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THE UNIQUENESS OF MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN IN THE GOTHIC LITERARY TRADITION

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To my mother

"Das beste des Menschen liegt im Schaudern."

-Goethe

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I am very grateful to ALL who have, in one way or another, helped me and cheered me up to persevere in my Frankensteinian studies. I do not name you but I will never forget you!

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ABSTRACT

The English Gothic Literature which flourished from the last decades of the 18thC to the first half of the 19thC has been usually regarded with undesguised contempt despite the great readership's acceptance at that time. Perhaps some of the reasons for that prejudice have to do with the genre's somewhat formulaic characteristics and the many exaggerations it contains. These factors, among others, might have led to the general oblivion towards most Gothic productions by the modern audience.

However, the novel Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus (1818) by the English novelist Mary Shelley seems to have defied all prejudice against its genre and has not only survived in time but is considered by many, nowadays, a modern myth. The endurance

of this unique work could have been investigated through a variety of different approaches and I chose to examine it under the light of its belonging to the Gothic genre. For that reason it was imperative the reading of other representatives of Gothicism so as to enable a contrastive analysis which could point out the causes for Frankenstein's uniqueness in the Gothic literary tradition. The chosen novels are: Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764); Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron (1778); William Beckford's Vathek (1786); Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794); Matthew Gregory Lewis' The Monk (1796); Charles Robert Maturin's Melmoth, the Wanderer (1820); and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897).

All seven novels are analysed separately in a chapter and special attention is given to the study of Frankenstein in another chapter. After that a contrastive analysis between Frankenstein and these novels takes place. The results reveal, finally, the many reasons which establish Frankenstein's uniqueness in relation to the other Gothic novels.

137 pages.

RESUMO

A literatura gótica inglesa, cujo florescer abrangeu as últimas décadas do século XVIII até a primeira metade do século XIX, é geralmente alvo de um evidente menosprezo embora a grande aceitação por parte do público leitor da época. Provavelmente, algumas das razões para tal preconceito estejam relacionadas com as características um tanto quanto formulísticas do gênero bem como com os exageros ali contidos. Estes fatores, entre outros, talvez tenham ocasionado o descaso do público moderno para com a maioria das produções góticas.

Porém, o romance Frankenstein: ou o Moderno Prometeu (1818) da escritora inglesa Mary Shelley parece ter desafiado todo e qualquer preconceito quanto ao seu gênero literário e não apenas sobrevive ainda mas é, inclusive, considerado por muitos atualmente como um mito moderno. A longevidade desta obra suigeneris poderia ter sido investigada sob vários ângulos diferentes e decidiu-se examiná-la sob a perspectiva do fato de Frankenstein pertencer ao gênero gótico. Para tanto fez-se imperativa a leitura de outras obras representantes do goticismo como forma de possibilitar uma análise contrastiva que pudesse apresentar as razões para a singularidade de Frankenstein dentro da literatura gótica. Os romances escolhidos são: The Castle of Otranto (1764) de Horace Walpole; The Old English Baron (1778) de Clara Reeve; Vathek (1786) de William Beckford; The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) de Ann Radcliffe; The

Monk (1796) de Matthew Gregory Lewis; Melmoth, the Wanderer (1820) de Charles Robert Maturin; e Dracula (1897) de Bram Stoker.

Todos os sete romances são analisados individualmente em um capítulo e Frankenstein recebe atenção especial em outro. Em seguida realiza-se uma análise contrastiva entre Frankenstein e esses romances. Por fim, os resultados revelam as várias razões que determinam a singularidade de Frankenstein com relação aos outros romances góticos.

137 páginas.

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INTRODUCTION

The English Gothic fiction is a type of novel which flourished from the last decades of the 18thC through the first half of the 19thC. The genre's main concern lies on arousing one of man's most ancient feelings: fear. All Gothic novelists, thus, would try and do their best in order to chill the spine of their readers by presenting situations where horrid events interfered with the characters' lives. In order to conform to this purpose writers could count on a set of stock horror devices found in the Universal Literature such as ghosts, spirits, vampires, witches, haunted places, monsters, and the list increases as soon as folk cultures are brought forward.

In addition to these elements, new themes and paraphernalia of fear were also to be supplied by the novelist's imagination as well as by his/her moral and philosophical claims. However, the originality and quality of one such tale would depend on how these very elements would be dealt with. Furthermore, the author's

writing skills and talent to innovate were also relevant factors that contributed to the success of the works. Indeed, most Gothic tales proved to have met the audience's expectations for the genre achieved great popularity among the reading public of the time ["Sensational, cheap, and complete with illustrations, the pulp Gothic dominated the working-class market during the 1820s and continued to grow throughout the 1830s and 1840s." (Mudge 100)]. The success of few novels, though, has endured as it is the case of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus (1818), a work still read up to the present.

Frankenstein offers so varied a range for challenging research that to concentrate on only one aspect is, in itself, a terrible though necessary task. Unfortunately, the scope of the present work does not encompass a digression on other interesting topics such as the terror/horror motif which could be, then, further developed maybe in another research. A comparative study of the terror/horror motif of the Gothic type and that of the contemporary macabre literature would turn out to be rather rewarding since what used to frighten the readership of Gothic novels in the 18thC-19thC does not work for the modern audience. Social behaviour and values have undergone great and drastic changes so that it takes different 'tools' to wake up one's feeling of fear nowadays. The investigation of such differences would imply, therefore, both a literary and a sociological digging which would, in their turn, bring about another insight on the terror motif throughout the times.

In the case of the present study the investigation focuses on the novel's Gothic genre with the aim of indicating the causes for Frankenstein's uniqueness in this context. The fact is that, as a Gothic novel which, obviously, carries many Gothic characteristics, Frankenstein, certainly, has also "something more" added to these characteristics so as to have become a classic of not only its genre but of literature in general. So, to investigate what this "something more" exactly consists of within Gothicism is part of my goal.

Another aspect of my investigation resides in the other Gothic novels. Not that I could intend to analyse all of them in detail, a thing in itself not feasible at all. Nevertheless, a panoramic look into some of the other Gothicists is possible and helpful at the same time. I have, then, selected seven Gothic novels which are going to provide the sample data, together with Frankenstein, for a contrastive analysis. The novels are: Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron, William Beckford's Vathek, Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, Matthew Gregory Lewis' The Monk, Charles Robert Maturin's Melmoth, the Wanderer, and Bram Stoker's Dracula.

The seven novels chosen represent some of the best achievements of Gothic fiction and it is, therefore, a consensus among literary critics that such works are considered as mainstream within the Gothic genre. However, even though the genre enjoyed great popularity at its own time it has always been regarded with prejudice and, to quote Bradford K. Mudge, this very "[p]opularity proved indeed a mixed blessing" (1992: 100). Not even Frankenstein

was spared the label of 'minor novel'.

In spite of the restrictions against Gothicism Frankenstein, unlike the other Gothic productions, has survived and the modernity of its themes has been challenging the contempt it used to be treated with. The novel has somehow distinguished itself so that it extrapolates the Gothic boundaries and claims universal respect. I felt then the necessity, and curiosity, to investigate the causes which have determined Frankenstein's uniqueness, more specifically in relation to its genre.

Assuming, then, Gothic Literature as a common link between Frankenstein and the other novels cited, I undertake a contrastive analysis between Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and the collective characteristics of the other representative Gothic novels mentioned already in order to delineate the distinguishing features that have worked to establish the former's success and uniqueness and the latter's failure in imposing themselves. Once these features are identified, the way to a better recognition of all Gothic works may be opened so as to highlight their qualities as well as to sympathize with, explain, and even learn from their deficiencies.

In order to proceed with the investigation I have, therefore, divided the study into four major steps. In the first step I concentrate on the general characteristics of the Gothic genre. The main objective of this overview is to locate both Frankenstein and the Gothic novels selected in their literary context.

Once able to understand the main features that usually orient the building up of most Gothic fiction's content, it is necessary

to have a look at the seven examples of Gothic tales. These novels illustrate the Gothic Historical, the School of Terror, the School of Horror, Vampirism, and the Oriental Tale -chief lines within Gothic Literature. The aim here is to collect the novels' Gothic characteristics for a later contrast with Frankenstein's.

The third step is dedicated to a more detailed insight into Mary Shelley's novel. For that, I provide some biographical data of the author, a summary of Frankenstein, and a comprehensive analysis which means to bring about the endless possibilities of approach to this unique work.

Actually, the fame of Mary Shelley's tale has gone far beyond any barriers of either time or space. Today, the novel is well known almost worldwide and on top of this, it sports the recognition of having the name FRANKENSTEIN standing as a synonym for 'horror' in many places. Therefore, in the final step a contrastive analysis between Frankenstein and the seven selected Gothic novels takes place. I intend, thus, to find out the distinguishing features that help to establish Frankenstein's uniqueness by the probing into the intrincacies of the Gothic characteristics of these works. After all, what exactly Frankenstein has that the majority of Gothic novels lack?

CHAPTER I

THE GOTHIC NOVEL: PRESENTATION OF THE GENRE AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS.

I.1 - Introductory overview of Gothic Literature.

English Gothic literature as an established genre has its origins traced back to Horace Walpole[1] who, living himself at Strawberry Hill, a gothicised castle especially built to please his taste for the mysteriously attractive, published his The Castle of Otranto in 1764. In the preface to its first edition Walpole declares Otranto to be a translation from an Italian undated work printed in Naples in 1529. After some thinking he comes to a supposed date for the writing of this work which might have been from 1095 to 1243. Later on, in the preface to the second edition Walpole would invalidate the above statements by confessing his own authorship which he had concealed out of fear for the "novelty of

the attempt" (The Castle of Otranto, Preface 19)[2]. The very publication of The Castle of Otranto, all wrapped up in mystery, embodies one of the genre's main characteristics. Such was then the beginning of a series of writings with an exquisite beauty of their own which would flourish through the end of the 18thC up to the first decades of the 19thC.

The second half of the 18thC is marked by a plurality in literary expressions that overlapped and influenced each other contributing then, at the same time, to the establishment of the novel as a literary form that had come to stay since Richardson. From verse, the reading public and writers would tend to turn to prose which seemed to be a fitter form to answer the anxieties of a newly industrialised society. Together with an ever growing acceptance by the public and by more and more writers who began to regard it as a worthy artistic means, the novel had come up as the perfect ground for the proliferation of those many ways of expression. Thus, it is greatly through the novel that significant changes in literary taste will occur and genres will affect and be affected by such changes as was the case of Gothic literature. When Horace Walpole wrote The Castle of Otranto he not only showed his own rejection of the "strict adherence to common life" (CO, Preface 2nd ed. 19) typical of the novel of sensibility, as well as the neglect of imagination inherent to the classicists, but he also opened the way to other writers who shared his crave for creativity.

Walpole's main concern was to "blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" (CO Preface 2nd ed. 19) with the final

aim of rescuing back the use of imagination from the heroic romance into the writing of novels. His work seems to have reached the public's interest for in spite of being taken nowadays by some as a "mere jumble of childish absurdities" (Hudson 159), at the time of its first publication the book was read quite seriously. It is no joke that the poet Thomas Gray became afraid of going to bed at night after having read it; Walter Scott and Byron, in their turn, praised the genius of the author (Beers 238). Regardless of its disputable artistic qualities, The Castle of Otranto has served as inspiration to many other writers who viewed it as a model to be improved, a line to be followed. Walpole's most direct follower, Clara Reeve, admitted in her preface to The Old English Baron (1778) that her novel was "the literary offspring of The Castle of Otranto" and was "written upon the same plan, with a design to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and modern Novel" (The Old English Baron, Preface: ix)[3]

Clara Reeve makes cautious use of the Gothic elements of fear and awe trying to reconcile the supernatural with reason (Legouis 939) since she believed that one can accept some mysterious happenings "but then they must keep within certain limits of credibility" (OEB,Preface: xi). Even though her idea of a Gothic story is much different from that of Walpole's, Clara Reeve has nonetheless prepared the way to the kind of novel proposed by Ann Radcliffe.

Gothic Literature appears to have reached the peak of its achievement with the romantic Gothic of Mrs Radcliffe, an author

whose love for natural scenery and peculiar characterization have exerted strong influence on other Gothic writers and on Romantic poets as well. The Byronic hero, for instance, has its roots in the prototyped image of Ann Radcliffe's "fatal man" , the monk Schedony in The Italian (1797) (Neill 99). Influential as her work had been Ann Radcliffe would have passed somewhat unnoticed nowadays if it were not for feminists' rediscovery of "good women writers of good Gothic novels" (Spender 244).

Ann Radcliffe's novels also function as reference for the understanding of other branches of Gothic literature that differed from her style. Basically, what distinguishes her type of novel from the others' is the handling of the **supernatural**. Novels that take supernatural events for granted and instead of rationally explaining them away count on the very predominance of the supernatural/fantastic are definitely not Radcliffean novels. So, unlike her, authors who deal with underground worlds and their correlate components of witchcraft, diabolism, magic compacts and so on, received influence mostly from the horrid tales of German Romanticism (Schiller, Hoffmann) and also from French Fantastic Literature (Prévost, Mérimée) and oriental tales, particularly The Arabian Nights which was translated into English only as recently as the beginning of the 18thC. One such author is Matthew Gregory Lewis also known by the alias of Monk Lewis, a reflex of the intense impression caused by the dissolute Ambrosio of The Monk (1796) on the public. The author goes to the extreme of describing in disgusting detail scenes of human putrefaction among other astonishing events. Moreover, he dares beyond the mere

acknowledgement of the existence of the Devil to portray him in full colours. A Faustian-like compact with the Evil One reappears as central theme in Charles Robert Maturin's Melmoth, the Wanderer (1820) where mental and physical sufferings are cruelly depicted. Again Devil worship or its funest consequences pervade in Oriental fashion and quite humourously the work of William Beckford's Vathek (1786).

Another branch of Gothic Literature that needs to be mentioned is that in which Bram Stoker's Dracula excels, vampirism. Though an ancient legend of European folklore, vampirism was widely explored by some Gothic writers. Hackneyed productions have weakened the possibilities of the theme.

A work that practically stands alone in its kind is Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818). Its success has never faded out and new interests continually arise rendering the novel a classic of Universal Literature, a merit denied to the other Gothic productions with the exception of Dracula. Despite its unique position Frankenstein contains enough Gothic characteristics to be included in this controversial genre.

The immense variety of themes, styles and approaches provided by the Gothic writers' differentiated contributions confirms what H. P. Lovecraft said about Gothic creativity: "Naturally we cannot expect all weird tales to conform absolutely to any theoretical model. Creative minds are uneven, and the best of fabrics have their dull spots." (1945: 15-16). In face of this very multiplicity of Gothic productions I feel the need to establish common bounds that will define better the inspirations, characteristics and aims

of Gothicism.

I.2 - Characteristics of the Gothic Genre.

I.2.a - Inspirations.

As was already hinted Gothicism has managed to answer a desire to replace the rationalism of the Age of Reason. Writers and readership were tired of what was (seemed) plausible, they longed for **creativity**. Accordingly, **feelings** too were in direct opposition to reason so that Gothic novelists used creativity to arouse the readers' feelings --especially the one of **fear**-- which is considered mankind's "oldest and strongest emotion" (Lovecraft 12). In their attempts to meet those intentions most authors found plentiful inspiration in the mythic Ancient Classics, in the chivalrous Middle Ages, in Shakespearean supernatural entities and silly domestics (Hennessy 12), not forgetting the previously cited The Arabian Nights and Oriental Tales, the German Schauerroman (horror novel) and French Fantastic Literature.

I.2.b - Setting.

This very search for the imagination which ran free in bygone times promoted a fascination for ancient settings that developed into what A. C. Ward termed "cult of antiquity" (1954: 215). As a consequence the great majority of Gothic novels are set in a rather remote or recent past, a fact that well justifies the frequent

recurrence of **Old Manuscripts** as a favourite Gothic technique for flashbacking narratives. Also, the use of old manuscripts as a means of providing a 'source' to what is about to be narrated reflects the general preoccupation with historicity in the 18thC (Karl 272). However, in spite of this concern, Gothic writings cared little for "veracity of detail" (Neill 91), so much so that even though characters may be admittedly sent back to a distant past, their behaviour, moral values, emotions and even diction remain strikingly contemporary, i.e., 18th/19thCs, as Walter Allen has pointed out in reference to the benefit of accuracy denied in Ann Radcliffe's novels (1986: 99). The same applies to almost all other Gothic characters.

In addition to the preference to a fanciful past, English Gothic Literature would rather set its action in foreign countries. There are obviously some exceptions worth noting such as the works of Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee, William Godwin and others. Yet foreign settings would correspond more adequately to the common yearnings detectable in most Gothic writings. Spanish, French, Italian scenarios suit brilliantly the purposes aimed at by authors who picture sublime mountainous landscapes, Catholic Church and Inquisition matters, not to mention the extra intensity offered by foreign places and character names. One further feature derived from the Gothic authors' somehow strategic choice for foreign (or Catholic) countries and ancient past settings constitutes the essence of Gothic power: **ATMOSPHERE** -the creation of which is the "all-important thing" in a novel of terror (Lovecraft 16).

I.2.c - Atmosphere.

The great importance H. P. Lovecraft gives to atmosphere may be attributed to the close relation this element has with the suspense required by the typical themes of Gothic novels. In order to build up the necessary sense of fear or terror proper to this kind of literature the whole atmosphere of the tale must be carefully and gradually worked up so that the reader might plunge into the story and get involved by its mystery. Once the author is determined to terrify, he ought to prepare the reader beforehand. Gloomy moods and dark places should replace happy dispositions and sunshining environments. The former shall be cultivated to the utmost point of suspense (viz. Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe) or actual confrontation with supernatural events or crude tortures (viz. Lewis, Maturin, Beckford), whereas the latter appears only as a means to strengthen the contrast between lost happiness and present misfortune. Imminent danger always lurks the protagonists' steps. In the midst of such a dreary and tense atmosphere the characters are now ready to face all the intricate situations imposed on them by the horrifying set of Gothic themes.

I.2.d - Main Themes.

Regardless of authors' creativity and diversity of techniques and points of view, there is no unsurmountable difficulty in detecting and grouping the major themes explored by the Gothics.

Most novels will share the recurring handling of:

-supernatural events (factual or not);
-supernatural agents (ghosts, spectres, spirits, Bleeding Nun, Wandering Jew, walking skeletons, werewolves, genii)
-Devil worship;
-witchcraft;
-vampirism;
-Inquisition (Roman Catholic Church, conventual life);
-immortality (salvation/damnation);
-manifestations of death;
-outcasts;
-usurpations;
-sinful transgressions;
-persecutions;
-overreachers;
-father X son conflict (parents X children)

Such themes were used as a form and basis for the expression of social criticism. Many values and behaviour could be therefore either attacked or questioned: individual freedom; filial duty; parental tyranny; marriage; chastity; sexuality (especially women's); monastic seclusion; despotism of upper-classes and social institutions; social injustice and class discrimination, prejudice, etc. Needless to stress that one of the writers' main goals was to curdle the readers' blood and they would not spare any opportunity to achieve it even to the extent of risking the overloading of their works with too much horrid imagery and excessive use of stock paraphernalia of fear. So as to make up for this prolific use of Gothic machinery in the same novel, authors have appealed to a structure for their narratives that became very characteristic.

I.B.e - Narrative Structure.

Most Gothic novels depend on a peculiar narrative structure that plays a significant part in the development of plot itself. This structure, highly based on the Chinese-box system of story-within-story, is sometimes complex [to the extreme in Maturin's Melmoth where the "tortuous involution of his reported narratives inevitably makes for obscurity" (Baker 221-222)], of great length, full of digressions and many coincidences (Lovecraft 32). The conscious resort to a story-within-story kind of narrative enables the writers to insert into the main narrative a greater number of characters with their respective horrors, mysterious events and sorrows that will increase the chances for a myriad of new Gothic devices to emerge. As far as coincidence is concerned, it does not go functionless, it comes, instead, as a linking element necessary to join characters together, reveal past occurrences, interweave events without too much interference of otherwise supernatural interpositions.

As mentioned before, the action of the tales usually takes place in a distant past demanding of the narrative structure strategies that can comply with the need for flashbacks. Here therefore appear the Old Manuscripts, and the living eyewitnesses' reports of past episodes that will help both to enhance the desired mystery and to prepare the narrative for the handling of all the Gothic devices in accordance with the writer's line or school.

I.2.f - Main Lines Within Gothic Literature.

It has been already stated that not all Gothic novelists could conform to one single model to express their diverse ideas of how to bring forth the reader's fear. Each author would try his/her best according to his/her viewpoints about the concepts of **TERROR** and **HORROR**. In order to clarify the difference between the former and the latter in the sphere of Gothicism, I take Brandan Hennessy's acknowledgement of an article by Ann Radcliffe on that issue. He agrees with her that terror has to do with "uncertainty and obscurity", it "awakens the faculties" while horror on the other hand "contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates" man's faculties; moreover fear and repugnance may go together (Hennessy 1978)[4].

This distinction done, it may be easier to understand the three major lines for "main stream" Gothic novels suggested by Devendra Varma: Gothic Historical, where slight supernatural entities intervene in a historic setting of chivalrous times (Clara Reeve, Sophia and Harriet Lee, Sir Walter Scott's Waverly Novels); School of Terror, where although supernatural events are rationally explained superstition causes nevertheless great anxiety (Ann Radcliffe and imitators); School of Horror, a type influenced by German Romanticism where "violence and crudity" abound (Lewis, Maturin), (Varma apud. Karl 238).

What Varma proposes here, if extended largely to all Gothic works, may stumble on certain obstacles proper of any generalization but surely serves as guideline. It allows an

abstract classification of works in terms of the quality of their reliance on Gothic stock imagery. However, one can always wonder if it is 'horror' or 'terror' which predominates in novels classified as Historical, Vampirism or Oriental Tale.

I.2.g - Gothic Stock Elements.

Plenty are the choices among the queer Gothic machinery available to compose an authentic Gothic novel. For that reason balance becomes fundamental lest the work might get spoiled by an overdose of weird elements. Still, such elements complement and give life to the themes described in the Gothic tradition and all works sport at least a few of them. These components include Gothic castles, old houses, monasteries and convents, ruins, dungeons, cemeteries, tours or escapes through sublime landscapes, all usually set in the past and in foreign (Catholic) countries. In addition to that eccentric scenario there is a whole paraphernalia of fear to heighten mystery and dread:

-dark corridors
-hidden rooms
-trap-doors
-stairways
-gusts of wind
-vaults (crypts,tombs,coffins)
-murders/murderers
-compacts with Hell
-mistaken identities
-old manuscripts
-secret underground passages
-sealed chambers
-creaking hinges
-strange noises, groans
-extinguished lamps
-clandestine meetings
-blood
-poison (elixirs,magic talismans)
-prophecies/revealing dreams

These elements combine to enrich the succession of incidents in complicated plots: "concealments, assassinations, duels, disguises, kidnappings, escapes, elopements, intrigues, forged documents,

discoveries of old crimes, and identifications of lost heirs" (Beers 250). Love affairs produce much of the conflicts and adventures.

Accordingly, Gothic stock characters inhabit the stories providing them with suitable protagonists carefully drawn to undergo any Gothic adventure:

- MAIDEN: (persecuted, orphan), virtuous, soft, innocent, vulnerable (Karl 257);
- PERSECUTOR (villain): dark, Italianate, passionate, corrupted, he is rarely what he seems (Karl 257),
- MELANCHOLY YOUNG MAN: valorous/immaculate hero, polite, corageous, of high birth but mistaken for a peasant, (Lovecraft 25);
- Servants (silly, loyal);
- Monks/nuns (corrupted or benevolent and sincere);
- Tyrannical parents;
- Banditti;
- Noble peasants.

Characters, settings, elements of fear, narrative structure, all converge to the making of the right kind of atmosphere for Gothic-terror purposes. The strangeness of the resulting scheme has driven Gothic Literature to controversy more often than not in negative tints. However, a type of novel that in its own time enjoyed enormous popularity and whose everlasting subject-matter has been exciting public of all times and places (folklore, old legends, either oral or written) deserves greater respect and invites deeper analysis.

I.3 - Gothic Literature : General Insight.

That Gothic Literature is controversial one cannot deny. On the one hand there are critics who will side with David Daiches'

opinion that the terror novel "remains in itself a crude form of fiction" which owes its popularity to "mere sensationalism" (1991: 742). Fortunately, on the other hand, some other critics open the way to new insights into the Gothic "mystery", perhaps inadvertently, as one can grasp from Robert Wexelblatt's comment: "Generally speaking, the stories of Gothic novels are so silly that they must be treated either as escapism or as symbolism" (1980: 106). In face of the very choice of themes and imagery that model such tales, it is more likely that symbolism better reflects the soul of Gothic writings. But what does Gothic symbolism conceal? Maybe a repression exerted by 18th/19thC canon on certain themes that could not surface overtly but only through labouriously disguised methods as those adopted by Gothic novelists to escape censorship. Possibly this same repression resulted in the prejudice imposed on Gothic Literature and writers.

When Feminist critics in their attempt to "unearth" and do justice to women writers who have been dismissed in spite of their significant literary legacy touched the domain of Gothic Literature they succeeded in "rediscovering" many neglected women authors[5]. What may be even more important in Feminist literary "archeology" is the new light it has thrown on Gothic Literature itself, for beyond Feminist matters all sorts of other implications emerge. Gothic symbolism emerges as well revealing what had been hidden for so long behind the so-called predominance of fantasy over reality.

Beneath the awesome intricacies of a Gothic context, the recurring themes cited earlier in this chapter carry in their depth, almost as a rule, a heavy criticism of society's hypocrisy.

Authors made use of TERROR not merely to scare the readers but mainly to call their attention to the 'social atrocities' and the individual's psychological tortures. The fantastic Gothic paraphernalia of fear veils forbidden subjects so that they can be expressed despite repression. As it is not in the scope of this work to make a complete analysis of Gothic Literature I sum up below some main features of Gothic 'hidden' criticism:

A) Feminist Inclinations: Despite their being virtuous and pure, heroines are strong-willed and brave or compelled to do and act unlikely normal women of the time: to travel on their own or in their lover's company; to get married without parents' consent. They can own or inherit great fortunes (independence). Women's sexuality acquires a status of something that must be considered.

B) Social Criticism: Hypocrisy of social institutions such as marriage, family relations, parental power, is denounced on account of the horrors derived from the potential tyranny they can unleash.

C) Criticism on Catholicism: Catholicism (mainly) is quite attacked for its strict and sometimes corrupted dominance over people's destiny. Attention is drawn to the tortures and injustices of the Inquisition, to monastic seclusion, to the corruption of monks and nuns, to the avarice of high ecclesiastics.

D) Taboo-breaker: By questioning and attacking taboo subjects Gothic Literature could have had a much more effective voice as denouncer if it had not been for the necessity to save faces.

E) Permissiveness: By breaking taboos and admitting the outcoming new values the Gothic novel acknowledges a permissive society in which these new values can be accepted.

F) Outlet of Repressions: Many Gothic figures like Dracula and the Devil embody the means to give vent to what is repressed including sexuality (Hennessy 51).

These aspects have been nevertheless clouded by the excessive use of the same imagery that had concurred to their very expression, thus accelerating the tendency to devaluation of Gothic Literature as a genre. Curiously enough, to follow up Dale Spender's complaint about the prejudice against women Gothic writers who "have been derided - with the term 'Gothic' being used almost synonymously with 'female'" (1986: 243), one can infer a derogatory relation between Gothic novels and Gothic writers. Just as a reminder many Gothic novelists belonged to the female sex and still others were homosexuals (William Beckford, Matthew Gregory Lewis), that is to say, social outsiders. Coincidence or not , a line as follows can be ventured:

GOTHIC AUTHORS	and	GOTHIC WORKS	----------	SUB-LITERATURE
x		x		
AUTHORS	and	WORKS	----------	MAIN STREAM

I.4- Influences of Gothic Literature on Authors and Genres.

However controversial, Gothic Literature has not failed to impress authors of other literary styles and furthermore to develop into other genres with the passing of time, not to mention the strong influence exchanged with other areas of fiction that ran

parallel with Gothicism, as the novel of sensibility, the domestic comedy/realism and the doctrinaire novel. In its own time the popularity of Gothic Literature was taken for granted to the extent of inciting the production of satires on its account. Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey (1817) displays a young-lady heroine, Catherine Morland, who compares the frightening adventures that befall Emily, the counter heroine in Ann Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho with the matter-of-fact kind of "real life". Thomas Love Peacock, too, satirizes the supernatural mysteries of a Gothic novel in his good humoured Nightmare Abbey (1818).

Still greater was the influence of Gothic Literature on Romanticism. The poet Percy Bysshe Shelley tried his literary vein writing two Gothic novels St Irvinne (1811) and Zastrozzi (1810). Byron's debt to Ann Radcliffe has been already mentioned but Coleridge, Wordsworth and Keats also found in Gothicism an attractive source of inspiration (Hennessy 38). Among other things Romantics and Gothics shared the love of nature, melancholy moods and gloomy settings [especially on the part of the Churchyard School of poetry (Neill 91)].

To a broader estimation it may be interesting to reproduce here the table idealized by Frederick Karl on the "Gothic overtones" present in forms of literature prior to the established Gothic genre as well as contemporaneous with it (1975: 237):

-The supernatural element of the ballad
-The primitive, primeval quality of the epic
-The extravagance and violence of Elizabethan drama (then being revived)
-The wildness of pagan Europe caught in Ossian (1760-3) and slightly later in Percy's Reliques (1765)

-The exoticism of Oriental and Near Eastern tales (Johnson's Rasselas, 1759; later, Beckford's Vathek, an Arabian Tale, 1786)
-The excesses of the chivalric romances
-The death-gloom of graveyard poetry Young's "Night Thoughts," 1742; Blair's "The Grave," 1743; Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," 1751; and their forerunner, Thomas Parnell's "Night-Piece on Death," 1722)
-The influence of Rousseau in terms of the natural, the primitive, the irrational
-The stress on the sublime - primitive, sensuous, anti- and non-intellectual, playing on awe, ecstasy, and disorder
-The rise of Methodism, chiefly the antiestablishmentarianism of the Wesleys, and the more elemental character of its form of worship as compared with that of the Church of England
-The admiration for frenzied and disordered nature - part of the stress on the sublime
-The Rousseauistic heritage, manifest, among other places, in the planned irregularities of the English garden

Perhaps the most remarkable of Gothic legacies are two of today's most popular genres of fiction, the detective novel and science fiction (Hennessy 40). The need to find out murderers and villains, to sort out mysteries and to save innocent victims, has evidently prepared the grounds for the subsequent crystallization of the detective novel as well as the modern thrillers. As to science fiction, the growing progresses on the scientific field reached Gothic minds so that a Gothic author and her work have "made the Gothic novel over into what today we call science fiction" (Moers 139). The author was Mary Shelley, the work, Frankenstein.

NOTES

[1] While most of the critics (see Howard P. Lovecraft (1945:23-24), S. Diana Neill (1952: 90), A. C. Ward (1954:216), W. H. Hudson (1966: 157-158), Henry A. Beers (1968: 232), Waldo Clarke (1976: 77-78), Brendan Hennessy (1978: 7), Jerrold E. Hogle (1980: 330), Walter Allen (1986: 92), as some examples) accept Horace Walpole as "the self-proclaimed father of the genre" (Hogle: 330), Ernest A. Baker (1969: 178) questions the general assumption that Otranto has originated the Gothic genre. He suggests that either Prévost's English imitators, Smolett, Thomas Leland before Walpole or Sophia Lee's The Recess after him, should be the genre's starting point.

[2] Walpole, Horace. The Castle of Otranto. 1764. New York: Collier Books, 1963.
Hereafter this book will be referred to as CO and page number.

[3] Reeve, Clara. The Old English Baron/The Castle of Otranto. 1778/1764. London: Milner & Co Ltd. [Printers], n.d. v-196.
All references in the text will be made to this edition as OEB and page number.

[4] A part of Ann Radcliffe's article "On the Supernatural in Poetry" appears in Bonamy Dobrée's introduction to The Mysteries of Udolpho. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991. ix.

[5] For detailed information see Spender 1986: 230-245.

CHAPTER II

SOME GOTHIC NOVELS, THEIR CONTENT AND THE PRESENCE OF GOTHIC ELEMENTS

The purpose of this chapter consists in presenting a panoramic analysis of some Gothic novels that will be necessary for the contrastive analysis of Chapter 4. It is not the aim of this work to make a thorough and minute investigation of the selected novels, nor would it be feasible. However, valuable information may be extracted from an objective scanning for the Gothic stock characteristics found in these novels which have the property of hiding and revealing Gothic 'messages' providing thus the necessary data for the analysis.

To produce a fair analysis some basic criteria were established for the selection of the Gothic novels that will be investigated. Thus, according to these criteria, only one novel of each writer will be analised; the importance of each of the novels to the Gothic tradition shall impose itself by plentiful criticism

on the works; the choice comprehends the major lines of Gothicism - Gothic Historical, School of Terror, School of Horror, Vampirism, Oriental Tale. Below follows the list of the chosen Gothic novels:

- The Castle of Otranto (1764), Horace Walpole
- The Old English Baron (1778), Clara Reeve
- Vathek (1786), William Beckford
- The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), Ann Radcliffe
- The Monk (1796), Matthew Gregory Lewis
- Melmoth, The Wanderer (1820), Charles Robert Maturin
- Dracula (1897), Bram Stoker

The study of these novels comes in order of their date of publication and obeys a simple method for the sake of objectivity. From mere informative details such as title, year of publication, author, time of action, and setting the survey includes also a list of the Gothic elements and devices, so that when it comes to the criticism of the novel itself with its main characteristics the background is already prepared.

II.1 - The Castle of Otranto.

The novel's original title is The Castle of Otranto, a Gothic Story, and was published in 1764 by Horace Walpole (1717-1797). The action takes place in Italy sometime between 1095 and 1243. The novel seems to fit more appropriately into the Gothic School of Terror. Before looking into its main characteristics it may be useful first to have a brief idea of the plot.

Principality of Otranto - On the wedding day of Manfred's son Conrad, the sickly boy is "dashed to pieces" (CO 28) by the fall of a giant helmet. A young peasant connects the "miraculous helmet"

(CO 30) to the statue of a former Prince, Alfonso the Good, which is just missing from St. Nicholas's church. Enraged, Manfred keeps the peasant "prisoner under the helmet itself" (CO 31). Insensible about the unnatural death of his son, Manfred's only concern is with the realization of the ancient prophecy: "the Castle and Lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it" (CO 27). Determined to sustain his right over the principality, Manfred conceives a plan to divorce his wife Hippolita and marry his would-be daugther-in-law Isabella. The young girl, relieved by the cancellation of an imposed marriage, on hearing of Manfred's wicked intentions manages to run away through the subterraneous regions of the castle where she finds Theodore, the peasant who, having set himself free, helps her. After much superstitious fear, supernatural apparitions, clumsy talks of the domestics and clandestine meetings, both Isabella and Matilda (Manfred's daughter) fall in love with Theodore. Isabella takes refuge in the convent. A friar, Father Jerome, on seeing a birthmark on Theodore's shoulder, recognizes him as his own son. Manfred fears divine wrath and negotiates Theodore's safety to obtain Father Jerome's alliance in his plans. In the meantime Matilda and Theodore exchange secret love vows while he sets out to help Isabella. In defending Isabella, Theodore stabs a man who turns out to be her father, Frederic, Marquis of Vicenza (he dreamed that Isabella needed his help). He is taken to the castle to recover from his wound. Manfred wins Frederic to his cause by offering him Matilda's hand. Hippolita submissively subjects to her husband's

will, to the despair of Isabella and Matilda. However, the project of the double marriage aborts when Frederic is warned by a praying skeleton (old hermit) to forget Matilda and when, furious, Manfred mistakes his own daugther for Isabella and kills her by Theodore's side. The whole mystery discloses when the ghost of Alfonso the Good acknowledges Theodore as the son of his secret daughter. The principality returns to its true owner and Theodore after much suffering over Matilda's death agrees to marry Isabella as the only being who could share his love for Matilda. After having confessed that his grandfather had poisoned Alfonso and usurped his title, Manfred and his wife take the veil.

Even though most critics label Otranto as "a piece of nonsense which founded a new kind of fiction" (Daiches 740) and a product of the fancy of a dilettante who would take refuge in the past, because "Old castles, old pictures, old stories, and the babble of old people make one live back into centuries that cannot disappoint one" (Tillotson 1179), the novel's major themes indicate the presence of **Gothic criticism through symbolism**. A closer look on each of the main characters may show a relation between the stereotype and what it represents in the novel.

Manfred, the corrupted usurper and tyrant husband/father, enacts the base feelings of a passionate man who in his longing for power becomes capable of any cruelty whatsoever. Let down by the death of his son, Manfred contrives to rid himself of his lawful wife and feels not deterred from the near incestuous drive to marry the young maiden who was to be after all his daughter -in-law. Blind by jealousy and by the fear of having his plans thwarted he

ends up by lethally slaying Matilda -infanticide.

The submissive devotion of virtuous Hippolita contrasts badly with the candid but determined figure of Matilda. Conscious of her filial duties and the respect owed to her father, the heroine nevertheless defies parental decisions, even at the risk of her life, for the love of the man she chose. The daughter dies defending her right over her destiny whereas the mother takes up the veil subdued by her husband's deliberations.

Frederic does not come as a tyrant, yet he seems prone to little doubt as to suffer his daughter onto a convenient marriage that would grant him the hand of fair Matilda and his claim over Otranto at one and the same time. Isabella in her turn seeks refuge in what Ellen Moers calls "indoor travel" (1977: 195), through the subterraneous regions of the castle -an escape she undertakes on her own led by Manfred's threatening schemes. The "horror" meant by Manfred justifies Isabella's attitude of trusting her virtue to the care of a man, a thing she would never do unpunished otherwise.

The stories told by Father Jerome and Theodore bring to light the fragility of the social institutions. When Alfonso the Good married the "fair virgin" Victoria in order not to "tempt her to forbidden pleasures" (CO 111), he was later compelled to conceal their union "deeming this amour incongruous with the holy vow of arms by which he was bound" (CO 111). He therefore permits Manfred's ancestor to usurp his Lordship after his assassination thus condemning the widow to a shameful fate. Victoria bore a child who was to become Jerome's wife and Theodore's mother. The resort to a secret marriage derives from the hesitation to affront social

conventions; it affords a "decent outlet" for a forbidden passion, though much harm can also be expected.

The problem with the "expression" of those passions, complaints and rebellions, is that an overload of superstitious fears, supernatural apparitions and unnatural events burdens the narrative so as to cause the dispersion of a critical evaluation of the conflicts. In other words, the excessive stress on dreadful interventions deviates the reader's attention from the handling of grey-area subjects as incest, women's sexuality, divorce, hypocrisy of parental dominance over children, the oppression of religious beliefs (Manfred's fear of damnation), quest for freedom of will, etc. So, the germ of Gothic criticism is there; one just needs to be curious enough to read it down deep in the novel's exaggerations and in Walpole's "fiction founded on a private vision" (Karl 247).

In order to stress the great quantity of gothic stock elements found in Otranto, it may be interesting to list them: enchanted armour, armoured hand, castle, secret passages, a cavern, convent, subterraneous corridors, spirits, ghosts, bleeding statue, praying skeleton, poisoning, mistaken identities, prophecy, revealing dream, secret marriages, hints of incestuous links, words in the sabre, old hermit, usurpations, parents X children conflict, story-within-story, superstition, love affairs.

II.2 - The Old English Baron.

Clara Reeve (1729-1807) retitled her The Champion of Virtue, a Gothic Story (1777) into The Old English Baron which was published in 1778. Unlike most Gothic works this novel has its action in an English setting: the 15thC, during the reign of Henry VI. For a better understanding of the plot intricacies of this representative of the Gothic Historical novel there follows a short summary.

After having spent thirty years as his Majesty's soldier abroad, Sir Philip Harclay returns to England to settle down. He solves all the problems concerning his estates and decides to visit his childhood friend Arthur Lovel. At an inn near Lovel Castle, Sir Philip learns that his friend died some fifteen years before, followed by his pregnant widow. He is also informed that the present Lord Lovel, Walter, sold his property to his brother-in-law, Baron Fitz-Owen who now inhabits it with his wife, three sons and a daughter and many relatives. Sir Philip, though shocked by the news, goes to the castle instigated by a strange dream (about Arthur, a blood-stained armour and a combat) and is introduced to the Baron and his family. Strangely, he is struck by a peasant boy's resemblance to his dear friend, he is told that this boy was taken into the Baron's care due to his noble qualities and for being neglected by his own father. Sir Philip wants to adopt the boy as his heir but Edmund refuses to leave his master's services. Sir Philip offers help in case he needs it one day. Time passes and, as the boys grow up, they envy Edmund's accomplishments and courage, with the exception of William, one of the Baron's sons.

They plot against him in vain but the Baron, so as to test Edmund's character, orders him to sleep for three nights in the haunted apartments to prove his courage and also to liberate the rooms if they are not haunted. Edmund hears groans from a secret closet and helped by an old servant, Joseph, and Father Oswald, discovers that old Lord Lovel is buried there. Joseph says he suspects Edmund is the son of his dead master. The three manage to talk to Edmund's mother who reveals he is not her child, he was found on a bridge.

Believing in his high birth Edmund seeks Sir Philip for advice. Sir Philip espouses his cause and challenges Walter Lovel to a duel after which the usurper confesses his crimes for fear of eternal damnation. Baron Fitz-Owen gets accquainted with all the details of Edmund's birth and happily acknowledges him as the true owner of Lovel Castle. Walter Lovel is banished from England and sent to Greece where he marries some years later. Edmund takes possession of his property, marries his beloved Emma (the Baron's daughter) and invites Sir Philip and William to live with him. Robert inherits Walter's castle; Wenlock, Edmund's rival, is expelled from the Baron's family. All is tranquility in the end and it furnishes "a striking lesson to posterity, of the over-ruling hand of Providence, and the certainty of RETRIBUTION" (OEB 196).

Clara Reeve sought inspiration to write her novel in Walpole's extravagantly fantastic The Castle of Otranto although she aimed not at imitating him, she desired instead to correct what she deemed imperfect. With this in mind she avoided unexplained supernatural appearances trying to keep the story probable yet never forgetting to rescue ancient times "when human beings could

be reduced to insignificance, and struck with awe" (Spender 231).

In her attempt to bring back the qualities of old chivalrous romances she shaped an atmosphere where all characters either 'goodies' or 'badies', highborn or peasants, share the 'ideal knightly characteristics' that Henry Beers quotes from Richard Hurd, an ardent defensor of Gothic Literature: "Prowess, Generosity, Gallantry, and Religion" (1968: 222). However, as Beers himself puts it, the novel has nothing to do with the Middle Ages (1968: 243), in fact it actually belongs to an early Romantic Gothic phase and has conquered many imitators (Neill 95).

As a consequence of her greater concern with chivalrous values Clara Reeve would rather attribute any mysterious occurence to the ways of Providence. Accordingly, characters have religious preoccupations such as to pray to Heaven for protection, to order mass for the dead, to bury corpses on consecrated soil, and not even the 'criminals' forget their duty to confess their crimes for the obtainment of divine pardon (confession, by the way, results in an instrument through which much information can be forced out).

In spite of such significant religious overtones the author undertook to make some open remarks against monastic life through Sir Philip's words, "a man was of much more service to the world who continued in it, than one who retired from it, and gave his fortune to the church, whose servants did not always make the best use of it." (OEB 18). To those who opted for a more secular life Clara Reeve suggests philanthropy as a form to serve God and do good to humankind. Also, philanthropy does not do away with the class system; on the contrary, it can, by diminishing poverty

levels, sustain this very prevailing class consciousness and, besides, it does go well with chivalrous knightly qualities. Coincidentally (or not) the above underlying ideology which means to strengthen the prevailing political body comes in a novel written soon after the Independence of America and just on the brink of the French Revolution.

The respect for the State with which characters are imbued (Baron Fitz-Owen's boys go to warlike exercises in France; Sir Philip relates to the King all about the duel and its outcome) does not interfere however with individual initiative. Not only are men able to decide on justice principles and kinds of punishment but women are also given the right of decision regarding marriage proposals. In Clara Reeve's novel the young lady has no need to defy a tyrant father; here, unlike in Walpole's Otranto, this right of women is absolutely granted, no matter the supposed time of action - 15thC.

In such a context of widespread justice, clear reasoning and little superstitious belief where the pretended supernatural events, as well as any other event, are minutely explained away, the terror of the stock Gothic elements seems to highlight terrors much more worldly or human. That is why the stock figures of the "usurper" and that of the "melancholy young man" whose identity is mistaken assume a remarkable relevance. In them resides the possibility of expressing all the dangers derived from human wickedness, villainy, and greed that may be lurking menacingly over innocent victims.

It may be helpful to make a roll of all Gothic elements for a better visualization of their influence in the novel. So, one finds here castles, haunted rooms, secret chambers, strange noises and rustling sounds, gusts of wind, extinguished lamps, vaults, revealing dreams, usurpations, mistaken identities, murders and murderers, armour stained with blood, duels, a false funeral, a fake corpse (stones and earth) in a coffin, loyal servants, love affairs, elopements, narratives-within-narrative.

II.3 - Vathek.

Vathek, an Oriental tale, was originally written in French by William Beckford (1759-1844) having its English version published in 1786. Its Oriental setting brings the action from Samarah, a city of Babylonian Irak, to Rocnabad where lay the Portals to the Hall of Eblis. The year is 227 of the Hegira, around AD 849.

The story is about the sensual Caliph of the Abassides who concentrates all his power and imagination on ever renewing the sources of pleasure at his disposal. He would not accept any kind of questioning as to the luxury and extravagance of his wishes. He counts on the destructive power of his EYE to punish (kill) anyone who dares to affront him; however, he avoids getting angry too often not to depopulate his reign. In order to please his eccentric taste Vathek even had five wings added to his castle each one dedicated to the reverence of one of the five Senses. Furthermore, just to show his magnificence he also had a tower built for him to

reach out the stars. He overcomes his disappointment at seeing that his distance to the sky continued the same by convincing himself that he was great in the eyes of the others.

One day arrives at his city, Samarah, an ugly man carrying incredible rarities which dazzle Vathek and make him eager to learn their procedence. The man refuses to tell him though and vanishes. Enraged, Vathek offers a reward to whoever finds the man or deciphers the words of a magic sabre he had sold to Vathek. The words, however, change daily raising Vathek's rage. After many strange events Vathek is attracted to a chasm at the High Mountain where a Giaour promises to take him to the Palace of Subterranean Fire where lay the treasures of the pre-Adamite Sultans on condition that he abjures Mahomet and gives fifty children as sacrifice. Vathek agrees and does everything that is requested only to be deceived by the Giaour who disappears and the chasm closes. His subjects realize what happened to the fifty children and revolt against Vathek who takes refuge along with his mother, Carathis, at the tower. In order to escape Carathis performs magic rituals to summon infernal powers causing, then, many deaths during the fire that enables their escape. Carathis finds an enchanted parchment in an old urn with promises concerning the talismans of Soliman and the pre-Adamite Sultans. According to it, Vathek needs to set out for Rocnabad to seek the Palace of Subterranean Fire but he cannot enter anybody's house nor speak to dwarfs. Vathek gathers his riches and harem into a majestic train and departs. On their way they are caught by a devastating storm that forces Vathek to accept a good Emir's hospitality unheedingly of the Giaour's conditions.

Irreverent, Vathek, not content to turn the Emir's household upside down, even flirts with his host's daughter who is already betrothed to the lovely and innocent Gulchenroutz. The Emir's scheme to fake the deaths of the pair to prevent Vathek from marrying Nouronhiar is soon unveiled by Vathek who then takes Nouronhiar as his concubine against Fakkredin's will. When Carathis learns her son has totally deviated from the initial purpose, she immediately decides to join him. On her way to Vathek, she and her hideous negresses stop at a cemetery to ask direction from the ghouls and, for that, they kick tombs. They also take their time to kill the guides and eat them.

When Carathis finally talks with Vathek she persuades him to go on his search for the Hall of Eblis. Nouronhiar, as greedy as Vathek, pushes him to start off. Carathis however, has to return to Samarah for her other son, Motavakel, has taken over and now rules. Determined, Vathek and Nouronhiar reach Rocnabad and do not pay attention to the good Genius' attempt to dissuade them from entering the Hall of Eblis. All to no purpose for Vathek and Nouronhiar follow the Giaour who opens the door of the Portal of Ebony and escorts them to the presence of Eblis himself. Eblis, a young man, welcomes them just to announce their terrible fate: they have few days to delight in the treasures and power at their hand before their hearts are enveloped by eternal flames once they "lost the most precious gift of heaven: -HOPE" (Vathek 119)[1]. Vathek blames his mother for his ruin and demands her presence there. Carathis willingly joins him after having destroyed the tower, hung Bababalouk (chief of the eunuchs), buried alive all Vathek's wives,

besides other cruelties. They end up in hopeless agony whereas Gulchenroutz lives in tranquility and happiness because he has not transgressed the condition of man on Earth to be humble and ignorant, devoid of curiosity, pride or avarice.

The status of William Beckford's novel is questioned from its very roots and upwards. Is it a novel or a near-novel (Baker 71-76)? Is it an Oriental tale or does it belong to the Gothic Literature (Karl 287)? Is it a fantasy or an allegory (Karl 287-288)? Whatever the answers, it certainly must be agreed that Vathek is eccentric and full of exaggerations. Whether these can be considered "Gothic exaggerations" or not, the fact is that behind all extravagances lies a criticism pretty much of the same kind of that of Gothic novels'. Through the tale's idiosyncrasies aspects of human character as ill behaviour, corruption, perversions (cannibalism, necromancy), ambition, sadism, and sexuality as well as social relationships and filial duty are displayed (and disguised at the same time).

The grandiosity of settings and actions may have a close relation to the protagonist's egocentric behaviour which in turn may derive from the novel's connection with the life of "England's wealthiest son" as Byron used to refer to Beckford (Lonsdale vii-viii) and especially to what Baker puts as the author's "monomania" (1969: 75). As a consequence, therefore, the almighty ruler of his people Vathek, possessor of a curious and ambitious mind, undertakes an overreaching quest for the Hall of Eblis.

Carathis plays a decisive role in Vathek's persevering in his journey to Rocnabad. The conflict between parents & children that

permeates most Gothic novels acquires in Vathek an ambiguous connotation. If on the one hand Vathek's obedience to his authoritative mother's commands leads him to his final ruin, as Vathek himself blames her for, on the other hand the ruin of Nouronhiar is caused by her irreverence and disregard for the admonitions of her caring father. However the results, what really matters to the scope of this analysis is that "filial duty" is at stake.

Another important issue has to do with female sexuality, once the male one is taken for granted in the form of Vathek's harem full of wives (or repressed in the figure of the eunuch). Not only can women give vent to their sexual desire and/or sensuality as Nouronhiar and the women of the harems do, but most remarkably still is the image of a "sexual mother". Carathis' unrestricted passions and sensuous posture that culminate in the summoning ritual for the talking-fish where she strips herself naked to enter the lake in company of her two negresses reveal uncommon features in contrast to traditional mother's roles. Although explored, the subject of Carathis's sexuality fades out under the weight of her cruelties and magic powers. It would seem at first thought that the sexual women's destiny ends up in the eternal agony of Hell (Hall of Eblis) but if one considers that it is not merely sex, yet the 'curiosity for forbidden knowledge' that has driven Carathis, Nouronhiar (and Vathek) to hell, one might envisage a permissive insight given to women's sexuality.

Similarly, in addition to the magnified atrocities and accumulation of magic entities and deeds that shadow criticism,

Vathek's "intentionally comic" tone (Leeming 7) also contributes to deviate the reader's attention from matters such as the divine right of a sovereign, despotism against lower classes, prejudices (against race, age, disabled people), and the potential hypocrisy of religion mainly as concerning people's preoccupation with salvation and damnation. So, horror and humour mingle in what Glenda Leeming admits as being "'black comedy' or 'sick humour'" (1975: 7) and more than that, they both function as grotesque intensifiers to Vathek's final consciousness. The humour involving acts of wickedness adds bitterness to the prospect of a burning heart promoting the feeling of "anxiety with no possibility of escape" which Mario Praz considers as "the main theme of the Gothic tales" (1973: 21).

Vathek's condemnation as opposed to Gulchenroutz's happiness in a somewhat manichaean and moralistic end and also the apparitions as actual characters of the two main 'forces' in the world, Mahomet -or God- (good) and Eblis -or Devil- (evil) highlight the religious concern. However, the preternatural impression that these two 'characters' could be supposed to strike the reader with is dimmed among all other supernatural entities that abound throughout the tale. That does not mean that the conflicts suggested in the book must be dimmed too. It only requires the deeper reading that fortunately Gothic Literature is being given today.

It pays to list the long and curious paraphernalia of Gothic elements present in Vathek that give colour to the novel's themes: castles; towers; caverns; cemeteries; Hall of Eblis (Hell); devil

worship; witchcraft; objects for sorcery; magic spells; genii; Devil; sorceresses; Vathek's Evil Eye; mysterious dwarfs; talking-fish; loyal servants; enchanted parchment; magic sabre; murders -infanticide; disgusting descriptions of magic rituals and evil doings; narcotic powder to fake death; parents X chidren conflict; love affairs; elopements; eroticism; cannibalism; necromancy; tortures; and sadism.

II.4 - The Mysteries of Udolpho.

Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) had her novel published in 1794 under the title The Mysteries of Udolpho, a Romance; Interspersed with Some Pieces of Poetry. Her most famous work, which belongs to the School of Terror, has its action transported to the late 16thC between the years 1584 and 1586 in France and Italy. The number of characters is extremely large and the many adventures are described with such an abundance of details that the following summary must forcibly omit much interesting information.

The protagonist, Emily, was used to a simple but happy life at the French countryside, far from the mundane and frivolous society of urban life. After her mother's death she and her father, St. Aubert, set out for a restorative journey through the Mediterranean shores during which they are acquainted with Valancourt, a valorous young man with whom Emily falls in love. When Emily and her father reach the Upper Languedoc the news of their ruin affects St. Aubert's health. In their journey back St.

Aubert faints and Emily seeks help in vain at a haunted chateau. They are finally aided by a peasant , La Voisin. St. Aubert does not resist and dies, not without having first given instructions to Emily to destroy some secret documents which she is not to read; he also wants her to stay under his sister's care. Back home Emily finds and burns the mysterious papers, but she is puzzled by the miniature of a woman. Before going to her aunt's house in Toulouse, Valancourt visits her and they confess their love. However, Emily's aunt (Mme Cheron) sees them and forbids their affair because Valancourt has no fortune. In Toulouse Emily regrets her present situation among hypocrite people. Mme. Cheron marries Montoni, an Italian nobleman, for money and they decide to leave for Italy. Valancourt warns Emily of Montoni's ruin and bad character and offers to marry her secretly but she fears for her reputation and submits to her aunt's will. When they arrive in Venice Emily learns that both her aunt and Montoni deceived each other and Montoni has no fortune depending on gambling for support. Montoni sells Emily's hand to Count Morano. On perceiving that the Count too is ruined, Montoni and his party flee to the Castle of Udolpho where he keeps Mme. Cheron and Emily prisoners trying to force them to renounce their estates in France. After many scares, persecutions, secrets, intrigues, and the death of Mme. Cheron, Emily and servants manage to run away and take a ship to France. On account of a shipwreck they are rescued and sheltered by the Count De Villefort who happens to be the new owner of the haunted chateau. She makes friends with the Count's daughter and remains with them having then the chance to solve all the mysteries she was

yet ignorant of: her father's second sister had been murdered by Laurentine who was the true owner of the Castle of Udolpho; the supposed ghosts in the chateau were nothing but smugglers who used to store their loot in those rooms; the veiled picture at Udolpho consisted of a waxen image used as a kind of penitence imposed by the Church on a sinner. By the end of the novel all doubts concerning Valancourt's reputation turn out to be mere misunderstandings making it possible that the two honest lovers get married and inherit big fortunes after sorting out other mysterious affairs. Montoni dies probably poisoned by his enemies.

The Gothic terrors in The Mysteries of Udolpho distinguish themselves as hallmark of Radcliffean novels. To complement these terrors and mysteries Ann Radcliffe made use of "romanticism plus sentimentalism" (Beers 252) and further still of the poetic prose with which her fiction would influence scores of imitators (Spender 241). It is no wonder that The Mysteries of Udolpho enjoyed such great popularity for about fifty years after its publication being considered by then in Bonamy Dobrée's words "a 'must', or in the phrase of today, 'required reading', for anybody who had any pretence at all to being a person of education, or culture, or even of popular reading habits (Dobrée:v) -a clear response of the reading public to Ann Radcliffe's fine mixing of the three main trends of the moment. The Gothic atmosphere of terror (and mystery) together with the romanticism and sentimentalism of Ann Radcliffe brought Gothic Literature to its highest pitch.

In the particular case of The Mysteries of Udolpho suspense, mysteries, intrigues, and persecutions abound to the point of

Walter Allen's regarding it as the "first successful thriller" (1986: 97-98). Ann Radcliffe counts on these very elements to keep up the reader's interest until she explains away all the supposedly supernatural events[2]. So, to make for the absence of actual supernatural entities the author creatively produces many adventures and critical situations in which the protagonists have their courage and reasoning tested in contrast to the superstitious fear that seem to take over. There is a constant need to fight superstition away, especially by the more educated people who, in spite of their total disbelief in superstitious threats, find themselves doubtful, whereas the uncultivated lower classes adhere unquestioningly to any form of superstition. Consequently, when mysterious voices or sounds, shadows or figures, are heard or seen they assume at first a supernatural significance that will be rationalized by the end of the novel. Apart from her peculiar handling of the supernatural, Ann Radcliffe multiplies and varies the kinds of adventures 'imposed' mainly on Emily, the heroine. Emily, the typical Gothic heroine, fragile but brave and intelligent, in her condition of a destitute orphan faces her destiny with resignation but also with determination. Yet, her destiny exposes her to plentiful worldly dreads that provide the story with enough terrors as if to compensate for the lack of more weird agents. For that reason social outcasts such as smugglers, banditti, murderers, gamblers, and their atrocious doings come in great profusion to menace the heroine's reputation and welfare. Reputation and danger go together in <u>The Mysteries of Udolpho</u> as they do in most Gothic novels in accordance with the Feminist

tendency of Gothic Literature. Gothic paraphernalia of terror enable women to partake in adventures previously designed for men only. The excuse of impending danger led women to defend their purity 'outdoors' thus contriving to expand the restricted space assigned to women since "it was only indoors, in Mrs. Radcliffe's day, that the heroine of a novel could travel brave and free, and stay respectable" (Moers 197).

Respectability will also classify honourable men against corrupted villains. Evil and wicked men/women become necessary as source of perils and mysteries. In The Mysteries of Udolpho all the treacherous acts of Montoni and the hypocritical malignity of Mme. Cheron towards her niece receive further supplement from the events in the many narratives-within-narrative as well as from the retelling of past happenings that clarify present mysteries. Moreover, the contrast between honest and wicked people serves to stress, in the novel's context, the hypocrisy of social relations, the worship of appearances, the importance of money and property to social (urban) life (Moers 207), the risks of depending on kinship ties, and other problems alike.

Kinship oppression here is more than only questioned, it is denounced, even though through exaggerated examples of kinsmen's tyranny. When Emily finds herself trusted to the care of her ambitious aunt the attacks on her freedom make her discontent to carry on her filial duty and the respect for her dead father's wishes. Emily will fight for her liberty of choice; she will not marry unwillingly -she even refuses two marriage proposals that were quite forced on her.

Another form of oppression that cannot go unnoticed has to do with Ann Radcliffe's "antipathy to the Roman Catholics" (Baker 201). She calls attention to the danger represented by the Inquisition's measures to capture eventual sinners through the "Denunzie secrete or lion's mouths" (The Mysteries of Udolpho 423)[3] where anyone could be falsely accused. Ann Radcliffe later dedicates a whole novel, The Italian (1797) to the terrors of Inquisition.

All those aspects of The Mysteries of Udolpho stay somewhat veiled by several circumstances such as the great length of the novel, many philosophical digressions and landscape descriptions, melancholy broodings, the interspersion of poetry, and chiefly the great number of characters and side stories. However, modern criticism has better tools to analyse with profundity what the Gothic intricacies hide.

Such a complicated plot has in addition a vast number of Gothic stock elements so that for the sake of a comprehensive view of all these paraphernalia here follows a list: the orphan heroine; the melancholy hero; corrupted persecutors; silly/loyal servants; Gothic castle; convent; grandeur of landscapes; secret passages and chambers; ruined tower/turret; vaults; open grave; haunted rooms; track of blood; gusts of wind; storm; mysterious miniature; veiled picture; murders and murderers; banditti; smugglers; pirates; concealed identities; love affairs; narrative-within-narrative; clandestine meetings; Inquisition; elopements; poisoning; corpses; moving pall.

II.5 - The Monk.

The action of The Monk: Romance (1796) by Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1817) takes place in the Spain of Inquisition times. The author has come up with an extensive cast of characters who, in their turn, face endless 'Gothic' problems. The nature and form of presentation of these problems help to include the work in the Gothic School of Horror.

The story has three circumstances that connect Lorenzo, one of the melancholy heroes, to the three main interlinked narratives in the novel. First, he comes to Madrid to visit his sister Agnes who is a nun at St. Claire's convent. Second, before going to the Convent he does not miss the opportunity of attending a sermon of the abbot Ambrosio, the latest sensation in Spain at the time. Third, at the crowded Capuchin church he chances to meet funny Leonella and her beautiful niece Antonia with whom he falls in love at first sight. The three stories, though closely related, develop quite independently without losing touch.

The story of Agnes is mostly disclosed by her lover Raymond who happens to have been Lorenzo's schoolmate and is Antonia's uncle. Raymond explains that he was travelling through Europe under false identity for safety reasons and describes that he came to know Agnes at Lindenberg Castle (Germany) where he was a special guest for having saved Agnes' aunt, Donna Rodolpha, from banditti in France. Agnes corresponds to Raymond's affection; however, before dying, her mother had promised Agnes should become a nun.

Raymond intercedes for her with Donna Rodolpha who, feeling betrayed in her love for Raymond, expels him from the castle. Helped by Theodore, his loyal page, Raymond and Agnes plan to elope by using the legend of the Bleeding Nun as cover for their flight. The "real" Bleeding Nun appears and frustrates the entire scheme. Only with the help of the Wandering Jew does Raymond get rid of this supernatural entity and is able to return to Spain to seek Agnes who had decided to confine herself in the convent. By means of clandestine meetings the lovers do not resist temptation and Agnes becomes pregnant. To their despair Ambrosio intercepts their message and presently denounces Agnes to the infuriated prioress who takes to herself the right to punish Agnes' crime. Agnes begs Ambrosio's help in vain and curses his lack of undestanding of wordly temptations. The prioress locks her on a subterranean dungeon under the cemetery vaults of St. Claire's convent to expiate but tells Lorenzo that Agnes died of a miscarriage.

Ambrosio resents Agnes' curse but feels secure and proud of his virtues and chastity. He has never been exposed to society's wickedness and never stepped out of the monastery's doors since he was left there at the age of two (unknown origins). He prided himself for being regarded by society as saint. In such a context his firmness is shattered when a novice reveals herself to be a woman and confesses her love for him. After much resistance on Ambrosio's part, due to his concern with his reputation, Ambrosio yields ardently to a long suppressed passion and turns into Matilda's lustful lover. He soon becomes insatiable and despises Matilda when he is helplessly attracted by Antonia's innocence and

beauty. Matilda, nevertheless, helps him to possess Antonia by means of sorcery and compacts with the Devil. Blind with desire, Ambrosio kills Elvira (Antonia's mother) and fakes Antonia's death in order to place her at the cemetery vaults where he plans to possess her even by force.

In the meantime, Lorenzo and Raymond manage to discover the prioress' evil doings; her atrocities are unfolded during St. Claire's procession. The enraged mob sets fire to the convent and kills the prioress and her accomplices. Lorenzo rescues Agnes from the damp dungeon and catches Ambrosio just after his having raped and murdered Antonia who considered herself dishonoured and unworthy of Lorenzo. Sometime later Agnes and Raymond get married and so does Lorenzo, although not before long mourning Antonia.

Ambrosio and Matilda are brought to the Inquisition trial where after cruel tortures Ambrosio confesses his crimes regretting only his detection. Matilda presents him with a way out of his death penalty on the fires of the Auto da Fe: a book with which the Devil can be summoned. He hesitates until the last minute when he invokes the Devil to be taken out of the cell. No sooner has the Devil obeyed his wish than Ambrosio is carried to Sierra Morena mountains where the Devil reproaches his vanity and tells him Elvira was his mother and Antonia his sister. Ambrosio prays for God's mercy but the Devil throws him down the precipice. It takes him six days to die slowly devoured by birds of prey.

Among the Gothic novels The Monk[4] may be the most permissive of all. It seems as though the whole of Gothic devices converged to the sole purpose of setting free repressed desires, sinful desires

in the main. Eroticism in this novel runs the gamut, since the main characters' troubles derive almost exclusively from their unrestrained burning passions. Agnes and Raymond do not resist temptation and break two taboos at the same time, for Agnes besides being a maid is also a nun so that they violate the laws of society and the laws of the Church. As to Elvira, she and her husband had been forced to leave the country not to offend further a parent whose son affronted parental power with an unwanted marriage. M. G. Lewis even rescues the legend of the Bleeding Nun who defies her parents' wishes for the sake of her love; or, in other words, her sexuality proved to be stronger than her filial duties. Even Marguerite's (Theodore's mother) misfortunes are the result of her yielding to a passion which made her deaf to her father's warnings. Finally, in the case of Ambrosio, the discovery of his (repressed) sexuality has triggered the process of his moral decadence that compelled him to his total ruin and torturing death.

M. G. Lewis' bold novel, in spite of its popularity, was viewed by many as immoral, so much so that due to its great impact the author had to take out the most "objectionable passages" (Beers 413). Moreover, it may be precisely to guarantee the 'expression' of this eroticism that Lewis "reaches the heights of sensationalistic terror" (Daiches 700) and explores almost all Gothic stock devices at hand. The presence of supernatural agents and rituals of sorcery, the varied array of cruelties distributed by evil nuns, robbers, Inquisitors, and all the gruesome places as dungeons, cemeteries, vaults, convents and castles, this complete concentration of Gothic elements that create horror create also the

possibility to write about taboos. Lots of taboos indeed, if one only examines Frederick Karl's list of Ambrosio's perversions: "a voyeur, a rapist, a sadist, a masochist, a necrophiliac, a matricide, as well as incestuous; at his best, a profaner and a masturbator" (1975: 254). Gothic horror here is thus working as a façade against censorship.

The novel offers many polemic themes that require an analysis adequate to the level of their complexity which is not in the scope of the present survey. Nonetheless, even a 'superficial' probing for the deeper implications of what might be regarded as traditional Gothic nonsense reveals that quality can also be found in the midst of such machinery. So, implied in Ambrosio's moral vanity supported and hailed by all Spain there appears the hypocrisy that moves society. The falsity of monastic life parallels the falsity and fragility of social relations and institutions. Chastity and reputation join religious rules to govern people's minds and regulate their behaviour. The character of Agnes rescues female sexuality and suggests a new (and permissive) complacence, the emerging of a man who actually marries a woman no longer virgin (his former lover) instead of abandoning her. Furthermore, Matilda is the fatal woman who fights for her sexuality, is not defeated, and in the end enjoys earthly power and voluptuousness due to her ability to deal with the Evil One (Ambrosio has no such ability). Ambrosio, as a monk, embodies more intensely the anxiety with which a human being is filled when tyrannized by social conventions. The artificiality of his monastic seclusion and his venerated image build up Ambrosio's conceited

vanity that helps him to fit in his role of a 'saint'. However, this role goes against his ardent nature so that the vanity of thinking himself immune to temptation thrusts him into a progressive downfall. From his almost sensuous devotion to the iconic image of the Virgin as well as his obedience to Church laws Ambrosio succumbs to carnal (human) desire just to end up by invoking the opposite object of his former faith, the Devil himself. Quoting Jerrold Hogle, Ambrosio's 'Gothic' dilemma is that "The hero must feel desire for what these signs [Church's mechanical interdiction] hold out and then be tortured with the guilt of profanation by related figurations in the same arena." (1980: 339).

It bears repeating that criticism on the Roman Catholic Church is a characteristic of Gothic Literature and here most evident still. But another point may be even more relevant which is the characters' fight for individual freedom in all dimensions of life. Absence of individual freedom and respect can generate social outcasts - an ever present imagery in Gothicism.

In this novel the amount of Gothic stock devices actually surpasses that found in the majority of works of this genre. To keep a clearer idea of the whole number of elements the best thing to do is to try and cite them all. There are several narratives-within-narrative, orphan heroines, corrupted persecutors, melancholy young men, the Bleeding Nun, Wandering Jew, Devil, ghosts, evil nuns, murderers, banditti, silly/loyal servants, gipsy fortune teller (a prophecy), Inquisition, tortures, Devil worship, sorcery, hellish fires, castle, convents, cemeteries, secret

passages, hidden dungeons, vaults, disgusting descriptions of decaying bodies with worms, reptiles and insects, magic mirror and elixirs, narcotic myrtles, revealing dreams, clandestine meetings, incest, rape, concealed identities, parents X children conflict, love affairs, poisoning, and elopements.

II.6- Melmoth, the Wanderer.

The work written by Charles Robert Maturin (1782-1824) Melmoth, the Wanderer, published in 1820 offers a quite cosmopolitan touch through narratives set in Ireland, England, Spain, Germany, and on an Indian Island. On account of the wandering condition of its protagonist the span of time of the novel ranges from the 17thC to the 19thC. Like the previous one (The Monk), this novel belongs to the Gothic School of Horror.

The novel is divided into four volumes each of which containing narratives of people who witnessed (and suffered) the malignant presence of Melmoth the Wanderer, a former puritanical preacher. The first volume starts in Ireland in the year 1816 with the arrival of young John Melmoth at his dying uncle's house. The uncle is a miser who dies of a fright of the curse of their ancestor Melmoth, the Traveller. Young John is soon acquainted with the story of this ancestor who survives through the centuries. John himself sees the threatening figure of Melmoth who usually appears before the death of a Melmoth. After his uncles's death John burns the 1646-portrait of Melmoth and reads the Old Manuscript written

by the Englishman Stanton who had been a victim of Melmoth's persecution. The first time Stanton saw Melmoth was in Spain (1677), where Melmoth caused much harm to two lovers and their families. Obsessed by this fact Stanton endeavours to trace up Melmoth in London (1681). Exactly as Melmoth had foretold, Stanton was sent to a madhouse where Melmoth visited him to offer a way out from the inmates' torturing lunacies. Stanton rejected the outrageous deal. The manuscript ends with Stanton's decision to seek Melmoth restlessly.

The next tale comes from the Spaniard who is rescued from a shipwreck and lodges at John's. He narrates all the horrors he went through during his forced monastic life. He is the illegitimate son of a Spanish couple dominated by an unscrupulous ecclesiastic (the Director) who commanded their lives in the name of religious fear. The Director defended that Alonso ought to become a monk (even against his own wish) in order to pay for his mother's sin. Alonso takes the vows for compassion of his mother and while at the monastery he can see all the hypocrisy and wickedness hidden behind the convent's walls. After many tortures, falsities, an unsuccessful reclaiming of his monastic vows, a frustrated attempt of escape in collusion with his brother who is killed in the act (here is inserted the revolting 'within-narrative' of the Parricide's sadistic killing of two lovers who were driven to cannibalism), Alonso is visited by Melmoth. He is horrified by the "incommunicable condition" (Melmoth, the Wanderer 237)[5] of Melmoth's proposal to save him from the hands of the Inquisition and refuses his help. Condemned by the Inquisitors, Alonso finally

manages to run away from the Inquisition prison on the occasion of a great fire.

The third volume shows Alonso living with an old Jewish wizard on a secret underground hideout in Madrid and translating an old manuscript in gratitude for having been saved from Inquisition persecution and offered a safe place to hide. The manuscript contains the story of Immalee, a Spanish girl who was left alone in a desert island on the Indian Sea and reared by Nature itself, remaining innocent as well as ignorant of human wickedness. When she is 17 Melmoth comes to her island and they become good friends. Immalee's innocence conquers Melmoth who gives up trying to corrupt her; he instead shows her the hypocrisy of civilization through the depiction of the atrocities promoted by the several religious creeds. Unaware of any danger Immalee confesses her love for him who abandons her not to do her any harm. However, three years later they are to meet again in Madrid where she then lives with her family since she was found in her island and brought home. Unknown to her family she keeps meeting Melmoth. Now a devoted Christian, Isidora persuades him to marry her so as to enable them to inform her parents of their affair. Melmoth fakes a marriage ritual to please her but does not permit her to tell her parents about it. Led by her now undisguised pregnancy and her father's wish to marry her off to a rich man, she presses Melmoth to see her parents. He comes on the very day of her engagement party to the astonishment of all guests. Isidora's brother dies in a confront with Melmoth who wants Isidora to go away with him, she however, stays with her family. Isidora bears a girl who happens to die at the Inquisition

prison a short time before her mother who has declined from Melmoth's conditions to save her. Still she hopes to see him again in Paradise.

Interpolated among the episodes of Immalee's story are Melmoth's two narratives of people tempted by him: "Tale of Guzman's Family" and "The Lover's Tale." In the first tale emphasis is laid on the horrors of poverty which make a desperate son sell his own blood in order to provide for his family, and his beautiful sister to consider prostitution as a means to obtain food. Melmoth tempts Walberg (the father) in vain. In the second tale two English lovers are separated by the ambition-ridden lies invented by the bridegroom's mother who wanted him to marry his other cousin and heiress of Mortimer's fortune. When they learn the truth, John Mortimer's mind goes deranged, and his beloved Elinor carefully looks after him. Melmoth starts tempting her but is prevented by a priest who used to be Melmoth's friend by the time he sold his soul in exchange for forbidden knowledge.

All narratives over, Melmoth joins John and the Spaniard to tell them the time of his death is coming. Nobody during his 150-year wanderings ever bargained their soul. Now that his 'master' has summoned him, Melmoth dreams about his own death falling from a precipice and forsaken by all whom he had tempted.

The Irish Anglican curate Charles Robert Maturin's attempt to criticize Catholicism through his complex Gothic novel embues the tale with a heavy atmosphere of religious consciousness. For that, Maturin restricts the use of traditional Gothic elements, though not to the point of altogether suppressing them, and concentrates

instead much more on the psychological side of human despair. To Frederick Karl the novel "is, at once, existential, psychological, indeed pathological, mythical, religious, and, even political." (1975: 268). Each story depicts in different ways the progressive despair that torments the characters, driven to the utmost exasperation without nevertheless consenting to bargain their souls when Melmoth beckons with the possibility of escape. The large number of interlinked stories connected with the Wanderer's interference boil down to a single and same fear, that of losing one's soul and along with it, eternal hope.

The recurrent Gothic theme of SALVATION/DAMNATION in this novel derives from the protagonist Melmoth in whom Charles Maturin "skilfully blends together the legends of Faust, Mephistopheles and the Wandering Jew" (Neill 104). Melmoth, in a first instance, sells his soul due to "a boundless aspiration after forbidden knowledge" (MW 499) only to his maximum disappointment for "all he gains from this semiomniscience may be an ironic sense of tempests, dungeons, and fearful hours destroying the world he would master" (Hogle 352), so that he is doomed to wander in search of some wretched person willing to exchange places with him.

No matter how hard he tries, no matter which means he adopts to lure people to deal with him, he always fails in his quest. Through the story of Stanton readers are shown, by vivid descriptions, the extreme sufferings of remaining sane among mad people until "you wish to become one of them, to escape the agony of consciousness" (MW 56). As to Alonso, he undergoes pressures far beyond the limits of endurance in the hands of despotic and

hypocritical monks and inquisitors. His forced monastic life is itself a consequence of paternal tyranny in an attempt to redeem the 'sinful' mother who is directed by a noxious priest, her confessor. Filial duty and the bad influence of Catholic religion hinder personal freedom leading people to sacrifices. The double of Alonso needs thus to be someone who can best convey his rebellion -the parricide (Karl 270). In Immalee's case, she loses her innocence, her love, her family, and her daughter in the Inquisition prison, but not her soul. The 'Tale of Guzman's Family' presents a suffocating account of the hardships poverty imposes on the members of a family. The ambitious mother of John, in the 'Lover's Tale', by separating him from his beloved Elinor causes his illness. Elinor is tempted by Melmoth but like Stanton, Alonso, Immalee, and Walberg she refuses his offer. The Gothic stock devices in these episodes appear adequately directed to highlight the mental conflicts. Physical suffering and Gothic terrors only enhance the psychological implicatons, never forgetting the crucial predominance of salvation/damnation over decision-making in all characters.

The complicated structure of so many stories-within-stories, the plurality of characters and minor characters, the varied events linked to the central figure of Melmoth, the involution of time transitions, are factors that render the novel quite difficult to follow. It takes determination to conquer this difficulty and examine the thousand themes hidden behind the Gothic atmosphere of Melmoth, the Wanderer.

Even though Maturin concentrates on the psychological area to create Gothic terror, the list of traditional Gothic elements remains a long one: the Wandering villain; orphan heroines; brave young heroes; persecuted Jews; parricide; fortune tellers; exorcisers; compact with the Devil; supernatural events; secret passages, old manuscripts; convents; mysterious portraits; murders and murderers; concealed identities; eroticism; sadism; cannibalism; tortures; skeletons; parents X children conflict; narratives-within-narrative inside interlinked tales; love affairs; clandestine meetings; blood-monger; and elopements.

II.7 - Dracula.

Dracula, the 5th novel written by Bram Stoker (1847-1912) and published in 1897, has its action set in a contemporary England with escapades to 'primitive' Transylvania, a perfect scenario for stories of Vampirism. The number of characters is somewhat reduced in comparison to other Gothic novels once there is no story-within-story in its structure.

From the English solicitor Jonathan Harker's diary the first contact with Count Dracula is drawn. The atmosphere of superstitious dread that envolves Jonathan's journey through Transylvanian territory anticipates his gloomy and menacing stay at the Count's ruined castle. Local inhabitants pity him and give him amulets against the Evil Eye and for his personal protection. The strange circumstances of his arrival at the castle, near the midnight hour, (the mysterious driver, the absence of servants)

keep Jonathan in constant alarm. Dracula attributes his decision to settle in London to his fondness of this splendid city and explains that he chose to buy an old house to satisfy his love of tradition. As time goes by Jonathan gradually realizes his condition as prisoner at the same time that he witnesses weird events such as no reflexion of Dracula's image on the mirror, three voluptuous women that wanted to suck Jonathan's blood, the Count's lizard-like climbing of walls, and his lair in a coffin at a chapel's vault among other minor bizarre occurrences. Finally, Dracula feels ready to voyage to England leaving Jonathan behind to try (and succeed) his do-or-die escape.

Meanwhile, through written and phonographed diaries all the other characters are introduced and their link to Dracula's affair is little by little established. Lucy, a friend of Jonathan's fiancée Mina, became one of the Count's first victims having her blood all sucked out, despite several blood transfusions, till she was transformed into an un-dead wanderer, a vampire like Dracula. The only way to have her soul saved consists in cutting off her head and thrusting a stake through her heart. The whole affair unites in friendship ties Lucy's three admirers, Dr Van Helsing, Mina and her now husband Jonathan, who joins them after recovering from a brain fever. The friends form a little brigade to save humanity against the danger represented by Dracula's threat. For that, they combine their skills and scientific knowledge in order to destroy the Count and save Mina, the next victim of the powerful enemy. Dracula manages to make a blood compact with her thus crushing down all efforts for her protection. Now, it is not enough

to sterilize with holy objects Dracula's many hidden lairs, but it is fundamental to follow him up to Transylvania and kill him as the only means to save the soul of his victims. The friends devise a minutely detailed scheme to reach the Count before he gets to his castle. The plan includes journeys by train, launch, horses, carriages, and the help of telepathic communication between Mina and Dracula. As they approach the castle superstitious measures function better than more rational ones to exterminate so weird an entity so much so that Van Helsing safeguards Mina inside a circle drawn with holy bread, having later to repeat the same ritual applied to Lucy's death in order to eliminate the three women who had attacked Jonathan. The same happens to the Count himself who turns into dust when Jonathan and Quincey (the American admirer of Lucy) perform the ritual. Quincey is stabbed and dies on the occasion. Seven years later Jonathan and Mina return to Transylvania where the desolated castle stands and vivid memories still linger.

In his introduction to the book A. N. Wilson refers to Bram Stoker as the author who has manipulated better the mythology into which the folkloric image of "Dracula, Prince Vlad V of Wallachia" (1431-1476) has been transformed (1991: xiii-xvi). Even though Dracula is not the first novel on vampirism[6], and most surely not the last one, it became the most famous and stands as a world's classic. Out of the Roumanian lore Bram Stoker gave new life to the traditional figure and patterns of the vampire-myth taking the blood-thirsty Count Dracula to the Hall of Fame.

A masterpiece of its genre, Dracula shares many of the Gothic characteristics observed in the previous works. The action, though brought temporarily to England, has its origins as well as dénouement in far Transylvania where lies Count Dracula's ruined castle and the vampire's lair among the vaults of a chapel. Curiously, there is even a 'time-travel', in addition to the displacement from England-Transylvania, caused not by the narrative of old manuscripts but instead by the primitive state of this strange land with its superstition-ridden people that provides the tale with the necessary taste of 'ancient past'. As to the supernatural element the novel focuses on vampirism only, thus converging all attention to the sensual Count and his macabre deeds. The atmosphere in which these deeds, or the action, take place is carefully built to sustain a constant thrilling suspension either in Transylvania or in urban London where a much richer elaboration is required to create the sense of danger and terror to equal the Transylvanian mood. Thus the author resorts to old houses to suit Dracula's needs, the lunatic asylum (Dr Seward's clinic) with the many horrors lived by the inmate Renfield, the cemetery vaults where most sacrilegous profanations are performed, all perfectly Gothic scenarios for mystery and terror.

The terrors represented by villainous Count Dracula and his compulsion to suck the blood of pure women, for his own survival and consequent creation of a race of un-dead, have eroticism as an additional ingredient. The erotic implications increase the intensity of Dracula's threat. According to John Allen Stevenson's article "A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of Dracula", the

Count's sexuality can reveal a xenophobic fear on the part of Englishmen once Dracula, as a foreigner, plans to 'invade' England, have intercourse (blood-sucking) with its females until they turn into un-dead beings like himself. Stevenson defends an "anti-incestuous model of human desire" in Dracula to explain the need for exogamy (marriage out) that compels the Count always to look for women (wives) that already belong to other men. As soon as he possesses these women through blood-compact (blood in the novel has the double function of nourishment and procreation), they automatically become his kin (daugthers), of his own race. He must therefore avoid them and start all over again to look for the next wife-daughter. Stevenson stresses the English reluctance to 'otherness', that is, foreign manners that might jeopardize stability and even modify standards of female sexuality since the un-dead women are clearly sexualized beings. Therefore Dracula and all he stands for must be destroyed. His head cut off and a stake through his heart would mean, in Stevenson's view, a "desexualization" and end of foreign power (1988: 139-149).

This ritualistic killing of Dracula may also reflect a still standing religious preoccupation with man's salvation or damnation, one of the greatest concerns of Gothic novels. No wonder the five brave men unite to fight against the embodiment of superstition, the vampire, on God's behalf. Actually, religion and science represent civilization, more specifically England in its "enlightened age" (Dracula 321)[7] whereas superstition mirrors the primitive of places such as Transylvania -places that need improvement (imperialistic colonization).

Even though Dracula was written almost in the 20thC it nevertheless has points in common with the interests of earlier Gothic works and their underlying criticism. However, it is worth mentioning the queer mixing of technological advances (phonograph, typewriter, telegraph, blood transfusion) in contrast to all the amulets and vampire machinery, maybe a well-succeeded anticipation of the open possibilities for the terror novels to come.

In Dracula the Gothic paraphernalia relate specifically to the vampire machinery so that the elements found in the novel consist of vampirism, supernatural events, a castle, churchyards, old chapels and houses, vaults, coffins, undead beings, command of nature and wild animals, blood compacts, amulets, sorcery rituals, disgusting descriptions of animal-eating, murders, cut-off heads and staked hearts, eroticism, love affairs, poisoning, and diaries instead of old manuscripts.

Dracula seems to be the only exception to the above group of seven novels in which the narrative does not suffer from an overloading of Gothic stock elements. However, its high reliance on Vampire imagery, with its own paraphernalia, produces an unbalance that shakes the novel's sobriety. Maybe one of the major deficiencies of most Gothic novels consists precisely of OVERABUNDANCE. There are innumerable characters to face the never-ending terrors spread through the several stories- within-story that compose the thick Gothic books. As a result, balance inevitably lacks, a fact that enhances the prejudice with which

Gothic Literature has been regarded. Conversely, it is balance, among other factors, that distinguishes Mary Shelley's Gothic novel Frankenstein.

NOTES

[1] Beckford, William. Vathek. 1786. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983.
From now on this novel will be referred to as V and page number.

[2] Ann Radcliffe's only novel in which a 'real' ghost appears is Gaston de Blondville which was published posthumously in 1826 (Beers 261).

[3] Radcliffe, Ann. The Mysteries of Udolpho. 1794. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.
Hereafter all references in the text will be made to this edition as MU plus page number.

[4] Lewis, Matthew G. The Monk. 1796. New York: Grove Press, 1978.
All references to this novel will be made as M and page number.

[5] Maturin, Charles. Melmoth, the Wanderer. 1820. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.
All references to this novel will be made as MW followed by page number.

[6] See as British examples Dr John Polidori's The Vampyre (1819), Thomas Pecket Prest's Varney the Vampire (1847),and Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla (1872)

[7] Stoker, Bram. Dracula. 1897. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.
From now on the references in the text will be made as D and page number.

CHAPTER III

FRANKENSTEIN, OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ONE OF THE MOST ENDURING OF THE GOTHIC NOVELS

This chapter presents an analysis of Frankenstein that will focus mainly on finding aspects that can help to explain both the endurance and the uniqueness of Mary Shelley's novel. For this purpose it will be relevant to have first a critical look into the author's biographical data which, in the case of Frankenstein, play a significant part on the novel's philosophical content. After that a plot summary containing the cast of characters and a brief roll of Gothic characteristics are also provided so as to make the understanding of the analysis that will follow easier.

III.1 - Mary Shelley's Personal Life and Frankenstein.

Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Percy Bysshe Shelley: three outstanding English minds of the late 18thC and early 19thC

who have each a fundamental part in the personality formation of Mary Wollstonecraft (Godwin) Shelley, author of Frankenstein. So strong an influence would they exert upon Mary's life and literary career that any attempt to analyse her work remains incomplete without an integrated biographical outline of the four intellectuals so as to supply the analysis with revealing information. In the specific case of Frankenstein this kind of information enriches and adds quality to the understanding of a novel which reflects most of Mary Shelley's deepest anxieties.

One of Mary Shelley's later anxieties may have developed precisely from her parents' decision to legitimate her birth as a form to, by conforming to society's rules, lead a peaceful life. Such determination could have no further consequences were it not for the radical philosophical beliefs of Mary's renowned parents. Her mother, the celebrated feminist theoretician and author of Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792), used to regard marriage as "legalized prostitution" while her father, the rationalist thinker William Godwin, in his turn, shared this conviction dismissing matrimony as "the worst of all laws" (Gilbert & Gubar eds. 237). Though contrary to legal marriage the couple had nonetheless agreed to this union in face of Mary Wollstonecraft's second pregnancy -Wollstonecraft already had a daughter, Fanny Imlay, by her American lover Gilbert Imlay.

However, the longed for happiness was interrupted when after having given birth to Mary Godwin on August 30th 1797 the mother did not resist a puerperal fever and died in eleven days. The death of Mary's famous mother originated two more anxieties that would

accompany her throughout her life: the lack of a mothering care and the phantoms related to BIRTH that would haunt her early adulthood.

As to mothering care it was in Godwin's hands to try and provide the two children with the necessary substitutes. Once he found himself unable to cope with such a responsibility on his own, he hired Louisa Jones as governess in order to look after the girls. Louisa got attached to them and to Mary in particular but their relation ended when Louisa eloped with one of Godwin's disciples leaving Mary without the "only mother she had ever known" (Mellor 4-5). Soon enough Godwin came up with the figure of the 'stepmother' with whom a proper family could then be established. In 1801 Mary's father espoused the widow Mrs Mary Jane Clairmont, mother of Jane and Charles.

The Godwin household, composed of children of half parentage ties received in 1803 a new member, William, who was to become the new Mrs Godwin's favourite child. As Mary grew up the atmosphere of this home felt heavy on her shoulders. She hated her stepmother, resented the cold distance of her idolized father and recognized herself as the only progeny of so distinguished parents. Though sentimentally cool Godwin expected much of her who soon became aware of this, as it reads on her Journal: "To be something great and good was the precept given me by my Father" (Hindle 11).

Ironically, however, Mary was never sent to school despite Godwin's intellectual expectations about her, and unlike the two boys in the family, she only received lessons in singing and reading music (Mellor 11). Yet, with the access to her father's library and also the opportunity of meeting the friends of her

father's circle such as Coleridge, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Wordsworth, Thomas Holcroft, Humphry Davy, and many others, Mary became not only bookish (she used to read several books simultaneously) but also intellectually curious. The first sign of her wish to correspond to her 'destiny' may have been the publication of her first work "Mounseer Nongtongpaw", at the early age of eleven, by the Godwin Company's Juvenile Library.

Even though much attached to her father, always willing to conquer his approval, Mary was a headstrong adolescent of an uncongenial temper with her stepmother, which forced Godwin to send her away in 1812 to live with a friend's family in Scotland. Mary experienced moments of pure happiness during her stay at the Baxters', the comfort and cheerfulness of a bourgeois family that she would later idealize in most of her literary production (Mellor 16).

Almost immediately after her returning home Mary met the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley who had become a constant presence in the Godwin household. Some months earlier Percy had taken courage to introduce himself as a humble disciple of whom he thought the unparalleled philosopher, author of Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793). Godwin welcomed the enthusiastic admirer of his ideas who also possessed the quality of being a baronet's heir and would consequently be of a great help to his decadent business. Thus Percy enjoyed singular popularity with the whole family when Mary rejoined them. Percy and Mary felt highly attracted to each other in spite of his being already a husband and a father. As Anne K. Mellor puts it, the origins of their passion might most surely

have to do, on Mary's part, with Percy's veneration to both her parents and Percy would accordingly see in Mary the brilliant offspring of his two idols (1989: 20-21). Even the scenario where Mary declared her love for him could not be more suggestive, the St. Pancras Churchyard by Mary Wollstonecraft's tomb.

On learning of the love affair between his daughter and the 'married man' Shelley, Godwin opposed their relation. To no purpose resulted his complaints and the couple eloped to France in 1814 accompanied by Mrs Godwin's daughter Jane. Out of their adventures in France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland Mary wrote History of a Six Weeks Tour (1817) and still during this period she began writing "Hate" which got lost leaving no clue to posterity as to the meaning of its title to Mary's feelings. Even on tour both Percy and Mary proved to be productive in terms of writing, not to mention the many readings they did.

The idyll reached an end when, highly indebted and driven by total lack of money, they were forced to return to London. Their financial situation stabilized sensibly after the death of Percy's grandfather which permitted him to negotiate his inheritance with his father. The relief caused by the increased income was not enough to soften Mary's grief when in 1815 Clara, her first baby, died before completing one month. This tragic event impressed the young Mary to the extent of making her doubt her capability of creating life instead of death, to dream that her baby could be rubbed back into life and to internally reproach Shelley's indifference to the death of her child which, in her view, revealed his non-commitment as a father. Together these concerns of hers

have conspicuously concurred to delineate some of the main themes of Frankenstein, Mary's "hideous progeny" (Frankenstein, 1831 author's introduction 60)[1]

Many significant events would mark the year in which Mary started writing Frankenstein, 1816. Right at its beginning Mary gave birth to a son, William, who seemed strong enough to survive. Later on in May the couple, William and Jane (renamed Claire) set out to Switzerland to join Lord Byron and his physician John William Polidori. While Percy became a good friend of Byron's, Claire entered a unilateral love affair with the latter poet. A certain intimacy among the group members was established stimulating the right atmosphere for intellectual discussions and clever conversation at Byron's Villa Diodati near Geneva[2]. These talkings were further prolonged by the rainy summer which confined the friends at home. As pastime they would gather to read ghost stories, mostly German horror tales translated into French. It was the poet Byron who suggested that each of them should write a ghost story of their own. Though all friends engaged in this entertainment only Dr Polidori wrote his The Vampyre (1819) and Mary who, encouraged by a revealing dream, took it seriously and concentrated on the writing of her tale (Frankenstein) which she would later develop into novel's length supported by Percy.

Still in 1816 Mary and her family returned to England where the news of two suicides would shock the couple. Fanny had killed herself and Harriet Shelley's body was found drowned in the Hyde Park's Serpentine. This way Percy could legally marry Mary, an act that earned Godwin's acquiescence. On the following year Mary

finished Frankenstein and gave birth to another girl, Clara Everina, who would die a year later, six months after the publication of Mary's novel. Death would still further obscure Mary's wish for family tranquility; not long before her only surviving son Percy Florence was born in 1819 had she suffered the loss of her baby William, and few years later in 1822 just when she was convalescing from a miscarriage her husband Percy drowned in the bay of Lerici in Italy where the couple had been living since 1818.

Despite the tension during their late years together, derived mainly from Mary's jealousy and reluctance to accept Percy's "free-love ethic" (Mellor 29), she dedicated the rest of her life to the rearing of Percy Florence, to her career as a writer, and to the difusion of her husband's literary legacy until she died in 1851. She refused all proposals of marriage not to have her name changed. Percy's father, Sir Thimothy, who had never considered her as family, discouraged her to use his surname so that often times Mary would refer to herself simply as 'Author of Frankenstein' (Pollin 1967).

III.2 - Summary of Frankenstein.

III.2.a - Note on the 1818 and 1831 editions.

The following summary of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus has its basis on the text revised by the author for the publication of the novel's third edition in 1831. Previous

to anything else, however, mention must be made to the changes found in the 1818 and 1831 editions of the book. In 1818 Mary Shelley had her novel first published anonymously only to assume its authorship in the edition of 1823. While the latter edition was a mere reprint, in 1831, on the other hand, Mary Shelley brought significant changes to her text (F, Note on Text 51). Even though some of these changes imply relevant philosophical import, such as the absence of **fate** in the 1818 text as opposed to its interference in the 1831 edition (Mellor 171), it is not in the scope of the present survey to go into details of the differences between the first and the third editions.[3]

There is, nevertheless, the need to explain the reasons to adopt the 1831 edition instead of the first one. The main reason for this choice has to do with the fact that although the 1818 text is the original version, the 1831 is the final and definitive one so that when it comes to the analysis one can consider the differences of the previous edition and can, at the same time, be sure that no later revisions would have altered the text. It is also noteworthy that these alterations occurred after Percy Bysshe Shelley's death (there is not his direct influence therefore), and when she was much older and more experienced than when she wrote Frankenstein in 1816. The introduction Mary Shelley adds in 1831 consists, too, in valuable information about her life and work. In order to clarify any doubt, references will be made in the summary below concerning the major changes from the 1818 edition.

III.2.b- Summary of the 1831 edition.

The novel begins with four letters (Dec 11th, 17-; 28th March, 17-; July 7th, 17-; August 5th, 17-) from the English Captain Robert Walton to his sister Margaret Saville in which he tells her of the progresses with regard to his undertaking in a quest for glory: his dreamed voyage of discovery to the North Pole. He describes some particulars of his crew, his fears about the accomplishment of the adventure and whether they will meet again or not, the need he feels of a sympathetic friend with whom he could share his impressions, expectations, anxieties. In the fourth letter Walton acknowledges the sight of a gigantic shape of a human being on a dog sledge on those isolated glaciers going North. To his and his crew's greater surprise they found on the following day a man drifting on an iceberg. The man would only accept to be taken on board after having been reassured the ship was northbound. As he, Victor Frankenstein, gradually recovers from his weakness, Walton identifies himself with the stranger's cultivated manners. Frankenstein decides to relate his story to the Captain on hearing of his same ambition for knowledge that had driven him to his utter destruction. Walton records the tale to send later the manuscript to his sister.

Frankenstein starts his narrative by referring to the integrity of his ancestors who had been all distinguished counsellors and syndics in Switzerland. His father, Alphonse Frankenstein, married Caroline Beaufort (daughter of a deceased friend) in the decline of his life (F 80) after having served his

country for many years. The couple spent the first years of their marriage abroad and it was in Naples that Victor was born. In Italy too at a village by the Lake Como Caroline met the orphan child Elizabeth Lavenza who had been reared so far by foster parents [1818: Elizabeth is actually the niece of Frankenstein's parents]. The girl was brought to their household and was intended to marry Victor in the future. Frankenstein stresses the love and cheerfulness of his infancy with his caring family, increased by two younger brothers Ernest and William.

At school Victor made friends with a merchant's son, Henry Clerval, who wanted to become a benefactor of humankind. Victor was rather concerned with discovering the "secrets of heaven and earth" (F 86) and for this he used to read Paracelsus, Cornelius Agripa and Albertus Magnus despite his father's contempt for them. Through the incident of a lightning bolt that crushed a tree to ashes when the family was at their country house in Belrive, Frankenstein was introduced, [1818: by his father] by a man of "great research" (F 89), to natural philosophy (electricity and galvanism). When he was 17 his parents decided to send him to study at a University in Ingolstadt. His departure was delayed by his mother's death, occasioned by her devotion to Elizabeth who had caught scarlet fever. Caroline's last wish concerned the union of Elizabeth and Victor.

Alone at Ingolstadt (Henry's father did not permit his son to study) he dedicated himself exclusively to his scientific studies. Professor Krempe scolded him for his previous attachment to the alchemists, but he found in Professor Waldman the right incentive

to his purposes. Frankenstein's progresses were astonishing until he realized he was capable of bestowing life upon dead matter, thus being able to create a new race which would reverence him as its CREATOR. After two years of isolation from friends and family, and hard work at his workshop (including visits to dissecting rooms and slaughter houses to collect materials) his creation was finally completed. "On a dreary night of November" (F 105) Frankenstein faced his living creature with extreme disgust at his hideousness and deformity (the 'monster' is 8 feet tall). Unable to bear its sight he fled to his bedchamber and had a nightmare about Elizabeth appearing as his dead mother. On the following day he wandered through the town and met Henry who had managed to convince his father to let him go to Ingolstadt to study. Frankenstein grew agitated but felt relieved to see the monster was gone from his workshop. However, the exertion was too much for him and he succumbed with fever. Henry nursed him for several months till Frankenstein recovered and joined Henry in his studies of Oriental languages. Henry restored Victor to his former self. They went on a tour to the mountains before Frankenstein could go back to Geneva. On their return a letter from Alphonse informed him of William's murder. Frankenstein immediately left for Geneva after a six-year absence.

When Frankenstein arrived in Geneva the gates of the town were shut and he had to go to a village for the night. Sleepless, he went to the place where his brother was killed just to see, in the midst of a storm, the monster he had created; and form that moment he suspected the creature to have been the murderer. Back home his

bereaved family warmly welcomed him and informed him that the murderer was already caught carrying a valuable miniature of Caroline, the temptation for the crime, and her trial would be on the following day: she was Justine Moritz, a girl whom Caroline had brought home to rear as a servant. Frankenstein though conscious of her innocence did not reveal the basis of his assumption fearing to be taken for a lunatic. So, Justine, although innocent was condemned to death having falsely confessed herself guilty pressed by her confessor who had threatened her with excommunication.

The injustice of Justine's death increased Frankenstein's anguish so that his only comfort came from his solitary ramblings through the mountains admiring nature (valley of Chamonix, Mont Blanc, the Arve, the Jura). During one of these walks he met the monster who approached him with "superhuman speed" (F 144). At first he repelled the creature but later acquiesced to listen to the fiend's story.

The monster's narrative goes back to that November night when he first awoke and saw Frankenstein fleeing from him. He left the workshop carrying with him Frankenstein's coat and was off to the forest of Ingolstadt. There he learned little by little to discern sounds, sensations, the uses of fire to provide light and warmth (it could also hurt), he enjoyed the beauty of nature and felt happy with his daily improvements. In search for food the monster had his first contact with men, all disastrous: an old man in a hut ran away from him; people from a little village attacked him with stones. He escaped to the countryside and found refuge in a hovel ajoining a cottage where he decided to remain after having examined

the place. A chink in the wall allowed him to observe the kind of life and movements of the three cottagers, a fact that enabled him to appreciate their gentle manners. The monster used to help them unknowingly at night not to be discovered. He wished to introduce himself to his cottagers but being aware of his hideous appearance (he had seen his image in a pool) he thus realized the necessity of mastering their language -"God-like science" (F 158)- before any attempt of approach. He already distinguished their names, 'father', the old blind man, Felix, the son, and Agatha, the daughter, when an agreable event accelerated his education. Safie, a Turkish girl, arrived and stayed with the cottagers bringing them the lost happiness.

The cottagers had to teach French to the new member of the family so that the monster profitted from her lessons and learned even faster than she did. They read aloud Volney's Ruins of Empires which acquainted the monster with forms of governments, division of property, wealth and poverty, rank, descent, noble blood. The monster now was able to understand also the cottagers' story.

They came from an affluent French family and had exiled in Germany on account of Felix's help to a Turkish merchant (Safie's father) who had been unjustly condemned to death. The Turk promised Felix the hand of his daughter but went back on his word when he was set free and planned to take Safie to Constantinople with him. The girl whose Christian-Arab mother had taught her the rights of women, refused to resign to her father's tyranny and eloped to Germany in order to join Felix.

The monster was also able to read some books he found in the woods: Goethe's Sorrows of Young Werther, Plutarch's Lives, and Milton's Paradise Lost. He read them as true and transferred the impressions to his own condition as Satan expelled from Paradise, an outcast. The monster longed for that love and domestic affection he had been so far denied and after being hidden in his hovel for one year he felt ready to address the blind old man, when he was left alone in the cottage. The old man, ignorant of the monster's deformity of shape, felt sympathetic to his claims but this tender moment was abruptly interrupted by the return of the other cottagers. On seeing the monster by the old man's side Felix attacked him, Agatha fainted and Safie ran away. Hurt, the only thing left to the monster was to escape to the woods.

Once again deserted by men and led by Frankenstein's diary which he had found in a pocket of his coat, the monster decided to look for his creator in Geneva for protection. On his way to Geneva, moved by rage, the monster had his last act of goodness when he saved a little girl who was about to drown in a river. The child's father instead of being grateful shot him and vanished. The monster now wanted revenge on humankind and cursed his creator. When he reached the neighbourhood of Geneva he met a little boy whom he intended to kidnap to rear as a friend. The boy, however, mentioned the name of his father, Frankenstein. Blind with fury the monster strangled William and stole the miniature of Caroline which he later placed on Justine's pocket when she was asleep on a barn nearby [1818: he does that while she passes by him].

His tale finished, the monster attributed his evil doings to all the injustice he suffered undeservedly. Telling Frankenstein that he was malicious because he was miserable, he asked for a female creature like himself to share his life and promised to retire with her from human society and go to the wastes of South America. Frankenstein hesitated much, in disgust for the killer of his brother, but at last reasoned that he as the creator of the being owed him some consideration and help. He finally consented to the terrible task.

Frankenstein needed the advice of some English experts in order to create the female being. He therefore alleged he wanted to travel to England before marrying Elizabeth. His father agreed on condition that Henry Clerval came along. In England while Henry delighted in visiting historical places Frankenstein brooded on the terrible deed he had to perform. He informed Henry he wanted seclusion for a while and went to a solitary Orkney island where he rented a hut to serve as his workshop.

The female being was half completed when Frankenstein realized the extent of the danger she meant to humanity. In a fit of despair he destroyed the body to the monster's agony for he had been watching the scene through the window. The two enemies quarrelled and the monster menaced Frankenstein: "I shall be with you on your wedding night." (F 213). Frankenstein's true wish was to kill himself but hatred, revenge and the need to protect his friends sustained his life. Before returning home he had first to get rid of the mutilated corpse that lay in his hut. He threw it down the sea and became extenuated with the effort to compose himself and

slept in his boat. When he awoke it was offshore. It took him many hours before he reached land only to be regarded by Irish villagers as the assassin of a young man. Frankenstein did not resist at the sight of his dead friend Henry and fainted. He spent some months in jail, with fever, until his father came to fetch him. In spite of being proved innocent on his trial, he affirmed he was the true murderer of William, Justine, and Henry. Mr Frankenstein credited such 'reveries' to Victor's deep grief and suggested he should hasten his marriage to Elizabeth so as to have some moments of relief and happiness. Frankenstein agreed and prepared himself to fight against the monster should he actually appear on his wedding night. What he failed to imagine was that the monster would plan the wittiest of revenges and murder not him but Elizabeth instead. Alphonse succumbed to his sorrows and died in a short time.

Frankenstein swore revenge and set out in pursuit of the monster. The monster, in his turn, guided Frankenstein through Russia and the glaciers of the Arctic regions making sure of Frankenstein's subsistence by supplying him with the necessary food until their final meeting on the North Pole.

It is right in this moment that Frankenstein is left adrift on a small piece of iceberg that Walton rescues him. Walton's ship finally breaks the ice that had been detaining its movement and Walton is forced to accept the sailors' claims to go southward instead of proceeding to the North. Walton reasons he cannot endanger the lives of innocent men for his own dreams of glory once the sailors are insensible to Frankenstein's discourse on heroism.

Despaired to learn the ship is southbound Frankenstein reacts, in vain; his weakness overpowers him. Before dying he entreats Walton to kill the monster in case they meet and advises him to live in tranquility and devoid of ambition. Frankenstein dies on September 11th, 17--.

Walton regrets the loss of such a special friend and writes to Margaret that he is returning without fulfilling his dream. The captain hears sounds in the cabin where lays the body of Frankenstein and finds the monster there looking at his master. The monster says he repents of what he did to Frankenstein, but is he the only to be blamed? He is a wretch whose only rest lies in death. Saying he would build his own funeral pire the monster steps off the ship and vanishes in "darkness and distance" (F 265). The novel ends thus.

In terms of the Gothic characteristics present in Mary Shelley's novel, which according to D. Varma belongs to the Horror School of Gothic (Karl 264), one can detect very typical devices of the genre. As to setting, the author spreads the action to several foreign countries, namely Switzerland, Italy, Germany, France, Scotland, Ireland, Russia, the Arctic region and a brief passage also takes place in Mary Shelley's native England. The time of action is the 18thC and the concentric structure of the narrative contains also some stories-within-story. Traditional characters of Gothic fiction appear in Frankenstein too: the melancholy young man (Victor, Felix), the virtuous, often orphan maiden (Elizabeth, Justine, Safie), the evil persecutor (the monster). The list of main Gothic stock elements includes Frankenstein's room (his secret

laboratory/workshop), cemetery, charnel house/dissecting room, dungeons, murders/murderer, corpses, magnificent landscapes, storms, love affairs, elopement, parental tyranny (children X parents conflict), dreams, coincidences, Frankenstein's diary, strict confessor, sadism, secret enterprise.

III.3 - Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus: a Study of Mary Shelley's Novel.

The making of Frankenstein dates back to that summer of 1816 when the Shelleys joined Byron and Dr Polidori at Villa Diodati in Switzerland. As mentioned earlier in this chapter Mary Shelley, urged by Byron's suggestion, strived to compose a frightening 'ghost' story. However, the anxiety not to disappoint the people (especially her father and her husband) who expected much of her supposedly 'inherited' literary talent haunted the young Mary who was not yet 18 but had already lost her first born child.

So, at first Mary "felt that blank incapability of invention" (F, 1831 author's introduction 58) but persevered to think of a story which could surpass in terror her opponents'. One day she listened to a talk of Percy and Byron about the experiments of Erasmus Darwin on galvanism and the possibility to bestow life upon a corpse. She herself admits in her introduction to the 1831 edition of Frankenstein that "[i]nvention... does not consist in creating out of void but out of chaos" and most probably the chaos produced by those talks on galvanism and the principles of life

might have 'organized' her inventiveness when she had the 'mental vision' that originated Frankenstein. Mary could not sleep on that night of June 16th so that she almost visualized the "pale student of unhallowed arts" and the 'thing' he had endued with life (F, 1831 author's introduction 59). She fully realized how terrifying would a book be that dealt with man's attempt to fool with CREATION.

Inspired, thus, by this waking dream Mary Shelley felt finally able to start writing her own 'ghost story' which she would only finish in May 1817 when she was halfway pregnant of Clara Everina. From the original dream and personal anxieties Mary Shelley enhanced her tale with many literary allusions, quotations, together with her political views and philosophical trends, a result of her extensive readings and intellectual acquaintances.

Even though it is not the main concern of this work to investigate in depth the literary influences and sources of Mary Shelley's novel, a broad listing of the major works cited in Frankenstein as well as a comment on those which have given shape to the philosophical content of the book may nonetheless supply the analysis with essential data. The number and character of the works mentioned and the kind of thinkers who have contributed to build up Mary Shelley's idea for her tale give clues to the reasons for the novel's ambivalence, its paradoxes and to what is most important for the present analysis, its endurance and uniqueness.

The many literary works that Mary Shelley makes use of to enrich her tale appear in the text with gradual significance that ranges from minor allusions to works of paramount relevance to the

thematic construction of her story such as Milton's Paradise Lost. To start with the minor allusions: Mary Shelley saw in the fourth voyage of the famous sailor Sinbad in The Thousand and One Nights an identification with Victor's feelings when he finds a "passage to life" through his ability to bestow life on dead matter (F 100); instead of a full description of the monster she prefers to allude suggestively to dantean Inferno (F 106); in order to assess Justine's 'frank-heartedness' the author brings about a heroine from Ludovico Ariosto's Orlando Furioso (F 113); Frankenstein's monster puts himself in the place of the ill-treated ass from La Fontaine's Fables (F 161). Quite nonchalantly, though not exactly so, according to Iain Crawford's article, Mary Shelley mentions Victor's admiration for the English martyr John Hampden (1594-1643). To Crawford, Victor associates himself with Hampden (who had fought against the 'monarch's devinely bestowed power' for the cause of liberty) in his anti-patriarchal revolt whereas he paradoxically sympathizes with King Carles I thus revealing the ambivalence of his relationship with Alphonse his father (1988: 251).

In a similar way Mary Shelley sometimes complemented the descriptions of the characters' impressions by quoting literary passages that best corresponded to the moment. She thereby picked from Charles Lamb's poem "The Old Familiar Faces" (1798) the right mood for Victor when he must leave sweet home and stand on his own at Ingolstadt (F 93). From Oliver Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield (1766) Mary Shelley took the Dutch schoolmaster as a perfect portrayl for Henry Clerval's father's narrowmindedness (F

108). Also in Victor's melancholy account of the surrounding landscape he cites 'the palaces of nature' (F 121) from Lord Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1816). Still, in the few instances when the author resorted to poetry as a means of depicting sensations and/or as foreshadowing devices Mary Shelley, unlike some Gothic writers as Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis who interspersed throughout their tales their own poems, has rather chosen pieces of Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Wordsworth. The stanza from Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1797) with which Mary Shelley illustrates Victor's state of mind the day after his creature was finally endowed with life not only heightens Victor's horror but also forewarns the coming menace of the 'frightful fiend' (F 107). She had, by the way, listened to Coleridge himself reciting his poem at her father's in 1806 and the figure of the lone Mariner deeply touched her (Mellor 11). As to Shelley's stanza from his poem "Mutability" (1816), it well indicates the irretrievability of Victor's former happiness and domestic peace (F 143-4) and later on it is the monster who refers to this poem just to resent his 'annihilation' (F 174). Mary Shelley also shows Victor's idealization of Henry's enthusiastic soul through poetry, this time Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" (1798) thus conveying as well Henry's benign relation with nature (F 201)[4].

There are, however, four works of a more conspicuous thematic influence on Mary Shelley's story, namely Volney's Ruins (1791) in which the first man had been deserted by his unknown creature (Baldick 46); John Milton's Paradise Lost (1667 and 1674),

Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Romans (c. AD 100) and Goethe's Sorrows of Young Werther (1774). These works whose fundamental precept permeates Frankenstein receive a closer examination in the monster's narrative when he gives his own account of his education process. Anne K. Mellor sums up the major tenets assimilated by the monster after reading them:

> "From Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Romans he learns the nature of heroism and public virtue and civic justice; from Volney's Ruins, or a Survey of the Revolutions of Empires he learns the contrasting nature of political corruption and the causes of the decline of civilizations; from Milton's Paradise Lost he learns the origins of human good and evil and the roles of the sexes; and from Goethe's Werther he learns the range of human emotions, from domestic love to suicidal despair as well as the rhetoric in which to articulate not only ideas but feelings". (1989: 49)

The monster takes his readings seriously so much so that on them he bases his conduct and responses to the outer world. He feels himself an outcast of Satan's kind in Paradise Lost. The conflict in Milton's version of the Creation becomes a recurring image in Frankenstein and this epic also has its influence marked even before the novel's beginning, in its revealing epigraph (to the 1818 edition) showing Adam's complaints: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay/ To mould me Man, did I solicit thee/ From darkness to promote me...?" (Paradise Lost 10, II.743-5).

In addition to all the above works already cited Frankenstein owes much of its philosophical basis to Mary Shelley's interpretations of Locke's thoughts mainly from his Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) on the "tabula rasa theory of

knowledge" where sensation or reflection are responsible for idea formation (Hindle 30); to the Rousseaunian noble savage' and the unfallen state of innocence from her readings of Rousseau's Rêveries, Discours, Confessions (1782), émile (1762), and Nouvelle Héloise (1761), together with Diderot's Lettres sur les Aveugles (1772) that might have inspired the creation of the blind father De Lacey, and Condillac's Treatise on Sensations (1754) for the monster's perceptional development (Pollin 1965); to Humphry Davy's Elements of Chemical Philosophy (1812) which seems to be the source of Professor Waldman's enthusiasm about chemistry and of Victor's confidence it could unveil the "secret of life" (Mellor 91); to Erasmus Darwin's evolutionary theories through the wellknown discussion of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Byron on Darwin's experiments with galvanism for the animation of a piece of vermicelli (Mellor 95).

Mary Shelley also gathers much of her ideas from the anti-Jacobin work by Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), in which he labels the revolutionaries as "parricides" and uses a whole monster image to criticize attempts at dismembering the body politic, a work that provoked direct attacks by both Mary Shelley's parents. In a series of bitter replies such as Mary Wollstonecraft's Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution (1794) and Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793), they contradicted Burke's arguments. In Chris Baldick's words on that issue the "story of the creation of a monster emerges from her [Mary Shelley] parents' debate with Burke over the great

monstrosity of the modern age, the French Revolution" (1987: 27).

On top of these aspects Mary Shelley's parents have further influence on her novel. The feminist ideas defended by Safie's mother derive clearly from Mary's readings of her mother's works whereas Godwinian doctrine of human perfectability and his Caleb Williams are echoed even more significantly in Frankenstein. Frankenstein's common issues with Caleb Williams such as dominating curiosity, mutual destruction, and the injustice of people punished for the wrong doings of others (Baldick 27) have earned Mary Shelley the credit of belonging to the Godwinian school of authors (Pollin 1967). Besides that she went as far as to dedicate Frankenstein to her father. Mary Shelley's indebtedness to kinship's literary production also involves her husband's poetry and beliefs. The poems by Shelley which have most directly affected Mary Shelley's conception of Frankenstein might have been "Alastor" (1816) which might have suggested Victor's nightmare of Elizabeth and his mother on the day the monster is animated, and "Mont Blanc" (1816). Bette London even mentions that James Rieger accuses Mary Shelley of plagiarizing the "diction, ideas, and symbolism" of this latter poem of her husband's (1993: 259). Percy Bysshe Shelley also revised her text as well as wrote the Preface to the 1818 edition of Frankenstein.

The well read Mary Shelley would still collect significant contribution in Charles Brockden Brown's Wieland, or the Transformation (1798) in terms of form, and from Cervantes' Don Quixote (1604) the well-intentioned hero who ends up tragically due to his obsession for a 'single vision'. In his introductory essay

to the Penguin edition Maurice Hindle attributes Frankenstein's epistolary form to the contemporary tendency especially diffused by Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe (1748) and his other novels (Hindle 23). He also stresses that Mary Shelley had read some Gothic novels by authors such as Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Gregory Lewis, Charles Robert Maturin, and William Beckford (Hindle 33-35) so that it may be thus that the Gothic atmosphere took hold of Frankenstein.

Mary Shelley's novel has moreover recognizable mythic qualities. Notwithstanding its being the object of still standing prejudices that insist in classifying it as a minor novel[5] Frankenstein has been granted the status of a modern myth (Baldick 1-2). When K. K. Ruthven talks of New Mythologies the following reference is made: "...before very long Frankenstein is no longer remembered as the name of Mary Shelley's 'modern Prometheus' but popularly confused with the monster he created. Here, possibly, we have a paradigm of the processes by which myths are made" (1976: 71). Following this line Robert Wexelblatt describes Frankenstein as a 'synthetic myth', a compound of the Prometheus myth, the Christian account of creation as told in Milton's Paradise Lost, and the story of Faust who exchanged his soul for forbidden knowledge (1980: 101-103).

Although Baldick sees no 'demonic tempter' seducing Victor into transgression thus eliminating the Faust myth's presence in Frankenstein (1987: 41) this very assumption, however, tends to confirm Frankenstein as a "secular myth with no metaphysical machinery, no Gods" (Levine 4) and then the Faustian tempter in this case would be represented by SCIENCE itself. When Victor

says "I seem to have lost all soul or sensation but this one pursuit" (F 102) the scientific knowledge that he had so obstinately strived to obtain appears to be lurking behind.

With regard to the Prometheus myth, itself part of the novel's title, Mary Shelley has apparently merged not only Ovid's Metamorphoses and Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound but also the Pygmalion myth which she observed in Mme de Genlis' Pygmalion et Galatée (1802-3). The legends of Ovid's **Prometheus plasticator** in which Prometheus creates man out of clay and of Aeschylus' **Prometheus pyrphoros** (the fire bearer) in which Prometheus steals fire from Mount Olympus to give it to man (Mellor 71) fuse in Frankenstein the ideas of the usurpation of the divine power of Creation and the consequent punishment for such a transgression (Mellor 71). Mme de Genlis' Pygmalion in its turn might have provided a more socialist touch to the monster's process of 'awakening' and awareness of social injustice (Pollin 1965).

Mary Shelley finished writing Frankenstein in May 1817 and her book was published anonymously in March 1818. Contemporary criticism received the book with some awe and maybe because it was dedicated to William Godwin some critics came up with negative opinions of its 'possibly subversive and atheistic content', so much so that The Edinburgh Magazine of 1818 condemns it for "bordering too closely on impiety"; the Quarterly Review of 1818 dismissed it as a "tissue of horrible and disgusting absurdity"; and even William Beckford, himself a Gothicist, considered it "the foulest Toadstool" (Baldick 56-57). The attacks on Frankenstein multiplied and the work was blamed in the Gentleman's Magazine

(April 1818) for its "pride of Science" and in the Monthly Review (April 1818) for its "doctrines of materialism" and for being nothing but an "eccentric vagary of the imagination" (Pollin 1965). Despite unfavourable reception by some critics Frankenstein, according to Maurice Hindle, was an instant bestseller which had its second edition in 1823, this time the author's name (and sex) being revealed (Hindle 8). By that time the Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (March 1823) expressed what might have been an unconsciously sexist praise to Mary Shelley, "[f]or a man it was excellent, but for a woman it was wonderful"; and even Byron was forced to admit its value (Hindle 8). As to Sir Walter Scott, since its first publication he admired, in the Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1817-18), the novel's "uncommon powers of poetic imagination" (Baldick 57).

The great popularity of Frankenstein resulted in numerous stage productions of varied approaches which began to be performed even before the 1823 edition and Mary Shelley herself would see and approve of the play Presumption; or the Fate of Frankenstein (1823) by Richard Brinsley Peake (Lavalley 246). From stage to film it was just a matter of time and technology for as early as 1910 the first Edison silent version of Frankenstein for the cinema was released (Lavalley 250). It was however the Universal series of films Frankensteinian that have greatly helped to immortalize Mary Shelley's tale which after James Whale's Frankenstein (1931) became up to nowadays immediately associated with Boris Karloff's stereotyped 'image' of the monster (Lavalley 262). Needless to stress is the fact that both stage and film versions of

Frankenstein have much altered and even simplified or vulgarized Mary Shelley's original text, not to mention the unavoidable confusion that has attributed to the nameless creature the very name of its creator. So, Frankenstein has lived up to our own times with unfading strength as well as with always renewing significance. In Brandan Hennessy's words Frankenstein "is that very rare phenomenon: a classic that was originaly a best seller and has remained extremely popular" (1978: 22). Mary Shelley's novel has lately been rediscovered so that its new and diversified readings have been altracting ever greater scholarly concern and respect. The possibilities of approach to it are manyfold and results prove mostly rewarding in terms of literary research.

From a mere cautionary tale against the dangers of technological progress and the whole mythic imagery of creature rebelling against creator recent criticism has realized that there is much more to Frankenstein than it had been so far thought of. The aim of this study however does not allow a minute delving into all aspects and implications of each and every approach to Frankenstein. It will be sufficient to discuss briefly some of the novel's main issues, its paradoxes, controversies, and ambivalence.

Central themes to Frankenstein concentrate mostly on Victor's overreaching quest for the knowledge of creation until he finally manages to obtain the power of endowing dead matter with life, becoming himself the creator of a new race (F 101), a role he usurps from God. His transgression has further and more destructive consequences when he abandons his creature in disgust leaving it totally parentless with only Nature to provide for its rearing.

Later Victor has to face the rage of his monstrous being who takes revenge by killing his family and they both start a suicidal and sadomasochistic pursuit of each other across the Arctic regions. Mainly from these points spread all kinds of approaches concerning the Promethean quest, the birth myth and mothering care, the question of guilt and responsibility, problems of repressed sexuality, the influence of family on the individual, the dangers of isolation from social life together with the scientific curiosity and the search for technological development, the social body and its hypocrisy and prejudices; and the absence of woman particularly generates a myriad of implications which even led Ann K. Mellor to term it as a 'feminist novel' (1989: 122).

Furthermore the novel's narrative structure, composed of three concentric layers, opens up yet new sources for investigation once it enables the handling of three first-person narrators. In the outermost layer there is Captain Walton's narration of his own discovery enterprise; in the middle layer Victor Frankenstein discloses the secret about the monster he created; and in the very center it is the monster who expatiates on his own development and anguish (Joseph: viii-ix). In this way the reader is given the necessary impartiality to figure out the three narrators' sides. This fact confers the novel with credibility and at the same time shows Mary Shelley's ability to avoid a Manichean view in her story. What one cannot possibly avoid though, is a connection between her personal life and the conflicts portrayed in Frankenstein.

The novel, in spite of its anti-conventional hair-raising plot may reflect, in a way, many of Mary Shelley's deepest anxieties as well as her ambivalent relationship with her husband, her father, and not altogether surprisingly with her dead mother. It is therefore through the figure of Frankenstein's motherless monster that motherless Mary seems to identify herself; she also shares the monster's consciousness of being regarded by the world as a social outcast (after all she had run away with a married man). She seems also to 'voice her disappointment' at her father's neglect towards her, a sentiment she would publicly admit only in 1838, two years after Godwin's death (Knoepflmacher 94).

In George Levine's terms, the displacement of God and woman from the acts of conception and birth (1979: 8) in Frankenstein would on one hand exempt Mary of the childbearing function she so feared after her first child's death while on the other hand there would be the haunting dread of producing a monster (Mellor 40-41). As to Victor Frankenstein he would embody Mary Shelley's criticism on the idealism of both Godwin and Percy Shelley as to the regeneration of humanity (Sterrenburg 147) and more specifically Mary's revolt against Percy's lack of parental affection and concern. Victor, by the way, used to be Percy Shelley's pseudonym in his adolescent days.

In a Feminist approach to Frankenstein, Victor's monster would represent "a woman in a patriarchal society --forced to be a symbol of (and vehicle for) someone else's desire, yet exposed (and exiled) as the deadly essence of passion itself" (Poovey 128). The submissive roles of women such as Caroline, Elizabeth, and Justine,

and even Agatha evidence the feminist liberation defended and passed over by Safie's Christian-Arab mother. To Anne K. Mellor, Victor greatly feared female sexuality; something he worried about was that his female creature would be able to liberate at her will (1989: 120). So, driven by such feeling he batters the body he had been constructing as a way to reassert "male control over female body" and to "destroy female sexuality" (1989: 120). Even though a feminist novel, Frankenstein, in Bette London's opinion, is "centered in the production of masculinity" giving thus room for "male self-display" (1993: 255).

Frankenstein still offers ground for countless psychological interpretations of its characters' behaviour and inner conflicts. Victor's wish to bestow life may, among several other probabilities, be viewed as a male fantasy to give birth without the "mediation of a maternal body", a dream also present in David Cronenberg's film Dead Ringers (Frank 468). The father-son conflict, especially parental tyranny that leads to the shaking of filial duty, moves Walton (his father would not let him be a sailor), Clerval, Safie, and Victor [William Veeder asserts that Victor sees his father as a rival who wants to drive the son from home and mother (1986: 377)]. These characters share also a doppelgänger relation: to Levine, Walton and Clerval reflect other aspects of Frankenstein and he adds that "Elizabeth can be paired with Victor's mother, with Justine and with the unfinished 'bride' of the monster" (1979: 15). Knoepflmacher goes as far as to say that although "male, ugly, and deformed, the monster is a potential Elizabeth." (1979: 109). In addition to such issues there are the

questions of guilt and responsibility [Joyce Carol Oates sees Frankenstein as a parable of denial of responsibility (1984: 553)], of marriage and work (domestic affection X overreaching quest), of monstrosity, and the complexities of relationships in the novel that can always be approached in new lights.

The suggestive images found in Frankenstein and the novel's particularities abound. The monster's eloquence, which differentiates him from the groaning monsters of film versions, transcends him and raises doubts about his not possessing a soul, involving thus religious concerns. The contrasting images of fire and ice, sight and appearances, the gender division of beautiful (female) and sublime (male) at the aesthetic level mentioned by Anne K. Mellor (1989: 138), all point to man's attitudes towards nature and science.

The possibilities do not stop here and it bears repeating that the above listing serves only as a hint to Frankenstein's thematic multiplicity as well as its potential for new readings. As the present study aims at relating Frankenstein to its Gothic genre, bringing forth the novel's potentiality for several approaches can help to delineate some of the reasons for its literary distinction.

The former tendency to depreciate all Gothic fiction merely because it was 'Gothic' is also responsible for the prejudice against Frankenstein. Mary Shelley's novel however has survived all hostile responses to it and its qualities have been imposing themselves with ever greater firmness despite the prevailing contempt for its genre. To praise Frankenstein should not imply though the underestimation of Gothic fiction; on the contrary, the

attempt to establish the causes of its uniqueness and endurance may also have the power to call attention to the somewhat still hidden merits of the other Gothic novels.

NOTES

[1] Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein. 1818. London: Penguin, 1985.
Hereafter all references to this novel will be made to this edition as F plus page number.

[2] This villa had been also visited by Milton in 1639 (Pollin 1965).

[3] For more information on the 1818 text and the revisions of the 1831 edition see Anne K. Mellor's Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters (1989, 170-176); Mary Poovey's The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer (1984, 122-142); George Levine & U. C. Knoepfelmacher's The Endurance of Frankenstein (1979, xv-xvi); Chris Baldick's In Frankenstein's Shadow (1987, 199-204); Bette London's article "Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, and the Spectacle of Masculinity", PMLA 108.2 Mar. 1993: 253-267.

[4] See the further implications of such a description of Clerval in Peter Brook's article "Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts": Language, Nature, and Monstrosity in EOF , when "Nature does not protect Clerval from its own malignant possibilities." (p.216).

[5] Such deep-rooted prejudice led George Levine and U. C. Knopflmacher to acknowledge in their Preface to The Endurance of Frankenstein (1979) the 'obvious risks' of approaching Frankenstein with 'high seriousness'.

CHAPTER IV

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS: FRANKENSTEIN AND GOTHIC FICTION

Considering the nature of the present investigation, an adequate starting point for analysis relates back to the Gothic novels' publishing time when a great readership avidly welcomed Gothic fiction. The works of this controversial genre had nonetheless their reception reduced as time passed until they became almost completely forgotten with the exception of Frankenstein (and Dracula too). However, the waning of the Gothic novel did not mean, as it could well be supposed, the end of the readers' interest for terror/horror matters, subjects that live forever, always adapting themselves to prevailing contemporary taste. What is rather intriguing is, why have those Gothic novels stopped to be attractive in spite of the steady popularity of the terror/horror motif? And why has Gothic-Frankenstein, instead, not

only survived but also been more and more respected?

The answer to that constitutes the very core of my survey and leads straight forward to the causes of Frankenstein's uniqueness. Thus, in order to try and provide a satisfactory answer I begin by giving a look into the structure of Gothic fiction so as to be able to find the deficiencies that might have led to the failure of the genre.

In her book The Failure of Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteen-century Literary Form (1987) Elizabeth Napier groups the typically Gothic structural techniques which themselves might have possibly withered the genre away. As at least some of these techniques are easily to be found virtually in all Gothic novels it is worth concentrating on them bearing in mind precisely this collective manifestation in works of the genre.

Elizabeth Napier distinguishes between two kinds of techniques, those of closure and restraint and those of destabilization and excess. The first case comprehends items related to: resolution and closure; moralizing; Gothic historicizing; providential, sentimental, and decorative Gothic; problems of character; effect and cause; and emotion. These characteristics of Gothic fiction result in its peculiar and almost formulaic narrative.

According to Napier, many Gothic works make a visible inclination to get to a plot stabilization by means of formal closures. For that, all mysteries must forcibly be solved (here enter the prophecies, revealing dreams, family resemblances), identities recognized, and moreover virtue must be rewarded whereas

turpitude demands punishment. Some Gothic novels display a tendency towards moralizing, an urge that even interferes with the characters' rhetoric. Thus, the characters sometimes speak through generalizations, a device that enables authorial intervention for the expression of moral messages through interpolated stories, reflective interludes, apostrophes, etc. For Napier, the attempts at historicizing by earlier historical-Gothic writers seem rather "'historical veneering' of tales of romance" (1987: 22) in which the abundance of anachronisms, improbabilities, distortions of history, fit the writer's need to create the right atmosphere. As to the influence of Providence (providential meetings, rescues and coincidences) detected in some early Gothic novels Napier attributes it to the similarities that link the Sentimental Novel to Gothic Fiction. She even produces a table that teaches how to 'transmute' a novel into a Gothic romance (and vice-versa) underlining this way the 'decorative effect' of Gothic themes and stock devices (1987: 28).

With regard to the portrayal of characters Napier believes that all Gothic characters look alike and 'particularization' is often replaced by more relevant requirements of plot or moral. In her view, if necessary, personalities may be oversimplified in this genre in which atmosphere, external events (as opposed to psychological probing) and even buildings (castles, monasteries) acquire a greater significance for the aimed neat ending. With relation to the symbolic quality of certain objects or images she sustains that there usually happens a 'reduction of meaning' that demonstrates a lack of concern with the unconscious side of human

psychology especially by the early Gothic productions. To her, in spite of the great emphasis given to emotional displays (though cause and effect are disjoined) emotion itself seems to be denied to the heroines who, mostly, have a tendency to suppress their true feelings, avoiding therefore to externalize both passions and fears, striving to show firmness and fortitude.

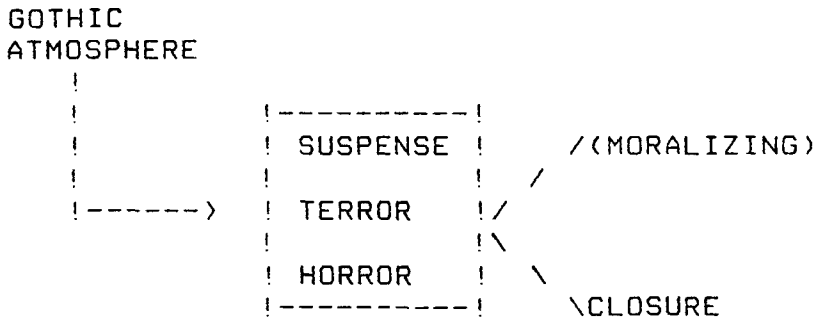
In the second case, when Napier comments on the techniques of destabilization and excess, she discusses items involving: the kinetic and obscure; acceleration; interruption and fragmentation; overstatement, intensification, and exaggeration; and tonal and generic incongruities. Such items account for the building of Gothic mood and atmosphere of fear.

Aiming therefore at disorienting and distorting an initially stabilized situation, some Gothic writers (chiefly Ann Radcliffe), as Napier notices, play with 'sudden shifts of scenery' in which the blurring of light also helps to increase suspense. She,then, cites acceleration as another technique used to disorient as well as to keep the heightening of action. The pace of both emotions and events is so hectic that it produces a feeling of lack of control over the hasty rhythm of the narrative. Then come the devices of interruption and fragmentation which, by means of interrupted deathbed warnings, fragmented manuscripts or even the eavesdropping of fragmented pieces of conversation and many instruments alike, help to "...curtail length and move the story forward to create the general atmosphere of unease that characterizes the Gothic." (Napier 56). Also, as she remarks, in their wish to depict extremes authors make vast use of exaggerated language (parallelisms,

syntactic repetitions, superlatives) as a way to intensify descriptions. In addition to linguistic overstatements authors sometimes come up also with exaggerations at the emotional and imagistic levels rendering the work as vulnerable as to "descend easily into the burlesque" (Napier 64).

Finally, Napier criticizes a general tonal indecision on the novelists' part. As many Gothic works rely on moments of comic relief, Gothic literature appears to "...teeter on the brink of tragedy and comedy between the sublime and the ridiculous..." (Napier 69). Other incongruities, in Napier's opinion, are connected to some Gothic writers' 'double view' about the handling of the supernatural and superstition for their own self protection. Napier ends up by arguing that these aspects of Gothic fiction concur to establish a failure to "...resolve its moral and aesthetic values,..." and therefore the genre does not succeed to "...confront the significance of its own position..." (Napier 72).

One of the major problems with the structure of Gothic fiction, just summed up above, was not only its somewhat formulaic construction but, more crucially, the possibility it engendered of unscrupulous imitations that spread tempted by the genre's popularity at the time. As a consequence of such hackneyed imitations I believe readers could become able to pinpoint rapidly the following frame envisaged behind the majority of Gothic novels:



This persistent frame repeats itself although the moralizing aspect varies much in intensity. Therefore, taking into consideration this oscillation of the moralizing presence in Gothic works and based on the previous chapters of the present study, it may be clear that all novels, i.e., The Castle of Otranto, The Old English Baron, Vathek, The Mysteries of Udolpho, The Monk, Melmoth, the Wanderer, and Dracula with the exception of Frankenstein seem to be constructed in accordance with this pattern. What distinguishes Frankenstein, in this sense, from the other works is not the moralizing issue but the item of closure. As George Levine states, "The novel has achieved its special place in modern consciousness through its extraordinary resistance to simple resolutions and its almost inexhaustible possibilities of significance." (1979: 18). One can notice that the resolutions in Frankenstein do not comply with a Gothic recipe.

Unlike the other Gothic novels mentioned Frankenstein's end defies the Gothic tendency towards a stabilizing closure. In Walpole's The Castle of Otranto the transient stability of the usurper Manfred shakes with the death of his heir which gives room to the realization of a prophecy that foresees the return of the principality to its true owner. Destabilization comes, characters

undergo several adventures of suspense and terror and arrive inevitably at a final stability through the identification of Theodore's mistaken identity. Theodore assumes the principality of Otranto and marries Isabella who, even though not his beloved shares, anyway, his grief over Antonia's death. Similarly, in Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron, from an initial equilibrium the story goes through a momentary span of destabilization when Edmund struggles to prove his true identity by revealing the criminal circumstances of his parents' deaths. With the aid of Providence all mysteries unfold, the usurper is punished and Edmund takes possession of his property and, on top of it all, receives the hand of the girl he loves. William Beckford's Vathek starts with a relatively stable moment of caliph Vathek's reign followed by his unscrupulous quest for 'forbidden knowledge' represented by the Portals of Subterranean Fire. After doing much harm and mischief to fulfill his wishes, the hero-villain and his accomplices are condemned to eternal damnation and a final stabilization is achieved through Gulchenroutz's reward for his virtues as well as through the overthrow of Samarah's evil caliph. A final stabilization is also reached by Emily, the heroine of Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, by the end of all the misadventures she experienced after the death of her parents. She bravely tackles the problems until all ends well for her while the depraved Montoni dies mysteriously. In the novel The Monk, by M. G. Lewis, destabilization brings with it innumerous tense passages full of horrifying events. In the end, however, when the wicked monk Ambrosio is arrested by the Inquisition, life gradually goes

back to normality. The monk faces damnation and even Matilda, who temporarily escapes the auto-da-fe through a compact with the Devil, is certain to have the same end since she had sold her soul. As to Charles Maturin's Melmoth, the Wanderer all the episodes of the Wanderer's desperate attempts to exchange places with someone who would sell his/her soul present closures in the end until the final closure with Melmoth's own death and consequent eternal damnation. Bram Stoker's Dracula also suffers a destabilization through the terror of Count Dracula's menace on humankind. By the end of the novel the group of friends who, on God's behalf, fight victoriously against so powerful an enemy, exterminate the vampire and along with him the risk he meant.

The end of Frankenstein, on the contrary, leaves room for both plot and thematic speculations. Napier herself reminds us that the tendency towards a final stabilization diminishes in Gothic works "more psychologically complex" such as Mary Shelley's novel (1987: 43). So, although Victor dies and Walton is forced to withdraw from his discovery enterprise, Victor's reasoning may make the reader wonder about the probability for Walton to start anew in the future:

> "Seek happiness in tranquility and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed." (F 260)

Also, at first, Victor advises that 'happiness in tranquility' should replace the ambition of 'science' and 'discoveries' so as to

erradicate the kind of danger he had exposed humanity to. However, on second thought, he admits his failure but to acknowledge the possibility that another scientist may be successful in his/her attempts. As such Mary Shelley seems to forewarn the reader about the impracticability of a turning back for scientific progress and its consequences, either good or evil. Also, Walton will not kill the monster in spite of Victor's entreaties. Thus, the monster, who embodies the novel's destabilization, is not liquidated by anyone; he is, instead, endowed with the free will to choose whether to live or kill himself in the end. This terrible power in the monster's hands (once he is a scientific artifact) together with the suggestive fact that he has not died yet before the novel's end may trigger conjectures as to humankind's destiny being in the hands of science as well. As a result, notwithstanding the novel's getting to an 'end', there seems to have no final resolutions among all doubts, questions, suppositions, raised by the tale's inexhaustible subject. For this reason Frankenstein cannot fit rigidly into the pattern of Gothic action:

INITIAL STABILITY--->DESTABILIZATION--->FINAL STABILITY

(suspense)

(problem)

(adventure)

Apart from this seemingly repetitive structure another characteristic which mars the originality of many Gothic texts has to do with some writers' tendency towards exaggeration in the use

of Gothic stock conventions. Thus, it is not uncommon to find in a single novel almost all the available Gothic paraphernalia. Such concentration of Gothic conventions overloads the texts and as a result distracts the reader from noticing eventual criticism.

Through the following diagram I present an attempted inventary of the most traditional Gothic conventions and reference is made as to their presence in the novels studied.

GOTHIC STOCK CONVENTIONS	NOVELS							
	CO	OEB	V	MU	M	MW	D	F
GOTHIC CHARACTERS								
Maiden	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Melancholy hero	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Usurper/Persecutor	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Silly servants	X			X	X			
Loyal servants		X	X	X	X			
Monks/Nuns	X	X		X	X	X		X
Tyrannical parents	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Villains/Murderers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Outcasts			X	X	X	X	X	X
Noble peasants		X		X	X			

GOTHIC SCENARIO	NOVELS							
	CO	OEB	V	MU	M	MW	D	F
Castles	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Monasteries/Convents	X			X	X	X		
Ruins/Towers	X		X	X		X	X	
Dungeons			X	X	X	X		X
Cemeteries/Vaults	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Old houses				X	X	X	X	X
Sublime landscapes			X	X	X	X	X	X
Caves/Caverns	X		X		X		X	

GOTHIC MOTIVES	NOVELS							
	CO	OEB	V	MU	M	MW	D	F
Supernatural events	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Supernatural agents	X		X		X	X	X	
Devil worship			X		X	X		
Witchcraft			X		X			
Vampirism							X	
Inquisition				X	X	X		
Immortality	X					X	X	X
Manifestations of death	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Usurpations	X	X		X				
Persecutions	X			X	X	X	X	X
Overreaching quests			X			X		X
Parents X Children Conflicts	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Sinful Transgressions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Concealments	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Assassinations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Duels		X		X	X		X	X
Disguises	X			X	X		X	
Discoveries of old crimes	X	X		X				
Identifications of lost heirs	X	X		X				

GOTHIC MOTIVES	NOVELS							
	CO	OEB	V	MU	M	MW	D	F
Love-affairs/ Elopements	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Compacts with Hell			X		X	X		
Mistaken identities	X	X			X			
Old manuscripts	*	*		X		X		
Clandestine meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Prophecies/ Revealing dreams	X	X	X		X			X

* These novels themselves are supposed to be 'old manuscripts'.

GOTHIC STOCK ELEMENTS (Atmosphere Intensifiers)	NOVELS							
	CO	OEB	V	MU	M	MW	D	F
Dark corridors	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Hidden rooms		X		X	X	X	X	
Trap doors	X	X		X	X	X		
Gusts of wind	X	X		X				
Secret underground passages	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Strange noises	X	X		X	X		X	
Extinguished lamps		X		X				
Blood		X		X	X	X	X	

TOTAL OF ITEMS: 53	NOVELS							
	CO	OEB	V	MU	M	MW	D	F
	36	32	27	43	44	34	29	22

The diagram points to the levels of both exaggeration and moderation in the use of Gothic conventions by the writers. Curiously enough, two of the three novels which, according to the diagram, rely less on Gothic stock conventions, belong to peculiar types of Gothic fiction: Vathek, an Oriental tale and Dracula, a tale of vampirism. The other novel is Frankenstein. However, to complement this kind of conclusion one must bear in mind that it is not so much the quantitative aspect that counts but even more significantly the qualitative aspect of the presence of such conventions in the novels. So, the importance and relevance given to the Gothic conventions in each novel also have great influence on the novel's balance. Consequently, even Vathek and Dracula which, in a first look, parallel with Frankenstein in terms of the number of Gothic items they contain, reveal on second thought an extreme dependence on these elements. In Beckford's Vathek everything is exaggerated and magnified, the supernatural intervention of Genii, Giaours (also the presence of Mahomet and Eblis) and the resort to magic powers play too strong a part in the characters' lives. In Dracula the reader must take it for granted and accept the crystallized conventions of the folklore of vampirism if he is to read it at all for the novel relies almost

exclusively on the Vampire myth. The same does not apply to Frankenstein in which the Gothic characteristics seem to have been well balanced. In fact, Gothic conventions in Frankenstein appear to adjust well with the required atmosphere of 'impending danger' rather than to interfere with plot or thematic development.

Elizabeth Napier's study of the structure of Gothic fiction offers plentiful material for a thorough contrastive analysis between the structure of the seven novels given and that of Frankenstein. However, I suggest that the chief factors to distinguish Frankenstein from other Gothic novels in general do not relate to structure alone. Instead, I call attention to the underlying thematic basis of each Gothic work, the very core of the novels' subject matter.

Behind the terrors of the so called 'ghost story' in each Gothic production lie the philosophical fundaments which are to give shape to the development of the story's themes. Basically, the essential tension which fuels Gothic fiction emerges from an ambivalent but highly influential relation between man and the forces of **RELIGION**, **SUPERSTITION** and **SCIENCE**. Furthermore, these three forces will orient man's attitude towards the surrounding world so that Gothic characters enact man's struggle to come to terms with the role played by these very forces on one's life. From the author's viewpoint towards these elements derive the novels's conflicts and especially the kind of their closure.

I devised therefore the table that follows to try to locate the central concerns of the novels studied with regard to these three moving forces:

CENTRAL THEMATIC ISSUE	NOVEL							
	CO	OEB	V	MU	M	MW	D	F
RELIGION	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
SUPERSTITION	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
SCIENCE							X	X

The table makes it clear that all novels, except Frankenstein, deal, in one way or another, with both religious matters and superstitious fears. Based on the reading of these novels one can also observe that of all seven novels in which the SUPERSTITION element is present only in Vathek characters seem not interested in fighting it away. In the other novels, however, heroes and heroines apparently do not believe in superstitious fears, they usually ridicule any allusion to supernatural entities and/or events. Thus, in The Castle of Otranto if on the one hand Theodore, the true heir of the principality (higher rank), dismisses superstition ["...He thought the place more likely to be infested by robbers than by those infernal agents who are reported to molest and bewilder travellers" (CO 77)], the clumsy maid, on the other hand, has no doubts whatsoever as to the matter: "-"Blessed Mary!" said Bianca, starting, "there it is again! dear madam, do you hear nothing? this castle is certainly haunted!" (CO 48). As to Edmund, in The Old English Baron, it is his religiosity which prevents him from succumbing to superstitious dread: "What should I fear? I have not willfully offended God or man; why then should I doubt protection. But I have not yet implored the divine assistance; how then can I

expect it? Upon this he kneeled down and prayed earnestly, resigning himself wholly to the will of Heaven; while he was yet speaking, his courage returned, and he assumed his usual confidence;..." (OEB 50). Thus, believing in God's protection Edmund faces the supposedly spooky rooms of Lovel Castle. Furthermore, Mr Du Pont in The Mysteries of Udolpho, for instance, saves his life by the cunning manipulation of superstition:

> "I heard of the superstition of many of these men, and I uttered a strange noise, with a hope that my pursuer would mistake it for something supernatural and desist from pursuit. Luckily for myself I succeeded; the man, it seems, was subject to fits, and the terror he suffered threw him into one, by which accident I secured my retreat." (MU 459)

Although the characters discredit such superstitions they end up by getting involved in unnatural events which make them doubt their former scepticism so that an inner fight against superstition takes place. In Melmoth, the Wanderer young Jonh Melmoth struggles not to be taken in by superstitious influence:

> "At this moment John saw the door open, and a figure appear at it, who looked round the room, and then quietly and deliberately retired, but not before John had discovered in his face the living original of the portrait. His first impulse was to utter an exclamation of terror, but his breath felt stopped. He was then rising to pursue the figure, but a moment's reflection checked him. What could be more absurd, than to be alarmed or amazed at a resemblance between a living man and the portrait of a dead one! The likeness was doubtless strong enough to strike him even in that darkened room, but it was doubtless only a likeness; and though it might be imposing enough to terrify an old man of gloomy and retired habits, and with a broken constitution, John resolved it should not produce the same effect on him." (MW 20).

In The Monk, likewise, Agnes narrates the legend of the Bleeding Nun to Raymond who, astonished, wonders whether she believes in such a thing and she promptly denies it:

> "How can you ask such a question? No, no, Alphonso! [Raymond's false identity] I have too much reason to lament superstition's influence to be its victim myself. However, I must not avow my incredulity to the baroness: she entertains not a doubt of the truth of this history. As to dame Cunegonda, my governess, she protests that fifteen years ago she saw the spectre with her own eyes." (M 154)

In Dracula too, Jonathan Harker, puzzled by the great level of superstitious dominance among the people of Transylvania, considers its powers with an analytic eye:

> "What meant the giving of the crucifix, of the garlic, of the wild rose, of the mountain ash? Bless that good, good woman who hung the crucifix round my neck! for it is a comfort and a strength to me whenever I touch it. It is odd that a thing which I have been taught to regard with disfavour and as idolatrous should in a time of loneliness and trouble be of help. Is it that there is something in the essence of the thing itself, or that it is a medium, a tangible help, in conveying memories of sympathy and comfort? Some time, if it may be, I must examine this matter and try to make up my mind about it." (D 28)

Therefore, superstition in Gothic fiction may be another destabilizing element which at the same time contributes to create a Gothic atmosphere of suspense and impending danger.

Notwithstanding the characters' swinging between believing or not in superstitious threats, one ingredient rises strong and unshakable, almost as a rule, in Gothic novels: the predominance of religion over people's acts and destiny. This assertion will determine a link between the characters' behaviour and their

expectations towards salvation and damnation.

In fact the majority of Gothic works' endings boil down to the expression of a great concern with man's salvation or damnation. This preoccupation may explain Gothic fiction's necessity to reward the virtuous and punish the malicious. The menace of eternal damnation functions, effectively, as an additional torturing source for Gothic terrors. It is something that the 'honest' characters try to avoid during their predicaments and that the wicked can be sure not to escape. In The Castle of Otranto, for instance, the usurper (and later infanticide) Manfred looks for friar Jerome, conscious of his faults and fearing divine wrath (or preternatural intervention), and grants Theodore's safety in exchange of self-protection. By the novel's end he repents and retires to a monastery to expiate for his misdeeds. In The Old English Baron, Lord Walter Lovel confesses his crimes, in his supposedly deathbed, pressed by the threat of eternal damnation, and after his confession he sourly admits: "I am brought to a severe reckoning here, and I dread to meet one more severe hereafter." (OEB 132). In Vathek, the ruthless caliph, driven by his ambition, abjures his religion. A good Genii still intercedes with the Prophet Mahomet himself who consents a last attempt to divert Vathek from perdition. Vathek, nevertheless, looks down on the Genii's admonitions and goes for the Portals of Eblis, where he finally meets his irrevocable fate -eternal fire and lack of hope. In The Mysteries of Udolpho, Ann Radcliffe, by means of her 'authorial intervention' attributes its happy ending to "...the example of lives passed in happy thankfulness to GOD," (MU 671). The duo

SALVATION-DAMNATION is, par excellence, central in Melmoth, the Wanderer. As to The Monk, a conventual tale, despite its strict criticism on the Catholic Church, and more specifically on monastic seclusion, Ambrosio, the wicked monk, is not spared in the end and is doomed to eternal damnation by the Devil in person.

Even in Dracula, a much later novel, religion commands the characters' thoughts and reaction to the enemy. It has, however, in its turn, the element of SCIENCE added to it. Thus, science in a curious but harmonical union with religious faith gathers enough strength to confront and defeat the world of superstitious dread that used to feed Count Dracula's power. Along with the enduring curiosity over vampirist folklore which keeps up Dracula's popularity, the inclusion of scientific progress, openly and irreversibly modifying people's lives, confers the novel with a dynamism which might distinguish it from the other Gothic novels. Dracula's thematic content, nevertheless, is somewhat reduced to its vampiristic sphere in which the salvation of one's soul is tantamount to the other novel's conflicts.

With the advent of the Industrial Revolution people's mind had been progressively turning from religion to science as a better form to explain phenomena so far covered in mysticism. Judith Wilt even points out a change in the classic Gothic centre of action: "In eighteenth-century Gothic novels it is the mystically tenanted chapel with its activating priest; in the nineteenth-century it is the laboratory." (1979: 36). The somehow deliberate predominance of religion (and also superstition) in Gothic fiction might therefore account significantly for the dating of the genre. The

superstitious fears of apparitions (ghosts), and the religious concern with salvation and damnation were, since then, on the wane so much so that they would no longer trouble the modern reader who accepts them but as curiosity and amusement instead of taking the whole thing seriously.

Science, on the other hand, remains ever since updated, always providing polemic subjects that range from responsibility (a great issue in Frankenstein) to ethics, morals, limits and so on. Accordingly thus, Frankenstein's theme sustains its modernity whereas the themes of the majority of the Gothic novels seem apparently much dependent on the mentality, morality, values, and beliefs of their own times. Once this historic moment (Inquisition, French Revolution) is over, there is no room any longer for Gothic terrors as they had been then explored because the reader would no more share the values and fears of Gothic characters.

Besides, science promotes an extra liberating connotation in contrast with the conservatism of religion:

SCIENCE	RELIGION
-rationalism	-feelings (room for superstition)
-boldness	-fear
-action	-inertia
-discovery	-secrecy
-freedom	-dependence

Ironically, this same freedom of action (and mind) brought by the element of science meets the anxieties of the Gothic 'hidden' criticism already mentioned (Feminist Inclinations, Social Criticism, Criticism on Catholicism, Permissiveness, Outlet of Repressions). The crave for freedom is a constant in most Gothic

works. The characters, in one way or another, look for individual freedom but have their action subdued by the above restrictions of the element of religion. It looks as though Gothic criticism is hindered by the very elements it criticizes, that is, superstitious fear, inertia, secrecy and dependence which nevertheless model the action in Gothic novels. This paradox, plus the Gothic excesses (overabundance), might have not only blurred the existence of criticism but also confused it. When science takes over, however, characters seem to be as bold as they are free to venture on (scientific) discoveries as in Dracula (optimistic view) and in Frankenstein (pessimistic -or doubtful-view).

Frankenstein appears to have come as a turning point in this transitional moment and is, conversely, the only novel in which neither superstition nor religion decide over the characters' will whereas science stands as a new driving force among mankind. Victor himself stresses his bold nature, totally devoid of superstitious barriers and, as a consequence, proper for scientific explorations:

> "In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy, and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm." (F 99)

Besides his not being superstitious Victor is not religious either. The absence of religiosity in Frankenstein may also function as a probable sign of the extent to where science can lead mankind if not held back by a refraining force such as religion. In this

Gothic context, the lack of religious consciousness (although one can never discard the possibility of religious implication through its very absence) permitted Victor to challenge God's privilege as Creator turning the novel, therefore, into a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked scientific progress (among the other qualities of the tale). Lowry Nelson Jr. even considers Frankenstein as the first of "... a line of 'unchristian' or diabolical novels of a distinctive Romantic or mythic cast..." (apud Baldick 43). Reversely, in Dracula, the presence of religion grants that science acquire the positive and benign function of a helping hand to mankind's progress and happiness.

Science has contributed to a slow but sure acceleration of a secularizing process in Gothic fiction's concern with forbidden knowledge. In that dimension, therefore, one sees that in Beckford's novel Vathek's search for forbidden knowledge passes through superstitious beliefs and ends in the Hall of Eblis evidencing, this way, man's preoccupation with the 'soul'. The same stress on life after death appears in Melmoth, the Wanderer in which John Melmoth's curiosity for forbidden knowledge involves matters of religious faith, and in the end he faces Hell and the damnation of his soul.

Yet, in Frankenstein Victor's quest for forbidden knowledge has science as its basis and his final concern is not with his personal fate but with the danger his act imposes on humankind's life on earth. This fact differentiates it from Dracula which, as an ancient folkloric tale, counts on the salvation of one's soul as the main objective. Furthermore, in Bram Stoker's novel there

is no need for a quest after 'forbidden knowledge' once scientific knowledge is already taken for granted as good. For this its optimistic view of science is clearly in opposition to Frankenstein's argumentative approach.

After all that was said about Frankenstein and the Gothic novels I would like to propose the following table to help to condense and illustrate the fundamental reasons which cause Frankenstein's uniqueness and endurance:

NOVEL	FIRST MOMENT	SECOND MOMENT	THRILL	END
Frankenstein	-issues of universal concern (OVERTLY)	-temporal issues, biographical relatedness (COVERTLY)	-enduring (after the reading)	-doubt-raising/inquiring
Most Gothic Fiction	-temporal issues (historical literary concern) (OVERTLY)	-issues of universal concern (COVERTLY)	-temporary (during the reading)	-closure

Through this table, one can observe that the most important subjects and ideas in Frankenstein have been overtly exposed by Mary Shelly so that they can be grasped immediately and without further information by the modern reader. The novel's temporal and biographical anxieties are also present but more identifiable on a second moment of the reading. The reader needs not to be aware of Mary Shelley's life nor of the book's historic importance (though much of the beauty of the tale gets lost) in order to appreciate it.

The majority of Gothic novels, however, seem to have this order inverted. At a first moment the reader is only able to perceive the depiction of temporal concerns (such as the atrocities of Inquisition, the strict moral of the characters, etc.) all wrapped up in the excessive quantity of Gothic stock conventions This circumstance may compel the reader to prejudge the tales as mere forms of amusement.

The items of the Gothic hidden criticism may be noticeable only on a second moment of the reading. However, the 'language of protest' which Kate Ellis detects in the violence present in Frankenstein (1979: 126) might also be perceived in the Gothic novels albeit dimmed by exaggerations.

Frankenstein's uniqueness among the other Gothic novels is further reiterated by its suggestive end. As has been already stated, Mary Shelley's tale is the only one, taking the seven novels perused, to resist definite resolutions. The insistence of Gothic fiction in providing well-elaborated closures to their stories might reflect directly on the reader's final impressions about the novel. Thus, the thrills experienced throughout the reading find a sudden break with the novel's ending, whereas in Frankenstein the fears and hypothetical dangers raised and stimulated by the novel's complex themes tend to continue to linger on account of its peculiar ending.

Frankenstein remains a unique work for its own qualities. As Anne K. Mellor states:

> "The idea of an entirely man-made monster is Mary Shelley's own. And this myth of a man-made monster

> can be derived from a single, datable event: the waking dream of a specific eighteen-year-old girl on June 16, 1816. Moreover, Mary Shelley created her myth sigle-handedly. All other myths of the western or eastern worlds, whether of Dracula, Tarzan, Superman or more traditional religious systems, derive from folklore or communal ritual practices." (1989: 38-9).

Its merits alone would have granted Frankenstein's lasting modernity in spite of its genre, sex of its author and even despite its flaws and improbabilities.

Frankenstein's improbabilities, by the way, such as the monster's gigantic size, the wild persecution through the Polar regions, and the monster-making process are offered a new insight by Arlene Young's suggestion of a 'symbolic realism'. In her contrastive analysis between Frankenstein and Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, Arlene Young argues that the contrivances in Brontë's novel reveal this symbolic realism "...in which the apparently contrived elements no longer seem artificial because they have a symbolic purpose, and the apparently extravagant elements no longer seem forced because they have relevance." (1991: 327). That symbolic realism may well be applied to Frankenstein too, for it does not matter much to the novel's thematic relevance what the precise details of Victor's monster-making process were, nor the feasibility of Victor's survival in the glaciers. What really counts are the implications and consequences of Victor's daring deeds.

Apart from Frankenstein's intrinsic value and the multiplicity and originality of its themes, if it were not for the author's craftsmanship not to fall into the Gothic trappings the work's

uniqueness could have been overshadowed. When Mary Shelley decided to write a ghost story, incited by Byron's idea at Villa Diodati, she could have the originality of her tale spoiled if she had only followed the Gothic formulae and typical exaggerations. So, Frankenstein's monster could have been doomed to forgetfulness like most of Gothic characters. As Glenda Leeming states,: "It is a tribute to Mary Shelley's intellectual penetration and literary skill that her powerful effects avoid monotony or ridiculous excess,..." (1975: 6).

By stressing Frankenstein's originality so emphatically I do not mean, in the least, to underestimate Gothic fiction. The above study intends, on the contrary, to shed light on the good qualities of Gothic Literature which just happens to be tarnished by the genre's typical excesses. The contrastive analysis between Frankenstein's enduring success and the oblivion of most Gothic works encompasses the aim of suggesting a new and challenging way of addressing and reading Gothic novels.

Furthermore, in order to complement this positive view of Gothic works I would like to mention Paul Lewis with regard to the classification of Gothic Literature. He argues that instead of distinguishing Gothic works in terms of LOW (affective) and HIGH (intellectual) Gothic, it would be fairer to classify it with 'value-free terms' (1979: 208). He proposes, therefore, two modes, the **didactic Gothic mode** and the **speculative Gothic mode**. The worth of this division is that the different uses of ideas in Gothic fiction seem to be respected. For in the didactic mode the 'limits of experience' in the end "...are always understandable and,

finally, clear."; and in the speculative mode the goal involves 'thinking' and a 'process of investigation' which nevertheless arrives at no 'final answers' (1979: 207-219).

Frankenstein would fit, thus, adequately into the speculative Gothic mode. Also, as belonging to the didactic Gothic mode the other novels studied can better preserve their quality and space in Literature eliminating this way much of the prejudice against the genre.

Summing up, the modern nature of the speculations raised by Mary Shelley's novel [for one may extend its concern with science's development to the recent discoveries on fields as Genetic Engineering and the production of clones or the possibility of programming a computer with artificial intelligence and so on, with the inherent implications of their effects on humankind] together with the appropriate handling of Gothic atmosphere makes the story of Victor Frankenstein unforgettable to readers of any time.

CONCLUSION

The present study concentrated on the investigation of the uniqueness of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein in relation to other Gothic productions most of which, unlike Frankenstein, have been neglected. So, after having contrasted Frankenstein with the seven Gothic novels selected, in the light of their Gothic characteristics, it was possible to determine the major reasons for Frankenstein's outstanding position.

It bears repeating, though, that on account of the modern nature of Mary Shelley's speculations in Frankenstein and the multiplicity of the subjects it touches, the novel's originality is not restricted to the Gothic domain. However, as this study relates Frankenstein to its genre one might realize that, in such a Gothic context, one of the main reasons for Frankenstein's uniqueness is its rejection of simple and definitive resolutions. Unlike all the novels analysed Mary Shelley's tale raises thematic doubts in its end [if Victor has failed, can other scientists succeed? if science

can produce a human being, what else can it do? what are its limits? are we in science's hands?]. Most Gothic novels, on the other hand, come up with total 'closures' once all the mysteries are solved and there are no more dangers. One can also infer from this that with such kind of definite closures the thrill experienced by the reader during the reading suffers a 'definite closure' as well. In Frankenstein, reversely, all the doubts raised in the end produce a lasting feeling of danger and suspense which is not extinguished with the novel's technical end.

Another reason that distinguishes Frankenstein from the other novels is the presence of the element of SCIENCE as the basis of the central conflict. The secular and modern implications of this element provide the tale's speculations with great dynamism and at the same time defy the possibility of a 'final stability', all is doubt. Conversely, the presence of the elements of RELIGION and SUPERSTITION in the other Gothic tales is more likely to keep them in their hermetic historical moment.

As a result of this gradual shift from religion to science as a source of explanations Frankenstein's main anxiety has nothing to do with the worry for one's eternal SALVATION or DAMNATION. What really matters are scientific discoveries and what the consequences of scientific progress might mean to mankind, all anxieties which are shared by modern readers. On the contrary, most of the Gothic works rely too much on issues of salvation and damnation (even to promote terror/fear) diminishing therefore the interest for modern readers who are rarely 'haunted' by such concerns.

Another distinguishing factor, related to the presence of the elements of science-religion-superstition, involves the quest for 'forbidden knowledge'. Whereas Gothic novels in the main promptly dismiss the curiosity over forbidden knowledge as evil (or as good in the case of Dracula in which knowledge is no longer forbidden) Mary Shelley would sooner question the very validity of a quest after the unknown. -Is it worth it? That is the main doubt to hinder Walton's quest for glory when his sailors are in danger. Again, there is no final answer either, for even when he decides to return home he is not completely convinced.

In a similar way Frankenstein's approach to the traditional Gothic quest for freedom innovates the whole problematic issue. Instead of only aiming at personal freedom Mary Shelley portrays a character who is given all freedom he needs to pursue his dream. Only, he has also to deal with the consequences of such freedom. Although eternal damnation does not influence his acts or feelings his humanistic concerns do.

More significantly still what contributes to evince Frankenstein's unique qualities is Mary Shelley's ability to treat overtly the main issues in her novel with no disguises that could overshadow the messages. In that way, the author manages to pass her views in a first moment of the reading, leaving to a second stage all secondary information such as historical, political, sociological, and biographical background. It happens, though, the reverse with the majority of Gothic fiction. If one reads a row of Gothic novels one will be able to point out the common anxieties and criticism which are, nevertheless, left to a second moment of

the reading on account of the great profusion of Gothic conventions However, one Gothic novel when read isolatedly is likely to have its 'hidden criticism' actually hidden, for what surfaces in a first moment of the reading, besides all horrid Gothic machinery, are the temporal issues which are no longer disturbing to the modern reader.

Finally, on top of all these items, comes the unbalance, proper to Gothic novels in general, which is caused by the exaggeration in the use of Gothic stock conventions, something that does not occur in Frankenstein. The effect of the overabundance of Gothic stock conventions influences and has even the power to modify the expression of any criticism whatsoever attempted by the novelists Too much emphasis on elements of the Gothic paraphernalia blurs the natural development of central issues.

Even though Mary Shelley's novel has several Gothic characteristics they are displayed with moderation, so much so that its action does not rely exclusively on Gothic devices or codes [codes of Vampirist tales, for instance]. By having no such exaggerations in its plot the Gothic atmosphere of Frankenstein provided an exquisite ground for the treatment of all the complex themes its author envisaged.

As has already been said, the novel's thematic content goes well beyond its genre's limits. The nameless monster, 'dreamed' by Mary Shelley more than a hundred and fifty years ago, has acquired a mythic condition on account of the speculations it embodies and is known almost worldwide, ironically, by its creator's name: Frankenstein.

So fruitful is this novel that it has inspired not only film-makers but also novelists who take up its theme(s) and develop it according to their own stand-point. Such was the case of Brian Aldis' science fiction Frankenstein Un-bound (1973) -already adapted to the 'big screen'- in which a scientist of the future finds a 'space/time rupture' that transports him to 1816 when Mary Shelley is just writing her Frankenstein (Hennessy 44). Another work of this kind is the intriguing O Diário de Frankenstein (original title: The Frankenstein Diaries) supposedly compiled and translated from the original German text by Reverend Hubert Venables. In this book Vi[k]tor Frankenstein and his story are said to have been real and portraits and pieces of documents are presented so as to support the assertion. A study which would contrast Mary Shelley's novel with its 'offsprings' (these two examples among others) could thus further illustrate the extent of Frankenstein's uniqueness and its influence on our culture.

Frankenstein, despite all popular confusions, survives thus not only as a product of consumism explored by the media [comic books, cartoons, TV series etc.] typical of our contemporary society but as a literary work that deserves respect. Its modernity confirms the merits of Mary Shelley's skill to put her 'revealing dream' into a novel's form in so unique a way.

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