

THE SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF GOTHIC FICTION: CLAUSTRAL AND GEOMETRICAL

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Abstract

This article applies Joseph Frank's ideas of spatial structure in literature and the theories of other literary critics, to a discussion of four Gothic novels: Lewis's *The Monk*, Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The analysis is structured by four general assumptions about Gothic literature: (1) The spatial form represented by the Gothic narrative is a dynamic rather than a static entity. The outermost frame, typically short, serves as the base while the embedded tales simultaneously explode outward and upward from that point; (2) When reading a Gothic novel, one must often ignore internal references until the end in order to interpret the disparate aspects of a single event or character; (3) The represented space (e.g. scenery and architecture) in the Gothic is mostly an enclosed space, labyrinthian inside and impenetrable from outside; (4) When mapped geometrically, the spatial form of the Gothic shows a tight structure with internal relations of either symmetry, antithesis, parallelism, repetition, or complementation.

Key Words: Gothic fiction, spatial structure, Matthew G. Lewis, Charles Maturin, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley