The Castle of Otranto

Name

Affiliation

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English author named, Horace Walpole, authored a novel in the year 1764, which is entitled “The Castle of Otranto." The novel laid the foundation of gothic literature, in which the castle is considered a contested space. In the case of the castle of Otranto, it is also contested space according to the pairing of male and female. The novel sheds light on the patriarchal system of the society, by highlighting the relationship of man and woman from different perspectives. The male characters of the novel Manfred, Frederic and Theodore indulge in a fight of gaining control over the female characters, Isabella and Matilda of the novel. The castle may have been a contested space for the male characters of the novel, as they want to keep control over the lives of the women, as well as on the land.

The Castle of Otranto is a contested space with respect to the pairing of male and female and one of the most important examples is the wish of Manfred to marry Isabella. Manfred wanted to keep his control on the castle and he realized after the death of his son that he can only control the castle by keeping control over the women. The death of his son made him realize the severity of the situation. According to a prophecy, the rule of the castle would be transferred to its real owner, once he reaches the age of managing it. In order to ensure the rule of the castle in the hands of his family, he tried to get Isabella married to his sick son, who died just a few days before marriage in an unfortunate and unrealistic incident. This caused a great blow to Manfred, as it made him think that the rule would finally be snatched from him. He divorced his wife on the claims that she was not able to give him a proper heir. On the other hand, he revealed that he would marry Isabella, who was much younger than him, only to continue his generation and keep control of the castle. So, his attempt of keeping the rule of the castle in his hands, he was playing with the lives of women around him. He divorced his wife, who had served him her whole life, just because his son had died and he was fearful that the castle would be snatched from him. He was also ready to sacrifice the life of a young girl, in order to fulfill his wishes.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The link between Frederic and Matilda highlights the fact that the castle of Otranto was a contested space. Frederic, who was the father of Isabella, was one of the most cunning characters in the novel. He left her daughter alone, being dependent on the family of Manfred. He did not feel any sense of affection of responsibility towards her and used to leave her, as well as comeback according to his own free will. When Manfred decided to get married to Isabelle, she took refuge in a church and then hid somewhere else. When Fredric came to rescue his daughter, he saw the daughter of Manfred, Matilda and fell in love with her. He was ready to exchange his daughter with Manfred, in order to get married to his daughter. Being a father, he was not loyal to his daughter and instead of ensuring her security, happiness and well beings, he was ready to sacrifice her, to maximize his personal gains. He only wanted to control the women around him and was not reluctant to pay any price for that.

The role of Theodore and Isabelle in the novel sheds light on the contested space of the castle from the perspective of man and woman. Theodore was given the responsibility of ensuring the safety of Isabelle. He was the only character in the novel who comprised his own safety, for the sake of ensuring the safety of another woman. He even indulged in a fight, after which he came to know that he is the real ruler of the castle of Otranto. At one point, he fell in love with Matilda, who also loved him. However, she was soon killed by her own father, who thought her to be Isabella. After that, Theodore succeeded in winning the rule of the castle, which belonged to him and married Isabelle, who finally became the wife of the ruler.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The castle of Otranto was a contested space as all the women in the castle were controlled by the men in one or the other way. They wanted to fulfill their personal desires and wished by keeping the women in their control. They regarded, as well as disregarded them according to their own free will and the women were forced to submit to the desires and expectations of the men, without raising any objection. Manfred wanted to control the women for his personal gain of keeping the control and rule of the castle in his hand. On the other hand, Fredric wanted to control the women in order to fulfill his desires, though he was least interested in ensuring the safety of his own daughter. Moreover, Theodore was inclined towards Matilda because she was the daughter of Manfred, however, did not think twice before finally acknowledging his feelings for Isabelle.

Bibliography

Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*. ReadHowYouWant. com, 2006.

1. Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*. ReadHowYouWant. com, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*. ReadHowYouWant. com, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)