

Past Impending: A Gothic Analysis of Familial Secrets in Echoes of Grace

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Abstract

The word Gothic was widely applied in negative context since the eighteenth century to characterize the art and writings that did not fit the neoclassical norms, which were perceived as barbarism and immorality. However, it became the revolutionary genre, questioning the aesthetic standards and social problems of that era, with the dark, mysterious, and supernatural motifs. Gothic elements have been adopted in the young adult fiction in the recent years and made up a sub-genre that is attractive to contemporary readers. This genre deals with issues of isolation, decay and madness, and employs plot mechanisms such as curses and retribution and is often situated in remote locations. This paper will explore how Gothic themes are used in the work by Guadalupe Garcia McCall, especially in her novel *Echoes of Grace*, in relation to the way this theme contributes to the richness of the story narrative and the level of emotional appeal. *Echoes of Grace* tells about the family relationships, Mexican culture, and feminist violence in a spooky world, where sisterhood is valued, and the power of stories is emphasized.

Key words : Gothic elements ,Young Adult literature , McCall, Echoes of Grace

الماضي الوشيك: تحليل قوطي للأسرار العائلية في اصداء كريس

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المستخلص

منذ القرن الثامن عشر، غالبًا ما استُخدم مصطلح "القوطي" بشكل سلبي لوصف الفن والأدب الذي يختلف عن المعايير الكلاسيكية الجديدة، ويرتبط بالهمجية وانعدام الأخلاق. ومع ذلك، فقد ظهر كنوع ثوري، يتحدى المعايير الجمالية والقضايا الاجتماعية في عصره، ويتميز بمواضيع مظلمة وغامضة وخارقة للطبيعة. في السنوات الأخيرة، تبنت روايات الشباب العناصر القوطية، مما أدى إلى ظهور نوع فرعي يجذب القراء المعاصرين. يستكشف هذا النوع مواضيع العزلة والانحطاط والجنون، ويدمج عناصر حبكة مثل اللعنات

والانتقام، وغالبًا ما تدور أحداثه في أماكن معزولة. تبحث الدراسة استخدام المواضيع القوطية في أعمال غوادالوبي غارسيا ماكول، لا سيما في روايتها اصداء غريس، وتسلط الضوء على كيفية تعزيز هذه العناصر لعمق السرد وتأثيره العاطفي. تستكشف اصداء غريس الروابط الأسرية والفولكلور المكسيكي والعنف ضد النساء في عالم مخيف، وتسلط الضوء على أهمية الأخوة وتبرز قوة سرد القصص.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب القوطي، أدب الشباب، ماكول، اصداء غريس

Introduction

1.1 The Rise of the Gothic Literature

The idea of the Gothic is not limited to literature. In historical, social, political, and spiritual contexts, it began as a movement (the Gothic movement) and subsequently influenced the arts. Thus, Gothic is present in contemporary media as well as in literature, architecture, music, and the performing arts. A number of Gothic characteristics must be taken into account when discussing the Gothic. This implies that Gothic studies should not focus on just one dimension of the Gothic. One should understand the Gothic's complexity because it covers other areas as well. When examining Gothic literature, for instance, it is impossible to focus just on one aspect of the Gothic. Gothic settings are often associated with Gothic characters and stories. Once more, the building and the landscape have a tight connection to the setting. As a result, when examining Gothic literature, one must consider the Gothic's complicated interaction between character motivations, symbols, and themes. Not only does this intricate tapestry enrich the story, but it also encourages readers to explore the deeper emotional and psychological facets that characterise the Gothic experience (Koppensteiner, 2011).

The first Gothic novel was set in the Middle Ages and with good reason. In actuality, Gothic literature demonstrates a clear interest in the past—more specifically, the Middle Ages. In *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, Maggie Kilgour makes the case that the revolutionary movements “of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which enabled the rise of the middle class” are to blame for this nostalgia for past events. Therefore, the Gothic's fascination with the Middle Ages may be interpreted as a form of nostalgia that romanticises the period as an “organic wholeness.” Kilgour uses this phrase to highlight how people were characterised in the past by their social standing and political clout (Koppensteiner, 2011).

Part of the reason for the rise of the Gothic novel was that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a period of enormous scientific, religious, and industrial investigation for the English; people both worshipped and doubted the existence of God or a higher authority. Gothic novels provided a storytelling vehicle for the exploration of these concepts by both authors and

readers. Death and decay, madness, curses, ghosts, and so-called “things that go bump in the night” were all used to examine people's fear of the unknown and their level of control over it (Bal,2024).

The emergence of the bourgeoisie and the social transformations of the eighteenth century ran counter to this viewpoint. As a result, many individuals felt overburdened by the new and rapidly evolving “world order” and yearned for the previous, well-known eras when everything appeared to be in perfect order. Fascinatingly, this idea has not only been maintained but perfected in our twenty-first-century society: the “autonomous and self-regulating individual” characterises our contemporary world.

The ballad was resurrected under the Gothic movement because of the Gothic literature's preoccupation with the past. Artists sang ballads, which originated in the Middle Ages and were a type of verse, frequently a story set to music. The medieval ballads covered a wide range of topics: they dealt with faith, love, and passion, but they also included supernatural themes like magic in many of their ballads. In addition, medieval ballads frequently extolled legendary or real occurrences. Because of this, the song was widely copied in literature and appealed to readers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Additionally, existing ballads were reinterpreted and/or modified. Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a well-known example of a Gothic ballad. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and Robert Burns (1759-1796) are other significant figures in the literary ballad. One should not disregard the fact that Gothic elements have been present in literature since early times, even though it is apparent that Gothic literature was not recognised as a distinct genre until the eighteenth century (Stevens,2000).

From the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century, a movement in European art, music, literature, and aesthetics had a significant impact on aristocratic taste. First-wave Gothic fiction popularised Edmund Burke's (1729-1797) idea of the sublime, which is largely responsible for the aesthetic roots of Romanticism. Romanticism's spirituality was entwined with a rejection of the Enlightenment principles of reason and an acceptance of the renewing effects of fear and superstition if its aesthetics were linked to an intensified emotionalism based on wonder and reflection. Romanticism favoured the wild over the domesticated, the spectacular over the merely picturesque, and nature over the city making it an intellectual setting for both academic ecocriticism and the eco-Gothic. Fear, loneliness, self-pity, and self-hatred were among the strong emotions it traded on. Though its proponents were often wealthy and well-educated members of elite society, it flirted with radicalism politically, at least in its early days, and lionised the working classes and impoverished as a collective manifestation of the noble savage.

In a way, first wave Gothic falls in between the theoretical beginnings of

Romanticism in the middle of the eighteenth century and its major cultural explosion in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. However, until relatively recently, outside of Gothic criticism, the Gothic was viewed as a distorted version of everything that Romanticism aimed for. The young Romantic poets of the first two decades of the nineteenth century read Gothic fiction and occasionally wrote within the genre's identifiable tradition. As this chronology indicates, the link between the two is far more complicated—possibly even more intricate than that between Gothic and modernism (Hughes, 2018).

The Romantic movement gave rise to Gothic fiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, emphasising emotion, imagination, and nature. Fear, loneliness, mystery, dignity, ruin, insanity, death, and delight were among the themes that it affected in European literature. Despite early criticism, Gothic novels had a big impact on European literature.

The eighteenth-century Gothic architectural renaissance was impacted by the creations of Bishop Richard Hurd, William Beckford, and Horace Walpole. Similar to Beckford's Fonthill Abbey, Walpole's Strawberry Hill house was influenced by medieval architecture. *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole's first Gothic tale, was influenced by Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), which associated Gothic with chivalry, feudalism, and romance. Hurd contended that we should not ignore or condemn the prodigies of the barbarous times because they had their roots there and should be given their narrative. In addition, he questioned the traditions of romance and chivalry, claiming that the spirit of chivalry was a fire that quickly extinguished itself (Wright, 2007).

Victorian Gothic, which refers to any Gothic work produced during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901), is frequently regarded as the “fin de siècle” as a historical term referring to the end of the nineteenth century, and more precisely to the decade of the 1890s. It focuses on works produced in the middle decades of the century. With the main works of the 1810s and 1820s, the “original Gothic” came to an end, although Gothic themes, tropes, and emphases continued throughout the nineteenth century, influencing some of the most important works of the time (Punter, 2016).

The Gothicizing of Victoria marks the beginning of the nineteenth century after 1837 as a “Gothic cusp,” since Gothic writers of the 1790s were able to recount and recover the crisis of their era by reenacting the Reformation's anguish from the viewpoint of a subsequent similar cultural upheaval. Although the genre was introduced to Britain by the regal Gothic of the early Victorian era, it was unable to tell the story of transformation “an old Gothic castle, erected in the days of chivalry, but fitted up for a modern inhabitant” (Hogle, 2002).

In nineteenth-century fiction, the Victorian Gothic genre predominated, including conventions from pioneers like Walpole and Radcliffe. Because of its

cultural and economic standing, London became a favorite location as the genre moved from the pastoral countryside to metropolitan areas. The tool used to evoke terror was modified to fit the ever-evolving environment, bringing evil closer to scenes in the home. Good examples of such change include novels such as *Oliver Twist* and *The Bleak House* by Charles Dickens. Victorian Gothic had also left fantasy and supernaturalism to an even greater extent to realism, using the supernatural as a form of social commentary. The theme of imprisonment, particularly in women was the symbol of the inner life of the Victorian era when there were social limitations and gender injustice. The novels by the Brontës' are the perfect examples of female Gothic, which explores female restraint within the home and ways of escaping the control of patriarchy. Other Victorian Gothic female heroes are *Jane Eyre* and the *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë . The field of psychology gained a lot of attention during the Victorian period. These psychological ghost stories focused on the relationship between actual and supernatural characters in order to bring out the uncanny feeling.

A major contribution to the genre was provided by American Gothic writer Edgar Allan Poe who studied the psychology of terror in his characters. It was the Radcliffean method of producing fear, tension and mystery that led to the development of the sensation novels in the mid 1800s. Examining hidden fears and worries in a society that is changing, they addressed topics including adultery, kidnapping, seduction, insanity, and death. Women were seen as a new powerful identity in sensation novels, and female sexuality was associated with rebellion, opposition, and evil. Victorian Gothic books' urban settings made them an ideal backdrop for sensation novels, such as *Lady Audley's Secret*, *East Lynne*, and *The Women in White*. Secularisation also occurred in the nineteenth century, as evidenced by the widespread use of scientific findings in Victorian Gothic literature on human psychology, anthropology, and mental science (Mahmood,2016). The Gothic genre was likely the most popular during the Victorian era (Craig,2012).

The dying European aristocracy was replaced by the powerful and frightful Indian of the border and the sexually threatening black slave in Gothic literature by the emerging World Gothic movement. American Gothic literature, which arose from confrontations between slavery owners and abolitionists, Puritans and Diabolism, Calvinists and freethinkers, and explorers and Indians, has historically used guilt, secret, and hatred as governing symbols. Some immigrants came to the American shores in pursuit of marvels, adventure, and vicarious thrills to escape the monotony and oppression of the Old World because of this danger-tinged attraction. Charles Brockden Brown is widely regarded as a seminal figure in the development of New World Gothic literature, with his notable works including *Arthur Mervyn* and *Ormond* (1799). These two literary pieces are

characterised by their exploration of themes of physical, social, and moral decay, reflecting a growing concern with the fragility of American ideals and institutions during this period. Gothic influences can also be seen in Washington Irving's atmospheric stories and folklore drawings.

The relationship between modernism, a culturally elite form, and the popular idiom of the Gothic novel might initially appear to be an improbable one. Authors such as Virginia Woolf, May Sinclair, and T. S. Eliot used Gothic imagery to explain the cultural gloom of the 1920s. Evoking Dickens' structural mood, Eliot's title for *The Waste Land* (1922) alludes to the multivoiced poem *Dracula*. Stoker's book is also mentioned by James Joyce in *Ulysses*, where he emphasises the material creation of literature in *Dracula*. Virginia Woolf's ghost stories of Henry James highlight the value of learning new storytelling techniques. Her work has been influenced by Henry James, especially his focus on the perception of ghosts. Woolf's writings, including *The Mysterious Case of Miss V* and *A Mark on the Wall*, question assumptions about everyday material circumstances (Smith,

1.2 Young Adult Literature

Fiction that profoundly connects with the distinct experiences and difficulties that teenagers endure is known as young adult literature. These books give readers sympathetic stories that reflect their own experiences by frequently examining themes of identity, self-discovery, and the transition to maturity. Readers and characters are strongly connected as a result of the protagonists' repeated struggles with friendship, first love, and social expectations (Harrison and Ehlers, 2024).

The term “young adult literature” is intrinsically ambiguous since the concepts “young adult” and “literature,” which make up its components, are dynamic and vary in parallel with the culture and society that give them context. When the phrase initially became widely used in the late 1960s. Libraries and schools that catered to these groups were the target market for these books, which were published by American publishers' children's book divisions. Traditionally used to refer to fiction, the term “literature” has come to encompass book-length nonfiction in verse as well as new types of literary, or narrative, nonfiction and poetry. This concept has started to expand to encompass the pictorial due to the growing significance of visual communication, particularly when presented alongside text, as in picture books, comics, graphic novels, and nonfiction. According to the number of titles being evaluated by a major journal, the number of books released for this readership has also increased as a result of these newly expansive words, possibly by as much as 25%. Similarly, from 1999 to 2005, sales of young adult books rose by 23%, according to industry expert Albert Greco. Children's literature and young adult literature are two different genres. Young

adult literature first appeared in the twentieth century as youths gained financial influence in the 1930s and became well-known in the 1960s. Because its main concepts, “young adult” and “literature,” are dynamic and change as culture and society, which give their background, do, the term “young adult literature” is intrinsically ambiguous. When the phrase initially became widely used in the late 1960s, it was used to describe realistic fiction that was situated in the real (as opposed to imagined). Since the mid-1990s, young adult fiction has matured as a literary genre that embraces artistic creativity, experimentation, and risk-taking, despite previously being written off as a genre that consisted primarily of romances and problem novels (Cart,2023).

Books intended for readers between the ages of twelve and eighteen are referred to as young adult literature. It frequently acts as a bridge between adult fiction and middle school reading. It offers viewers stories that are typically more complex in terms of theme and emotion. Books that appeal to younger readers yet are primarily written for adults may also be included in this group. Young adult literature covers most of the same subjects as adult fiction. They differ from adult literature in that the primary characters are usually kids or teens going through a tough time. Young adult fiction can be realistic or contemporary, use any genre, or combine different genres. Many individuals assume that young adult topics are simpler than those found in adult fiction. The themes, which are used, are similar oftentimes. The difference between the two is the way these ideas are investigated. Romance, as an example, is a theme that can be discussed in both the young adult literature and the adult literature (Munarriz and Pangilinan,2023).

It is manifested in reading orientation in such genres as fantasy, mystery and science fiction, and maturity of a given population. Young adult fiction often focuses on teenagers who are just beginning their in the process of becoming adults, discovering the concealed aspects of themselves, overcoming personal problems, and learning how to take responsibility to the actions they have performed. Although the themes, structures and target audiences of young adult and adult fiction are similar, there exist some notable differences that make the division of these groups possible. When comparing young adults with adult fiction, the primary distinction is the protagonist's age. The normal ages of young adult protagonists are twelve to eighteenth, whereas those of adult fiction protagonists are eighteen to thirty. While adult fiction books may include protagonists who could be classified as teens, many adult novels have primary characters who are beyond twenty years old. Young adult novels often use an “in the moment” storytelling approach, with characters frequently reflecting on the past and future. The third-person point of view is usually used in adult fiction to give readers an omniscient viewpoint. Although they are interchangeable, young adult themes are sometimes more category-specific (Salao,2022).

1.3 Gothic Elements

The Gothic work is the result of the combination of its various elements, which can be more easily categorised by the application of two lists: concrete and abstract (Mahmood,2016). The division of Gothic elements into two categories could be helpful in understanding and analysing the complicated nature of the Gothic genre. This approach provides a more comprehensive analysis of the interaction between Gothic works and both the material world (for example, settings) and the psychological or emotional world (for example, insanity, fear). The clear separation of these components allows getting a more detailed perspective on the role that the elements play in the overall mood and themes as well as the emotional richness of the Gothic piece. The increased thematic exploration and deeper understanding of symbolic and emotional effects of Gothic work is a great contribution of this study.

Abstract elements are such concepts or ideas as motifs: themes, symbols, or literary devices. The abstract features of the Gothic literature are marked by their intangible, psychological and emotional nature which affect the inner world of the characters and the mood of the story in a strong way. These factors often involve the feelings of dread, fear, madness, guilt, and existential despair that are deeply connected with the human psyche. Characters in many Gothic works experience inner strife, i.e., anxiety or paranoia, which is most often complemented by supernatural or mysterious power and, thus, the line between reality and illusion is blurred. The abstract elements most often have the themes of isolation, the subconscious, or the suppressed desire, and they appear in the style of haunting memories, or pervading feeling of something dreadful to happen. This type of expression is referred to as the Gothic mode and it is also defined by an air of uncertainty and tension which is used to highlight the frailty of human mind and the frightening influence of the unknown. These aspects usually contain some society fears or personal problems of identity, fairness, and death. The presence of abstract elements makes Gothic literature address psychological complexity of the characters as it probes the dark recess of human experience.

Plots and literary devices from medieval ballads, Renaissance literature, and eighteenth and nineteenth-century prose are characteristics of the Gothic tradition, which encompasses literature up to the current age (Botting, *Gothic* 4–10). It is linked to indications of engaging in paranormal activities. The existence of some unfathomable metaphysical evil is always a prerequisite for a difficult confrontation with someone or something (for example, out of retaliation). Darkness, faint murmurs, dim views of objects, and fluttering shapes have a way of arousing that exciting, enigmatic fear that has for its target abilities that are invisible and more powerful than humans (Snodgrass,2005).

The explained supernatural is a Gothic genre that bears a strong resemblance to what Tzvetan Todorov refers to as the “uncanny,” maintaining the rules of daily reality but allowing for the explanation or even rejection of supposedly supernatural happenings. For instance, Ann Radcliffe's novels leave the reader and the character wondering throughout whether the strange occurrences are explained by the known laws of nature or if miracles or other supernatural interventions are required to explain the strange events. Radcliffe consistently displays her rationalist inclinations towards the book's conclusion by finding probable reasons for seemingly paranormal occurrences (Bryson,2013).

Concrete elements are the actual Gothic items that are available to the senses, such as the scene and the character. An ancient castle or palace, which may be empty; inhabited, or ambiguously inhabited, is usually the focal point of the scene. To increase the mystery and tension, these buildings commonly have trap doors, hidden chambers, secret quoteways, dim stairwells, and rotting areas. The eerie ambiance is enhanced by the nearby caves, which occasionally house terrible creatures like vampires, zombies, or monsters. Gothic settings have been updated to include either new or old homes, with lighting used to create a sense of claustrophobia and entrapment. The feeling of dread is heightened by darkness, whether it comes from sudden power outages during a storm or from desertion. Close-ups in movies further influence the viewer's emotional reaction by coordinating with the visual and narrative components to evoke a sense of dread and terror through the use of odd camera angles and music (Harris,2019).

Initially, Gothic novels in many cases employ the weather to highlight and reflect the dark themes of the narrative as well as the emotions of the characters. Thunderstorms, lightning, and violent storms are examples of atmospheric phenomena that frequently correspond with paranormal activity and evil deeds. These storms usually happen at night, especially around midnight, which evokes anxiety and portends bad things to come. These meteorological phenomena are often used in Gothic fiction to reflect and intensify the characters' dark desires and menacing storylines. It is intended to arouse readers' sense of suspense and terror with its overall dark and enigmatic atmosphere, which is full of violent feelings and supernatural dread. The cohesive theme and engrossing reading experience of Gothic literature are enhanced by the utilization of location and weather (Scarborough,1917).

1.4 Guadalupe García McCall

Guadalupe García McCall emigrated with her family from Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico, to the United States at the age of six. It is acknowledged that the year of her birth is not known, yet she is still alive . Her place of origin, Eagle Pass, Texas, is a village located on the Rio Grande border. In a home full of

cultural history, literature, and storytelling, McCall's parents encouraged her to follow her passions. "I've been writing since my Papi- put a pencil in my hand and I heard it whisper with its magical voice across the page" . Her talents were also fostered by her professors:

After reading a narrative I wrote in Spanish, Mr. Hernández, my third grade teacher, asked me if I planned to pursue writing as a career. It was that that sowed the seed. Then, Ms. García and Ms. Urbina in high school thought I had the ability to get published. My math instructor and mentor, Ms. Moses, hoped the same for me. She gave me a copy of *Writer's Digest* as a high school graduation present, and I will never forget it. (Rodríguez and Hinton, 2014)

Peers offered support as well, according to McCall, who adds, "I wrote love poems and love stories for my friends in middle school. I suppose you can say I was writing to the market back then, writing what my readers were demanding" McCall started writing as a young adult to help herself grow and to record her maturation. Once she started high school, she learned to write for herself, to purge, to cleanse, to reflect, to make sense of the world around her, and to find her place. The experiences and cultures she encountered as a child growing up in Northern Mexico and the Texas-Mexico borderlands enhanced her voice (Rodríguez and Hinton, 2014).

Daniel Chacón, the chair of UTEP's creative writing program, has called Guadalupe "... one of the most important writers in Texas and Latinx literature as well as mainstream fiction and poetry." Her books have received high praise from critics and numerous honors. At George Fox University, Guadalupe is a tenure-track professor at the moment. After earning her MFA, she was able to seek jobs at universities and end her twenty-year tenure as a San Antonio high school teacher ("Guadalupe García McCall" *UTEP Connect*).

During our time in Mexico, my father introduced me to writing, though not in the conventional sense. I have been in love with writing ever since. It is an art form, a gift from my father, his legacy to me. Every weekend, he placed me on his lap and drew pictures with letters and numbers. As he drew the letters, each curl and swirl combined to create a tiny animal or caricature that leaped off the paper. He left me a journal so I could write during the week while he was gone for work in the United States. Since then, I have been deeply in love with writing. It's an artistic medium, bestowed upon me by my father as a legacy . (Ellington, 2018)

Guadalupe García McCall is an award-winning author of multiple young adult novels, adult short stories, and several children's poems. Among many honors, Guadalupe has won the prestigious Pura Belpré Award, the the Westchester

Young Adult Fiction Award, the Tomás Rivera Mexican-American Children's Book Award, and was a finalist for the Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy, and the William C. Morris Award. She is a supporter of her voices, diversity in literature, and literacy. Along with her husband and sons, she resides in the San Antonio region. She enjoys playing with her granddaughter, writing, drawing, and cooking, and she represents a significant new literary voice for young adults that crosses many cultural and influence boundaries. Her profession, her relationship to reading, and her dedication to the community are some of the personal experiences that have shaped her work. Young adults are directly attracted to McCall's voice in the end. McCall often incorporates Chicana and Latina culture into her lyrical, evocative work. Her works create an alive tapestry of cultural history and modern issues together with a wealth of emotion and imagery (“Faculty Directory › Antioch University”,2023).

1.5 *Echoes of Grace*

García McCall skilfully pieces together the personal and family history of an eighteen-year-old, Grace, a girl who was given the talent of seeing, feeling, and even smelling the past and future in warped visions she calls echoes from her mother. Regrettably, this faculty often diverts Grace's concentration from the present moment. Grace's memories illuminated a period three years prior when she had fled to Mexico and lost a whole week of her life. She is having a really difficult morning due to echoes and her sister's failing relationship. While she is taking care of her loving nephew, two-year-old Alexander he walks into the street and gets hit by a car. The trauma intensifies her sadness and brings back memories of her mother's brutal murder twelve years prior by tipping her into memories of a horrifying sexual assault. Since the passing of their mother at a tender age, Grace (Graciela) and Mercy (Mercedes), have enjoyed a close relationship as sisters.

In the sphere of Gothic literature, frequently explores the paranormal, from menacing omens to wicked spirits. In circumstances where the established laws of nature are transgressed or violated, a profound sense of disquiet is often evoked, suggesting the presence of an anomalous element. But keep in mind that the supernatural is frequently unclear in Gothic fiction (Daisie Team,2023). In this captivating paranormal family story, tragedy and paranormal gifting appear to hound the Torres family.

I try to stay present like Mercy warned, but something has changed, and I know it's happening again, that weird thing Guelita Rosa calls echoes — the don, a kind of woman's intuition with sights and sounds and smells shared by most of the women in my family, starts to manifest something before me. I stand very still, trying not to be overwhelmed, waiting for the premonition to pass through me as it

does most times. (García McCall,2022)

The ability to sense echoes of individuals and past events without being conscious of them is a don (gift) that Graciela—Grace—carries from her mother's side of the family. Grace, who lives near Eagle Pass, Texas, finds it difficult to comprehend the “echoes” her mother left behind—visions that frequently warp her sense of reality. A troubling echo grips Grace one morning as her sister Mercy dashes out to work, and tragedy befalls her in a matter of minutes. The clear separation of these components allows getting a more detailed perspective on the role that the elements play in the overall mood and themes as well as the emotional richness of the Gothic piece. The increased thematic exploration and deeper understanding of symbolic and emotional effects of Gothic work is a great contribution of this study. This manifestation is a typical Gothic literary device, in which characters frequently have visions or premonitions that disclose secrets or hint at future events. The reaction of the main character, who stands still and tries to restrain her emotions, underscores the psychological and emotional price of such paranormal experiences. This is an important element of Gothic fiction because all human beings always feel anxious, terrified, and do not know what to expect. The fact that the majority of women in my family are the same in their intuition brings the thought of a similar paranormal connection going on in the family. This is connected with the Gothic concept of the inherited powers or curses of the ancestors in the character and makes the experience of the character more sophisticated as well as ties it to a greater, often evil ancestry.

The mental instability and inner fears of the character is one of the essential elements of the Gothic fiction. The characters are either unstable or mentally sick because they are obsessed with the unknown or their guilt of the past transgressions. Their past of guilt and the internal anxieties bother them at every turn. Psychological trauma that the characters have ended up with eventually led to a split personality and rendered them dangerous to the people surrounding them. In the novel, the characters are swooning, angry, terrified, sobbing, and yelling. Their emotions become more intense due to their dread of the unknown and mysterious. They experience constant fear and occasionally internal misery. The protagonists have intense emotional outbursts in response to events such as murder, kidnapping, and tragic insanity. Gothic literature also uses a very emotive language. Character emotional extremes can be clearly shown in the works of Ann Radcliffe *Mysteries of Udolpho*, M.G. Lewis *Monk*, Mary Shelley *Frankenstein*, and Charlotte Brontë *Jane Eyre* (Harris,2023). The intricacies of the human psyche are not exclusively the domain of classic fictional characters. Modern stories also engage with themes of personal struggles and internal conflicts, drawing readers into the fraught emotional landscapes

experienced by protagonists. In one specific example:

'I'm not...' I started to defend myself, but I had a hard time validating my actions. I liked drawing and writing. There was nothing wrong with it. It centered me, and kept me focused, despite the echoes that no one except Guelita Rosa had the courage to talk about. If it wasn't for her explaining that there was nothing wrong with me — that, like my mother, I had a special ability — I don't know how I would have dealt with this don. 'Wake up, Graciela! It's time to grow up! 'A tiny speck of my father's spit landed on my cheek, and I wiped it away without saying anything because I knew, deep down inside, I knew he was making a mistake by letting Mercy and her new husband, that loser Jose, move in with us. (García McCall, 2022)

Graciela, the main character, battles her need for praise from others and her need for self-worth. Her father's harsh judgement and his outward display of rage—spittle landing on her cheek—serve as a metaphor for the stifling atmosphere she lives in. Her internal struggle and low self-esteem are probably increased by this atmosphere. Wiping away the spit without replying is a sign of learned helplessness or resignation, which is typical of those who have been subjected to emotional abuse for an extended period. Graciela undergoes subtle, and complex feelings. Writing and painting allow her to stay focused and provide her with some sort of control among the insanity. The attitude of her father is rather dismissive, and the attitude of Guelita Rosa is supportive, because of her talent. Graciela requires this emotional support so that she feels that she belongs and is valuable. Her connections and self-talk make her experience a lot of powerlessness, acceptance, and frustration. The fact that the mother of Graciela possessed a similar form of special ability creates the option of a tendency of passed-on traits or experiences.

In the realm of Gothic literature, the general atmosphere is filled with mystery, darkness, and suspense. In Gothic novels, the night serves as the primary motif. Nighttime dimness limits vision and creates a sense of unpredictability, where a character is unsure of what will come next. Gothic fiction also features a lot of cryptic events in its narrative. The characters can vanish, as well as inanimate items. Doors open and close on their own, yet nobody is visible. All by itself, the candle goes out. The narrative's enigmatic tone is enhanced by each of these components. Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* both have eerie, ambiguous interiors (Harris, 2019).

Gothic novelists created the tone by carefully selecting the physical location of a scene, as the atmosphere and surroundings of a Gothic novel directly contributed to the reader's sense of terror and unease. Authors frequently used

locations such as dark forests, unsettling mountain ranges, ominous weather conditions, and terrifying storms. Castles, romanticised during the Mediaeval period played an important role in early Gothic literature. Many early writers were fascinated by exoticism and strange, undiscovered territories. This was explored in William Beckford's 1786 novel *Vathek*, an omniscient fiction about an Arabian caliph whose reign is fraught with upheaval and unrest. It is set in the Middle East and has piqued interest in Arab and Asian cultures (“Top 10 Elements of Gothic Literature”,2019). Authors of Gothic fiction often enhance the sense of dread by meticulously setting their scenes in eerie, sinister locations. This gives it a chilling effect of the outside environment that reflects the internal battles of the characters making their mental struggles all the more dramatic. In Beckford *Vathek*, say, the exotic Middle Eastern scene would further add to the mysterious and disturbing atmosphere of the narrative. Similarly, the contemporary narrative can be seen to dwell on these concepts when it explores the psychological conflict of the main protagonist in an emotionally charged surrounding.

After a quiet conversation, my father follows the doctor down the hall, leaving me alone with Mercy. I sit there looking at my sister, waiting for her to wake up, telling myself not to listen to the things whispering around in my head, not to give in to my don, not to let the aggrieved voices swirling around in that place of trauma overwhelm me. My sister needs me. So, I fight to stay present. (García McCall,2022)

The author successfully here develops the supernatural, mysterious mood, which defines Gothic literature. Grace is abandoned to stand in a silent almost suicidal atmosphere, which makes the sense of vulnerability and loneliness even more tangible. This immediately makes the scene a disgusting one. The narrator experiences voices and furious voices, but they are not merely tricks of the mind; they are the indications of a deeper supernatural being, which causes it to be hard to define the decisions between the supernatural and the real world. This creates a ghostly, almost spooky element which is frightening and seductive simultaneously. A psychological horror element is added by the narrator's internal effort to ignore these voices and be there for her sister while she fights against both her own troubled psyche and outsideotherworldly forces

A recurring theme in Gothic literature is seclusion, with characters' fragility frequently being shown in hidden settings. Although the heroines' responses serve to both comfort and inspire us to rise above the concrete reality of social isolation, this isolation is frequently shown as self-imposed. The Gothic grandeur and dark grey walls of Emily St. Aubert's prison in Ann Radcliffe's novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* exacerbate her melancholy. It does not seem like reading can instantly take her mind off of her current situation, and her mental

resources are wearing thin. If one is physically limited, Radcliffe and her colleagues proposed that there is still a possibility of reducing the effects by immersing oneself in reading and taking in the wonders of nature. A common element of the Gothic is isolation; writings by Bram Stoker, Shirley Jackson, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mary Shelley all examine the conditions of forced seclusion. But reading and talking about the Gothic may also be more social, as demonstrated by the reading and writing of ghost stories by Mary Godwin and Percy Bysshe Shelley and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* 1818. These lively, group reading and discussion practices of the Gothic continue to exist and flourish in our day and age on a variety of academic and social media platforms (Wright, "Gothic and the Hermeneutics of Isolation | Fifteen Eighty Four | Cambridge University Press", 2020).

A fuzzy black caterpillar is sitting on the wooden railing of the porch. There are a million things I'd rather be doing than standing around waiting for my older sister, Mercedes — or Mercy as she prefers to be called these days — to come out of the house. She's late again, which means that I can't get my day started, not until she's left the driveway and I am alone with my daily ritual: wake up Guelita Rosa, feed her and Alexander, wash the dishes, and sort and put away the laundry. Once that is done, I can sit down and sketch and think and create. (García McCall, 2022)

South Texas's environment, with its intense sun, evokes a physical sense of solitude. The topic of being out of place or separated from its native habitat is highlighted by the uncommon remark of the caterpillar—a nocturnal creature—being outside during the day. This reflects the protagonist's personal feeling of being disconnected from her environment and day-to-day activities. The protagonist emphasises a routine and solitary existence through her daily responsibilities, which include feeding Alexander, cleaning dishes, and folding laundry in addition to awakening Guelita Rosa. She is locked into a cycle of repetition by this routine, which restricts her independence and her chances for social connection or personal development. The main character's displeasure with her sister Mercedes (or Mercy) suggests that their connection is tense.

Conclusion

The genre of Gothic literature is dramatic and immerses its readers in their uneasy settings and awakens their senses and imagination. It delves deeper into the negatives of human nature by playing with the issue of romance, death and terror, and usually in a haunted setting full of ghosts and curses. Gothic novels focus on

the struggle of good and evil and mirror great human fears and provide a mixture of horror and romance of mysterious and supernatural situations. Good cases in point are the works of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* that are famed by their captivating plots and the chilling stories.

It is through the introduction of Gothic themes into the genre of young adult fiction that titles such as Guadalupe Garcia McCall in her novel *Echoes of Grace* help to enrich the narratives with psychological concerns such as identity, trauma, and resilience. The blend of Gothic themes and modern problems connects with teenage readers with the help of multifaceted narration. The novels emphasize the importance of family and especially brotherhood and sisterhoods as a source of strength when faced with adversity. They also use Mexico folklore where magic components interact with the true problems in society like the violence of women and finally lead to their enlightenment of the multi-faceted experiences. The narration of McCall turns fear into a courage and the significance of love and unity to fight against misfortune.

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