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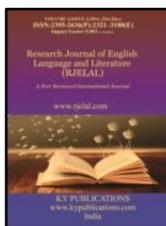
GROTESQUE MOTIFS IN CLASSICAL LITERATURE AS MOTIVES OF MILLENIALS' AFFECTION TO SCARY STORIES

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ABSTRACT

Hornedo (1999) in his essay, *Conceptual Structure of the Relationship of Theory to Literary Text*, explains that “the teacher is treating literature after a theory- his own theory, which is literature as a useful art. It is measured by its effects, and form is valued for what it can do for the sake of content”. The said idea adheres to this study which explores the subversive undertow of the grotesque motifs from the classical type of literary material to the taste of the modern reader. The materials are considered good number of representative such as, Richard III, the creation of Dr. Frankenstein, Quasimodo, and Erik the Phantom. This paper intends to unravel reasons behind the strange affection of the Millenials to the literary works with deformed characters or scary themes. This paper uses a descriptive- qualitative type of research which anchors on the theories of the grotesque as an analytical tool to present the motives behind the Millenial’s allure to the literary materials with scary or deformed characters. The discussion starts with the Theories of the Grotesque and follows four phases titled as: The Unmasking of the Faces; The Veiling of the Faces; the Damnation of the Faces; and The Readers’ Attraction to the Faces. It is therefore encouraged that the teachers, being the basic facilitator of learning situation, should have a wide understanding of their learners’ needs in terms of the materials that will be utilized in the process of presentation, discussion, and assimilation.

Keywords – Grotesque, Classical Literature, Millenials

Introduction

The reemergence of the grotesque in the arts was only one of a remarkable range of new expressive models through which the grotesque was extended, expanded, and reinvented in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These cultural vehicles for the grotesque included such disparate developments as psychoanalysis, photography, mass media, science fiction, ethnography, weapons of mass destruction, globalization, and virtual reality.

The modern era witnessed an explosion of literary imagery that in various ways incorporated grotesque. A remarkable number of canonical works of modernism, include motifs from classical literature. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo, *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand, *Richard III* by William Shakespeare, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte, *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy, *Le Fantome de L’Opera* by Gaston Leroux, *La Belle et la Bete* first published version by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de

Villeneuve, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, and so much more, employ structures deeply rooted in the western tradition as grotesque. The grotesque characters are prominent in novels, short stories, poems, dramas, but it also plays a role even in creative non-fiction and the visual arts such as films and paintings.

Accordingly, the term *Millenials*, refer to the people who grew up in the turn of the 21st century. A Time Magazine article placed them to be born between 1980-2000. Millenials are known to be flexible or tolerant of difference. Being born in the age of technological advancement with electronics-filled and rampant use of social media through the worldwide web, they are the generation that requires keen marketing attention. They are not easy to be pleased by a traditional way of presentation. Hence, some researches probe on their needs and interest.

The literary materials that get the most attention of most of the Millenials are those that are far from the ordinary. They love things that are different. In the research of Carretero, Gilbas and Remolacio (2011) on the Motivating situations in Reading, the scary stories ranked first as the top choice or preference of the respondents. Both the book and movie industry seem to address the inclination of the new generation to the idea of gothic. The common examples are the movies with the idea of deconstruction where the basic villain-type character becomes the hero /heroine. The examples of such are, Maleficent, Pan, Hanzel and Gretel, and Alice Through the Looking Glass, to mention some.

Theoretical Background

The grotesque was first linked to the notion of "primitive" expression to other primal realities. In *Le monster*, published in 1889, where Huysman contended that the microscope revealed an entirely new field of monstrosities equal to any of those animating medieval art. Similarly, as explained in the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms* Contemporary, Fried's exploration of the unconscious was embraced by surrealists who employed grotesque modalities

Given the prominent role of the grotesque in modern image culture, there are surprisingly few significant studies on these issues, a failure that reveals a blind spot in art-history and practice. The neoclassical foundations of art history and aesthetics, with their emphasis on ideated beauty and rational inquiry, set up an intrinsic hostility toward grotesque. There is, however, an even unprecedented disjuncture and shifting boundaries, with the collision of cultures and scientific challenges repeatedly stripping away the veneer of familiar reality from the chaos of raw experience. The details lay down bare the answers to the mystery of the readers' attraction to the gothic and grotesque. They help clear out the invoking of sympathy to the characters presented.

Thus, this study explores the subversive undertow of the grotesque within the modern, with a good number of representatives as follows: Richard III, the creation of Dr. Frankenstein, Quasimodo, and Erik the Phantom.

The Theories of Grotesque

The chief difficulty encountered in seeking to define the grotesque in its relation to media is—as can be attested to by every theoretician who has sought to do so since the sixteenth century conception of the term in its modern sense—that the grotesque is not an expression of norms, but rather what results from the transgression of them. In recognition of the grotesque as the slipperiest of aesthetic qualities the flurry of nineteenth century writers addressing the grotesque did so by exploring its aesthetic, social and philosophical significance.

Theoretical attempts to iron down the meaning and implications of the grotesque have addressed it alternately as a quality of media or as a quality of interaction with media, or even alternatively as a quality of the act of mediation itself. As a quality of media the grotesque has proven particularly susceptible to the conceptual fluctuations of history.

Kayser, (1981) the father of modern grotesque theory, identifies the definition of the term as the central issue in the study of it, assessing it himself as the appearance of a reality that is simultaneously of and opposed to the worlds in which its audience take part. Kayser's focus on

definition is not novel, but the direction from which he approaches the issue is.

Harpham (1976) summarizes the approach in his presentation of the effective standard, a standard based in the temporality of grotesque form versus the fairly constant evocative effect it has historically had upon the viewer and in his own assertion that "Etymological consistency does not equal conceptual accuracy." For Harpham, this effect is the establishment through the grotesque of a structure of estrangement, separated from the completely fantastic by the maintenance of the reality of the world while deconstructing the illusion of its basic reliability.

Objectives

This paper aims to enlighten the reasons behind the sweeping, fantastic stories that evoke concepts through history and literature. The outcast, the mythology of beauty and the beast, the use of masks, the society, and the power of literature are the main subjects of discussion. This paper intends to present motives to the ideas and language which seem dry and dull at first glance but later come vividly to life on pages. Furthermore, this work aims to identify the reasons behind the strange affection of the Millennials to the literary works with deformed characters or scary themes.

Methodology

This paper uses a descriptive- qualitative type of research which anchors on the theories of the grotesque as an analytical tool to present the motives behind the Millennial's allure to the literary materials with scary or deformed characters. The materials include written forms such as novels and play, but not limited to the visual type or the films. This paper's materials focus on the four representative of classical literature, *Richard III* by William Shakespeare, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo, and *Le Fantome de L'Opera* by Gaston Leroux. The primary basis of selecting the materials is the presence the main character with physical deformity. They are also considered as classic type of literature, famous and still recognized in the contemporary time.

The discussion follows four phases titled as: The Unmasking of the Faces, where the characters in

each genre are described; The Veiling of the Faces, which uncovers the type of personality and the reason why they became physically ugly; the Damnation of the Faces which discusses the societal culture that are reflected in the stories; and The Readers' attraction to the Faces. The discussion of the Theories of the Grotesque serves as a background information for deeper understanding and easy grasp of this paper's point of contention.

Results and Discussion

The Unmasking of the Faces

A. *Richard III – Richard III William Shakespeare , printed in 1597; Performed between 1600-1601)*

He is also called the duke of Gloucester, and eventually crowned King Richard III. He has a deformed body and twisted mind. He is both the central character and the villain of the play. He is evil, corrupt, sadistic, and manipulative, and he will stop at nothing to become king. His intelligence, political brilliance, and dazzling use of language keep the audience fascinated—and his subjects and rivals under his thumb.

B. *Frankenstein Creation - Frankenstein (Mary Shelley , 1818)*

Victor Frankenstein's creation is often referred to as the monster. He is roughly eight feet tall, hideously ugly creation assembled from old body parts and strange chemicals, animated by a mysterious spark. He has watery yellow eyes and a withered, translucent yellowish skin that barely conceals the muscular system and blood vessels. Oddly, the creature has perfect, white teeth, black lips and long black hair. He has the strength of a giant, yet an infant mind. He has a gentle nature, yet his physical defects hide his goodness and make everyone fear and mistreat him.

The monster tries to integrate himself into society, only to be shunned universally. Looking in the mirror, he realizes his physical grotesqueness, an aspect of his persona that blinds society to his initially gentle, kind nature. And Victor feels unmitigated hatred for his creation, the monster shows that he is not a purely evil being. The monster's eloquent narration of events (as provided by Victor) reveals his remarkable sensitivity and benevolence. He assists a group of poor peasants and saves a girl from drowning, but because of his

outward appearance, he is rewarded only with beatings and disgust.

C. *Quasimodo - The Hunchback of Notre Dame*
(Victor Hugo, 1831)

Quasimodo is the abandoned child left at Notre Dame and adopted by Archdeacon Claude Frollo. Hideously deformed, he has a giant humpback, a protrusion coming out of his chest, and a giant wart that covers one of his eyes. He is also deaf. His heart is pure, and this purity is linked to the cathedral itself. Indeed, his love for Notre Dame's bells and for the beautiful sound of their ringing represents his only form of communication. The whole of Paris ironically enjoys his "singing" while at the same time detesting him for his ugliness. His name literally means "half-made".

D. *Erik - Le Fantome de L'opera* (Gaston Leroux, 1909-1910)

He was born near Rouen in France, and ran away from home at a young age because his parents were horrified by him, his own father never seeing his face. He travelled Europe with the freak shows, being displayed as the Living Corpse, and singing with unearthly beauty, learning magic tricks from the gypsies. Tales of his skills went with the traders who saw him, and reached the court of the Sultan in Persia.

Erik is a genius of music but always wears a mask because of his ugly appearance. His frightening look scared everyone. People thought of him as a ghost haunted in the opera house. He has a devil's appearance but an angel's voice. He lives underneath the Paris Opera House with a lonely heart because he was abandoned by his parents with no place to go.

The Veiling of the Faces

A. *Richard III*

In the first scene of the first act Richard III is already seen regarding his despicable appearance with self-pity. He further justifies that since he cannot be a lover then he chooses to be a villain. From here it is made clear that his physical deformity has caused him a lot of misery and insecurity, that the hatred that he feels for others, members of his family, and himself is deeply rooted and primarily caused by his appearance.

His deformity also makes it impossible to attain the love of Lady Anne, the young widow of Prince Edward (whose death, as well as the death of all the other Lancasters is brought upon them by Richard's hand) who is utterly repulsed by him and tells him so in the next scene wherein she expresses her repulsion by calling him a string of names: "fiend conjured up by a black magician" (L. 34-35), "foul devil" (L.50), "thou lump of foul deformity" (L.57). Although at the end of the second scene in the first act Richard has a momentary boost of confidence and is taken over by the illusion that he is good-looking caused by Lady Anne's acceptance, arguably feigned as it was, of his love.

B. *Frankenstein's Creation*

Victor Frankenstein's fascination in the mystery of the creation of life led him in the study of how human body is built and how it falls apart, and goes one step further: discovering the secret of life. He works months on his creation from human corpse pieces but when he brings it to life, its awful appearance horrifies him. The "monster" is rejected by his own creator because of his hideous looks. People who saw him were horrified and drove him away. Reflecting on his own situation, he realizes that he is deformed, horribly different from human beings and alone.

Society cannot accept his horrible appearance and so he decided to find refuge and solitude in the wilderness. His unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes. Victor curses him and drives him away when they met.

The monster's growing understanding of the social significance of family is connected to his sense of otherness and solitude. Observing the kindness and devotion to each other of the DeLaceys family, causes the monster to suffer as he realizes how truly alone and how far from being the recipient of such kindness. The lack of interaction with others, in addition to his namelessness, compounds the monster's woeful lack of social identity.

The monster tells a sad and moving story about how he has been alienated from the world (being a corpse-parts conglomeration can do that to you), and how he killed the boy out of revenge. The

monster asks Victor to create for him a female companion as monstrous as him when he learns about the pleasures and obligations of the family and of human relations in general, which deepens the agony of his own isolation.

C. *Quasimodo*

Being an infant, he was abandoned by his own mother and when given over to the church at Notre Dame, no one adopts him, thus Claude Frollo one of the priests declares to raise the misshapen baby. The churchwomen, who have always championed the cause of abandoned babies and found suitable homes for them, proclaim him to be the devil.

His appearance, which seems to be almost half-beast and half-human is a perfect and exaggerated example of ugliness. His hunched back, one-eyed and disfigured face makes the citizens of Paris think he is evil. Nobody other than Frollo speaks with him. He takes the responsibility of ringing the bells of the cathedral which eventually causes his deafness. He considers the bells as his friends having no one else to talk to (aside from Frollo) and endures the insults and accusations of the people of Paris. This makes him feel sad, isolated and lonely. However, he feels totally rejected when his own beloved master ignores his needs.

D. *Erik*

"The Phantom's" distorted personalities attributes to different underlying factors. Nobody wants to get along with him in his childhood. Even his parents hate and ignore him. Other children tease him and make a fool of him while the adults think he is a devil which brings bad luck to them. Being deserted, he develops sense of inferiority and chooses to close his heart and live alone in the darkness. Aware of his horrifying appearance that may scare Christine, he hides behind and pretends to be "an angel of music"

Erik is a tortured soul, a mind and heart in agony. He's wounded and broken within, but radiates a hardened exterior to mask his pain. No one gives him compassion, and as a result his heart has become dark and angry. He lives a life in isolation, hidden in the shadows, and untouched by the warmth of another human being. He is unloved

and unwanted. He dreams of beauty and secretly yearns for heaven, but lives in perpetual hell. He hates who he is, a gargoyle of a man doomed to a life of loneliness.

He wants his girl, Christine, to love the monster behind the mask. He longs to be loved for who he truly is. When his desire for being loved was not attained, he thought that no one truly accept him and became desperate to be freed from his lonely existence. His face reflects the two warring personalities that dwell within him -- light and darkness; yet his personality still cries for redemption.

The Damnation of the Faces

The common aspect of rejection and reason of the society's disapproval of the characters such as Richard III, Frankenstein's creation, Quasimodo and Erik is the rule of the binary. Light and dark, beautiful and ugly, bad and evil. People always associate the ugly to the dark and evil side. Having physical deformities and monstrosities, those characters are rejected and condemned. It is regardless of how compassionate they are internally, their external features devoid them of people's approval or acceptance.

Grotesque describes the aberration from ideal form and from accepted convention, to create the misshapen, ugly, exaggerated, or even formless. This type runs the extent of deliberate exaggerations of caricature, to the unintended abnormalities, accidents, and failures of the everyday world represented in realistic imagery, to the dissolution of bodies, forms, and categories.

While gaps, or disunities, of the combinatory and aberrant grotesques requires an imaginative leap, the metamorphic grotesque does much of this work for the readers. This grotesque can combine or deform in the same way as its static counterparts, but the metamorphic exists in the process, the "morphing" from one thing or form to another. It also seems much more reliant on mimesis and illusion, transgressing them for its impact. (Connely, 2003)

Central to the grotesque is its lack of fixity, its unpredictable and its instability. Victor Hugo's observation has special resonance here: that ideal beauty has only one standard whereas the

variations and combinations possible for the grotesque are limitless. A premise central to Kant's idea of the beautiful, that it makes us feel as though the world is purposive, that it is here for us, cannot be more brutally and specifically refuted than in the disfigured humans playing a game of chance.

The Readers' Attraction to the Faces

The personalities of those figures make the readers empathize and sympathize with them. Each of the featured characters has a quality that may redeem the deformity in their appearances. In the narratives, those characters suffer from maltreatment, rejection and betrayal of people around them, making them seek for revenge or eventually secluding themselves.

Despite Richard's deformities, he has brilliance with words and his persuasive emotional manipulations fascinates the readers. The Creation of Frankenstein or "The Monster" has a complex duality which is evident in his actions. He has the great desire for companionship, a kind and pure heart at the beginning despite of his physical monstrosity. However, he also seeks for revenge and turns him to be a killer due to the rejection against his existence.

Quasimodo breaks the heart of the reader through his fascinating personality amidst his physical ugliness. His sense of loyalty and faithfulness to his master and unconditional love to Esmeralda are enough qualities that may divert the readers' attention and feel sympathy towards him. Eric or The Phantom in a way resembles the character of Quasimodo, being despised by his own parents and abandoned by the society. However, his desire to be loved is quite similar to the creation of Frankenstein who wishes for companionship. Every reader may feel compassion to those characters who suffered from the verdict of the popular culture about outside beauty.

Grotesques are typically characterized by what they lack: fixity, stability, order. People or readers in particular can move a step further to add these modalities at play on the boundaries and nowhere else. To put it more bluntly, the grotesque is a boundary creature and does not exist except in relation to a boundary, convention, or expectation.

Boundedness is a critical feature of the grotesque's relationship with both the beautiful and the sublime

Most people identify themselves being the oppressed, experience in one way or another, the societal conflict and the problem of dualities or binaries. In Quasimodo's part, the whole of Paris enjoys hearing the sounds of the bells but people despise the appearance of the bell ringer. He loves the bells and treats them as his best friends though their sounds make him deaf. In the scene with Esmeralda, it implies the complete opposite sides of the "spectrum of beauty". The most beautiful woman in Paris must look at the ugliest man in Paris, confronting the fact that beauty lies within.

The idea of equality attracts the readers to unravel and discover what lies behind the external sight. The idea of physiognomy or the belief that one's outside appearance dictated one's character traits is proven to be false under different circumstances presented in the narratives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The recognition of the grotesque as a phenomenon particularly relevant to modernism has been common to writers from Victor Hugo on, but with an increasing emphasis on the ambiguity and the dissolution of reality in the modern day. It is appropriate, then, that the act of definition should gain new ambiguity in the terms relevant to our own day, in the three fold division of media, mediator and mediation out of which the contemporary lens is constructed.

The Millennial's affection to scary stories can be traced even from the classic form of literature. The element of human nature's inclination to the oppressed or the victim, leads to the interest of the readers towards the character. The modern society demands for something unusual that depicts the realistic aspect. The new generation aims for something distinct that marks their strange inclination to scary stories.

In the local scene, it is the sad reality that the Philippine society is greatly under the spell of colonial mentality. Due to this fact, we place high priority on physical beauty and perfection. However, our perception of beauty is incredibly distorted. We see beauty and perfection through another culture's eyes---the colonizer's eyes. We do not perceive our

own race to possess distinct beauty---what with the brown skin, short stature, thick lips, flat nose, and all the features that gives the Filipino an identity. We have been brainwashed by countless advertisements that "Black is dirty and white is beautiful" (though in most cultures the belief is entirely reversed). We have been convinced that being fair-skinned, hooked-nosed, wide-eyed, and long-haired is the standard that we must measure ourselves against. This notion is flawed. The grotesque truth: The Filipino has yet to feel completely comfortable in his or her own skin.

The influence of cultural and social variables on consumer behavior is a cornerstone of marketing. A cursory review of leading consumer behavior textbooks shows that most begin with an overview of the impact culture has on the behavior of the consumer. Perhaps no industry offers insight into the impact of the society on the individual than the cosmetics industry. Society dictates what is perceived to be attractive. The whims, desires and sense of fashion of the consumer require that the cosmetic industry continuously offer different and more advanced products. As society changes, so does the perception of beauty. (Hunt, et al, 2011)

It is therefore encouraged that the teachers, being the basic facilitator of learning situation, should have a wide understanding of their learners' needs in terms of the materials that will be utilized in the process. Although contemporary literary materials will be used, it is a must that they have enough knowledge of the traditional type for proper discussion and possible assimilation. The teachers may also encourage their students to read the materials or use them as a spring board/major reading selection.

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