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Parallels

Horror stories parallel the realities in one’s life. However, all these sources challenge the internal or external conflict one has with themselves and the outside world by using symbolism, imagery or irony and a gothic setting. Charlotte Perkins Gilman being one of America’s first feminist writes in protest of the rest cure in her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, through the use of literary devices Gilman depicts the cultural anxieties of women with the protagonist in her story suffering from a psychotic break from being isolated from her child and the outside world. Jordan Peele emphasize on the Black cultural anxieties through his film *Get Out* with the use of gothic setting along with several literary devices that brings the plot to life. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* shows the fear of modern science and defying the power of nature. Stanley Kubrick movie adaptation of Stephan King’s book *The Shining* reflects the horror as parents, especially people that suffer from mental health issues and addiction. Parents who have abused their children and are trying to get sober are haunted by their past, Kubrick and King both use gothic elements to set the scene that will further push someone over the edge and further away from recovery. **All the sources depict the cultural anxieties experienced at the time. However, they are addressed by the authors and the directors through their own experiences and in different mediums whether it is through film or literature. However, every source has characters that are driven mad. Different with every source with some characters developing a god complex and others being pushed over the edge by isolation and dealing with their own thoughts and urges. Yet society needs to recognize that isolation does not help people with mental health problems and recognize how privileged people abuse their power.**

Charlotte Perkins Gilman writes in protest of the Resting Cure and advocates on behalf of the cultural anxieties of women suffering from a mental illness. Gilman uses literary devices and gothic setting to further make her point, that women should have a say in their own recovery. Charlotte Perkins Gilman one of America’s first feminists, suffered from postpartum depression herself, she was prescribed rest cure for her nervous prostration after the birth of her child. Through her poems and short stories, Gilman addressed the issues of women’s suffrage and the injustices in women’s lives during the era: “In a sick society, women who have difficulty fitting in are not ill but demonstrating a healthy and positive response.” The cultural anxieties at this time involved hysteria in women and the rest cure. The rest cure is six to eight weeks of bed rest, isolation with no creative or intellectual activity or stimulation. Women prescribed with the rest cure were feed a high fat diet that boosted weight and blood supply, making a woman a more capable mother and as a wife more helpful. However, Men were prescribed vigorous outdoor exercise. This goes to show that the societal views on women in the 17th and 18th century, women were perceived as weak, feeble and were to become wives and mothers. In Gilman’s short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* the protagonist states: “If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives what there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression – a slight hysterical tendency – what is one to do?” (102) Which further enhances the point that women did not have a say in their own mental health recovery. Through the use of literary devices, she shows the psychological torment the main character as she suffers from losing her grasp on reality. It’s ironic how the rest cure in treating depression and hysteria which was supposed to help Gilman’s main character but further worsened her condition. She becomes fixated on the yellow wallpaper and eventually it drives her insane. Around the time that Gilman wrote her short story, yellow was a symbol for mental instability. She describes the wallpaper as “one of those sprawling, flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.” (Gilman 104) There is something more sinister at play especially dealing with the heaven and hell components considering at this time when the short story was written most people were religious. The place she stays does not help with her condition, how she is confined inside an old Victorian house, where she spends most of her time inside a nursery, where the plaster is dug out, the wallpaper is torn, there are gauges in the walls and the floor. All this creates a gothic setting which holds a mirror to the cultural anxieties experienced at the time. The main message of Gilman’s short story is that women should be given a say in their recovery instead of being dismissed and controlled by men.

Jordan Peele’s film Get Out reflects the Black cultural anxieties of our time through the use of gothic and psychological horror through and the uses of literary devices. Peele is an African American director known for making film with popular culture and social issues, especially with race relations. With his award-winning film *Get Out*, he shows the Black cultural anxieties at the time. Many Black cultural anxieties are portrayed in this film such as: White microaggressions are framed as masking real dehumanization or that code switching is portrayed as a tool to make White people more comfortable. Peele once said, “a greater truth that I think we are faced with on a day-to-day basis as minorities is: We are the color of skin first and people second.” In the film *Get Out*, Jordan Peele uses literary devices to creates a gothic atmosphere and to show the cultural anxieties that are happening right now. Throughout the movie Peele uses symbols to further the mirror the cultural anxieties experienced. The sunken place symbolizes paralysis a helpless spectator and the way that it reflects anxieties in is through the double consciousness, this idea first brought up by W. E. B. Du Bois. It is the struggle that African Americans face to remain true to Black culture while at the same time trying to conform to the White dominant society. The deer, representing Chris’s mom getting hit by a car and Rose’s dad later says, "you know what I say? I say one down, a couple hundred thousand to go. I don't mean to get on my high horse, but I'm telling you I do not like … deer, I'm sick of it, they're taking over, they're like rats, they're destroying the ecosystem. I see a dead deer on the side of the road, and I think to myself 'That's a …start.'" (Get Out 15:08) This goes to show how Dean Armitage, a privileged White man sees Black people. Peele also uses imagery in his film to create an eerie feeling within the viewer. An example of imagery in *Get Out* is when Georgina apologizes for accidentally unplugging Chris' phone during the party, Chris tells her that being around too many White people makes him nervous, hoping that she can relate about feeling of being alienated. She just says, "no" over and over, while shaking her head, she smiles yet tears stream down her face. Near the end of the film is ironic how later the Dean in impaled by a deer which can be seen as the oppressed fighting back. Through the use of different literary devices in the movie, it can parallel to societal and cultural anxieties in the real world. The gothic horror and the psychological horror portrayed in the film represents the cultural and societal anxieties where Black people are often dehumanized by the system and that racism is the real horror.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* also known as *The Modern Prometheus* shows the cultural anxieties at the time. Furthermore, *Frankenstein* is about the fear of modern science and technology. Mary Shelley born 1797; her mother was a feminist author; she wrote The Vindication of the Rights of Woman in 1792 and died during birth of Mary. Furthermore, Shelley had her own complications with childbirth with only one of her four children surviving. Frankenstein being a cautionary tale about artificial intelligence, the power of science and defying nature. The story depicts that birth can be both creative and destructive. Shelley uses symbols to further show the cultural anxieties at the time. Fire is symbolic of both human progress as well as the dangers of human invention whereas light may symbolize knowledge, discovery, and enlightenment. The creature’s first experience with fire reveals its dual nature. He discovers that it creates light in the darkness, but also that it harms him when he touches it. Fire also brings to mind the full title of Shelley’s novel, *Frankenstein* or *The Modern Prometheus*. The Greek god Prometheus gave fire to humanity as a gift, but it created both progress and destruction and Prometheus being punished. When playing with fire one might get burned, therefore, saying progress can be a good thing yet it can lead to dangerous outcomes. With Victor Frankenstein trying to become the modern Prometheus, things go wrong in his experiment creating a murderous creature. The creature saying, “my heart is black. It stinks. My mind, once filled with dreams beauty, is a furnace of revenge! Three years ago, when I was born, I laughed for joy at the heat of the sun, I cried at the call of the birds, the world was a cornucopia to me! Now it is a waste of frost and snow” (Frankenstein 1:45:20) Frankenstein’s aim was to create a beautiful creature; yet the reality of his creation was a grotesque monster who once saw the world as a utopia but later seeing it for what it really is, a very flawed place. Adding to the fact that *Frankenstein* parallels the cultural anxieties experienced with progression and the development of modern science.

Stanley Kubrick uses literary devices and a gothic setting to reflect the internal conflict one has with themselves, and the anxieties experienced by parents. Kubrick adapted Stephen Kings’ horror novel *The Shining* to the big screen. Kubrick grew up in the Bronx, New York. He started his career as a photojournalist then later becoming a filmmaker. His films are characterized by a unique visual style, attention to detail, and quite often ironic pessimism. Even though Stephen King was unhappy with the adaptation of his novel, yet the film still oozes gothic and psychological horror. Cultural anxieties depicted in this film are coping with our fears that we might lose control and lash out at our children, this could parallel how people are constantly haunted by their past. In the movie, Danny was abused by his father and assuming Jack descent into madness caused by the menial job and trying to recover from his alcoholism and being an abusive parent dealing with his issues. To add on to the eeriness Danny, Wendy and Jack, the five-year-old son has psychic powers that fellow psychic Dick Halloran calls “shining”. Danny can read people’s thoughts, communicate telepathically with others who “shine”, and has frequent, frightening prophetic visions. He receives these messages and visions from a supernatural entity he calls “Tony” that only he can see; his parents believe that “Tony” is just his imaginary friend. A lot of the anxieties experience by parents come to life in this film, especially through the literary devices and gothic atmosphere of the film. The maze being one of the most important symbols in the film, with Danny ultimately using the maze to disorient and trap his father while escaping from the maze to reunite with his mother. The maze symbolizes the obstacles to connection that accompany the family life. *The Shining* creates strong imagery for the viewer such as the bloody elevator when the blood rushes out of the elevator is an iconic image that represents of the carnage that defines the hotel. This film contains a lot of irony like the photograph of Jack at the Overlook's 1921 Fourth of July ball, shown only in the last shot of the film, as an ordinary man driven insane by the hotel's evil spirits, this photograph suggests that Jack himself might be one of those ghosts. Ultimately the story parallels the experience abusive parents have, when trying to recover, how they are constantly haunted by the past.

**In conclusion**, all the sources depict the cultural anxieties at the time and hold a mirror to the true horrors experienced, and the actions people take on an everyday basis. One is constantly haunted by their past and worries about their future. All of these sources are cautionary tales that depict societal and cultural anxieties experience during their time. Whether it’s read or watched gothic horror is a reflection on the everyday horrors that surround one’s mental health or the privileged versus the non-privileged in one’s community.

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