

Gothicism in literature and architecture belongs to the middle ages. In literature it means presence of horrid mystery, supernatural elements, cases of murder or lost heir, plenty of historical abbeys and castles and other spooky elements which create wonder mixed with horror.

Its revival took place in the first half of the nineteenth century with the Romantic Revival. Romanticism had, as Rickett says "a subtle sense of mystery" in it. He goes on to say that this sense of mystery is "a complex emotion compounded of awe in the presence of the unknown, wonder in the presence of the known, and an exquisite response to manifestations of beauty!"

~~Gothic~~ Gothic revival was two sided. On the intellectual side it satisfied the sense of security and on the emotional side it satisfied the sense of wonder. During the middle of the eighteenth century there arose a

group of writers who wrote novels with gothic elements. Those novels of thrill, sensation, mystery, ill forebodings etc. came to be known as gothic novels.

The "horror romanticism" of the eighteenth century is said to have born out of a dream of Horace Walpole one midsummer night. He dreamt of a giant hand in armour on the balustrade of the staircase. Out of the womb of this dream came the first flower of the gothic genre -

'The Castle of Otranto' by Horace Walpole. The novel was published in 1764. Just as Percy's 'Reliques' and Macpherson's 'Ossian' heralded romantic revival in poetry, in the same way 'The Castle of Otranto' brought in the same in the domain of fiction. The story is placed in medieval Italy but the medieval historical background is not an integral part of the story. The writer's main intention is to remove his characters from the present

day environment. The novel is taken to be the pioneer of the so-called gothic romance.

The first woman novelist to be influenced by Horace Walpole is Clara Reeve. She published her 'Champion of Virtues' which later on came to be known as 'The Old English Baron'. Miss Reeve tried to improve upon Walpole by economising supernatural effects but she only "succeeded in excelling Walpole's tale in its tedium, repeating most of his absurdities and showing even less acquaintance with mediæval life!"

Ann Radcliffe is another woman writer of gothic tales who is taken to be a great force. Her best stories are 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' and 'The Italian'. The former reveals passages describing the rituals of the Roman Church whereas the latter has scenic effects which show real appreciation of the sublime in Nature. In these stories the

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authoress has successfully created an atmosphere of suspense and dread. Her other works include 'A Sicilian Romance', 'The Romance of the Forest' and 'Gaston de Blondenille'.

Matthew Lewis is a lineal descendant of Mrs. Radcliffe who tried his best to exceed her in horror and sensation. In 1795 he published 'The Monk' and later on came to be known as 'monk' Lewis. Magic and witchcraft are very dear to him so far as the business of fiction is concerned.

Mary Shelley has the ~~most~~ greatest claims of all the gothic novelists to reap literary distinction.

'Frankenstein' is not as great a novel as 'vanity fair' but can be ranked with the novels of Disraeli or Peacock. 'Frankenstein' is a novel full of horror the authoress created the monster and established it as an object of terror.

Another novelist of repute is Charles Robert Maturin whose

novels 'The Fatal Revenge of the Family of Montorio' and 'Melmoth the Wanderer' are remembered even today. The second one is his masterpiece. According to D.P. Varma, "Walpole adumbrated the machinery and characters of a gothic story, Mrs. Peave designed the characteristic gothic ghost in an English setting, while Mrs. Radcliffe spread over all the warm colours of her romantic imagination the two gothic streams of 'terror' and 'horror' met in the genius of Charles Robert Maturin!"

The end.

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