



NEW CREATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON EXISTENTIAL AND SOCIAL UNDERCURRENTS IN BRITISH GOTHIC NOVELS

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Abstract. Changes that occur often in the world around us in accordance with each period's change. It is a common trend in writing to introduce new tendencies, and the Gothic subgenre exhibits this tendency. The term Gothic has its roots in the early 16th century and refers to a mysterious quality that appears in some metaphysical items. This paper is a humble attempt to explore the history of the Gothic novel and demonstrate how mystery alone recreates this genre in British literature. The ability of intangible components to incite fear in readers was lessened with the rise of the mysterious portrayal of a story in day-to-day life. As the Gothic novel began to examine reality, readers' desire to learn the truth increased. This paper investigates to understand the reasons for the abrupt disappearance of metaphysical components and increased focus and importance on existential and social issues by examining a few randomly chosen modern novels and comparing them to the earlier Gothic classics. It highlights the differences occurring in readers' views according to the various times while also evaluating the variance occurring within the Gothic genre.

Keywords: British literature, classic Gothic novels, contemporary Gothic novels, mystery, social issues, suspense.

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1. Introduction

The characteristics of each genre often alter in modern writing. The literary genre was influenced by readers' interests as well as authors' concerns, which makes it more appropriate for the present situation. According to Fischer's (2019) article "The Gothic Aesthetic: From the Ancient Germanic Tribes to the Contemporary Goth Subculture", the Gothic aesthetic originated with the Germanic tribes known as Goths and eventually spread to architecture, painting and literature. Hennelly, Jr. (2001) stated in the article "Framing the Gothic: From Pillar to Post-Structuralism" that students agree that architecture makes it easier for them to relate to Gothic fiction. The word *Gothic* has grown, as explained by Longueil (1923) in his article "The Word 'Gothic' in Eighteenth Century Criticism". The article shows that the 18th century in English is when Gothic got started, certainly, the term appears earlier. Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare both use the term, and Edmund Spenser applies the adverb. These usages also are not isolated, even in joyous England, United Kingdom (UK), the sombre Renaissance shade lingers. The word's appeal is further boosted by the growing interest in black lettering and medieval architecture. Gothic is a modified genre of literature whose roots may be found in the invention of fiction. *Beowulf* (unknown author), the first European vernacular epic, provides a clue as to the Gothic style's presence throughout the Old English era.

Even if the term *Gothic* is not used, this epic contains all the characteristics, such as mystery, terror, death, and supernatural creatures. With the aid of mystery and morality plays, the medieval age in the history of English literature advanced the same Gothic traditions. The father of English poetry, Chaucer, usually emphasised social criticism. The figure of Fame in the poem *Hous of Fame* (contemporary title: *The House of Fame*, written in 1374–1385) is one example of how he investigates enigmatic tendencies in some of his other works. Because a large portion of his writings address aspects like ghosts, omens, prophesy, and magic which are central to Gothic literature, Shakespeare, the greatest writer or dramatist in the history of English literature, may also be ranked among the top Gothic authors. Even while it is possible to pinpoint the precise moment of the word's creation, it is impossible to locate the beginning of Gothic literature. Even if the foundation is murky, it is nevertheless feasible to trace the changes that this genre underwent through time in response to the reader's interest and temporal changes. What new traits have been included to increase the splendour of this genre and how much does this change impact the common traits of this literary field? The development of this genre may be seen in a comparison of notable works from the previous era, such as *The Castle of Otranto* (Walpole, 2014, first published in 1764), *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1997, first published in 1847), and *Dracula* (Stoker, 2011, first published in 1897), with modern Gothic works, such as *The Little Stranger* (Waters, 2010, first published in 2009), *Secrets of the Sea House* (Gifford, 2013), and *The Shadow Hour* (Riordan, 2016).

As an art historian, Whigs (British political party) politician, letter writer, and novelist, Horace Walpole is the youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole, who served as Prime Minister of the UK during the reigns of George I of Great Britain (GB) and George II of GB. He is said to be the father of Gothic literature since he popularized the term *Gothic* in literature with his masterpiece *The Castle of Otranto* (Walpole, 2014). *The Castle of Otranto* (Walpole, 2014) was the first in a long series of Gothic books by authors like Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliff, and Matthew Gregory Lewis that were significantly more popular. The vast majority of Walpole's political and historical writings, which number in the thousands and have been collected in several volumes, pale in comparison to his letters. Politics, history, geography, travel, GB, music, literature, and theatre are among the subjects he discusses in his letters. One of the five daughters of an Irish Anglican priest, Emily Brontë resided in the village of Haworth in West Yorkshire, England. Her life revolved around the Haworth parsonage and the adjacent moorland. Her life was a disaster in which she was forced to do all life's duties unhappily; *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1997) is how she portrayed the misery and dread of existence. The novel uses a Russian doll or Chinese box structure that is story-within-story-within-story, it contains the very spirit of the wild, desolate moors. The main characters have an innate, lyrical drive that is created in huge sizes and emotions. The work employs sharp, merciless reality and climaxes to bring the continuous tension to incredible heights of desire. Stoker (2011), often known as Abraham Stoker, was an Irish writer who popularized the idea of vampires through *Dracula* which gave Gothic literature a new direction and served as an inspiration for other vampire-themed films. His love of travel serves as an inspiration for several of his works, including *Dracula* (Stoker, 2011), which was inspired by a trip to Whitby, North Yorkshire, England, English seaside town. While the first author employs prophecy, omen, and death to create a Gothic mood, the second author uses ghosts, and the final author uses a new supernatural creature called a vampire. Each of these authors has many distinctive traits.

Contemporary authors produce Gothic without these foreboding and ghostlike creatures, except for this trend of introducing some mystery. Welsh author Sarah Waters earned a degree and worked as an academic before beginning her first book while she worked on her thesis. *Tipping the Velvet* (Waters, 2000, first published in 1998) and *Fingersmith* (Waters, 2002) are only a few of the lesbian novels she focuses on that are set in culture of Victorian era. *The Little Stranger* (Waters, 2010), a Gothic novella that challenges the idea of ghosts, is the sole one that stands out from her other works. Elisabeth Gifford is a rising author who attended University of Leeds, UK, to study French literature and comparative religions. She was raised in the industrial Midlands, England. She wrote the books *The Lost Lights of St Kilda* (Gifford, 2020), *The Sea House* (Gifford, 2014), and *The Good Doctor of Warsaw* (Gifford, 2018) and has a degree and Master's degree in creative writing. Through the introduction of a mysterious creature, a mermaid, she presents societal themes including classism and unfairness suffered by women as well as her attempt with Gothic writing in the book *Secrets of Sea House* (Gifford, 2014). Here in this novel, she gives scientific details to show that the mermaid is not just a supernatural creature to remove the existence of supernatural beings in her work. Daphne du Maurier and Agatha Christie both affected Cotswolds, South West England, UK, resident and writer Kate Riordan. Her main works are *The Girl in the Photograph* (Riordan, 2015), *The Stranger* (Riordan, 2018), and *The Heatwave* (Riordan, 2020). She concentrates more on mystery tales or stories that fascinatingly present a typical narrative. In *The Shadow Hour*, a Gothic book similar to Stoppard's (1994, first published in 1993) *Arcadia*, Riordan (2016) tells the narrative of a family by displaying both the past and the present at the same time. The novel's enigmatic method of gradually revealing a secret truth comes to an end at the finale when the truth's shadow is revealed to the readers.

2. Objective of the paper

Evolution is a common phenomenon that occurs on Earth, with humans, and many living beings. Here this paper aims to show the same evolution that happened in the literary genre, of Gothic fiction. This study intends to be a shred of evidence for the negligence of supernatural figures like a ghost and the surfacing of realism befriended with suspense and mystery. With the materialization of science, the inquisitiveness of the audience turns towards the scientific portrait of fiction that is the mystery behind the questions hoisted in science, for instance, the existence of aliens, time travellers, and the other world. The concepts of ghosts get smashed in these circumstances so the readers also confer more value on authenticity or science-based fiction. While the fictionalized or mysterious science stories assembled as science fiction, Gothic started to fetch reality with some rarity through mystery. To prove this with the help of some major Gothic novels is the objective of this paper.

3. Uniqueness of the paper

A study of Gothic literature is not a rare one, many papers with the revision of Gothic and its features are available now. The importance of mansions, supernatural elements, and magic realism all are a part of these existing research findings. But a criticism or a thorough

exploration of the evolution that changed the outermost layer of Gothic that is the ghostly influence is not much elucidating still now. Today the interests of youth deviate from more implausible possessions to authentic or thought-provoking ideas, so more than the portraits of the ghost as in the *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1997) readers expect the mystery as in *Secrets of the Sea House* (Gifford, 2013). This anticipation of the majority of readers leads to the downfall of most metaphysical elements and the rise of magical realism.

4. Findings

The turn-up of Gothic elements shows that there is no meticulous interlude which is evidence of the flourishing of Gothic literature and the present belief about first Gothic fiction is also weird. The premise of Gothic was readily available from the beginning of literature and it itinerant through each age. The alternation in the characteristics of Gothic due to the interaction with each era resulted in the contemporary Gothic style. Fear is the single component of Gothic that has persisted from the beginning to the present without losing its significance. According to the article "The Face of the Beast: Bestial Descriptions and Psychological Response in Horror Literature" (Thurston, 2019) the portrayal of terrifying beasts relies on dissecting the predator's visage physically to highlight important predatory traits that elicit automatic reactions in viewers. The horror genre exposes the intricacies of the human phobia of predators. It clarifies how terror may be induced in people by nonexistent creatures, and how this fear aids in the Gothic's literary success. Thurston explains in this article that,

"David Quammen argues that our fear of predators is not some metaphorical fear related to dominance–submission. Instead, through his engagement with Shepard, he argues quite the opposite: 'Such fear arises from signals beyond memory, beyond oral tradition, beyond ancient poetry and cave art <...> it's programmed into human DNA'. So, here we see how this kind of fear is not merely cultural, but also instinctive" (2019, p. 39).

Thurston (2019) explains that readers can see something like *Jurassic Park* or even Ridley Scott's *Alien* (franchise) trilogy and be scared of these monsters that do not exist in reality, even though they know very logically that dinosaurs and dragons are not real. Gothic writers may still evoke the same horror in readers today by just creating the impression that something is out of reach and concealed. Readers learn in the conclusions that the enigmatic concealed object is a reflection of their existential problems. The chapter "'Gothic' and the Critical Idioms" by Levy (1994) in the book *Gothick Origins and Innovations* describes the writer's sorrow over the term Gothic transformation from one that originally denoted medieval literature, architecture, customs, and superstitions to something very different by emphasising realistic things. The author quotes from Ellen Moers' (1976, pp. 90–98) "Female Gothic" in the chapter of the book *Literary Women: The Great Writers*, stating that the Gothic genre captures the essence of the feminine condition and the lineage of misfortunes and maledictions that female flesh bears. These themes, which have become more and more prevalent in women's writings throughout the 20th century, include self-disgust, self-hatred, and the impulse to self-destruction. This demonstrates how the idea of the Gothic has evolved from fantasy to social issues.

Hamm's, Jr. (2009) article "*Hamlet* and Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*" shows how a 16th century work like *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 2020, written between 1599–1601) can influence the 18th century novelist, Walpole. In the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, he praises Shakespeare as a "truly original genius and the exemplar of imaginative liberty, as a part of a defence of *Otranto's* design" (Hamm, Jr., 2009, p. 668). The episode which describes the initial meeting of a prince with his father's ghost is the engine for Walpole's horror even though he eliminated the direct encounter of ghostly figures. Here this novel does not show any ethereal figures but the story is crammed with plenty of supernatural elements such as the pictures of life that move and involuntarily close doors. From an ordinary story, the novel transferred to Gothic since the scene in which a gigantic helmet falls on Conrad's head and leads to death. By accumulating some mystical elements that initiate fear in the audience, Walpole succeeded in his writings as a Gothic writer.

Even though the Gothic starts with *The Castle of Otranto*, the first Gothic that magnetizes the attention of readers is Stoker's (2011) horror thriller *Dracula*. Horror always initiates the notion of ghosts in everyone but it indicates each aspect that kicks off the feeling of dread in the human mind. Along with love, friendship, and affection, this novel shows the preoccupation of some metaphysical figures. The perception of vampires was considered at this juncture of literature. The portrait of a human-like figure with a craving for human blood who found habitation in a dilapidated mansion became chatter to a greater part of readers at the end of the 19th century. Stoker (2011) used this transcendental figure to explore the theme of the destruction of the human being through sexual and psychological manner. The life of Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker represents the devastation of one's life by the influence of awful powers in the world, through psychological imbalance and sexual abuse:

"Oh, the terrible struggle that I have had against sleep so often of late; the pain of the sleeplessness, or the pain of the fear of sleep, and with such unknown horror as it has for me! How blessed are some people, whose lives have no fears, no dreads; to whom sleep is a blessing that comes nightly, and brings nothing but sweet dreams" (Stoker, 2011, p. 147).

A distinct viewpoint on sexuality is provided by Leigh Pender's (2021) argument about the concept of sexuality in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2011). Leigh Carson's thesis interprets the sexuality of the three ladies in Dracula's castle as a sign of women's independence. Instead of stepping across limits to put Jonathan Harker in danger, the three sisters – women in Dracula's castle – cross Victorian cultural and artistic boundaries by seizing an opportunity that should empower them and other women (Leigh Pender, 2021). *Dracula* (Stoker, 2011) is a wide exposure to tribulations in the life of youth and their nerve-racking life. A peaceful sleep shows a calm mind but even today youth are in a hectic situation by overthinking about their lives and being ruthless to others. The absolute plot of this novel moves ahead through the life of young characters except Abraham Van Helsing and it shows the nasty control of life on their mental and physical health. After escaping from Dracula's castle Jonathan Harker endured a nervous collapse and Lucy Westenra is affected with schizophrenia. A war between good and evil is the actual theme rendered through the preternatural creature Dracula. The Gothic side of the novel is visible through the concept of vampires, decaying mansions, drinking human blood, and darkness. This is evident that the use of supernatural elements improved

in the Gothic novels of this period. Nevertheless, modern critics would like to approach this novel from a fresh angle by using the vampire as a metaphor for something more grounded. For example, the thirst for blood that vampires have is explained as a symbolic portrayal of women's postmenopausal dread in Waddell's (2021) article "Moistening the Dry Lips of Dracula: Postmenopausal Anxiety and Mimetic Fertility". The desperate hunt of vampires for human blood is said to be a metaphor for women's menopausal urges and their dread of altering their menstrual cycles. This article illustrates how perspectives shift throughout time.

Brontë (1997) creates an ethereal ambience in the novel *Wuthering Heights* through the character Catherine Earnshaw and expresses unrequited love. The achievements of this novel as a Gothic rest in the use of supernatural creatures whose existence is a big question still now. It is the concern of the audience to explore the more imaginary world through reading and find excitement in fantasy making these types of genres popular. The run-down interior, rooms, or space covered with darkness, strange sounds, and wind; these entire effects make an indoor horror in Gothic novels. *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1997) is also represented as a Gothic building that hides many mysterious stories in its darkness. The vision of Mr Lockwood is an example of this supernatural stroke "the excessive slant of a few, stunted firs <...> and gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs as if craving alms of the sun" (Brontë, 1997, p. 6). The narrative style of the whole story also mirrors the horror in this novel which enhances the concern of readers when they go on to the next chapter. Emily Rena-Dozier (2010) who prepared a revision of the narrative technique in *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1997) enlightens the responsibility of narration in the triumph of this novel in the field of Gothic literature. She says that

"But more importantly for my purposes, the ongoing narratorial inadequacies presented in *Wuthering Heights* and the claustrophobic accretions of frames produced thereby have created in the critical discourse surrounding *Wuthering Heights* a gothic mirror of the narrative situation of the novel itself" (Rena-Dozier, 2010, p. 758).

All above these Gothic elements, this novel also sketches some contemporary issues in life the denying of opportunity only because of social status. Heathcliff (*Wuthering Heights*) is the demonstration of such issues; he only needs the love of his life Catherine Earnshaw but it is denied only because he is an orphan whose parental details are still a mystery. The overpowering of Hindley Earnshaw on Heathcliff, denunciation of parity with landowning people even after he becomes affluent and his consciousness about his appearance and class position damaged his integrity. Readers are even able to witness the powerlessness of middle-class women who lack authority in their own lives. The central character Catherine Earnshaw and her motherless daughter Catherine Linton, often referred to as Cathy, are two ways in which the article "Middle-Class Women Role in the 19th Century as Reflected in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*" (Nur Indrasari & Abbas, 2020) represents this theme. These devastations along with the ghostly presence change the whole plot from a family story to a Gothic one. Here this ascendance of a ghost as a bizarre creature makes an initial point for the flourishing of the ghostly Gothic novel. Another woman character who suffers in this novel is explained in the article "How Is *Wuthering Heights* a Gothic Novel?" (Qiao, 2019). Like other weak Gothic ladies, Isabella Linton is taken prisoner by Heathcliff and becomes a victim of his scheme of retaliation. Heathcliff attempted her life, she dreamed of passionate

love, and she disregarded other people's advice to elope. Due to her ignorance, she had to make many sacrifices, including being imprisoned, tortured, and escaping before dying far from her cosy home. Another recurring theme in Gothic books is innocent yet frail women. These characters are frequently lovely and pure, and when they find themselves in difficult circumstances, they are typically defenceless and desperate.

The same ghostly influence can be seen in the 21st century novel *The Little Stranger* by Waters (2010). The company of the ghost at the beginning of this novel confers the readers a sense of fear but when they reach the climax, the task of the ghost unexpectedly falls and suspense arises which marks a position in Gothic literature. From the title, *The Little Stranger* (Waters, 2010) readers must get an idea that the major character or the stratagem of this novel was controlled by a child, so in every chapter, they curiously search for that stranger. This prying ends only when readers find Susan, daughter of Mrs Ayres who died of diphtheria, as a ghost through some incidents. A substantial outward show of this supernatural creature was avoided by Waters (2010) which makes this Gothic novel more different. Without a doorway, Waters (2010) portrays the awfulness using some actions like ringing bells without any source and spots on the wall that look like burns. These enigmatic occasions ground trauma in every personality and along with these characters readers started to accept the existence of ghosts in that mansion, Hundreds Hall, as true.

The Little Stranger (Waters, 2010) is a plot twister that utterly perverted the story and position of some characters. After the confrontation with Susan's ghost, the life of Hundreds Hall changes, strange death of each character leads to the end of the Mrs Ayres family. In its climax, the novel illustrates the death of Caroline Ayres who falls into death by uttering the word *YOU!* It symbolizes the reason for her death as someone familiar to her and unexpected. Since the death of Caroline Ayres, the storyline started to alter and ponder on those who may be the basis of the destruction of the Hundreds Hall family. This question shows the way to Dr. Faraday who is cognizant regarding his class and status that makes him feel substandard. His urge to become a member of an enormous family like Ayres may guide him to act like this. The death of Mrs Ayres and Roderick Ayers is considered necessary by him to get Caroline Ayers as his life partner through which he can heir this family, but the unpredicted movement of Caroline Ayers wide awake the gruesomeness in Dr. Faraday and leads to her death. Lenny Abrahamson's *The Little Stranger*, 2018 film version of this novel, titled as same as the novel, skillfully portrays the tale in one hour and fifty-one minutes. The mystery surrounding Dr. Faraday and Hundreds Hall is described in exquisite detail, along with the character depiction. Throughout the entire movie, the transformation of Gothic into a horror thriller is demonstrated. "Horror: Fearful Bodyminds" by Cheyne (2019, pp. 27–52) states that the genre of horror affects both the body and the psyche. Its goal is to elicit a variety of unpleasant sensations that are paradoxically enjoyable. A strong emphasis on the body or mind within the horror text – which usually concentrates on either a terrifying, dangerous or vulnerable body or mind at risk of harm – also engages the body or mind in the horror genre.

The readers can find some similarities between the novels *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1997) and *The Little Stranger* (Waters, 2010). Both these novels use the mystic ghost as a weapon to insert fear in readers and they specify the precarious upshot of actions from people who are over-conscious about their limitations. Unlike *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë,

1997), the jittery enclosure in *The Little Stranger's* (Waters, 2010) climax marks a new trend in Gothic writings. While the novel *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1997) justifies the existence of ghosts, *The Little Stranger* (Waters, 2010) questions the same existence and in an indirect way portrays it as the distraction of the mind. "Trauma Reenactment in the Gothic Loop: A Study on Structures of Circularity in Gothic Fiction", an article by Juranovszky (2014) explains that the Gothic as a literary genre will continue to be a relevant form of cultural warning, frequently and obsessively leading to its adjustments of traumatic incidents until they are finally resolved, as long as enduring collective traumas, such as those about tradition or societal identities, are preserved in society. This article demonstrates how Gothic is embracing modern societal issues and incorporating them into the genre. Rather than having phantom disturbances as the terror of the novel, *The Little Stranger Stranger* (Waters, 2010) highlights the addition of mental trauma, which is experienced by the majority of people nowadays. In a review article, Crapo explains that,

"Throughout, Waters maintains an appropriately mannered tone, and yet her characters remain some of the most believable I've encountered in a long time. I could see Caroline striding across the grounds, the dog at her heels, or her brother, Rodderick, bent over the mess of farm accounts on his desk. *The Little Stranger* imparts that grand sense of being in the hands of an intelligent, confident novelist <...>" (2010, p. 22).

Gifford a contemporary Gothic writer bears out her talent through the 2013 novel *Secrets of the Sea House*, faintly away from the traditional Gothic style, this novel depicts an unearthly entity as the major feature. The inclusion of a supernatural creature, a mermaid, to portray a certain reality in society is one way that this story demonstrates to readers how magical realism and the Gothic are combined. The mermaid, a mythical creature whose existence is still murky clear, was this novel's major plot. Eventually, this novel itself shows the existence of these creatures as a possible one by justifying Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. The urge of contemporary writers to make their work more realistic is shown through her effort to add scientific evidence to the origin of this creature. The dead body of a mermaid child instigates inquisitiveness in readers and along with Ruth, the heroin; readers also search for some loophole to find the truth behind its birth. More than the mythical baffling creature it is the secret behind its birth that makes readers more spectacular. The most conspicuous present-day issue in our surroundings is what is demonstrated through the birth of this mermaid child. Today the world is going upward and even fathers forget the purity of parenting and rape their daughters. The corruption of society by keeping away minorities from them and forgetting the purity of relations is the main theme of this novel. The paper "Uncles and Nieces: Thefts, Violence and Sexual Threats" (DiPlacidi, 2018, pp. 139–189) draws attention to the connection between the Gothic's depictions of incest and violence. It contends that the Gothic's handling of sexual assault, murder, and cruelty is mutually reinforcing with the fiction's exploration of gender and sexuality. The drive to acquire female bodies and belongings is linked to interpersonal impulses and sexual blackmail; rape and sex, therefore, become additional means of control and theft.

Through the novel, Gifford masterly exhibits the contemporary style of a Gothic novel. She does not need long-established features of Gothic but can construct a perfect Gothic by popping in fear and anxiety in readers. Through the experiences of Ruth, Gifford pours this anxiety into the reader's mind:

"I froze. A sudden, painful pricking of blood in my feet, the smell of clay sharp in my nostrils, every instinct primed to get out of there. She was so close, so palpably present, I thought she would appear in front of me. I couldn't breathe. My heart was gabling so hard I thought it was going to give out" (2013, p. 6).

Here the ordinary temperament of humans to think mysteriously when they visit a house without any habitat for a long time is presented. The elements that create a Gothic atmosphere are the darkness, flashbacks, and the story of the mermaid. There are no exacting prospects that put in plain words any disgusting situation but readers themselves craft some as horrendous through their thinking. The oddness of this novel is echoed here, more than the interpretations and explanations given by the author it is the thoughts and expectations of readers which make the story more attractive as a Gothic.

In the 2016 novel, *The Shadow Hour* Riordan (2016) uses the same potential of *Secrets of the Sea House* (Gifford, 2013). Here Riordan (2016) put on display her talent as a Gothic writer without using a minute metaphysical creature. The whole part of her story is not beyond nature but within nature. The inscrutability of this storyline lies in the interpretation of Fenix House by Grace and Harriet Jenner and the missing of some characters. The employing of the epistolary style of writing, which is the use of letters to reveal the past story, increases the reader's fascination so that in addition to Grace, readers wait for Harriet Jenner's letter to know the truth. It is the explanation of the present condition and the revealing of the past truth that makes the story more interesting to the readers. Harriet Jenner explicates the fine-looking past of this house which gives an agreeable delineation of each character; on the other hand, Grace conveys the current state of the same house which shows the descending of this family and house. Each step of Grace inside this Fenix House causes an augment of snooping in readers, the anonymous resonance from upstairs becomes a source of her nervousness every night which generates an atmosphere of terror:

"I had just shut my door behind me when I thought I heard a noise behind the door at the other end of the attic floor – the side that faced the hillside and never really got any light. It wasn't Agnes: I would have heard her heavy, uneven tread as she struggled back up. And there were no other servants; Mr Pembridge and Agnes both said so. I didn't know if any other Pembridges were still living but, even if they were, I didn't see why they would be in the attic" (Riordan, 2016, p. 32).

This anticipation got wrecked when Grace uncovers the resource of this noise as Robert Pembridge. Even if Riordan (2016) shatters the expectation in this scene, she has an additional sketch to mesmerize readers, she puts yet another ground for mystery by pursuing the parentage of Grace. At last, by tearing down the hope of all readers it was exposed that Harriet Jenner was seduced by Jago Dauncey and he is the grandfather of Grace.

Away from all Gothic traditions, *The Shadow Hour* (Riordan, 2016) builds up its style to create a Gothic atmosphere that can win the reader's mind. This novel can be said as a model of the contemporary Gothic style which means initiating fretfulness in readers without using many metaphysical creatures. The genesis of foreboding in readers is due to the existence of comparison of past and present, rundown mansion and surroundings, slowly uncovering truth, darkness, and inexplicable sounds. Merging this type of rudiment with certainty is the existing Gothic which retains the same importance in the literary field. Although many things

have changed in this genre there are some traditional styles that, insert darkness to create anxiety, still exist. This role of darkness to stir up fear is evident through the lines of Poe (2004, p. 58) in the poem *The Raven*: “Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing, / Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before”. In the article ““Deep into That Darkness Peering”: An Essay on Gothic Nature”, Hillard (2009) said that the Gothic style has always been a safe approach to facing everything frightening, ominous, and taboo in society or culture. The Gothic genre naturally addresses challenging subjects, and its allure has always sprung from this.

The upsurge of women in Gothic is increasing nowadays which may be the reason for the increasing number of female protagonists along with the increasing influence of societal problems in this genre. “Uncles and Nieces: Thefts, Violence and Sexual Threats” by Jenny DiPlacidi (2018, pp. 139–189) describes the horrors that women face in a patriarchal society. This article’s major premise is that in most Gothic writing, for example, *The Castle of Wolfenbach* by Parsons (2006, first published in 1793), uncles have a negative influence on their nieces’ lives, primarily through sexual harassment. More than any other male family figure in the Gothic genre, the uncle seems to symbolize the looming danger of male dominance in general. These are menacing, hidden men who want to steal from women in three different ways: they want to take their bodies through rape and kidnapping, their property through usurping their wealth and position, and their lives through murdering them. The Gothic authors were highly cognizant of how the female body played a role in the trade of goods and money required to uphold patriarchy. They are also able to express, in concrete form, the threat that the conventional family structure poses to the freedom and wants of women by using the uncle as a figure. The three contemporary Gothic novels discussed in this paper portray a variety of societal problems that mostly affect the female protagonists. Caroline Ayers in *The Little Stranger* (Waters, 2010), who was attempting to recover from a traumatic event that killed her entire family; Mrs Marstone, Moira, and Ruth in *Secrets of the Sea House* (Gifford, 2013), who suffered from familial issues, class discrimination, and loneliness, respectively; and Harriet Jenner in *The Shadow Hour* (Riordan, 2016), whose life was completely altered by sexual harassment. According to the paper ““Unimaginable Sensations’: Father–Daughter Incest and the Economics of Exchange” (DiPlacidi, 2018, pp. 34–84), it is impossible to dismiss Gothic protagonists as victimisation stories or as mere displays of fragility without using language associated with patriarchal power that downplays the mistreatment of women. Instead of feigning victimhood, the Gothic heroine triumphs against the genuine threats inherent in the unconventional society that requires the objectification and trade of women.

5. Conclusions

The voyage from the 18th and 19th centuries to the contemporary 21st century is evidence of the changes that happened in British Gothic writings. The journey of Gothic in British literature from a story enclosed of death, prophecy, and omen was converted to a story about supernatural creatures like a ghost, and vampires then ended in these modern-day stories which portray reality by putting in fear-inducing elements. As the word *Goth* indicates a person who wears black dresses and dark make-up, Gothic always indicates darkness. The only

thing that is common still in this contemporary British Gothic is this darkness which indicates obscurity to evoke fear in the audience. Except for the frequency of duskiness in these novels, all other features gave a new viewpoint to readers. Death, omens, and dishonest relationships are all Gothic symbols represented in *The Castle of Otranto* (Walpole, 2014). *Dracula* (Stoker, 2011) investigates metaphysical vampirism at the same time as he represents humanity as a victim of negative forces. This supernatural influence could be discernible in *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1997), where the ghost expresses the evil part of human nature. However, when the 21st century rolled around, even authors began to portray ghosts and other supernatural beings as mere fiction. All of the authors succeed in instilling a sense of dread in the reader via certain riddles, but they all disclose the conclusion that the human being himself, not any supernatural being, is to blame for the mystery. *The Little Stranger* (Waters, 2010) demonstrates how this idea of life beyond death destroyed many people's current lives. *Secrets of the Sea House* (Gifford, 2013) illustrates the class war that still torments the human race by depicting the estrangement experienced by the oppressed as if they were some beings beyond nature. Finally, by revealing the secret inside a family and eliminating any otherworldly creatures Gothic takes a fresh turn with *The Shadow Hour* (Riordan, 2016). The conclusion of this research, which emphasizes the importance of realism above strange trends, points to the revival of Gothic literature.

Away from showing the current social issues Gothic genre also incorporates another genre to make its contemporary appearance more attractive to the audience. The use of magical realism by incorporating reality and the magical creature mermaid in the novel *Secrets of the Sea House* (Gifford, 2013) increases the suspense in the story which may lead to the upsurge of curiosity in readers. In the novel *The Shadow Hour* (Riordan, 2016), the use of letters to communicate the past in the present gives the novel an epistolary style, so it shows the mingling of Gothic with epistolary as seen in *Dracula* (Stoker, 2011). The adaptation of the novel *The Little Stranger* as a film in 2018 directed by Abrahamson, presents this Gothic novel as a horror thriller. The horror in the movie mainly aims at inducing fear and disgust in the audience by using some supernatural or mysterious elements. The movie became a thriller as well because it influenced people psychologically by making the story filled with tension that was not predictable. So modern British Gothic can also be explained as an incorporation of different genre forms.

6. Future scope of extension

Today in all fields of entertainment youths are probing for a new perspective. Their interest in fantasy changed from just imagination to reality to some extent. The growing penchant of youth for thought-provoking series, stories, and films upholds contemporary Gothic, science fiction, and all. Now the concept of a ghost is satirized, and even films use ghost characters to evoke humor. The quest of an audience for wit rather than humor denotes the cause of rising interest in modernized fantasies. Future scopes of this study include:

- The search for evolutions in literary genres by comparing their current and earlier forms;
- The cause of increasing interest in science fiction and Gothic writing in the present generation;
- The talent of fantasies attracts even non-literary students to literature;
- The transformation of science fiction in the field of films and series.

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