

Is the Gothic novel at its most successful when the reader is fully immersed into the speaker's realm of blind terror?

The Gothic novel is at its most successful when the reader is fully immersed into the speaker's realm of blind terror as it lets the reader place themselves in the place of the protagonist and by making the reader experience the same feelings as the protagonist it acts to not just retell experiences to the reader but to actually make the reader go through the same experiences as the protagonist.

The the first person is used very effectively in Wuthering Heights to involve and immerse the reader in the protagonist chaotic terror. The repeated first person pronoun makes the chaotic dream Lockwood experiences almost like a dream the reader is having themselves. This is very effective as it makes the reader think “[they] must stop it” when they learn of the noise disturbing Lockwood. Once this effect begins it continues throughout the passage keeping the reader involved in the realm of confused terror which Lockwood is experiencing. It also stops the reader from thinking about the insignificance of what is actually happening, for there is no danger as it is all just a dream. This personal engagement is further developed by the use of direct speech when the unexplained entity outside sobs “Let me in- let me in” showing its desperation. The violent urge to enter is emphasised as the entity again says “Let me in!” This adamant desire paired with the unexplained nature of the thing outside makes it seem horrific and without any evidence makes the reader believe that it has some malevolent intention. In Dracula the first person is also used in much the same way to engage the reader with the protagonist's terror. The repetition of the first person pronoun, sometimes where it is not needed for understanding, keeps reminding the reader that it is the protagonist doing these things and makes them think about how it would be if they were doing this. This is most clear when Harker describes Mina's face as “[he]” seemed to know [...] but [he] could not recollect at the moment how” he knew it. The repetition makes it easier for the reader to place themselves in the confused state of Harker, as they are constantly reminded of what he is doing.

The personal engagement the reader has with the protagonist's terror is further developed by the vivid, and detailed, description of the surroundings and other characters. This vivid detail of even the most minor things makes the reader feel as if they are also experiencing the actual event and are not just having it recounted to them. In Dracula the description of small parts of Mina's anatomy in such detail that even the “moisture shining on [her] scarlet lips and on [her] red tongue” is described to the reader. This very in depth description combines with the vivid nature of the colours used creates a very powerful, detailed, image in the readers mind enabling them to feel some of the same feelings as Harker. This use of detailed vivid imagery is also utilised in Wuthering Heights when describing Lockwood's dream. This vivid description makes it easy for the reader to visualise the scene which is playing out in Lockwood's mind. The most vivid image is the image of how once the entity outside cuts itself, on the shards of glass clinging to the window frame, the “blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes”. The mixture of bright crimson bleeding into the white of the bedclothes creates such a vivid image that the reader can visualise the terror of an inexplicable being trying to force its way towards themselves. These vivid images make the reader experience many of the same thoughts and feelings as the characters.

The chaotic maelstrom of thoughts the characters experience is also reflected in the structure of the language itself. In Wuthering Heights Lockwood is very confused as to what is a dream and what is real. This sense of confusion is so powerful it borders on a feeling of helpless terror. This is reflected in the rather chaotic syntax of the passage as there are many sentences that continue on and on with many clauses. An example is the sentence: “Terror [...] fear” which rambles on for over three lines. This sense of unending, confusing action is effectively demonstrated to the reader as by