

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Gothic literature is a literary genre that focuses on the horror, the terror, the supernatural, the psychological state of mind, the use of haunted buildings, and the portrayal of anti-heroes (Mukherjee, 2024). One of the central aspects of gothic literature is the inclusion of supernatural or mysterious events. Figures such as ghosts, vampires, werewolves, and the presence of curses help create an atmosphere of discomfort and challenge the boundary between what is real and what is imagined (Mukherjee, 2024).

Gothic literature is characterized by key elements such as haunted settings, supernatural beings, emotional intensity, and themes of death, fear, and the unknown. Typical features include gloomy castles, damsels in distress, brooding male protagonists, ominous weather, and internal psychological conflict. These elements aim to evoke suspense and terror. In modern adaptations, traditional gothic tropes are reinterpreted through a contemporary lens, combining horror with romance and identity exploration. Gothic literature incorporated architectural features such as decaying castles and monasteries, reimagining them as backdrops that conveyed an atmosphere of mystery and peril (Ananya, 2024).

To further understand the foundations of gothic literature, it is essential to explore its historical origins and the early works that established its defining characteristics. The term “gothic” was originally a disparaging term applied to the style of medieval architecture with grandiose high-point arches and high vaulted ceilings, giving a feeling of mystery and horror. The mysterious, the grotesque, the

haunted, the macabre, the harrowing supernatural flavor, and the gigantic dark castles are some of the basic features of the gothic genre (Vashishat, 2019). One of the pioneering figures of gothic literature is Horace Walpole. His novel, "The Castle of Otranto" which was published in 1764, is considered the first true gothic novel. It features a brooding castle haunted by a giant helmet, a trope that became a staple of the genre. Walpole's work revealed the supernatural, blurring the lines between reality and imagination. Following in Walpole's footsteps was Ann Radcliffe, whose novel "The Mysteries of Udolpho" which was published in 1749, remains a classic example of gothic storytelling. Radcliffe excelled at building suspense, often leaving her readers unsure whether the horrors they encountered were truly supernatural or elaborate schemes. Her work explored themes of imprisonment and persecution, tapping into the anxieties surrounding a changing world (Mukherjee, 2024).

As the gothic tradition evolved beyond its literary roots, its defining characteristics began to influence a wide range of cultural expressions, extending the reach of gothic aesthetics far beyond the early works of Walpole and Radcliffe. The expression of the goth has invaded and been accepted by almost all forms of literary expression - music, art, film, books, architecture, fashion, and whatnot. In literature and filmmaking, the term goth manifests itself as a brooding protagonist, his internal dilemma and longing, who is surrounded by the most exotic, dark, gloomy weather that one can imagine. It embraces the melodramatic narrative and creates an atmosphere of fear and dread (Ananya, 2024).

The *Twilight* film series stands as a prominent example of gothic influence in modern popular culture, combining romantic fantasy with distinct gothic elements.

Adapted from Stephenie Meyer's bestselling novels—*Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), and *Breaking Dawn* (2008)—the films gained immense popularity worldwide. Due to the franchise's commercial success, Summit Entertainment acquired the rights and released the first film, *Twilight*, in 2008 under the direction of Catherine Hardwicke. This success led to four sequels released between 2009 and 2012. Featuring Kristen Stewart as Bella Swan, Robert Pattinson as Edward Cullen, and Taylor Lautner as Jacob Black, the series made a significant cultural impact, primarily through its portrayal of supernatural romance rooted in gothic tradition. The films were praised for their visual aesthetics and their ability to bring Meyer's romantic and supernatural world to life, although they also received criticism for their portrayal of relationships and gender dynamics (Wilson, 2011).

The *Twilight* series centers on Bella Swan, a teenager who falls in love with the vampire Edward Cullen after moving to Forks, Washington. Their relationship is challenged by supernatural threats, rivalries between species, and Jacob Black's unresolved feelings for Bella. The narrative explores themes such as forbidden love, personal sacrifice, transformation, and the notion of destiny. It concludes with Bella's transition into a vampire alongside the final confrontation with the Volturi. By combining romance, supernatural motifs, Gothic undertones, and emotional conflict, the saga reinterprets traditional vampire mythology to engage a contemporary young adult audience (Silver, 2012).

As interpreted by the researcher through the reviewed sources (Ananya, 2024), The vampire genre, rooted in centuries-old folklore and diverse cultural beliefs, traditionally portrays vampires as undead beings who feed on human blood

and exhibit distinct traits—such as avoiding sacred grounds, sleeping in coffins during the day, and being active at night, especially during twilight. They are commonly repelled by garlic, harmed by sunlight, and cannot enter homes without invitation. Folklore also suggests that vampires are vulnerable to wooden stakes, while dead blood is considered toxic to them. While early depictions presented them as terrifying, monstrous figures, modern portrayals—such as in *The Vampire Diaries* and *The Twilight Saga*—tend to humanize vampires, portraying them as morally conflicted individuals who often reject violence and attempt to coexist ethically within human society.

However, a deeper analysis is needed to understand the complexities of Gothic elements depicted through interactions and themes in the Twilight movies. In addition, only a few studies have explored the intersections of Gothic literature and modern cinematic adaptations presented in the films. To fill the existing research gap, this research aims to analyze the representation of Gothic elements in the Twilight movies through a critical literature study approach. In the course of exploring the film's use of Gothic conventions—such as supernatural beings, dark romance, and themes of fear and the unknown—this research identifies how the movies reinterpret traditional Gothic tropes in a modern context. Examining Gothic literature is particularly significant because the genre has historically served as a mirror of cultural anxieties, psychological struggles, and shifting social values. By analyzing how Twilight incorporates and reimagines Gothic motifs, this research not only highlights the endurance of Gothic literature in contemporary popular culture but also demonstrates its capacity to address modern concerns about identity, morality, and human relationships. Additionally, this research aims to

contribute to the broader discussion on Gothic literature in contemporary media by providing a more comprehensive and critical analysis of its adaptation in popular culture.

This research explored how traditional gothic elements are adapted and transformed within contemporary popular culture, particularly in widely influential films like the *Twilight* film series. As modern reinterpretations often reshape classical literary traditions, analyzing the *Twilight* films provides a valuable insight into the evolution of gothic themes in the 21st century. The primary objective of this research is to identify and interpret the gothic elements presented in the *Twilight* movies and to examine how these elements have been modernized to reflect contemporary values and anxieties. Furthermore, this research aims to contribute to the broader academic discussions on gothic literature, alongside film studies as well as cultural analysis, by providing a critical perspective on the adaptation of traditional gothic motifs in modern media. The findings are expected to benefit students, scholars, and readers interested in gothic literature, film adaptations, and popular culture, offering a deeper understanding of how classic genres continue to shape and influence modern storytelling.

1.2 Problems of the Study

The problems of the research are formulated in the following questions:

1. What are the gothic elements found in the *Twilight* films, and how are these elements adapted from the traditions of classic gothic literature?
2. How do the *Twilight* films represent gothic themes, such as forbidden love, death, and identity, in a modern context?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the problems, the objectives of this research are:

1. To identify and analyse the gothic elements present in the *Twilight* films and their adaptation from classic gothic literature.
2. To explore how the *Twilight* films represent key gothic themes, such as forbidden love, death, and identity, within a contemporary context.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the understanding of how Gothic literature has evolved and been reinterpreted in modern media, particularly in film. By examining the gothic elements present in the *Twilight* films, this research provides valuable insights into the cultural relevance of gothic themes such as forbidden love, death, and issues of identity in contemporary society. By bridging the gap between classic gothic literature and its modern adaptations, this research enhances the discourse surrounding the gothic genre.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this research is not without limitations. The primary focus on the *Twilight* films may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other works within the gothic genre, as the unique characteristics of these films may not be representative of all gothic adaptations. Additionally, the analysis concentrate on a selection of key gothic elements and themes, which may not encompass all possible interpretations or representations found within the films. This selective approach may lead to an incomplete understanding of the broader gothic context. These limitations should be acknowledged when considering the implications of the research's findings.