

"In gothic writing, the presentation of places is often more interesting than the presentation of characters." How far do you agree with this view?

Throughout the Gothic genre, the presentation of places is often not as interesting as the presentation of characters. I believe that the intriguing characterisation of the Marquis in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* outweighs the presentation of setting, for instance. Although the setting is described as "unknown" and "never-to-be visited" from the outset, juxtaposing the narrator's own naivety, the Marquis' "strange" portrayal by Carter heightens the intrigue towards it. Physically, he is characterised as animalistic through his "dark mane," with the lexical choice of "mane" reading as leonine and ferocious. Regardless of this bestial "mane" and "rasp of beard," the Marquis' physical description by Carter is fairly limited, emphasising more upon his the complexity of his mannerisms and erratic interests. He is, however, attributed with a face that "seemed to me like a mask." The lexical choice of "mask" suggests that the character of the Marquis is multidimensional, presenting a tone of ambiguity and mystery. Presented as a captivatingly peculiar enigma from his introduction, the Marquis is also linked to a prevailing symbol throughout the story: the "funereal" lilies. This suggests that his detached, yet composed, nature is inhuman – he has the capacity to think and to exist, but has no real awareness of feeling. The narrator observes "gravity" in his desire for a new wife, which seems to be linked to the pungent portrayal of the lilies that "stain you." This link between character and symbol also intertwines with the setting as the narrator's bedroom is "filled" with lilies "until it looked like an embalming parlour." Whilst lilies are a common symbol of death, it can be suggested that this intense presentation of the lilies within the narrator's bedroom only becomes significant due to the Marquis' own character and intentions. The same notion can be applied to the Marquis' castle. Though a castle is a notable feature of the Gothic genre, having appeared as dark and foreboding in texts such as Hill's *The Woman in Black*, the "amphibious place" described within *The Bloody Chamber* becomes all the more terrifying and intriguing due to the Marquis' desires. It is described as being "neither on the land nor on the water" presenting an image of an object that is in limbo, that is in purgatory between separate states of matter. The interior of this castle is presented as being littered with disturbing décor, such as the "Rape of the Sabines," an artistic representation of the 750 BC historical event by which the first generation of Roman men abducted and sexually violated women from the neighbouring Sabine families. In reference to this artwork, amongst others, the Marquis patronizingly goads, "have the nasty pictures scared baby?" Due to this, it can be inferred that his tone is condescending yet excited, relating back to the correlation between setting and character. Whilst this setting is interesting for its images of terror, it becomes even more fascinating on account of the Marquis' interaction with the paintings coupled with his own implied masochistic desires. Again, this suggests that the presentation of the setting by Carter becomes interesting due to the description of the Marquis and his interests. Moreover, whilst exploring, the narrator discovers that "the electricity, for some reason, did not extend here" as she approaches the Marquis' "private slaughterhouse." Whilst this is an intriguing portrayal, the bloody chamber only exists due to the Marquis' psychological depravity – it is presented dually as "hell" and a manifestation of his own psyche.

Within Webster's *The White Devil*, the setting is used as a tool to enhance the schemes of the characters within it. Act Two Scene Two presents the audience with a dumbshow, a concept of which was common in the Jacobean literature of the era, supplemented with imagery evocative of a