

The Castle of Otranto - A Reading Key March 2024 *Del Bello*

FACETS //// PERSPECTIVES

<p>PRAGMATIC/ NARRATOLOGICAL Who speaks to whom? Do we have a prevailing voice? Whose? An omniscient narrator? Is it a first person narrator? A second person narration?</p> <p>What is the relation between the three elements of the novel: story/narrative/narration?</p> <p>What is the TIME of the STORY? What is the TIME of the NARRATION? Do we have a chronological order? Do we have flashbacks? A analepsis? Prolepsis? Are events compressed or expanded in description?</p> <p>WHERE is the story SET? What type of STRUCTURE or FRAME does it have?</p>	<p>POINT OF view/FILTERING the story (https://thewritepractice.com/point-of-view-guide/)</p> <p>1st person narration (I) == narrator in the story (Biased/Unreliable?)</p> <p>2nd person narration (you) == narrator shares experiences/song lyrics/videogames/</p> <p>3rd person narration (he/she/they) == narrator outside the story. The narrator relates the the experiences of a character.</p> <p>(omniscient OR limited) There are two types of third-person point of view. A third-person point of view can be omniscient, in which the narrator knows all of the thoughts and feelings of all of the characters in the story, or it can be limited. If it's limited, the narrator only relates his or her own thoughts, feelings, and knowledge of various situations and other characters.</p>
<p>LEXICAL (Word choice) Do we find unusual words? If so what is their etymology/historical context? Do we have many words that refer to similar things?</p>	<p>Word Choice Archaic? Medievalizing</p>
<p>RHETORICAL/SYNTACTICAL (Special Effects) Can we find any figures of speech? If so, which ones? Who cares?</p>	<p>Figurative language METAPHOR METONYMY IRONY SYNECDOCHE LITOTES CHIASMUS PERSONIFICATION</p>
<p>SEMANTIC (Semantic fields/patterns of meaning) Which words/images/ recur? Can we see a pattern?</p>	<p>Clusters of Meaning/Semantic Fields/What is hinted at but left unsaid Incest Murder MOTIFS Stock characters (evil tyrant, virtuous maiden, noble peasant) and its motifs (the supernatural, incest, mistaken identity).</p>
<p>SYMBOLICAL Do we have imagery? If so, what kind? What does it do?</p>	<p>Architectural features tower/subterranean caves/labyrinth/locked doors/secret passages/church Tapestries Riddles Magic Dreams Ghosts and Specters Meteorological features TEMPEST impetuous Imagery moon/moonshine/arms/helmet/blood/sigh dark/dark and dismal/dark and mysterious forest/caves/towers PANTOMIME? PARODY?</p>

CASTLE OF OTRANTO – CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

<p>Preface 1 1st edition (1764)</p>	<p>Distant time and distant places (Italy, Spain, The Crusades, 1095 or 1243) Manuscript found in a library Ancient Catholic family in the north of England Darkest ages of Christianity The black letter of the Gothic Dispelling the power of superstition? BUT: the artful priest (Maybe this work was written by a priest trying to persuade the populace to return to their old religion, or to their “Ancient errors and superstitions” The reformation and Luther are mentioned</p> <p>Nemesis and Prophecy: The sins of the fathers Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams and other preternatural events</p> <p>CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STORY: No bombast? (There is no bombast, no similies, flowers, digressions, or unnecessary descriptions) Rules of drama are observed Characters are well drawn The comic element is justified Style: “his style is as elegant as his conduct of the passions is masterly.” Lessons of piety, purity and devotion (moralistic element)? Best suited for theatre perhaps?</p> <p>Story founded on truth?</p>
<p>Preface 2 2nd edition</p>	<p>Asking pardon: “the borrowed personage of a translator” An attempt to reconcile, or “to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern” ANCIENT == all imagination and improbability MODERN == nature is copied usually with success Why? Modern romance restrains the “resources of fancy” excessively because it insists on a “strict adherence to common life” ◊ Nature has “cramped imagination” Why a comic element? ◊ the model is Shakespeare / Humour is an essential FOIL to tragedy (something that serves by contrast of colour or quality to adorn another thing, highlight it or set it off to advantage.) Indirect criticism of the Enlightenment: Polemical passages on Voltaire (1694-1778), the quintessential satirist writer of the French Enlightenment. Voltaire is “a genius, but not of Shakespeare’s magnitude”</p>
<p>Chapter I</p>	<p>A sickly, homely child and a beautiful virgin daughter An amiable wife</p> <p>Oh! the helmet! the helmet! Ominous casque/ Fatal casque/ the miracle of the helmet noise of shrieks, horror, and surprise Grief and amazement Prodigy, portents, Strange events A mountain of sable plumes Manfred’s impetuosity and “frantic deportment” ◊ “tempest of mind” Twilight and the moon/ Strangers: A young peasant and (later) a noble knight, whose “behaviour is above [his] seeming”</p>

	<p>Lust, passions and lunacy (disordering of passions)</p> <p>SOCIAL RULES and PATRIARCHY: You, my lord! You! My father in law! The father of Conrad! Moving portrait, and the melancholy of the past</p> <p>ECHOES OF SHAKESPEARE: Speak, infernal spectre! (Hamlet) Intricate cloisters and subterranean passages Staircases and secret passages The Church of saint Nicholas and “the holy virgins”</p> <p>THE DESCENT (katabasis)</p> <p>Candles and “sudden gusts of wind” The gallery Dark and dismal places “The dark and dismal hour of the night”</p> <p>PROLIXITY: Long-winded domestics: never getting to the point Diego Jaquez Bianca Echoes of Restoration comedy (being comprehensive that we might meet a ghost)</p> <p>Manfred’s “exquisite villainy” / Manfred as a Machiavellian ruler ◊ “Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs”</p>
Chapter II	<p>MOPED in a CONVENT (Bianca to Matilda) Matilda “born to be a saint”</p> <p>Some fatal secret at the bottom (Matilda on Hippolita’s secretive behaviour) Theodore taken for a ghost The castle is certainly haunted!</p> <p>The ghost of the drowned astrologer Spirits in pain and the assistance of prayer (Reach me my beads)</p> <p>Matilda and Bianca/Theodore’s window scene (Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet)</p> <p>The mystery of Isabella’s flight Matilda’s inclination for the cloister</p> <p>Manfred’s intention on divorce and Jerome’s reproach Delicacy of Conscience/Scruples (Echoes of Henry VIII’s divorce from Catherine of Aragon)</p> <p>Theodore as the paladin of ladies in distress: I fear no man’s displeasure,” said Theodore, “when a woman in distress puts herself under my protection.” Theodore as “noble, handsome and commanding” Theodore’s chivalric language: “For me!” cried Theodore. “Let me die a thousand deaths, rather than stain thy conscience. What is it the tyrant would exact of thee?”</p> <p>Matilda’s womanish panic and fainting</p> <p>Mark of a bloody arrow: RECOGNITION: Jerome finds his long-lost son: As he stooped, his shirt slipped down below his shoulder, and discovered the mark of a bloody</p>

arrow. "Gracious heaven!" cried the holy man, starting; "what do I see? It is my child! my Theodore!"

Matilda would rather take the veil than a spouse.

Matilda meets Theodore.

Jerome threatens to expose Manfred's corruption to Hippolita.

Jerome and Theodore find each other once again, and half of Theodore's true identity (being aristocratic) becomes exposed.

Chapter III

the Knight of the Gigantic Sabre

The usurper of Otranto: Manfred is not a "lawful prince"

Story within the story: Holy Land and the Crusades

Jerome's "thousand contrary passions"

Hippolita believed dead ◇ this life is but a pilgrimage

Transitory condition of mortality

"A hundred gentlemen bearing an enormous sword"

More portents: the gigantic sword bursts from the supporters falling on the ground

Silent guests at the castle "strangers and mutes"

Manfred's sentimental account of his life "I am a man of many sorrows"

Manfred's dark and ambiguous dealing

"related within the forbidden degree"

Matilda frees Theodore out of "holy charity" (even though filial duty and womanly modesty condemn the step)

Matilda's beauty as an emanation of divinity

"Give me thy beauteous hand"

Sanctuaries are for helpless damsels! ◇ to the forest and the "labyrinth of caverns"

→ Melancholy (deepest recesses)

→ Theodore and Isabella

→ Alone in these "perplexed retreats"?

→ Most private cavity of these rocks

→ Isabella's fear "The trembling princess relapsed into her former agony of fear"

→ Theodore's valour now manifest

→ RECOGNITION SCENE: Isabella's father:: horror and amazement

Mistaken identities: Frederic

The entrance of Fredric marquis of Vincenza (in disguise as a herald) further upsets authority and order in Otranto.

Isabella flees and with Theodore's help she is successful.

Frederic is revealed to be her father, and is also fatally wounded.

Matilda becomes promised to Frederic, and Isabella becomes promised to Manfred.

Chapter IV

Matilda's blushes

Frederic's dream about Isabella (story within the story)

The venerable hermit and the prophecy

The treasure hunt ◊ dig under the 7th tree

Manfred sees Alfonso's ghost (Theodore in armour)

Ha! what art thou? thou dreadful spectre! is my hour come?" "My dearest, gracious Lord," cried Hippolita, clasping him in her arms, "what is it you see! Why do you fix your eye-balls thus?" "What!" cried Manfred breathless; "dost thou see nothing, Hippolita? Is this ghastly phantom sent to me alone—to rue, who did not—"

Admiration dashed with secret horror

Theodore's story (story within the story)

Corsairs and slavery

The secret parchment

Matilda and Isabella's "contest of amity" over Theodore

PATRIARCHY:

My lovely children," said the touched Hippolita, "your tenderness overpowers me—but I must not give way to it. It is not ours to make election for ourselves: heaven, our fathers, and our husbands must decide for us. Have patience until you hear what Manfred and Frederic have determined.

FATE and PROVIDENCE: *There is a destiny hangs over us; the hand of Providence is stretched out;*

Matilda's "unhappy secret":

No, Isabella," said the Princess, "I should not deserve this incomparable parent, if the inmost recesses of my soul harboured a thought without her permission—nay, I have offended her; I have suffered a passion to enter my heart without her avowal—but here I disclaim it

Theodore's guilty passion (EROS, SIN, and NEMESIS)

The lovely Matilda had made stronger impressions on him than filial affection. All night he pleased himself with visions of love; and it was not till late after the morning-office, that he recollected the Friar's commands to attend him at Alfonso's tomb.

"Come, come," resumed the Friar, "inconsiderate youth, this must not be; eradicate this guilty passion from thy breast—" "Guilty passion!" cried Theodore: "Can guilt dwell with innocent beauty and virtuous modesty?" "It is sinful," replied the Friar, "to cherish those whom heaven has doomed to destruction. A tyrant's race must be swept from the earth to the third and fourth generation

Kneel, headstrong boy, and list, while a father unfolds a tale of horror that will expel every sentiment from thy soul, but sensations of sacred vengeance—

Manfred's impious schemes

Three drops of blood from Alfonso's statue

The back-story of Frederic, his interaction with the hermit and his past as a POW.

Manfred's insanity reaches new depths and we see him become unsettled by the resemblance of Theodore to Alfonso.

We come to fully see and understand the love and unrequited love between Matilda, Isabella,

and Theodore.
 Chivalry and romance
 Hippolita resigns herself to life in a convent, and begins to consent to divorce.

Chapter V

Manfred's final machinations
 Bianca and the ring

METONYMIC (or SYNECDOCHIC) PORTENT:

Oh! The hand! The giant! The hand! ♦ 'Tis the same hand that he saw the foot to in the gallery-chamber

Bianca's rambling and long-winded account
 A hand in armour

Hippolita's oratory and the skeletal ghost: Frederic's pursuit of "carnal delights"

The Marquis was not surprised at the silence that reigned in the Princess's apartment. Concluding her, as he had been advertised, in her oratory, he passed on. The door was ajar; the evening gloomy and overcast. Pushing open the door gently, he saw a person kneeling before the altar. As he approached nearer, it seemed not a woman, but one in a long woollen weed, whose back was towards him. The person seemed absorbed in prayer. The Marquis was about to return, when the figure, rising, stood some moments fixed in meditation, without regarding him. The Marquis, expecting the holy person to come forth, and meaning to excuse his uncivil interruption, said, "Reverend Father, I sought the Lady Hippolita." "Hippolita!" replied a hollow voice; "camest thou to this castle to seek Hippolita?" and then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl. "Angels of grace protect me!" cried Frederic, recoiling. "Deserve their protection!" said the Spectre. Frederic, falling on his knees, adjured the phantom to take pity on him. "Dost thou not remember me?" said the apparition. "Remember the wood of Joppa

The stabbing of Matilda

Gliding softly between the aisles, and guided by an imperfect gleam of moonshine that shone faintly through the illuminated windows, he stole towards the tomb of Alfonso, to which he was directed by indistinct whispers of the persons he sought. The first sounds he could distinguish were- "Does it, alas! depend on me? Manfred will never permit our union." "No, this shall prevent it!" cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger, and plunging it over her shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke. "Ah, me, I am slain!" cried Matilda, sinking. "Good heaven, receive my soul!" "Savage, inhuman monster, what hast thou done!"

Matilda's resignation

The show of sentiment and melancholy

The "afflicted procession"

Moon high in the sky as a presage of Matilda's death

Jerome's final story (story within the story): Theodore's noble ancestry

The final apparition: Alfonso's magnified form and the castle's collapse

ATONEMENT: poverty, prayer and the habit of religion

Melancholy has forever taken possession of Theodore's soul

*The hermit corpse dictated to Frederic that he should forget Matilda.
 Manfred's pursuit of Isabella leads to the death of Matilda.*

*Manfred abandons his hopes of Isabella.
With Otranto, Isabella is bequeathed to Theodore.*

THE STORY

The Castle of Otranto tells the story of Manfred, prince of Otranto by virtue of his grandfather's usurpation of the rightful owner, and his attempts to secure his lineage. His sickly son is crushed by a gigantic helmet on the day of his wedding to Isabella, daughter of another noble. The helmet comes from the statue of the original owner and, despite the physical impossibility, the credulous followers of Manfred blame and imprison a young peasant, Theodore, for its miraculous transportation. Ambitious and unscrupulous as he is, Manfred decides that, though already married, he will have to wed Isabella in order to produce an heir.

Repulsed at his advances, Isabella is saved by the sighing portrait of Manfred's grandfather. She flees from the castle, helped by a recently escaped Theodore, through subterranean vaults. The youth, however, is recaptured. At the same time, servants are terrified by the sight of a giant in armour and Manfred, jealous of an imagined attachment between Theodore and Isabella, threatens his life. A friar, Jerome, intercedes, and discovers the youth to be his long-lost son. A troop of knights arrive at the castle carrying a gigantic sword (which matches the helmet) and the colours of Isabella's family. Suspicious of Manfred, the knights join the search for her. In the meantime, Theodore is helped to escape by Mathilda, Manfred's rejected daughter, and flees through the castle vaults to encounter Isabella among a labyrinth of caverns. There, to defend her honour, he defeats a knight in combat and discovers him to be Isabella's father, Frederic. Back at the castle, the conjugal problems are still unresolved. Theodore is attracted by Mathilda, as is Frederic. At the mention of this amorous interest, blood runs from the nose of Alphonso's statue. Manfred, finding the lovers in the chapel and believing Mathilda to be Isabella, stabs her in a fit of passion. His guilt and his forebears' guilt is discovered, Jerome and Theodore are revealed to be the true heirs to Otranto and, with a clap of thunder and a clanking of ghostly chains, the castle crumbles to ruin. The guilty die or incarcerate themselves in convents and proper lineage is restored with a warning about human vanities and with the eventual marriage of Theodore and Isabella.