

Different Readings of gothic literature

Feminist Reading

Some feminist critics have suggested that gothic texts frequently explore the conflict between the sexes. The general absence or marginalisation of women in texts, such as Jekyll and Hyde, has often been noted and has led some critics to argue that the associations between the men themselves shadow male-female relationships.

Marxist Reading

A Marxist interpretation of a text is driven by the idea that the text is significantly held to its social and political contexts. In the late 18th century, de Sade famously argued that the Gothic 'was the inevitable product of the revolutionary shocks which affected the whole of Europe'. De Sade's suggestion was that the horrific conditions of the time were such that literature was itself driven to extremes in order to make an impact.

Many of the villains of the early gothic novels are from aristocratic backgrounds. At a time of the growth of the shift towards a more commercially driven, bourgeois society, the aristocracy was often viewed as corrupt, parasitic and given to a life of self-indulgence. But the gothic world can also be

Used to highlight the faults of the post-feudal, industrial society.

Religious Reading

Darwinism had posed a challenge to conventional religious thought. His theories had dealt a blow to the complacent view of a human kind made in the image of God, and established a disturbing link between humanity and the beast that lay behind them within. Gothic literature has always operated in a religious context. The fondness for the exploration of the supernatural could be regarded as a quest for a form of religious experience in an increasingly secular age.

Psychological Reading

Sigmund Freud changed forever the world of psychology and psychoanalysis. Many of the central components of Freud's theories are also familiar of gothic tales:

- The power and appeal of the irrational
- Dreams
- The ways in which illicit desires are controlled and suppressed
- The mixed response to sexual activity
- Guilt