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History of Nicolas Pedrosa, and His Escape from the Inquisition in Madrid, by Richard Cumberland.

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Full Title

The History of Nicolas Pedrosa, and His Escape from the Inquisition in Madrid. A Tale.

Summary

Andalusian-born Nicolas Pedrosa is a shaver, surgeon, and male-midwife living in Madrid. One day, after assisting in a birth, Nicolas is returning home when his mule becomes obstreperous and he beats it, rejecting the offered advice of a group of passing friars who counsel patience. Angered by Pedrosa's reaction, the friars sweep on only to be trampled when the mule loses control because of the sound of their bells.

The next morning, Pedrosa receives a summons from the Inquisition, an especially worrisome situation for him as he is secretly a Jew. Imprisoned and tortured briefly, Pedrosa The interrogation by the Inquisitor General (Don Ignacio de Santos Apparicio, a name with obvious associations to the Jesuit Ignatius) is ended when Pedrosa reveals that he had been returning from the childbed of a woman named Donna Leonora as the Inquisitor General takes Pedrosa aside and commissions him to slip a vial of what he claims is medicine to Donna Leonora.

Suspicious of the Inquisitor General's motives, Pedrosa flees to Portugal and accepts employment as a ship's surgeon. Under the tutelage of the British captain, Pedrosa experiences freedom from fear of the Inquisition and is able to act to save Don Manuel, the husband of Donna Leonora, who is captured and brought aboard the ship. Though initially skeptical, Don Manuel is persuaded of the Inquisitor General's evil intent when he receives a letter written by the dying Leonora.

Pedrosa and Don Manuel go to England. Once there, they receive word that the Inquisitor General has either disappeared or is dead so a return home would be safe. Pedrosa is happier, however, living in glorious and tolerant England where he can live as a Jew without fear of the Inquisition.

Constellation of Knowledge/Historical Context

Not much is known about the origins of the chapbook of Nicolas Pedrosa. Firmly rooted in anti-Catholic ideology, the chapbook also apparently descends from an anti-Spanish tradition, revealing the Spanish Inquisition as manipulative, cruel, and remorseless while Protestant England is the land of tolerance and freedom. Interestingly, this 1799 version printed in Scotland does not appear to be the earliest version as an earlier publication occurred in London at some point in the 1790s. Initial dates as early as 1795 have been offered, but the most concrete evidence of a previous version is not until 1798 when Richard Cumberland presents a version of the chapbook in *The Observer*.

Key Words

Boundaries

Anne Williams in her book *The Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* suggests that Gothic literature is “pervasively organized around anxieties about boundaries (and boundary transgressions)” (Williams 16). Gothic literature, however, deals not only with boundaries (and transgressions) of “self and other”; it attempts also to show the problematic nature of

boundaries in the first place. Social boundaries, for example, define what is correct, but at the same time repress the individual. Boundaries in Gothic fiction are often blurred, and things are never as clearly defined as they seem.

The establishment of the boundary between the self and other is important in Gothic fiction for everything that the Self is not is projected onto the Other. In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Frankenstein's monster is clearly the Other for he, at least physically, has come to represent everything that the other normal looking characters are not. The idea of "self and other" extends also to geographical boundaries, where everything within the boundary of civilized world is good and everything beyond it is either seen as exotic or dangerous. In Stoker's *Dracula*, London is seen as civilized and safe (at least prior the arrival of Dracula) and everything in Romania is considered to be dark, ominous and dangerous.

Boundaries create distinction, but they are also repressive in nature. Society lays down certain norms (boundaries) that individuals cannot transgress or risk being termed the 'Other'. People in attempting to stay within these boundaries naturally have to repress any desires that may transgress these socially placed boundaries. It can be argued that Dr. Jekyll's creation Mr. Hyde is an attempt to remain respectable at all times, as defined by the societal boundaries.

Lastly, boundaries can be blurred as we see in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, for is it really possible to create a boundary within oneself? The fact the Jekyll goes to bed as himself and wakes up as Hyde suggests that not only are boundaries problematic, it can also be easily blurred. Dracula too, represents a blurring of the boundaries between the living and the dead, He is not dead, but he is not alive as well, hence he is called the "Un-Dead", which is really an oxymoron.

Boundaries are endless in Gothic fiction; they constantly attempt to define what is correct, known and approved, but at the same time create more problems by their very act of categorization.

Source: Ivan Ang. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

Entrapment

Entrapment, a favourite 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. The notion of claustrophobia is closely tied up with that of entrapment. 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.

There are essentially three types of entrapment: physical, mental, and existential. Physical entrapment would mean being physically trapped in some place. A recurring gothic device of physical entrapment is that of the protagonist trapped in a maze of some kind and trying to escape, but inevitably returning to the same spot again and again. An example of physical entrapment can be found in Stoker's *Dracula*. When Harker is being driven to the castle of Dracula, he experiences a moment of being physically trapped in the nightmare landscape of the Transylvania, as is evident in his remark that "[it] seemed to me that we were simply

going over and over the same ground again; and so I took note of some salient point, and found that this was so" (Stoker). Another example of such entrapment is found in Smith's "A Rendezvous in Averigogne." In this short story, the protagonist Gerard is trying in vain to escape from a forest; he returns, inevitably, to the same spot every time. Eventually, "[his] very will was benumbed, was crushed down as by the incumbence of a superior volition." Mental entrapment, on the other hand, is about being confined to a certain state of mind. The gothic trope of madness, for example, is a form of mental entrapment. In a way, the insane are trapped in their own mental universe, into which no one else can penetrate. Renfield, in *Dracula*, is doubly entrapped; physically locked up in an asylum, he is also limited to the confines of his mental universe, doomed to be continually misunderstood by Seward, or simply dismissed as insane.

Lastly, there is also existential entrapment, which takes the form of social entropy and ontological or epistemological entrapment. An example of existential entrapment can be found in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; Dr Jekyll feels trapped by societal notions of respectability, by a constant pressure of having to uphold his reputation as a gentleman in the eyes of the Victorian public. As a way of breaking out of this 'prison', Dr Jekyll invents the figure of Hyde. Hyde is therefore Jekyll's liberator, for it is as Hyde that Dr Jekyll can truly express himself, unbound by considerations of maintaining his respectability.

Source: Esther Leong. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

Ethnicity

Description forthcoming.

Emigration

Description forthcoming.

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. The highly disturbing image of Lucy the "Un-Dead" throwing the child whom she was cradling in her arms earlier on onto the hard ground without so much as a blink in the eye in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) encapsulates one example of such a preoccupation—that of motherhood gone wrong. The mother-child relationship—one that is usually regarded as nurturing and loving—is violently destabilized at this instance where Lucy—as the symbolic mother—harms the child whom she was supposed to be protecting. Relating to motherhood, the theme of birth signals the preoccupation with the unknowable dimensions of female sexuality that many Gothic texts exhibit. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831), the birth of Victor Frankenstein's creation is depicted as one that is monstrous insofar as it is "unnatural"; Frankenstein is, symbolically, both father and mother to the creation that he abhors from the moment of its birth. Given that it was a woman who authored *Frankenstein*, this then signals how female sexuality—in all its different aspects—was very much on the minds of both men and women in Victorian Britain. 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; Mina Harker in *Dracula*, for instance, is very much a response to the New Woman phenomenon.

Source: Ashley Lin. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

Inquisition

Description forthcoming.

Jew

Description forthcoming.

Letters

Letters to a phantom sister, wills, transcript, journal entries, newspaper entries; Gothic narratives are punctuated with embedded writings in the form of letters and entries that are both a pastiche and fragmented, the sum total of which makes up the complete text. Letters while seemingly presenting objectivity on one level through the assumed tone of factuality, are also simultaneously open and subject to interpretation. It is linked to a reading of words as well as a misreading. There are letters that are not replied in *Frankenstein*, letters that may not have reached their destination, letters of secrecy in *Jekyll and Hyde*, letters that chronicle events—these letters attempt to present to us an understanding of what happened, reiterated with the supposed advantage of retrospect and an over-arching perspective that is allowed by the passing of time. However, as the paths of these letters are always dubious, it calls to attention its own in-authenticity and hence the potential for a misreading since we are never always sure if what we are reading is accurately represented. In other words, what has happened is always fragmented and there can be no complete reading of events.

These fragments also call to attention the reliability of information in an age where information is becoming increasingly available, as seen from the inclusion of newspaper reports in *Dracula* and the fact that distance is no longer a barrier to words. Some letters and entries, instead of being handwritten, are now type-written which displaces the personal touch of the writer from the reader and handwriting can no longer be a measure of authenticity. Anything, including words, can be reproduced. This links the idea of letters to modern communication and technology. The use of problematic embedded narratives illustrates an anxiety about the increasing ease of communication and whether more information really means knowing more. Narratives within narratives draw to attention its own artificiality and the question of whether there can be an original sequence of events behind what is narrated. At the same time, letters are also clearly letters of the alphabet which cues the reader in to the notion that all that is being read is a construct of "letters". Perhaps over-determined, but letters open the doors to the multitude of readings and misreadings in the Gothic world.

Source: Felicia Chan. "Gothic Keywords."

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