CLASSICAL GOTHIC: THE ARISTOTELIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE GOTHIC READING PROCESS


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This dissertation explores the connection between the Gothic novel and Ancient Tragedy (as described by Aristotle in his Poetics). This connection focuses on our emotional reaction to the text and has a direct impact on the historical persistence of the Gothic--both in its survival as a distinct literary genre and in its influence on other genres. I explore three primary texts in the project, each at distinctive historical points: Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey (1818), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1862) and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897). Through my use of Aristotle and Ancient Tragedy I argue that we do not lose the community experience when we leave the arena of Greek and Roman Theater, nor do we need Drama to experience it, but that it still exists in the individual Gothic reading process in the community that consists of the protagonist, the narrator, and the external reader. The variation in not only the date of publication, but also the tone and style of each primary texts allows me to see explore how attributes of the audience reaction that Aristotle describes in his Poetics still exist, and emphasizes how his theories regarding the emotional connection between the audience and the text are still current, and they are not solely applicable to Drama, but can be used to give us further understanding of the individual reading experience.

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