

# THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE'S ROLE IN 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY IN *THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO* AND *THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO*

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## **Abstrak**

Pendekatan mimesis cenderung mencari imitasi karya sastra terhadap realita. Ada begitu banyak karya sastra yang menggambarkan realita, *The Castle of Otranto* oleh Horace Walpole dan *Misteri Udolpho* oleh Ann Radcliffe adalah diantaranya. Dikenal sebagai novel *gotik*, keduanya mengangkat isu sosial yang sama. Menggunakan cara *gotik* dan dengan cerita yang mengerikan, *The Castle of Otranto* dan *Misteri Udolpho* menyajikan kehidupan wanita muda dengan masalah sosialnya. *The Castle of Otranto* menyuguhkan potret kehidupan Matilda dan Isabella yang memiliki kehidupan yang sedih hanya karena mereka perempuan, sementara *The Misteri Udolpho* bercerita tentang kehidupan kesengsaraan seorang gadis juga yang diperankan oleh Emily. Oleh karena itu, masalah sosial menjadi isu menarik untuk dibahas. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan mimesis, dapat dilihat dengan jelas bahwa kedua novel tersebut *gotik* dan berbicara tentang peran perempuan di abad 18.

**kata kunci: gotik (gothic), mimesis (mimetic), masalah sosial (social problem)**

## **Abstract**

Mimetic approaches tend to look literary works is imitation of reality. There are so many works of literature that describes the reality; *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* are the examples. Known as the gothic novel, both raised the same social issues. Using a gothic way and with a terrible story, *The Castle of Otranto* and the *Mystery of Udolpho* presents the lives of young women with social problems. *The Castle of Otranto* presents a portrait of the lives of Matilda and Isabella who had a sad life just because they are women, while *The Mystery of Udolpho* tells about the life of a girl's woes also played by Emily. Therefore, the social problem becomes interesting to discuss the issue. By using a mimetic approach, can be seen clearly that both the gothic novel and talk about the role of women in the 18th century.

**key words: gothic, mimetic, social problems**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Literature, at any given time, mirrors the current social situation correctly or depicts some aspects of social reality. The author as the individual person is born and grown in a certain society and culture in his or her life time. The author's environment influences his or her view and idea. Through his or her works, the author tries to convey situation and experience of society. As Iswanto in Jabrohim states that "a literature is created within society as the imagination of the author and problem around society" (2002: 59).

Moreover, literature is related to human's life and expression. Literature can be used as a medium of communication by the author to express his or her feeling about something, especially something that happened in the society. Besides, literature can be used as a criticism by someone to another, such as citizens toward the government, or the lower class toward the upper class in the society. As stated by Perrine (1956: 3), "Literature can be used as a gear for stepping up the intensity and creasing the range of human experience, and as a glass for clarifying it".

Some of literary works which are used to portray the social condition in society are *Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe. *Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe are the gothic novels. Besides its elements of Gothic novels, both of the novels portray the same social issue. Children's role in 18<sup>th</sup> century related to the difference between the boy's role and the girl's role in society becomes interesting subject to be discussed since it becomes the social issue in *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe. Besides, the main characters in both of the novels are female. These similarities need further analysis to dig out the truth of the social phenomena during 19<sup>th</sup> century related to children's role in society. Hence this study will be done using mimetic criticism to find out whether *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe are truly the representation of life.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Summary of the Two Novels**

#### **2.1.1. The Castle of Otranto**

*The Castle of Otranto* tells the story of Manfred, lord of the castle, and his family. The book begins on the wedding-day of his sickly son Conrad and princess Isabella.

Shortly before the wedding, however, Conrad is crushed to death by a gigantic helmet that falls on him from above. This inexplicable event is particularly ominous in light of an ancient prophecy "That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it." Manfred, terrified that Conrad's death signals the beginning of the end for his line, resolves to avert destruction by marrying Isabella himself while divorcing his current wife Hippolita, who he feels has failed to bear him a proper heir.

However, as Manfred attempts to marry Isabella, she escapes to a church with the aid of a peasant named Theodore where Manfred cannot touch her. Manfred orders Theodore's death while talking to the Friar Jerome, who ensured Isabella's safety in the church. When Theodore removes his shirt to be killed, Jerome recognizes a marking below his shoulder and identifies Theodore as his own son. Jerome begs for his son's life, but Manfred says that Jerome must either give up the princess or his son's life. They are interrupted by a trumpet and the entrance of knights from another kingdom who want to deliver Isabella. This leads the knights and Manfred to race to find Isabella first. Theodore, having been locked in a tower by Manfred, is freed by Manfred's daughter Matilda. He races to the underground church and finds Isabella. He hides her in a cave and blocks it to protect her from Manfred and ends up fighting one of the mysterious knights. Theodore badly wounds the knight, who turns out to be Isabella's father, Frederic. With that, they all go up to the castle to work things out. Frederic falls in love with Matilda and he and Manfred begin to make a deal about marrying each other's daughters. Manfred, suspecting that Isabella is meeting Theodore in a tryst in the church, takes a knife into the church, where in fact, Matilda is meeting Theodore. Thinking his own daughter is Isabella, he stabs her. Theodore is then revealed to be the true prince of Otranto and Matilda dies, leaving Manfred to repent. Theodore becomes king and eventually marries Isabella because she is the only one who can understand his true sorrow.

### **2.1.2. The Mysteries of Udolpho**

Emily St. Aubert is the only child of a landed rural family whose fortunes are now in decline. Emily and her father share an especially close bond, due to their shared appreciation for nature. After her mother's death from a serious illness, Emily and her father grow even closer. She accompanies him on a journey from their native Gascony, through the Pyrenees to the Mediterranean coast of Roussillon, over many mountainous

landscapes. During the journey, they encounter Valancourt, a handsome man who also feels an almost mystical kinship with the natural world. Emily and Valancourt quickly fall in love.

Emily's father succumbs to a long illness. Emily, now orphaned, is forced by his wishes to live with her aunt, Madame Cheron, who shares none of Emily's interests and shows little affection to her. Her aunt marries Montoni, a dubious nobleman from Italy. He wants his friend Count Morano to become Emily's husband, and tries to force her to marry him. After discovering that Morano is nearly ruined he brings Emily and his wife to his remote castle of Udolpho. Emily fears to have lost Valancourt forever. Morano searches for Emily and tries to carry off her secretly from Udolpho. Emily refuses to join him because her heart still belongs to Valancourt. Morano's attempt to escape is discovered by Montoni, who wounds the Count and chases him away. In the following months Montoni threatens his wife with violence to force her to sign over her properties in Toulouse, which upon her death would otherwise go to Emily. Without resigning her estate Madame Cheron dies of a severe illness caused by her husband's harshness. Many frightening but coincidental events happen within the castle, but Emily is able to flee from it with the help of her secret admirer Du Pont, who was a prisoner at Udolpho, and the servants Annette and Ludovico. Returning to the estate of her aunt, Emily learns that Valancourt went to Paris and lost his wealth. In the end she takes control of the property and is reunited with Valancourt.

## **2.2. Mimetic Criticism**

### **2.2.1. Definition**

In analyzing the similarity between literary work and reality, this study uses mimetic criticism. Mimetic approach is the idea that art or literary work imitates reality. Abrams in *Pengkajian Sastra* says that mimetic criticism is "literary critic which views literary criticism as imitation the aspect of nature, mirror, or representation of the world and life" (Pradotokusumo, 2002: 22). Meanwhile, according to Morner and Rausch in *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms*, mimetic criticism is an approach to literary criticism that views an individual work in terms of the 'truth' of its representation of the reality of the world and of human life and character (1998: 135).

Moreover, Aristotle in *Critical Approach to Literature* undertakes to examine the nature and differentiating qualities of imaginative literature with a view to demonstrating

that it is true, serious, and useful. Aristotle's method is essentially one of examining observed phenomena with a view to noting their qualities and characteristics. His concern is the ontological one of discovering what in fact literature is rather than the normative one of describing what it should be. He is describing, not legislating; yet his description is so organized as to make an account of the nature of literature involve an account of its function, and its value emerges in terms of its function (Daiches, 1956: 24).

Mimetic approach is the idea that art or literary work imitates reality. Moreover, Aristotle said that, "if poetry is an art of imitation or representation, and the objects of imitation are 'men doing or experiencing something', they are either better than they are in real life, or worse, or the same" (Daiches, 1956: 25).

Mimetic approach identifies the literary work as imitation of nature or social phenomena in society. So, it can be concluded that mimetic approach is the relationship between literary work and the reality. In this case, children's role in society during 18<sup>th</sup> century is important to dig out to reveal the reality.

### **2.3. Children's Role in 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

In some ways, the life of children in 18<sup>th</sup> century is similar to the life of the adult at that time. The children were treated the same as the adult. They are prepared to be and behave like the ideal woman and man based on the society's view. For instance, at that time, women and men of the upper classes did not marry for love. Instead, they married strictly for financial and social reasons. Women who wished to continue living within a wealthy household simply did not marry a man of the middle or lower class. A self-respecting gentleman didn't even consider marrying a woman from a poor family. It was unlikely she would possess the social graces and dowry required to marry into such a society. Moreover, rumors would abound as to why a wealthy young man would wed a girl of such poor means. (<http://ezinearticles.com/?Family-Life-in-the-18th-Century&id=1465057>). Hence the children were prepared to fulfill this social norm.

The real condition of women in 18<sup>th</sup> century is in a poor condition. They are treated without respect by society. The society differentiates between men's right and women's right. The right of women was drastic. As a wife, she does not get any inheritance from her husband if the husband died. Since England is entailed upon the male line, so that in the absence of sons, the inheritance will go to the male relatives. The wife and the daughter

will get unworthy inheritance, such as bible, books, and household goods (Gilbert and Gubar, 1985:171).

Moreover, the woman does not have the same rights as the men have. Women had to walk behind their husbands. Women could not own property, and widows could not remarry. This social norm made male children were preferred over female children (<http://www.wic.org/misc/history.htm>)

### **III. ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1. The portrayal of the children's role in 18<sup>th</sup> century**

##### **3.1.1. *The Castle of Otranto***

There are three children characters in *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpolle that will be discussed. They are Conrad, Matilda and Isabella. Matilda and Isabella represent the girl's life in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, while Conrad is used to compare the girl's life and the boy's life in that century.

##### **Conrad's role**

Conrad is the fifteen year old son of Manfred and Hippolita and the younger brother of Matilda. In the first pages of the novel, he is crushed by a giant helmet on his way to his wedding with Isabella. Conrad is described as sickly, physically underdeveloped and generally lacking in admirable qualities. As it is stated that “Conrad, the son, was three years younger, a homely youth, sickly, and of no promising disposition” (*The Castle of Otronto*:15). Even Conrad is portrayed as someone who lacking in all of the qualities that Matilda possesses, Manfred as the father treats him better than Matilda. Manfred gives the affection more to Conrad than Matilda. There is no other reason for what Manfred has done to Conrad and Matilda except just because Conrad is a boy while Matilda is a girl. As it is explained that Conrad “was the darling of his father, who never showed any symptoms of affection to Matilda” (*The Castle of Otronto*:15).

##### **Matilda's role**

Matilda is described as a girl who has everything to recommend. She is beautiful, possesses a winning personality, intelligence, emotional maturity and a great social poise. As it is stated in the beginning of the story in chapter I as follows “Manfred, Prince of

Otranto, had one son and one daughter; The latter a most beautiful virgin, aged eighteen, was called Matilda”(*The Castle Of Otranto*:15).

The life of Matilda becomes the portrayal of children especially the girl’s life during 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since, the boy is preferred rather than the girl, Matilda is also neglected by her family, especially her father. Even, Matilda has already 18 years old, she is still considered as a child, as she has not married and left the parental home.

As a girl, Matilda has to accept the biased parental attention. It can be seen clearly when Matilda tries to console her father after the death of Conrad, Manfred’s appreciation of Matilda does not increase. Even Manfred shows cruelty emotional attitude. It is stated

“She was however just going to beg admittance when Manfred suddenly opened his door; and it was now twilight, concurring with the disorder of his mind, he did not distinguish the person, but asked angrily, who it was? Matilda replied trembling, “my dearest father, it is I, your daughter”. Manfred stepping back hastily, cried “Begone, I do not want a daughter”, and flinging back abruptly, clapped the door against the terrified Matilda” (*The Castle Otranto*: 21)

Based on the quotation above, it can be seen clearly that Matilda has to accept the biased parental affection just because she is a girl. Manfred cannot accept or approach his daughter outside of the old paternalistic frameworks of that era. For him, it would be better that Matilda be neither seen nor heard.

### **Isabella’s role**

Isabella is the daughter of Marquis of Vicenza and the fiancée of Conrad (at the beginning of the novel). As a female child, Isabella does not have rights to settle her own life. After the Conrad’s death, she is forced to get marry with Manfred, Conrad’s father. Even she becomes a victim of her own father, making an agreement with Manfred to exchange their daughter becoming their wife. Even though Isabella does not love Manfred, she has to accept it. Isabella has a happy ending due to her effort in achieving her own happiness. After the death of Matilda, Theodore settles for Isabella and the two become the lord and lady of the castle.

### **3.1.2. *The Mysteries of Udolpho***

#### **Emily’s role**

Emily is portrayed as unusually beautiful and gentle with a slight, graceful figure, fond of books, nature, poetry, and music. She is described as extremely virtuous, obedient,

resourceful, brave, sensitive, and self-reliant. However, just because of her gender, she has to accept a bad life. She cannot inherit her own father's heritage after her father's death. This event represents the reality at that time. She has to live with her aunt and cruelty step uncle. As it is explained above that at that time, female child cannot inherit a heritage even from her own father. This unfair social norm is well captured in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In both Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* highlight the compelling female characters who despite their youth, challenge the social convention and boundaries during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At that period, society was structured around the protection of parental authority and the marginalized position of the child, especially the girls. This social issue which is reflected in *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* demand the changing of the norms in society itself.

The strong female characters of Matilda, Isabella and Emily expand the range of possibilities for the girls' rights in society. Despite the elements of Gothic novels, *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* well portrayed the unfair social norms related to the biased parental attention to their children during 18<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, this unfair social norms lead to the picture of female's rights during 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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