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**Use of Gothic Elements in Ligeia**

Gothic literature is a pleasant yet horrifying blend of horror and fiction with a little bit of romance. Ligeia by Edger Ellen Poe is written in the gothic horror, genre. The story has all the elements of a classic gothic novel. Many researchers consider Ligeia as a work of fiction which is written in the gothic genre. Gothic literature has many conventions such as horror, exotic locations, dark theme, the presence of supernatural beings, hallucinations, mystery, etc. In Gothic conceptions, imagination and emotive effects surpass reason (Fred, p.2). Death and romance are the foundation of this genre and they are beautifully used by Poe in this novel. Poe covered almost all the conventional elements of classic gothic horror in his novel Ligeia.

As it is described at the introduction of the novel, the story is set in some remote area in an abandoned castle that is really gloomy and scary. The interior of the castle is really dark and big ottomans and the tapestries are to be found there. The wind is blowing outside and the curtains, creating the eerie sounds. The castle is located on the top of the river Rhine. After some time the setting is shifted to another place, and that also fits well to a gothic novel. This time it is the abandoned abbey. It seems to embody the qualities of the narrator’s late wife, who had raven hair, black eyes, and a mysterious character. Characters Poe gave the minute details about the location and the interior of the abandoned Abbey, and the bridal chamber. The bridal chamber is of pentagonal shape. A Pentagon has five corners, and such figures are related to the world of the occult. The room gives an atmosphere of mystery and horror. The golden curtains in the room create an optical illusion. Towards the southern side of the Pentagon is the window which has covered the whole wall. It is a huge sheet of unbroken glass from Venice. It is of a single pane and is tinted of a leaden hue. Whenever the sun rays or the moon rays passed through it and fell on the objects inside, it created a frightful glow (Poe).

Not only the objects and the setting but the characters also create an atmosphere of mystery in the novel. The lady Ligeia is capturing the attention of the readers because of the description Poe gave of her. There is a common concept of the feminine demon haunting the male protagonist in the gothic novels.in this novel however, the author Poe gave an illustration of a spirit of a dead wife who was in love with the narrator and the narrator is still obsessing over her (Andriano). She is an extremely beautiful and mysterious woman with whom the protagonist is in love with. In gothic Literature, women are often presented as beautiful and ethereal beings. Poe kept the tradition alive by giving us the details of the beauty and the glory of Ligeia. The narrator describes her beauty as strange and she looks to be divine. Ligeia has many other mysterious features attached to it. For example, the narrator could never hear her come into the room. The narrator says that "she came and departed as a shadow” (Poe).

There are a lot of supernatural elements in the novel added by Poe. The element of reincarnation is one of them. The horrific scene of reincarnation occurs by the end of the story when the narrator realizes that his first love Ligeia has come back to life in the body of his second wife Rowena. The appearance of the body of Rowena is also changed to resemble Ligeia. It is obvious through the story that the narrator is obsessed with the late lady Ligeia and is constantly thinking about her even after marrying to Rowena. Rowena’s death is also an unsolved mystery for the readers. Before she died she had hallucinations. The death scene is not clear and the reader cannot say whether the scene was real or inside the mind of the narrator, because he was high on opium at the time of the death of Rowena. Another strange thing that the narrator experiences are that the body of Rowena showed some signs of life and then appeared dead again this happened throughout the night, finally the body stood up and took the shape of Lideia. Poe brought another very common supernatural element in use and that is the experience of the narrator watching the shadow walking, and the presence of some supernatural being. (ElementsoftheGothicNovel).

Gothic genre along with the element of horror brings into use the feature of romance and extreme emotions. Poe manifested the love of the narrator for his late wife in the novel through the thoughts and experiences he interpreted. The intense love of the narrator for his dead wife took the form of obsession later, and this obsession of his love made him hate his second wife.

Darkness is another theme which is frequently used in the gothic genre by the writers. Poe created an environment that was gloomy and dark in the external and the internal world of the characters. The gloominess is felt by the readers as they read the novel.

Poe is known for taking Gothic writings into the Victorian age and combining psychology into their subjects, making the mystic more realistic and close to home. The novel under discussion, Ligeia, is one of this kind of novels. It has manifested all the typical features of gothic writing style, and it grabs the attention of the audience completely.

Works Cited

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