

# Views on Gothic Tradition from British and American Literature

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**Abstract.** Since the producing of gothic novels in the mid 18th century, the gothic technique is applied to literature creation continually, and has gradually become one of the far-reaching creation traditions in the field of English and American literature. Gothic traditions focus on exploring the mysterious and horrible elements in the society in order to show the darkness and violence of society. For this reason, this essay will analyze the gothic tradition in literature, and primarily explore the specific manifestation of the gothic tradition in British and American literature.

## 0.Introduction

In British and American literature, there is a gothic tradition which has a widespread influence and is in the sustainable development. Since around 1750 gothic novels appeared for the first time in Britain, not only popular writers were keen on the traditional gothic literature creation, but also many first-class writers had a strong interest in it to either create a familiar gothic works or apply the gothic technique to their own works, which results in a large number of horror literature system in British and American literature. The main characteristics of traditional gothic novels are generally in places such as castles, ruins or wilderness as backgrounds, the plot of story is terrorist and exciting, and full of a large number of murder, violence and incest, always accompanied by ghosts, gods or other supernatural phenomena. This kind of works usually has a mysterious, dark and terrorist atmosphere, full of a lot of suspenses, and has a very unique artistic power. The psychological basis of traditional gothic novels is mainly the inward fears of people. The outstanding works are devoted to show the evil and the depths of the human society, and carry out a moral dimension to further exploration. Since the advent and development of gothic literature, it is closely related to the social and cultural background of British and American over two hundred years. Since the beginning of last century, the study of gothic tradition has been promoted to an important height, and raised a hot wave among the academic trend of gothic culture study.

## 1.The analysis of gothic tradition in literary works

The word “gothic” in English derives from a tribal name of the Teutonic peoples living in northern Europe during the middle ages. The people of this tribe were known as savage and wild. At that time, this nation had been called barbarians by the Romans. Then during the Renaissance in Europe, the thinkers used gothic to refer to a kind of arch type architectural style which was called the hated pointed in the middle ages. This kind of buildings had the towering spires, narrow windows, dark internal structure, complex tunnels hiding dead bodies. In these thinkers’ views, the development of this type of construction was lagging behind the times, was a symbol of a savage and dark. As a result, gothic was labelled as savage, backward, horror, mystery, darkness, inappropriate lab etc. It is through this kind of belittled and despised buildings that gothic literature inspired. Since the date of its birth, traditional gothic novels attracts generations of readers all over the world relying on its unique charm. A large number of world literature masters have created the traditional gothic novels, or used gothic method in their works to achieve the improved theme or work results. Early gothic works generally happened in the middle ages, the location was often full of mystery. In the southern region of Catholic, the theme was mainly based on the description of family hatred, inheritance to show the dark side of humanity. The plot was tried to describe the violence and terror atmosphere, such as conspiracy, intrigue, incest, dungeon, and the dark image or structure like monasteries.

## **2.The specific manifestation of the gothic tradition in British and American literature**

### **2.1 the strange gothic settings**

The typical scene of traditional gothic is rendering a sense of mystery and intrigue in a closed place. The atmosphere of this kind of work seemed very mysterious followed by the gothic tradition, then a large number of British and American literature make the settings in the bizarre gothic scene. The *Wuthering Heights*, for example, didn't happen in the middle ages, but the time of the author Emily Bronte lived. However, in order to form a kind of weird atmosphere which the readers are fascinated, the author continues to pave the story to deepen and expand. Then *Wuthering Heights* is described as the narrow windows embedded in the wall, the conors on both sides are protected by the outstanding big stones. Around the door there are very strange stone carving, even carved 1500 such a remote year. Outside the village, there are endless dark-colored wilderness. In the village, there is very dim and dark because of lack of ligh, so it also known as a typical gothic scene. Another example, the famous American short story writer Edgar Allen Poe also select an ancient place even isolated with the world in his magnum opus *the collapse of the urban house*, the location of the selected in the ancient land is almost isolated urban house, the walls are pale and sad, the window just like glazed eyes, the exterior wall filled with many fungus, the gothic hall ,arch and the darkness and winding corridors are gloomy and horrible, the floor is dark, the trophies are like ghost, and the arrangements of the hero's room is mysterious and strange, 4 walls all hang black curtains, the furnitures are old and worn-out. In British and American literature, gothic scene has developed into an indispensable element to create a mysterious atmosphere. Now, this feature is still very obvious. The novel *Harry Potter*, for example, has been popular in the world and received great commercial success in recent years because an ancient and great castle is the background of the whole novel. The location of the castle seems mysterious and unpredictable, but the interior is filled with mystery, such as the twists and turns and dark staircase, very deep and long corridor, etc. In fact, a lot of scenes of the novel also occurs in old castle or rubble. *Harry Potter and the goblet of fire* are beginning to readers described was the most spacious and magnificent of countryside for miles around, but now he looked wet and desolate, for no one living among them, the riddle house broken disorderly unbearable. Then, the author also for readers about a strange and terrible thing: more than fifty years before the riddle house, not only well managed, and has an extraordinary. But, in a summer morning, one for the maid walks into the sitting room found riddle 3 have been keel, and the more mysterious is three of the dead, there is no any injury, just have terrified expression on his face. Here later became the base of what voldemort lurks. The scene description is the plot of the story happened and play an important role.

### **2.2 the horrible gothic themes**

Among the eerie feel the noble morality, this is the gothic tradition of British and American literature under the influence of a theme. Gothic literature readers is the strongest impression and feelings is great terror. The horror often throughout the occurrence, development process and outcome of events, and the horror and only occurs in local, but the sprint in all aspects, thus became the mass-tone attune of the literary works. Literary critics burke was published in 1756, the theory of the sublime and beautiful, this paper proposes a new aesthetic standard, namely the lofty artistic experience not only makes people feel terror, but also can give a person with aesthetic feeling, let a person can get a soul purification. He felt the pain of thinking tend to form very high passion, and the rational activities whether the concept of fuzzy, or conscious awareness, both are in the state of a temporary halt. Once appear, the effect of pain, so, it is not real, is a kind of imagination, which can achieve great aesthetic. To some point of view, it is because of fear of savage and cruel and rejects, disdain for reality and boredom, a celebration of the happy life and hope, to form the psychological foundation which is formed by the gothic art and literature. Ought to say, the British and American novels of gothic tradition as a general, with a spirit with a sense of evil sad cloak, continues to show strong and vigorous vitality, reasonably to stimulate the senses of the reader, let its sense a derived from no pleasure, desire to appreciate the beauty of sublimation, and transcend reality of morality ethics level. In Shakespeare's many have a lot of drama instead of the darkness of the breath, among them, the "romeo and Juliet" that let people in the heartbreak of love tragedy

family avenger deep shadows, and Hamlet of murder, violence and revenge desire has always been firmly wrapped up with the fate of the hero. These let a person fear and trembling, and a writer as a basis of human nature are further revealed that by the time spirit and social life to implement the height of the summary, let work more tension and appeal. Today, there are a lot of European and American writers, or will be affected by the impact of the gothic tradition. Master of modernist fiction kafka is influenced, for example, the famous novel *The Castle* is a story about life fantastic works, among them everywhere filled with typical gothic despair and darkness, the desperate breath like the night surrounded by the whole world. Another example, contemporary pop novel *Harry Potter* also tradition the gothic novels on the theme of the theme, it was dark and terror of moral lofty body odor. Works fully unfolded in the middle of the terror atmosphere, thus reveals the magic community in the fierce struggle between good and evil, then promote the kindness, beauty and truth and don't bow to evil forces of the sense of justice.

### **2.3 the weird gothic characters**

In gothic fictions, it often describes the villains to explore the human nature of good and evil. The hero in gothic novel is mostly the so-called villain, such figures tend to have quite a mystery story, strange shape and distort the is different from the ordinary people's soul. And darkness, death, always accompanied by others, and to its own horror, mystery and bizarre as the main characteristics. However, it is these very controversial gothic characters, although very cruel and terror, but at the same time very perceptual and fragile, reveal character is evil but very charming. As a result, the author will be able to in human nature to the dark side of the implicit behaved very clear. At the same time, also can realize the feeling of fear and resonance multiple dramatic results. By observing the British and American literature, this kind of image is everywhere, sometimes even let readers feel, once the lack of the gothic characters, the whole works has the appeal will be overshadowed by the drama. For example, the hero of the novel *"Jane Eyre"* Rochester belong to gothic characters. He is of medium height, at large chest is quite wide, face is dark, face seemed quite thick eyebrows, tough, its eyes and locked his eyebrows looked like suffered a setback, and have been angry. He asked Jane to show that his accomplishments, I failed to win over the environment, once owed my fate, I don't have to stay calm, but began to despair, then fell. Jane Eyre also noticed that Rochester in personality weakness, says that look before and after are never seen. The American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his works, *The Scarlet Letter* is the protagonist Roger resort to depict Ross become such a role. Resort to Ross appear cold and ruthless, and has a very strong sense of revenge, even the name Roger resort to Ross and his fate. He left out on his wife Hester largely let the wife and the local priest and gave birth to a girl. His wife as a prompt it to convert all the energy into the will of revenge. He disguised as a private doctor to Arthur, for its treatment, actually gradually explore Arthur's heart, and delights in salt upon Arthur. For this kind of villain hero image of British and American literature, the readers not only hate the characters, but also will void attracted for its. Once from the psychology Angle of view to consider, because the reader is quite easy for more special resonance in this image. Its body has some characteristics, such as aggression, oppression and destruction to the subconscious mind is just the reader, is another half of the readers of split personality. Readers when reading gothic literature, the sort of repressed desires will be in the form of other content, and the satisfaction and to expand the real life experience of readers, and gothic hero is the reader to know the world and the observation of human nature important mirror, the world of absurdity, and the complexity of human nature have their own can not ignore the aesthetic function, so as to arouse the readers' reading interest. It was also because of this, now popular and far-reaching influence of British and American fiction, villain hero has become a important cannot lack of character types.

### **3. Conclusion**

In general, the use of gothic tradition in British and American literature for events filled with horror and mystery, introducing the surrealist art means such as fantasy, to reveal the darkness of human nature and society. Thus it can be seen no matter how the development of the gothic tradition has experienced, it remains to expose the evil dark side of society, and explore the morality

between good and evil as its main content. As an important school in British and American literature, Gothic tradition has made a very important influence to British and American literature and even the world literature. Because it is not only the expression of society that the modern people know, it can also let the British and American literature have a more unique artistic expression to sparkle in the world literature treasure house.

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