



A Gothic Feminist Reading of the Hollow Places by T. Kingfisher Gayatri Subhash Nikam

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Gothic literature which originated throughout the 18th century, covered across Britain with its focus on suspense, gore elements, supernatural, terror, and macabre, the gothic was heralded as a mediaeval revival that stood against the focus on reason. It was first established with the publication of Horace Walpole's dark "The Castle of Otranto" in 1764. Setting plays an important role in making a novel, poetry, drama, etc. Setting can make any scene go from romantic to comedic, comedic to gothic, gothic to tragic, tragic to romantic. It is a needed thing for plot formation. If we follow unity of time, place, and action. We got to know that some of the books have the setting of the same place for the whole book, for example Irene by Samuel Johnson (1749). The Winter's Tale by William Shakespeare (1623).

Keywords: *Gothic Literature, Goth, Bigfoot, Taxidermy.*



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Gothic Elements in novel The Hollow Places

Gothic literature originated throughout the 18th century, covered across Britain with its focus on suspense, gore elements, supernatural, terror, and macabre, the gothic was heralded as a mediaeval revival that stood against the focus on reason, as it was flourished in mediaeval period it was also linked with Romantic period. Gothic literature was associated with religion and anti-religion. Gothic was also a style of architecture. It

was first established with the publication of Horace Walpole's dark "**The Castle of Otranto**" (1764)

Gothic elements include the setting of castles, old mansion, museum. Sometimes the action takes place in the abandoned places, occupied places or sometimes places where occult activities have happened. The castle could have hidden passage, trap doors, secret rooms, trick panels, dark and hidden staircases. The Gothic stories also have a plot sometimes which revolves around the ancient prophecy, omens, portents and

visions. Most of the time authors use the metonymy of gloom and horror.

Ursula Vernon is born on May 28, 1977. She is an American freelance writer, artist and illustrator and she writes with the name **T. Kingfisher**. She has won numerous awards for her work in various mediums, including Hugo Awards for her *Graphic Novel Digger* (2012) and fantasy novel *Nettle & Bone* (2023), the Nebula Award for her short story "*Jackalope Wives*" (2015), and Mythopoeic Awards for adult (2012) and children's literature (2017). Her books for children include *Hamster Princess* and *Dragon breath*. Under the name T. Kingfisher, she also writes books for older audiences. She writes short fiction under both names. For "*The Hollow Places*" author takes the inspiration from *The Willows* by **Algernon Blackwood** (1907). In the book, "*The Hollow Places*" (2020) introduces her protagonist *Kara* who lived nearly a decade in North Carolina—a part-time graphic designer who invested too long in a bad relationship. After her divorce she goes to her uncle place where she visits her uncle's museum-God Museum of Natural Wonders, Curiosities and Taxidermy.

"The sign out front of the Glory to God Museum of Natural Wonders, Curiosities, and Taxidermy mostly has small print, but the word WONDERS is large, so most people call it the Wonder Museum. There are a lot of jokes - '*I wonder what Earl was thinking*', '*I wonder where he gets this stuff*.' They stopped being funny a long time ago, but we all smile politely anyways, in case the person saying it has money." (5)

The museum had genuine taxidermy, eleven stuffed deer heads, six stuffed boar heads, one giraffe skull, forty-six stuffed birds of various species, three stuffed albino raccoons, and a genuine Fiji mermaid. It also has an entire case of dried scorpions, a mother eaten grizzly bear, five stuffed prairie dogs, two fur bearing trout, one Amazonian River otter, and a pickled cobra in a bottle. It was kept in the cases which were brought from China. The walls of thimbles, it had real thimbles and all barong masks from Bali. The jar of mystery of the cones from Banksias plant.

Her Uncle believes strongly in Jesus, Moses, the healing power of crystals, the freemasons, the Illuminati, aliens landed at Roswell, secret histories, faith-healing, snake-handling, that there

is an invention that will replace gasoline but the oil companies are suppressing it, Chemtrails, demon-possession, the astonishing powers of Vicks VapoRub, and that there's proof that aliens contacted the Mayans and the Aztecs and probably the Egyptians, but the scientists are suppressing it. He believes in Skunk Ape, Chupacabras, and he positively adores Moth man. He is not Catholic, but he believes in the miracle of Fatima, visions of Mary appearing on toast, and he is nearly positive that the end times are upon us, but seems to be okay with this, provided it does not interfere with museum hours.

In most of Gothic stories there is always a character whom author gives a personality trait where he has interest in gothic related stuff or something gothic going on his life. They could be supporting characters, main characters or both. It depends on the flow of the story.

The Hollow Places is an atmospheric and horrifying portal fantasy, she finds a hole in the wall of a museum and the paranormal adventure begin. Kara doesn't investigate the portal without the assistance of a friend, a 40-year-old gay barista who lives next door. But despite both of them taking measures to avoid finding themselves trapped in a horror plot, the world on the other side of the portal seems to thwart their every precaution, and they find themselves in a bizarre and unsettling world that is probably trying to kill them, and possibly worse. Author writes about uncle Earl's in *The Hollow Places* (2020).

"It's hard to argue with Uncle Earl. He can believe in too many things at the same time, without any apparent contradiction" (4)

Some Gothic novels have one or more characters who possess some kind of supernatural power. So that character could be a beast or mixture of human and beast like werewolf, Dracula etc omens, portents, visions is a big part of Gothic novels. Sometimes character may have a disturbing dream vision, or some strange phenomenon may be seen as a portent of coming events. For example, if the statue of Greek god falling over, it may show his death. In the modern fiction, a character might see something like shadowy figure in dark clothes with knife walking towards the character or falling of teeth represents death sometimes.

It can interpret as an "imitation vision. "Writer uses an omen to represent foreshadowing, some writers will indulge the reader by denying expectation like the protagonist of **'The Hollow Places'** having a dream of sitting in the bus, knees down up, head leaned back against the dashboard, under the complicated set of hurdles that the driver would use to open the door. Her looking down at the centre aisle of the bus, except that the seats were no longer empty but filled with children which were inside the seats.

"Simon tried to describe it, the way the children were trapped inside. It was hard to wrap words around it, was doubly hard when we were talking to a wet, skeletal man lurking in the dark water, stroking his floating hair." (149)

Occurrence of supernatural events. Dramatic, amazing events occur, such as Kara finding a big hollow place in the wall in the book *The Hollow Places*. She being saved by deer whom she named as Prince, which she was fond of since childhood.

Gothic novels also have special set of vocabulary. The constant use of the appropriate vocabulary set creates and sustains the atmosphere of the Gothic. Using the right words maintains the dark-and-stimulated feel that defines the Gothic. Here as an example are some of the words that help make up the vocabulary of the Gothic in **"The Hollow Places"** Mystery diabolical, enchantment, ghost, goblins, haunted, infernal, magic, Goblin Market, magician, miracle, necromance, omens, ominous, preternatural, prodigy, prophecy, secret, sorcerer, spectre, spirits, priest, mage, anxious, breathless, flight, frantic, hastened, hastily, impatience, impatient, impatiently, impetuosity, precipitately, running, sudden, suddenly anger, angrily, different diseases, enraged, furious, fury, incense, incensed, provoked, rage, raving, resentment, temper, wrath, cold, cool air, wrathfully, enormous, giant, large, tremendous, dark, darkness, dismal, shaded, black, night.

"Can horror even be this rollicking, this fun, while still delivering on the creepiness, the dread, the ick? In Kingfisher's hands, it can." (Stephen Graham Jones)

To sum up, Gothic literature is mainly different from other literature types because it has supernatural elements which makes the plot setting paranormal and by studying different types of elements in the novel, we can easily understand horror novels in a better way. In **The Hollow Places**, we could see the whole book revolves around the *'Taxidermy'*, which is full of curiosities, hidden secrets. Friendship element in this novel also explored beautifully in the creepiness of events. It's really *"A Righteous, folkloric horror"* (Chuck Wending).

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