By the creation of Casterbridge, Hardy unified the real with imagined like other Gothic writers. By creating the urban style in the Casterbridge and used the word “Wessex” as familiar, she established a new micro-mic world. Henchard encounters the past and he tried to bring it in the present mode that makes “a huge circle of complexity” and enters into the Gothic situation as with double problem with terror in limited mode and unlimited mode. Returning of past can be call as Gothic flaw. Using the features as “tower”, “gables”, and “bell” implying the Christianity cum Gothic. Casterbridge images of darkness and light, sometime, to add to the Gothic(hunting) many character in this novel in many locations.

Conclusion:

Therefore, I conclude that Hardy, in her novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* has narrated Gothic elements through settings, both natural and architectural, characters and also created a dream place, Wessex. Hardy's engagement with Gothic into complex involvement with its portrayal into the text and its effects on the individual.

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