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Father Innocent [supplemental material]

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Father Innocent, Abbot of the Capuchins, by an unknown author.

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MLA Citation

Father Innocent, Abbot of the Capuchins; Or, the Crimes of Cloisters. London: Tegg and Castleman, c. 1805. Print.

MLA Citation from the Gothic Archive

Father Innocent, Abbot of the Capuchins; Or, the Crimes of Cloisters. Published 1805. E-Publications Marquette. The Gothic Archive, Marquette University, Wisconsin.

http://epublications.marquette.edu/english_gothic/25/. Accessed 9/16/13. Web.

Full Title

Father Innocent, Abbot of the Capuchins; Or, the Crimes of Cloisters.

Summary

Father Innocent draws large crowds to his sermons due to his famous purity. Among them are Drusilla and her fifteen-year-old niece Ambrosia and two cavaliers, Olmas and Antonio. The four meet in the congregation and form friendships as Antonio seeks to woo Ambrosia. Among Innocent's followers inside the monastery is his favorite novice, Philario, who turns out to be a woman named Sabrina in disguise; she is a seductress in league with Lucifer, and has come to bring about Innocent's downfall. She successfully seduces Innocent and traps him with the need for secrecy. Meanwhile, Antonio's sister, Bertha, is a nun in the nearby Convent of St. Clare. Bertha is pregnant and in love with the Marquis di Langara; she hopes to escape the abbey to elope with him. Father Innocent discovers their scheme and reports Bertha to the abbess, who punishes her by locking her in the crypts and leaving her to starve. Meanwhile, the bored Father Innocent shifts his sexual interests from Sabrina to the lovely teenaged Ambrosia. Father Innocent joins Sabrina in a dark ritual to summon Lucifer, who provides him with the magical means to rape Ambrosia in her sleep without her knowledge. Leonora, Ambrosia's mother, walks in during his attempted rape, and to cover his crimes, Innocent kills her. In the meantime, Antonio and the Marquis have attempted to rescue Bertha from the convent, but discover her missing. They confront the Abbess in the city square and accuse her of Bertha's murder, starting a riot. While defending the terrified nuns during the riot, Antonio discovers his sister Bertha alive and trapped therein with the corpse of her baby. Another nun, Romalia, escapes with Bertha, and within a few weeks Romalia marries Antonio, and Bertha weds the Marquis di Langara. During the same riot, Father Innocent sneaks into the crypt and succeeds in raping Ambrosia (whom he had drugged and abducted from her home after her mother's murder) and murders her to protect his secret. Innocent and Sabina are caught and tortured by the Inquisition. Sabina makes a deal with Lucifer to receive her freedom, and Innocent wants the same. He summons Lucifer, who reveals that Ambrosia was Innocent's sister. In exchange for his soul, Lucifer frees Innocent, but then throws him down onto a mountainside where he dies.

Constellation of Knowledge/Historical Summary

Father Innocent is based very closely on *The Monk* by Matthew G. Lewis, published in 1796. During this period of time it was common for gothic novels to be shortened and repackaged in chapbook form for less affluent readers. *Father Innocent* appears to be this type of knock-off of *The Monk*. The characters all have direct analogues with different names, and the plots are nearly identical. In shortening *The Monk* for the chapbook, however, the unknown author removes a great deal of *The Monk's* exploration of moral dilemmas.

Bibliography:

Other Editions:

Birmingham: J. Belcher, n.d.

Father Innocent

Bristol: B. Sellick, n.d.

Liverpool: T. Troughton, n.d.

Newcastle: J. Mitchell, n.d.

Edinburgh: C. Brown, n.d.

York: E. Peck, n.d.

Leeds: T. Binns, n.d.

Bury St. Edmund's: J. Dingle, n.d.

Bath: T. Brown, n.d.

Dublin: B. Dugdale, n.d.

Manchester: M. Swindels, n.d.

Ipswich: J. Raw and J. Bush, n.d.

Norwich: J. Booth, n.d.

Salisbury: Collins and Fellows, n.d.

Derby: G. Wilkins, 1803

Key Words

Androgyny

In Gothic literature, to be androgynous is to be neither specifically masculine nor feminine thus creating an amorphous character with an ambiguous sexual orientation. Androgynous behaviour is exhibited in marginalized characters such as the foreign other and females to mirror cultural and sexual anxieties in this period of enormous social turbulence. In *Father Innocent*, Sabina/Philario is an example of a character whose gender performance changes over the course of the novel. Although she begins in male garb and with male profession, Sabina demonstrates feminine wiles and sexuality in her initial seduction of Father Innocent. Soon thereafter, however, she returns to rather male behavior; acting as a confidant, helping Father Innocent to cover his crimes and rape Ambrosia.

Source: Metta Yang "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 12/1/2013. Web.

Beauty

Beauty in the gothic is brought to perfection in women, who are likened to angels and the Virgin Mary. In the gothic, however, there tends to be a twist of fate or defilement affecting such women, and bringing to light the ideological suppression of women in society. Beauty without morals or chastity becomes unnatural and bestial, evoking attraction and repulsion. Beauty here is seen as something to be feared due to its power to seduce and bring out the irrational in man. Sabina in *Father Innocent* begins her seduction of him by

posing for a painting of the Madonna, which is placed in his cell. He loves the image of the Madonna, and transfers his emotions easily to Sabina when her resemblance to the painting is revealed. Her beauty paves the way for her seduction of him, and his eventual fall to complete depravity.

Source: Candida Ho "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 12/1/2013. Web.

Death

Gothic literature is obsessed with death. We find portents of death, unnatural deaths, and series of deaths, all of which contribute to an atmosphere of horror. Death in Gothic literature is associated with the supernatural. If Gothic literature reflects a wish to overcome one's mortality, there is also a fear of those who somehow manage to transcend it. In Gothic literature, death is horrific because it is often not quite the end. This thwarts the human wish for certainty. There are two portents of death before Ambrosia's murder; first, the gipsy predicts it by reading her palm, then her mother's ghost warns her that death is coming. Sabina's magical charm creates the appearance of death in Ambrosia, who is lying among three dead bodies in a crypt when Father Innocent finally rapes her. All of the scenes in the crypt take place among the bodies of dead females.

Source: Khoo Lilin "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 12/1/2013. Web."

Dreams

In the beginnings of society's recognition of the unconscious, dreams signify the innermost repressed desires of an individual. Dreams can also mirror one's fears or foreshadow events to come. In *Father Innocent*, Antonio's dream in the church foreshadows Ambrosia's death, and also alerts him to the Marquis' skulking around the shadowy church.

Source: Anna Mathew "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 12/1/2013. Web.

Entrapment

Entrapment, a favorite horror device of the Gothic, means to be confined or to be trapped in such a way that there is no way out. It is this sense of there being no escape that contributes to the claustrophobic psychology of Gothic space. Although it is most often regarded as a consequence of physical entrapment, it can also be more generally attributed to a character's sense of helplessness, or a feeling that one is caught up in some sinister plan or destiny over which one has no control. Two women are trapped in *Father Innocent*. First, Bertha is locked in the crypts beneath the convent, where the abbess has left her to die. Then Ambrosia is caught in the same crypt, waking from her drugged sleep to find herself unable to escape. Later, Father Innocent becomes trapped by his own crimes. Once he takes the first step and agrees to keep Sabina's gender a secret, he is caught in a series of

escalating scenarios wherein he cannot return to the righteous path without losing his position and fame as a monk.

Source: Esther Leong "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 12/1/2013. Web.

Female Sexuality

Aspects of female sexuality figure prominently in gothic literature insofar as there is a strong preoccupation with what may happen if female sexuality is not contained within the structures of patriarchal authority across many Gothic texts. When seen alongside the socio-cultural-historical developments in Victorian Britain, it becomes possible then to view the depictions of female sexuality in gothic literature as responses to women's increasing freedom and mobility during this period. *Father Innocent's* Sabina is a clear example of a woman whose sexuality is not properly restrained, and calamity ensues. Strangely, without her intention, Ambrosia's sexuality is also a spur for Father Innocent's lust, and therefore seals her doom.

Source: Ashley Lin "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 12/1/2013. Web.

Gothic Intertextuality

Intertextuality exists everywhere in all literary genres, but Gothic intertextuality stands apart from the usual usage as it both subverts and perverts the meanings and intentions of the original text, in a bid to overturn, question and invert its significance. In the case of *Father Innocent*, Matthew Lewis' novel *The Monk* is nearly duplicated in a shorter format, with very few differences. The names are changed (except in a few cases, wherein the author refers to Sabina as Matilda or Innocent as the Monk), but the main components of the plot and characterization are the same.

Source: Magdalene Poh "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 12/1/2013. Web.

Occultism

The word 'occult' means 'concealed' and is unrelated to 'cult', which means 'worship', but the genre of the Gothic makes a cult out of the occult. The esoteric societies taught theories that differed considerably from modern science but had as much claim on public imagination at a time when Christian orthodoxy was being challenged and reinforced. Using natural or white magic, an occultist may divine the workings of the universe; or may influence the course of events to personal ends through black or malefic magic. Sabina's character in *Father Innocent* seems to have mastered the occult, and is able to perform many magic deeds, such as summoning demons, removing poisons, creating magical items, and using magical devices of unknown origins, such as the mirror and the potion.

Father Innocent

Source: Nicole Kwan "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 12/1/2013. Web.

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<http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/cc09_n03.html>.