



GOTHIC FEATURES IN KEVIN RYAN’S NOVEL “VAN HELSING”

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ABSTRACT

The Gothic novel, which appeared in English literature in the late XVIII and early XIX centuries, influenced the works of outstanding writers of all subsequent periods. The description of supernatural elements in the Gothic novel filled the reader with horror and fear. The genre of the Gothic novel, known in some sources as the "black novel", is widely developed, primarily in English literature. Gothic novels play an important role not only in English but also in world literature. They had a significant impact on the further development of many literary movements, both in Europe and in other parts of the world.

KEYWORDS

Gothic novel, mysticism, danger, horror, terror, mystery, villain, Chrono tope, villain.

INTRODUCTION

The title of the Gothic novel comes from the style of Gothic architecture, as the setting in these types of novels was often set in old Gothic fortresses. In the XVIII-XIX centuries. The gothic novel was one of the most widely read works in Europe. Gothic literature is usually understood as "the literature of the mysterious and terrible". The presence of the supernatural and terrible, causing a feeling of fear, becomes a fundamental feature of the Gothic novel. The Gothic genre appeared in literature against the backdrop of

fears. The horror that is present in the gothic genre is accompanied by fantastic stories and sometimes extraordinary events. The heroes of gothic novels often suffer from a deep sense of loneliness and pessimism experienced by grief. The fears of the heroes of these novels are conveyed to the reader through artistic means. Often these feelings are manifested against the background of mystical events. Howard Lovecraft, in his study Supernatural Horror in Literature, wrote: "Fear is the oldest and strongest of

human feelings, and the oldest and strongest fear is the fear of the unknown.”

“Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.” The main feature of the "Gothic" novel is the reader's feelings of horror and fear. English novelist Ann Radcliffe identifies two types of fear: horror-fear of disgust and terror-fear of attraction. She notes terror - based on obscurity and semi-distinctness, enriches the soul and sharpens perception, while horror - suppresses, cools and almost destroys all spiritual abilities. Of course, the line between terror and horror is rather arbitrary: they can be used equally in the same work. Horror, however, is more primitive; it indicates with shocking clarity what to fear for readers and heroes: suffering, torture, physical death, and so on. A terror (terror) is based on the work of the imagination, which is "spurred on" by subtle details. These are "... narrative techniques designed by vague hints, vague suggestions to arouse the reader's quivering curiosity, awaken in him vague guesses and forebodings, make him rush along the wrong track so that after long wanderings in the labyrinth of the unknown, he again finds himself in the face of an insoluble mystery". In addition, terror requires considerable skill in order not to cause more fear than pleasure.

To enhance the effect of horror, the authors of Gothic literature use a number of elements and symbols:

The place of action - in the Gothic novel is the cornerstone - the narrative is built on it. Most often, especially in early Gothic novels, this is a castle. As the

genre develops, a monastery, a cathedral, a cemetery, a small settlement, a Gothic mansion or a house also become the most frequent setting. The scene itself is characterized by a gloomy, terrifying atmosphere: intricate corridors, secret passages, dark basements, stairs, antique objects, paintings, books, occult symbols, crypts, dug up graves. This is the description given to Count Dracula's castle in Kevin Ryan's *Van Helsing*: “Now they both looked at the majestic medieval castle, which, as it seemed, was entirely carved from the black rock that belonged to the mountain ranges that surrounded this impregnable fortress on all sides. They don't build castles like that anymore, Van Helsing thought. However, if you take a closer look at this fortress, you could guess that such castles have never been built. Not in the fifteenth century, when Dracula was killed, or anywhere else. The size of the castle was amazing. Next to its huge spires and crenellated battlements, any other structure that Van Helsing had seen in his entire life would have seemed tiny. It seems that the foundation of the fortress seemed to take root in the mountain, and its three towers seemed to grow out of the black rock. It seemed that this building was not built at some time, but was a natural stone monolith. Two bridges connecting somewhere at the top of the tower with each other, perhaps, remained the only reminder that people still worked here and this was their work, and not the product of some unknown dark forces of nature.” Often this is accompanied by strange sounds, unexpected gusts of wind, a frightening play of light and shade, the appearance of "demonic" animals, such as a black cat, crow, wolf or bat: “Anna turned to head for Valerious Manor . . . and then for the first time in her life

saw a werewolf in the flesh. The monster loomed above her, blocking her path. It

was more than seven feet tall, powerfully muscled, and standing on its hind legs

like a man, its breath blowing white vapor in the cool moonlit night. The creature's

face was more wolf than human, with large pointed ears and a pronounced snout

with large canine teeth. The only quality that distinguished it from the face of an

animal was the terrible intelligence in its eyes.”

The presence of one or more secrets that are certainly related to the main character. Revealing the mystery is delayed until the very end. Secondary and side secrets, also revealed in the final, are usually added to the central secret. In a gothic novel, an unusual protagonist is very important, who can solve the mystery. The secret, as a rule, is associated with the main character, who, overcoming trials, is approaching "to reveal the fatal secret and at the same time to know himself - his roots, origin, true character". Due to memory loss, his past is shrouded in mystery. The secret order of the Vatican uses it to protect humanity from evil spirits, convincing Van Helsing that he is the chosen one and God is testing his faith for strength. He was sure that the Vatican knew much more about his past and about his personality in general. “Not an answer, exactly-at least, not the kind that Van Helsing was looking for. How much did the cardinal know about his past, his identity? More than he would say today, that much was certain. Nevertheless, the cardinal was right: His faith was being tested. Somehow, he hoped that knowing his past would

make it easier for him to bear the terrible price of his work, or perhaps leave it behind. A weariness descended on him and weighed on more than body.”

The very nature of the plot requires the presence of a villain. Almost no "Gothic" work is complete without a villain. He is the true hero of the Gothic novel; the development of the action depends on him. The villain of Gothic literature is an unforgettable and negative image. The mystery of the origin and past of such characters, the unusual and incomprehensible nature of their current life, their majestic and gloomy appearance and inexplicable power over people around them, sometimes suggesting their inhuman, supernatural nature - all this arouses genuine curiosity of readers and attracts attention right up to the last chapters of the novel. Writers usually endow villains with tall stature, a stern and pale face, and, of course, a piercing gaze. Here is how the author describes Count Dracula in the novel: “Victor went to the front door and came face-to-face with a tall man standing in the entryway. He was dressed all in black, a long coat

draping his body. The clothing was formal and had a vaguely military look, of a

style Victor had never seen before. Most unusual was his hair, which was long,

dark, and pulled back, away from his face. Perhaps the oddest thing about him was

the single earring he wore in his left ear-a small golden hoop. Clearly, the count

was nobility, but Victor had never known an aristocrat who wore an earring. The count's features were striking, with pronounced cheekbones and very dark

hair. If Victor had had to guess, he would have said the man was perhaps thirty,

just a little older than Victor himself. His guest certainly looked like a man in the

prime of youth, but there was something odd about his eyes, which looked older

than his face-much older. Victor found himself drawn to those eyes. They were

electric, intense, and . . . warm?"

An important theme of the Gothic novel is related to time. All the secrets of the present and future are always rooted in the past, and in order to determine them, the main characters rush into the past, which are in the same space with them. Dracula, who made a deal with the devil, was imprisoned by his father in an ice palace. The only entrance to Dracula's castle was hidden on the map of Transylvania, which was located in the castle of Valerius. Anna's father said that once Dracula lived in this castle, but now no one knew about his current whereabouts. He stared at the map for hours looking for this entrance, but he couldn't find it because of the missing part of the map. When Van Helsing attached the manuscript and read the inscription on it, the map begins to change and turns into an ancient mirror, through which they eventually enter Dracula's castle. According to researcher Ashley Prosser, "The signifying power of the space of a Gothic castle is chronotopic precisely because it lies in its ability to act as a physical conduit for the paradoxical

return of these troubled past years to an often equally troubled present."

Romance often plays a significant role in gothic fiction, as writers weave an element of death into romantic relationships to create tension and capture the reader's emotions.

Conclusion: Having reviewed the main features of the plot and techniques of the traditional gothic novel, we analyzed Kevin Ryan's novel "Van Helsing" and it is not difficult to see that the novel is replete with motifs and images characteristic of this kind of literature. Masterfully used by the author, the methods of forcing anxiety make the novel especially interesting, not allowing the reader to relax for a second.

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