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Bakalářská práce

Gothic Elements in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein **Prvky gotického románu v díle Mary Shelleyové**

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Annotation

This bachelor's thesis works with Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein and deals with a literary analysis of elements in the Gothic novel. The aim of this thesis is to present the literary context and circumstances concerning the creation of Mary Shelley's work. The thesis includes a brief characterisation of the beginning of the 19th century in English literature and defines the terms Gothic novel and Romanticism. The core of the thesis is the analysis of the novel Frankenstein and an interpretation of horror elements of the Gothic novel. The thesis also concentrates on the description of the surroundings and landscape, which sets the mysterious and ominous atmosphere of the story and eventually presents characteristics of Romanticism.

Keywords

Frankenstein, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Gothic novel, Romanticism, 19th century

Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá románem Mary Shelleyové *Frankenstein*, práce se věnuje literárněvědné analýze prvků gotického románu. Cílem práce je přiblížit literární kontext a okolnosti vzniku díla Mary Shelleyové. Práce zahrnuje stručnou charakteristiku počátku 19. století v anglické literatuře a definuje pojmy jako gotický román a romantismus. Hlavní náplní práce je analýza románu *Frankenstein* a interpretace hororových prvků gotického románu. Práce se dále zaměřuje na popis prostředí a krajiny která udává zlověstnou a tajemnou atmosféru příběhu a případně vykazuje znaky romantismu.

Klíčová slova

Frankenstein, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Gotický román, Romantismus, 19 století

Bibliografický údaj této práce

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Introduction

This bachelor's thesis deals with the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and the interpretation of its elements. The thesis deals with the themes of the Gothic, and its association with the Middle Ages as well as its modern usage. It also defines the terms Gothic novel and Romanticism and provides its most common motifs. The thesis also provides a brief characterisation of the late 18th and early 19th century in English literature, which saw an increasing rise in the interest in superstitious themes as well as a strong diversion from the sense of reason.

Providing the background and circumstances of the period the thesis also discusses the the life of Mary Shelley, including the topics of her family, misfortunes and travels across Europe. The section will also present the context and circumstances for writing *Frankenstein*, as well as her motives and inspirations that influenced her writing process. The thesis then provides a summary of the story and its biggest plot points and follows up with an overview of the characters, relevant to the following analysis.

The goal of the thesis is to offer a closer look at the novel and the circumstances and literary context regarding its creation. The main section of the thesis deals with the analysis, which focuses on the interpretation of the horror elements and comments on the Gothic and Romantic features of the text. The part dealing with analysis provides samples of text in chronological order and includes some of the relevant plot points and aspects. The thesis Points out and comments on the topics of the setting, the surroundings, the landscapes and beauties of nature, the gloomy atmosphere accompanied by tension, the topics of death and the supernatural, as well as feelings of constraint, struggle, fear, terror, horror, and hopelessness. The work also highlights references to other historical authors, personalities, lines of texts from works by other authors, and other relevant historical notions, which Mary Shelley uses as comparisons or highlights.

1 The Gothic

The Gothic is generally recognised as a term referring to the Middle Ages, mainly in the context of Art¹; however, it is not a construct created during those times, but a modern one based on subjective medievalism.² The origin of the term is associated with myths about Goths, northern people, the destroyers of Rome's architecture.³ Goths were one of the several Teutonic/Germanic tribes who had a different opinion regarding art and they were the ones responsible for the rise of Gothic art. Back then the term was used in a negative connotation due to the conflicts between Italians and Goths. Italians blamed them for the downfall of the Roman empire and similarly, as people to this day refer to useless destruction of art as vandalism, they began referring to their art as gothic, which meant barbaric.⁴ The formation of the Gothic style was caused by the invention of implementing a supportive system of pillars. This discovery enabled the architecture to be built to greater heights, without the need of using massive walls; instead, they could be replaced by large windows.⁵ In contrast, The Classical art of the Romans and the Mediaeval art of the Goths were considered opposites.

Even though it is mostly considered a term referring to the art and architecture of Europe between the 12th and 16th centuries, Gothic continues to be a prominent construct in the present day. Throughout history Gothic changed its meaning several times and because of its habit of being reimagined by each generation it is considered a flexible term. Today it presents a range of areas such as fashion, music, literature, architecture, ethnicity, and art.⁶

¹ Reeve, M. M. (2012). GOTHIC. *Studies in Iconography*, 33, 233–246. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23924286> p. 233

² Reeve, M. M. (2012). GOTHIC. *Studies in Iconography*, 33, 233–246. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23924286> p. 243

³ Reeve, M. M. (2012). GOTHIC. *Studies in Iconography*, 33, 233–246. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23924286> p. 233

⁴ GOMBRICH, Ernst. *The Story of Art*. Online. 4th. Phaidon Press, 1951. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/in.emet.dli.2015.29158/mode/1up> p. 161-162

⁵ GOMBRICH, Ernst. *The Story of Art*. Online. 4th. Phaidon Press, 1951. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/in.emet.dli.2015.29158/mode/1up> p. 131-132

⁶ Reeve, M. M. (2012). GOTHIC. *Studies in Iconography*, 33, 233–246. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23924286> p. 233-234

1.1 Gothic Novel

When it comes to the concept of Gothic in literature, it is often assumed that all Gothic novels possess the same elements such as the presence of Castles, supernatural occurrences secret passages and stairways, aged books, and gloomy midnight scenes.⁷

It is however not completely possible to put Gothic texts into one box; they do not possess the same exact features, rather, they usually have some of the Gothic elements and motifs in common.⁸ Writers of the late 18th century tend to be psychologically motivated and focus on interior mental processes. They try to play with the reader's imagination. Gothic texts in particular aim to achieve this with the use of terror, they attempt to involve the reader by holding them in suspense and trying to shock and surprise them.⁹

Reoccurring elements of Gothic literature might include strange places, which are oftentimes dangerous or violent, these are places such as a prison or a castle. Prominent feature is a combination of the old aspects with the new ones, for example, ghosts from the past are combined with modern technology. Another frequent motif deals with power and constraint, including instances of forced actions, perversions, obsessions, sexual violence, etc. The constraint is often accompanied by terror and horror; while terror focuses on the suggestion of horrific things, horror explicitly presents them. Another major occurrence in Gothic novels is a world full of doubt, people doubt the supernatural and spiritual, usually dealing with things above human comprehension accompanied by uncertainty.¹⁰

Among other prevalent terms associated with the Gothic novel is The Gothic sublime. The Gothic sublime is a term that includes many aspects of Gothic literature and sets up a haunting yet beautiful atmosphere; the sublime may include elements of exaggeration and repetition, where characters express their feelings strongly and

⁷ Hume, R. D. (1969). Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel. *PMLA*, 84(2), 282–290. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1261285> p. 282

⁸ BOWEN, J. *Gothic motifs*. Online. British Library. Dostupné z: <https://www.britishlibrary.cn/en/articles/gothic-motifs/>.

⁹ Hume, R. D. (1969). Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel. *PMLA*, 84(2), 282–290. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1261285> p. 282-284

¹⁰ BOWEN, J. *Gothic motifs*. Online. British Library. Dostupné z: <https://www.britishlibrary.cn/en/articles/gothic-motifs/>.

repetition suggests that anything can happen again. Another aspect forming the sublime is the Uncanny; which is a form of terror connected to the repressed past, it is something familiar but forgotten. Closely related to the Uncanny are the themes of death and superstition, as they cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind and are repressed.¹¹

To simplify some of the dark nature of Gothic literature, here are some examples of occurrences that can be found in the Gothic novel: Ghosts, serpents, towers, storms, dark nights, mountains, and sounds such as sighs moans and whispers. Such elements may be often noticed in Gothic novels, however, they, the novels, should not be overly simplified and regarded just as texts containing these aspects.¹²

When it comes to the term Gothic in literature regarding the authors themselves, it is historically mainly used in connotation with the novels of Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, M. G. Lewis, Mary Shelley, and Maturin.¹³

1.2 Romanticism

Romanticism and The Gothic of the late 18th century to the mid-19th century are closely related, they are however not the same and both have a different focus and elements. While Gothic literature focuses on elements such as Terror and Horror, the differences of power and topics of constraint, and the unconventional gloomy places and settings, Romanticism delves more into the examination of the human mind, the exploration and the beauties of nature. Compared to gothic literature, it focuses on inner struggles as well but it does not delve into the horror and supernatural aspect as much.¹⁴

¹¹ Morris, D. B. (1985). Gothic Sublimity. *New Literary History*, 16(2), 299–319. <https://doi.org/10.2307/468749> p. 302 – 310

¹² Morris, D. B. (1985). Gothic Sublimity. *New Literary History*, 16(2), 299–319. <https://doi.org/10.2307/468749> p. 301

¹³ Hume, R. D. (1969). Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel. *PMLA*, 84(2), 282–290. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1261285> p. 282

¹⁴ *Romanticism*. Online. Britannica. Dostupné z: <https://www.britannica.com/art/Romanticism>.

Major aspects of Romanticism each originating in a different country may include individualism, medievalism and naturism. Individualism, originating in France, brought focus on the self, it deals with the examination of the human mind, including struggles and pleasure. Medievalism, originating in Germany, derived from an appreciation of stories from the Middle Ages. Naturism, emerging in England, focused on the beauty and appreciation of nature, country life, etc.¹⁵

Both Gothic and Romantic literature differ in their execution, however, they stem from the same need to explain and explore the complex aspects of life, which reason and faith have not been able to fulfil until that point.¹⁶ As a result of the lack of adequacy of reason or religious faith, the romantic writers rely on imagination, creating a reality that, to them, seems to be more true and provides them meaning. The Gothic writers on the other hand are more grounded in reality and do not stray away from reason¹⁷

To summarise or specify some of the terms and motives associated with Romanticism, here are some recurring aspects: Strong appreciation for nature, emphasis on emotion over reason, interest in the exotic,¹⁸ the innocence and nostalgia of childhood including the reminiscing over simpler times,¹⁹ moments of self-discovery related to the aspect of travel²⁰ and the interest or even fantasies of death. Related to the fantasies of death is the topic of suicide.²¹

Romanticism as a movement affected all kinds of artistic branches apart from literature, such as visual arts, containing the authors Eugène Delacroix, John Constable, and William Turner, an increased appreciation for nature resulted in the emergence of landscape painting. Music was affected by romanticism as well, it emphasised

¹⁵ Burgum, E. B. (1941). Romanticism. *The Kenyon Review*, 3(4), 479–490. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4332291>
orris p. 479-482

¹⁶ Hume, R. D. (1969). Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel. *PMLA*, 84(2), 282–290.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1261285> p. 290

¹⁷ WILLIAMS, Anne. *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*. Chicago 60637: The University of Chicago Press, 1995. ISBN 0226899063. p. 6

¹⁸ *Romanticism*. Online. Britannica. Dostupné z: <https://www.britannica.com/art/Romanticism>.

¹⁹ BLAKEMORE, Erin. *Wordsworth and the Invention of Childhood*. Online. Dostupné z: <https://daily.jstor.org/wordsworth-and-the-invention-of-childhood/>.

²⁰ Jarvis, R. (2004). The Glory of Motion: De Quincey, Travel, and Romanticism. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 34, 74–87.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3509485>

²¹ Lieberman, L. (1991). Romanticism and the Culture of Suicide in Nineteenth-Century France. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 33(3), 611–629. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/179055>

originality and individuality, among musicians of the era were Ludwig van Beethoven, and Franz Schubert.

When it comes to the authors of Romantic literature among them are William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley.²²

1.3 The Turn of the 18th and 19th century in English Literature

In the second half of the 18th century, there was a rise in the superstitious themes in English literature. This thematic shift was caused by several aspects, one being the contemporary rise of modern consumerism which brought new ways of distribution, and marketing and expanded the reading public. Due to this cultural shift common people were more likely to read. Another change that led to the increased interest in the supernatural and the mysterious was the introduction of ghost stories. This change was caused mainly by an article in the newspaper *The Public Ledger* in 1762; in which they reported the murder of a young lady. A few days after, she allegedly returned as a ghost; she was invisible and communicated with people by a system of knocks, where one knock meant *yes* and two knocks signified *no*. This incident, known as the “Cock Lane Ghost” story became popular among locals of London very quickly and their credulity helped with the interest in the superstitious.²³

In 1764, only two years after the *Cock Lane Ghost* story another contribution to the development of English literature took place; *The Castle of Otranto* was written by Horace Walpole, and it is considered to be an introduction of the Gothic Romance. Walpole initially published the novel anonymously and disguised it as a translation by William Marshall of a book written by an Italian by the name of Onuphrio Muralto. Walpole’s reasoning for this decision was, that he thought the book would not be

²² *Romanticism*. Online. Britannica. Dostupné z: <https://www.britannica.com/art/Romanticism>.

²³ CLERY, E.J. *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800*. Online. Cambridge : New York, 1999. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/riseofsupernatur0000cler/page/n1/mode/1up>. p. 1-15

accepted positively in the age of good sense and reason, and also, he considered it to be just an insignificant story for amusement. Only after the novel was received enthusiastically by the public, he admitted being the author. His reasoning was also explained in a letter to his friend where he addresses that the novel could have gotten him into trouble:

“It is not everybody that may in this country play the fool with impunity’.

At the time the term Gothic was regarded as something barbaric and was used as a form of reproach, but fortunately, the novel scratched an itch of the romantics and brought an interest in the works written between the years 1100 to 1650; by the arrival of the 19th century, the term lost its negative connotation.

The novel itself was inspired by Walpole’s miniature castle at Strawberry Hill which he admired, and it was his attempt at connecting the old marvellous with the modern natural. Even with Walpole’s initial shame before the topics of Gothic were accepted and praised, he admitted his admiration of the castle in his letters.

“In the heretical corner of my heart I adore the Gothic building”²⁴

The Gothic as a literary genre Flourished between the years 1764 and 1820, beginning with *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and ending with *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Maturin.²⁵

²⁴ BIRKHEAD, Edith. *The Tale of Terror; a study of the Gothic romance*. Online. Glasgow: London Constable & Company, 1921. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/cu31924027195183/page/n6/mode/1up>. p. 16-20

²⁵ Hume, R. D. (1969). Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel. *PMLA*, 84(2), 282–290. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1261285> p. 282

2 Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

2.1 Life of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

The Author Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley or Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, an English writer of the 19th century, born in 1797 was a child of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. Both of her parents were renowned authors; her father played a significant role in Mary's life, her mother however, died only a few days after Mary's birth. Her father later happily remarried, but Mary and her stepmother did not get along well. Mary got her second last name Shelley from her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley with whom she eloped in 1814 because her father disapproved of their relationship; the same year Mary and Shelley started their diary.^{26 27}

Mary was pregnant with their first child in 1815, however, she gave birth prematurely and their daughter died shortly after being born. Their second child William was born in 1816; the same year, Mary along with Percy, William and Claire departed to Switzerland where Mary's first inspiration for writing Frankenstein began. In December Percy's former wife committed suicide and shortly after Mary and Percy got married. In 1819 their son William died, and the same year she gave birth to another son Percy Florence, the only child who outlived both Percy and Mary. Her husband Percy Bysshe sadly drowned in July of 1822.²⁸

Mary's life, even if it was full of misfortunes and tragedies as seen in her and Percy's journal, was also filled with travelling across Europe and getting familiar with different places and cultures. Both of these aspects of her life might have played a major role in her writing.²⁹

²⁶ SHELLEY, Mary. *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814 - 1844*. Online. Vol. 2. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1987. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/journalsofmarysh0002shel/page/430/mode/2up>. p. xv-xxiii

²⁷ Badalamenti, A. F. (2006). Why did Mary Shelley Write Frankenstein? *Journal of Religion and Health*, 45(3), 419–439. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27512949>

²⁸ SHELLEY, Mary. *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814 - 1844*. Online. Vol. 2. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1987. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/journalsofmarysh0002shel/page/430/mode/2up>. p. xxxvii-xlii

²⁹ Badalamenti, A. F. (2006). Why did Mary Shelley Write Frankenstein? *Journal of Religion and Health*, 45(3), 419–439. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27512949>

Among some of her other publications apart from *Frankenstein* are: *Valperga*, *The Last Man*, and *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*.³⁰

2.2 Literary Context of *Frankenstein*

The author Mary Shelley spent the summer of 1816 in the vicinity of Geneva in Switzerland. The weather was cold and rainy at the time which is reflected in the novel. Her evenings were spent with friends gathered around the fire and from time to time they would tell each other German ghost stories that they had found. The inspiration and excitement gathered from the stories led Mary, her husband Percy Shelley and Lord Byron in an agreement that they would each write a story based on a supernatural phenomenon. As both Percy and Lord Byron were considered renowned poets of the time, Mary felt the need to create something worthy. The other two pieces of work were never finished, Mary however used her newly gained inspiration to write *Frankenstein*. The story itself takes place, along with the North Pole, in several parts of Europe; England, Italy, France, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, Russia and as well in Geneva where Mary's interest began.^{31 32}

Her initial reasons for writing *Frankenstein* were, a form of amusement for herself and also, she wanted to write about unexplored territories of the human mind; other motives came later throughout the writing process. Although the story is founded on supernatural occurrences, it was considered by Charles Darwin and by several German psychological writers as of not impossible character, meaning that the events of *Frankenstein* could in theory happen.³³

The reasons stated above are however not the only influences on Mary's work, she was significantly affected by her dreams, and the support from her husband Percy,

³⁰ KUIPER, Kathleen. *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, British author*. Online. Dostupné z: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mary-Wollstonecraft-Shelley>.

³¹ SHELLEY, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Online. 1818. Project Gutenberg, 2013. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/Frankenstein1818Edition/frank-a5/mode/2up>. p. vii-ix (the countries derived from the context of the whole book)

³² Badalamenti, A. F. (2006). Why did Mary Shelley Write *Frankenstein*? *Journal of Religion and Health*, 45(3), 419–439. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27512949>

³³ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. vii-ix

as well as Lord Byron. Additionally, Galvani's experiments of reanimating the dead with electricity probably influenced her work, as the electro- and biochemistry were among Percy's interests.³⁴

2.3 The Story of Frankenstein

The story of Frankenstein begins with the character Robert Walton sending letters to his sister, Mrs. Margaret Saville, describing his journey on which he encounters Victor Frankenstein. Robert and his crew set sail towards the North Pole where his ship gets stuck between the icicles. After the ice breaks off, he decides to wait until morning before continuing. In the morning, he finds his crew talking to someone in the sea, it is a man on a sledge. Not knowing the stranger's name he takes Victor, who is in a terrible state, into his ship and helps him heal and restore his energy. Once Victor gets better, he proceeds to tell his story to Robert.³⁵

Victor starts his story by talking about his background, he introduces the members of his family and close acquaintances. He proceeds to talk about his rising interest in natural philosophy which lead him to do research. At the age of 17, he becomes a student at the University of Ingolstadt, where his interests in old philosophers and alchemists are ridiculed and dismissed, Victor however combines his interests with newly acquired, more scientific knowledge and becomes obsessed with topics regarding life and death.³⁶

With his increasing obsession Victor becomes interested in the structure of humans, animals and, the living overall. This leads to him studying, experimenting and eventually reanimating a lifeless matter. He constructs a body frame and at night brings the monster to life, however, immediately after, he regrets it and becomes disgusted,

³⁴ Badalamenti, A. F. (2006). Why did Mary Shelley Write Frankenstein? *Journal of Religion and Health*, 45(3), 419–439. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27512949> p. 428

³⁵ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 3-22

³⁶ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 23-40

terrified and runs away. Victor then becomes paranoid and ill. Before coming home because of his illness, he receives a letter from his father announcing to him that his brother William has been murdered. Crushed Victor rushes back home to Geneva and upon his arrival, he finds out that Justin Moritz, a young lady, adopted by the Frankenstein family has been accused of the murder; Victor believes in her innocence because of his conviction that the monster he created is guilty. Justine pleads innocence during the court trial but later confesses. The confession is however a lie, but still, because of her confession, it is decided by the court that she is guilty.³⁷

Victor feels terrible guilt after Justine dies and the whole family mourns. After some time, Victor decides to take his brother Ernest and cousin Elizabeth on a trip to the valley of Chamounix and they spend some time there. While he wanders into the mountains alone one day, he is approached by the monster, who seeks Victor to tell him his story. Victor at first refuses to hear the monster out but is eventually convinced and the monster begins his tale.³⁸

The monster talks about the family he observed, what he learned since his creation and the loneliness and troubles he suffered, which led him down a path of evil and revenge. He then proceeds to ask Victor for a favour of creating a female counterpart for him. Victor refuses at first but the monster is able to convince him and promises that he will leave into the wild of South America never to be seen again. The monster leaves after their agreement and Victor along with Ernest and Elizabeth returns home to Geneva.³⁹

Back home, Victor realises he is not able to construct and reanimate a female body without proper study. He consults travel to England, where he seeks to acquire needed knowledge, with his father, and settles an agreement that upon his return to Geneva he will marry Elizabeth. Victor then leaves for England with his friend Henry Clerval, where he begins collecting materials necessary for his creation of a female creature. After some time of travelling through Britain, he decides to travel to Orkney without Henry, where he settles in a hut, prepares his laboratory and begins his work. After some time, Victor sees the monster lurking behind a window, this sight terrifies

³⁷ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 41-88

³⁸ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 91-105

³⁹ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 106-165

him and he becomes disgusted, destroys his work and refuses to continue. He is then confronted by the beast who after failure to convince Victor, threatens to be with him on his wedding night. Victor is however resilient and the monster leaves. After Victor gets lost at the sea while getting rid of the female creature's remains, he finds himself at the shore of an Irish town.⁴⁰

There Victor is suspected of murder, and later he finds out that the monster killed Henry Clerval. Victor then gets severely ill and after two months wakes up in prison. During the third month in prison, he gets better and is acquitted of charges. Afterwards, he with his father, gets on their way back to Geneva. Victor recollects the monster's threat and proceeds to tread cautiously at all times. After his and Elizabeth's wedding, he prepares himself for the monster's arrival. Not understanding the monster's intentions, Victor awaits, thinking the creature is going to kill him, but he is suddenly surprised by Elizabeth's scream, and the monster kills her instead of him.⁴¹

Overwhelmed by pain, rage and despair Victor decides to take revenge and pursue the monster no matter what. He follows the monster to the North Pole where he chases him on a dog sledge. Victor is not able to reach the monster and notices Walton's ship, he proceeds to create oars from parts of his sledge and on a platform of ice heads towards it. Victor is taken in by Robert Walton and his crew, and his story is at its end. The rest of the story is told through Robert in letters to his sister, Victor falls ill shortly after telling his story. Victor's last wish is for Robert to kill the monster, so it would not cause any more harm. Victor dies and Robert finds the monster mourning over him. He, the monster, tells Robert that his crimes are at the end. The monster says his goodbye to Frankenstein and leaves on his ice raft to die at sea.⁴²

⁴⁰ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 169-199

⁴¹ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 201-232

⁴² Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 233-258

2.4 The Characters of Frankenstein

The story of Victor Frankenstein is mostly about him and the impact of his selfish deeds on people's lives, which is why he is the main character; however, it is not purely a linear story with one primary narrator.

The novel consists of three primary narrators. The first one is Captain Robert Walton, who tells the story in the first part of the book⁴³ and the last part⁴⁴. Robert is a captain of his ship who hires a crew and heads to the North Pole; he might be considered a primary narrator as the novel suggests that the whole story is told with letters to his sister, and his narration opens and closes the novel.

The second narrator is Victor Frankenstein, who begins his narration after Walton's fourth letter,⁴⁵ he is then interrupted by the monster's story and continues after the monster's narration ends⁴⁶. Victor is the main protagonist of the novel, he is a man whose curiosity is his best quality but also the reason for his demise. His curiosity combined with ignorance and selfishness leads him to overcome all obstacles, he is persistent and resilient in achieving his goal, that is until he reaches it. Afterwards, his well-being starts to deteriorate, and he becomes increasingly deranged until his death.

The Third narrator is the monster himself. His narration starts after meeting and talking to Victor for the first time⁴⁷. The monster is visually a hideous creature, but he is overall an intelligent being, who in the beginning only seeks understanding and acceptance. The more he understands however the more he leans toward the path of evil. The monster is not evil by nature, but because of his circumstances; he realises, he will never be loved and accepted by anyone and becomes miserable. He never receives a proper name and may be addressed as: The monster, creature, fiend, daemon, beast etc.

⁴³ (Robert's narration range) - Volume I, Letter I – Letter IV

⁴⁴ (Robert's narration range) - Volume III, Chapter VII starting on p. 242 – The end of the book

⁴⁵ (Victor's narration range) - Volume I, Chapter I – Volume II, Chapter II

⁴⁶ (Victor's narration range) - Volume II, Chapter IX – Volume III, Chapter VII ending on p. 242

⁴⁷ (Monster's narration range) Volume II, Chapter III – Volume II, Chapter VIII

The first non-primary character mentioned in the book is Mrs. Margaret Walton Saville and she is Robert Walton's sister. She is not a character physically present in the story because she functions only as a recipient of Robert's letters.

The following characters are members of the Frankenstein Family. Alphonse Frankenstein is Victor's father. Victor's mother is Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein, she isn't mentioned in the novel much, because of her death from an illness early on in Victor's life. Victor also has two brothers; William is the youngest innocent child who gets murdered by the monster. Ernest is Victor's second younger brother and he is the only one in the family to survive until the end of the novel. Other closely related characters to the family are Justine Moritz, who was adopted by the family after her mother's death, Elizabeth Lavenza, who is Victor's cousin and upcoming wife, and Henry Clerval who is a close family friend, mainly a friend of Victor. Justine is accused of William's murder and wrongfully executed. Elizabeth and Henry are both strangled to death by the monster.

At the University of Ingolstadt, Victor meets two professors relevant to his study. These are M. Krempe and M. Waldman. They both dismiss Victor's interest in alchemy, while Krempe encourages Victor to renew his study immediately, Waldman at least sympathises with Victor's interest in the unknown territories of science.

The following figures are members of the poor family from whom the monster secretly educates himself by observing them. De Lacey, an old blind man, was the only human who was kind to the monster because he could not see his hideousness. The old man has two children, Felix and Agatha and an adopted girl Safie. As Safie does not speak their language, the rest of the family has to teach her, and the monster learns from them from a distance.

There are a few other characters, less relevant to the thesis, such as the merchant Beaufort, the father of Caroline Beaufort, Mr. Kirwin, an Irish magistrate and Daniel Nugent, an Irish fisherman.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ All Characters derived from the Novel

3 Analysis of Gothic and Romantic Elements

The following part of this bachelor's thesis is devoted to the analysis of the gothic and romantic elements. The section will provide excerpts from the novel and comment on features based on the previous parts of the thesis; these are elements such as the weather, the atmosphere, the supernatural, the terror and the horror, the suspense etc. as well as the context of the plot points and characters.

3.1 Volume I

3.1.1 Letters

The first section of the analysis works with samples from the Letters I – IV. These are Letters written by Captain Robert Walton to his sister Mrs. Margaret Walton Saville, and they follow Robert's voyage on which he sets sail to the North Pole, there he runs into trouble when his ship gets stuck in the ice; soon after he meets Victor Frankenstein.

The first excerpt starts with a direct speech of Robert as he addresses his sister. "YOU will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such *evil forebodings*. I arrived here yesterday; and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare, and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking. *I am already far north of London; and as I walk in the streets of Petersburg, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks, which braces my nerves, and fills me with delight.* Do you understand this feeling? This breeze, which

has travelled from the regions towards which I am advancing, gives me a foretaste of those icy climes.”⁴⁹

Immediately, a sense of existential uncertainty, solitude, and isolation is presented to the reader, as the text implies that the Narrator went alone from Petersburg to London, writing to his worried sister to assure her of his safety. The excerpt hints at slightly uncomfortable circumstances with the description of the cold weather as well as themes of travel far from home, these aspects are typically seen in romantic texts. The sense of danger is introduced with the negative assumptions of Robert’s sister and pulls the reader into the dark gothic atmosphere with the help of suspense right at the beginning.

“HOW *slowly the time passes here*, encompassed as I am by *frost and snow*; yet a second step is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel, and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I have already engaged appear to be men on whom I can depend, and are certainly possessed of dauntless courage.”⁵⁰

This time the text portrays Robert in an even more difficult situation, he is surrounded by untamed nature in cold weather in the city of Archangel. The unpleasant weather being a common theme in gothic and romantic literature goes hand in hand with Robert’s acknowledgement of time, both together help build the harsh nature of his voyage; other gothic elements worth noticing are some forms of constraint and the unpleasant place.

As his narrative progresses, a sense of individuality can be noticed as the text focuses solely on Robert and his emotions as well as the descriptions of his surroundings.

⁴⁹ SHELLEY, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Online. 1818. Project Gutenberg, 2013. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/Frankenstein1818Edition/frank-a5/mode/2up>. p. 3

⁵⁰ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 9

“*Our situation was somewhat dangerous*, especially as we were compassed round by a very *thick fog*. We accordingly lay to, hoping that some change would take place in the atmosphere and weather”⁵¹

As Robert mentions in the fourth letter his vessel got stuck between the icicles, the text introduces a sense of danger to the situation with the arrival of thick fog, adding a sense of mystery into the atmosphere and making the situation even harsher.

The following excerpt introduces a strange man who is taken upon Robert’s ship, it is later revealed that his name is Victor Frankenstein.

“Good God! Margaret, if you had seen the man who thus capitulated for his safety, your surprise would have been boundless. His limbs were nearly frozen, and *his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering*. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition. We attempted to carry him into the cabin; but as soon as he had quitted the fresh air, he fainted”⁵²

Victor is in a terrible state and seems to be on the verge of death. The text presents themes of constraint and suffering; the description of Victor's state might be regarded as an element of horror as it is explicit. Extreme conditions such as Victor’s are typically present in romantic texts.

The following excerpt focuses on the description of Victor’s appearance and behaviour.

“his eyes have generally *an expression of wildness, and even madness*; but there are moments when, if any one performs an act of kindness towards him, or does him any the most trifling service, *his whole countenance is lighted up*, as it were, with a beam of benevolence and sweetness that I never saw equalled.”⁵³

Victor is described here as a wretched man in a terrible mental and physical state; he seems to be utterly confused which is described by his erratic mood changes

⁵¹ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 15

⁵² Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 17

⁵³ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 17

and behaviour. The mention of madness is another typical aspect found in other pieces of gothic and romantic literature. It is especially present in the works of the American Gothic author Edgar Allan Poe where they usually play a greater role than in this example.⁵⁴ The element of Madness is prevalent in “The Tell-Tale Heart⁵⁵ or The Raven.⁵⁶ The following sample describes Victor’s strange habits once he slightly recovers.

“He is often *overcome by gloom*, and then he sits by himself, and tries to overcome all that is sullen or unsocial in his humour. These paroxysms pass from him *like a cloud from before the sun*, though his dejection never leaves him.”⁵⁷

Victor’s portrayal suggests his efforts to lighten up while he is overshadowed by the dark thoughts, but his problems never leave him. This example of a mental struggle and emphasis on the human psyche is complemented with the use of a *metaphor* which compares his mood changes with the swiftness of a cloud passing the sun. The following sample is from the near end of the last letter and is told from the perspective of Victor.

“You will hear of *powers and occurrences*, such as you have been accustomed to believe *impossible*: but I do not doubt that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed.”⁵⁸

First hints of supernatural themes are presented, preparing the reader for unnatural occurrences relying on their credulity and further reinforcing a sense of mystery as Victor is about to tell his story.

⁵⁴ BARZUN, Jacques a MABBOTT, Thomas Ollive. *Edgar Allan Poe American writer*. Online. Dostupné z: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edgar-Allan-Poe>. [cit. 2024-07-03].

⁵⁵ POE, Edgar Allan. *Jáma a kyvadlo a jiné povídky*. Přeložil Marie BROŽOVÁ, přeložil Anna KUČEROVÁ. *Knihy Omega*. Praha: Dobrovský, 2015. ISBN 9788073903053. p. 5-9

⁵⁶ POE, Edgar Allan. *Havran a jiné básně*. [2. vydání]. Přeložil Jaroslav VRCHLICKÝ, přeložil Vratislav Kazimír ŠEMBERA, přeložil Augustin Eugen MUŽÍK, přeložil Karel DOSTÁL-LUTINOV. *Knihy Omega*. Praha: Dobrovský, 2017. ISBN 9788073901653. p. 13-20

⁵⁷ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 20

⁵⁸ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 21

3.1.2 Chapters

From Chapter I the novel changes its narrator from Robert Walton to Victor Frankenstein, who begins his story by presenting his life's background.

“I feel *pleasure in dwelling on the recollections of childhood*, before misfortune had tainted my mind, and changed its *bright* visions of extensive usefulness into *gloomy* and narrow reflections upon self.”⁵⁹

Victor is reminiscing over childhood memories and compares his carefree mind with the current sense of doom and feelings of hopelessness. There is an emphasis on contrast between the *light* and *dark* reflecting the *good* and *evil* times in his life; this example shows the recurring motif of reminiscing over the simpler past, the times of childhood.

“It may appear very strange, that a disciple of *Albertus Magnus* should arise in the eighteenth century; but our family was not scientific, and I had not attended any of the lectures given at the schools of Geneva. My dreams were therefore undisturbed by reality; and I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the *philosopher's stone* and *the elixir of life*.”⁶⁰

Victor talks about his unconventional interest in Albertus Magnus and his lack of knowledge leading to his research of the mentioned artefacts and further deepening his interest in topics regarding life and death.

In the following sample, Victor describes the passing of his mother caused by her illness.

⁵⁹ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 28

⁶⁰ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 29

“These are the reflections of the first days; but *when the lapse of time proves the reality of the evil, then the actual bitterness of grief commences.*”⁶¹

Victor is exaggeratedly explaining that only when enough time passes, one will realize the reality of a such horrible event. Along with the present focus on the inner state of being is prevalent the Dramatic language and expressions such as the *reality of the evil*, and *bitterness of grief* which increase the impact and put an emphasis on the strong emotion in the text. The following text concerns Victor’s first days at the University of Ingolstadt. There he gets familiar with the place and some of his professors.

“He then took me into his *laboratory*, and explained to me the uses of his various *machines*; instructing me as to what I ought to procure, and promising me the use of his own, when I should have advanced far enough in the science not to derange their mechanism. He also gave me the list of books which I had requested; and I took my leave. Thus ended a day memorable to me; *it decided my future destiny*“

Here Mr. Waldman takes Victor into his laboratory to introduce him to the subject of natural philosophy and chemistry. The machines present in the laboratory show the prevalent interest in modern technology which are often combined with the old elements in gothic literature.

The following section deals with the day on which is Victor finally about to accomplish his goal of creating life artificially by reanimating a lifeless body frame and the sudden twist that follows his action.

“*IT was on a dreary night of November*, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an *anxiety that almost amounted to agony*, I collected the instruments of life

⁶¹ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 34

around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet.”⁶²

The interest in modern aspects such as technology is even more dominant in this part. Victor’s goal is to use his tools and abilities to achieve something unthinkable. This turns the interest in technology to another notch as it delves into the area of impossibility. The description of the night and his extreme emotions convey the dark and scary atmosphere of the moment which helps to build up the tension before the impact of Victor's action; this excerpt might serve as an example of the recurring gothic suspense.

“It was already one in the morning; *the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out*, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the *dull yellow eye* of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.”⁶³

Once again, the atmosphere is supported by the description of surrounding aspects and weather. This time the combination of the raindrops and almost burnt-out candle suggests the gloomy and strangely calm nature of the moment, reflecting the disturbing description of the monsters awakening. The scene contains supernatural elements, combined with the aspect of modern technology as well as the elements of horror with the monster’s terrifying description.

“I had *desired* it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, *the beauty of the dream vanished*, and breathless *horror and disgust filled my heart*. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep.”⁶⁴

⁶² Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 49

⁶³ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 49

⁶⁴ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 50

The first sentence of this sample focuses on Victor's deep desire which overshadowed his judgment. The realization of his horror contrasts with his initial excitement and he is immediately horrified and disgusted. The text contrasts between the Romantic element of beauty and the Gothic aspect of horror.

“A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even *Dante could not have conceived*.”⁶⁵

Victor describes his progressively increasing disgust as the monster reanimates. The vileness of the creature is supported by Victor's reference of the historical figure Dante Alighieri, the writer of the *Divine Comedy*. The book features a part by the name of *Inferno* in which Dante portrays himself going through several layers of hell accompanied by his guide Virgil.⁶⁶ The reference emphasises the hideousness of the monster by comparing it to those seen in hell; this is an explicit description that could be regarded as an element of horror.

“I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes *my pulse beat so quickly and hardly*, that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness.”⁶⁷

In this example Victor's terror is portrayed with the mention of his quick pulse; the use of a pulse or an increased heart rate is used many times in the novel. It often describes his anxiousness but can be mentioned as an example of excitement in other parts of the novel.

⁶⁵ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 51

⁶⁶ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Dante's Inferno*. Online. New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1866? Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/dantesinferno00dantuoft>.

⁶⁷ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 51

“My heart palpitated in *the sickness of fear*; and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me: *Like one who, on a lonely road, Doth walk in fear and dread, And, having once turn'd round, walks on, And turns no more his head; Because he knows a frightful fiend Doth close behind him tread.*”⁶⁸

Victor describes his terror and paranoia because of the monster, the passage is followed by a quote⁶⁹ from a poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by the author Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This quote reflects Victor’s situation, he is not going to look around because he knows that there might be something terrifying behind him. In the following sample, after Victor’s incident of reanimating the monster, he and his friend Henry Clerval meet by chance.

“I did not before remark how very ill you appear; so thin and pale; you look as if you had been watching for several nights.” “You have guessed right; *I have lately been so deeply engaged in one occupation, that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest*, as you see: but I hope, I sincerely hope, that all these employments are now at an end, and that I am at length free.”⁷⁰

Henry comments on Victor’s unpleasant appearance and expresses his worry. Victor’s obsession and fear reflected greatly in his looks and took a toll on his health. His state serves as an example of a person under a lot of pressure and constraint. Victor expresses his hope for the better and the following example releases the suspense of his situation.

“We ascended into my room, and the servant presently brought breakfast; but I was unable to contain myself. It was not joy only that possessed me; I felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and *my pulse beat rapidly*. I was unable to remain for a single instant in the same place; I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands, and laughed aloud.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 51-52

⁶⁹ Note: The quote begins with “like one who, on a lonely road...”

⁷⁰ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 53

⁷¹ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 54

Victor realises that the monster is no longer in his room and becomes overwhelmed with joy; his fear and selfishness are so strong that he ignores the fact that the monster ran away and could be a possible danger to someone. The description of his pulse is often⁷² depicted as the result of his terror and anxiety, but this time it reflects his excitement and relief.

“We passed a fortnight in these perambulations: my *health* and spirits had long been *restored*, and they gained additional strength from *the salubrious air* I breathed, the natural incidents of our progress, and the conversation of my friend.”⁷³

The text presents a form of appreciation of nature and shows how the weather and regular walks reflect positively on Victor’s healing process. As all seems to go well and the atmosphere of the novel is light and calm at the moment. The terror is however soon brought back with Victor receiving a letter from his father Alphonse.

“I wish to prepare you for *the woeful news*, but I know it is impossible; even now your eye skims over the page, to seek the words which are to convey to you the horrible tidings. “*William is dead!* — that sweet child, whose smiles delighted and warmed my heart, who was so gentle, yet so gay! *Victor, he is murdered!*”⁷⁴

The text brings back the suspense by announcing bad news, the situation escalates by specifying the details of the news two times; the first time by announcing the death of Victor’s brother William, and the second time, increasing the severity even further, by exclaiming that he was murdered.

⁷² Note: See a different example: Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 51

⁷³ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 64

⁷⁴ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 67

3.2 Volume II

The beginning of the second Volume relieves the suspense of the atmosphere for a while as the aftermath of Victor's action seems to be at its end. While the family grieves and tries to heal, it is decided they should travel to process their misfortune.

The following text describes Victor's view in the Valley of Chamounix, where he travelled along with Henry and Elizabeth after the tragedies of William's and Justine's passing.

*“Ruined castles hanging on the precipices of piny mountains; the impetuous Arve, and cottages every here and there peeping forth from among the trees, formed a scene of singular beauty. But it was augmented and rendered sublime by the mighty Alps, whose white and shining pyramids and domes towered above all, as belonging to another earth, the habitations of another race of beings.”*⁷⁵

The depiction of the landscape, the cottages, the river Arve and the ruined castles shows the Romantic appreciation for nature and combines it with the element of medieval architecture. The beauty is altered by the visage of the Alps which Victor describes as if they were from another planet, they are depicted as something foreign and strange, highlighting the sublime atmosphere.

*“vast mists were rising from the rivers which ran through it, and curling in thick wreaths around the opposite mountains, whose summits were hid in the uniform clouds, while rain poured from the dark sky, and added to the melancholy impression I received from the objects around me.”*⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 96

⁷⁶ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 100

The depiction of the view is affected by the arrival of bad weather, resulting in a much gloomier atmosphere, this is reflected in Victor's mood as he suddenly becomes overwhelmed with sadness.

The next sample is a verse borrowed from a poem *Mutability* by Mary's husband Percy Bysshe Shelley.

"We rest; a dream has power to poison sleep. We rise; one wand'ring thought pollutes the day. We feel, conceive, or reason; laugh, or weep, Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away; It is the same: for, be it joy or sorrow, The path of its departure still is free. Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow; Nought may endure but mutability!"⁷⁷

In the context of this passage, Victor talks about the effect that exterior aspects of life can have on human emotions; He states that if human needs were reduced just to hunger, thirst and desire they would almost be free. This verse serves as a comparison or a mirror of Victor's thoughts as it deals with the variable experience of living; meaning that one's mood might be altered by the simplest thought.

As time passes in the valley of Chamounix, Victor decides to head on a walk into the mountains alone. the following example shows the moment Victor sees the monster right before he is approached by him for the first time.

"As I said this, I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with *superhuman speed*. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man. I was troubled: *a mist came over my eyes*, and I felt a faintness seize me; but I was quickly restored by the cold gale of the mountains. I perceived, as the shape came nearer, (sight tremendous and abhorred!) that it was the wretch whom I had created."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 101

⁷⁸ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 102

Victor describes his increasing feelings of fright as the monster approaches him. This situation contains the elements of terror as Victor almost faints, as well as suspense and the supernatural as the monster moves unnaturally fast towards him. The climax of the situation is at the end with Victor's realisation that what he sees is the monster.

*“The air was cold, and the rain again began to descend: we entered the hut, the fiend with an air of exultation, I with a heavy heart, and depressed spirits. But I consented to listen; and, seating myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale.”*⁷⁹

At this moment Victor follows the monster after agreeing to hear his story and they enter a hut in the mountains. The cold and rain outside of the hut, along with the contrasting heat of the fire inside create a comfortable and sublime atmosphere right before the monster begins his story. This also prepares the reader for a change of narrators.

With Chapter III of Volume II the story changes its narrator from Victor Frankenstein to the monster he brought to life. The creature begins his tale by talking about his awakening and learning about the world.

*“By degrees, I remember, a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I was obliged to shut my eyes. Darkness then came over me, and troubled me; but hardly had I felt this, when, by opening my eyes, as I now suppose, the light poured in upon me again. I walked, and, I believe, descended; but I presently found a great alteration in my sensations. Before, dark and opaque bodies had surrounded me, impervious to my touch or sight; but I now found that I could wander on at liberty, with no obstacles which I could not either surmount or avoid.”*⁸⁰

The dark and twisted atmosphere of this part is complemented by the prevalence of supernatural elements as the monster describes the unnatural nature of his birth. The text concentrates on the monster's inner dialogue, feelings and senses as he rises to life.

⁷⁹ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 105

⁸⁰ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 107

The awakening is depicted with the use of light and dark, the increase of light representing the process of waking up. The focus on the state of his being may be regarded as the Romantic individuality.

The following part describes the monster's situation after running away into the wild from Victor's apartment.

“It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half-frightened as it were instinctively, finding myself so desolate. Before I had quitted your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some clothes; but these were insufficient to secure me from the dews of night. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but, feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.”⁸¹

The focus on the element of individuality in the novel is prevalent even more from the monster's point of view as he is alone because of his differences. The monster is depicted as confused and hopeless, only able to act instinctively; the text focuses on his mental process and constraint as well as the significance of weather to his situation. The monster's differences signify his individuality as there is no one similar to him; he is desperate but begins to learn about the positive aspects of life soon as well.

As the creature finds a hut, he frightens its one inhabitant. He goes inside of the hut and comments on its appearance.

“His appearance, different from any I had ever before seen, and his flight, somewhat surprised me. But I was enchanted by the appearance of the hut: here the snow and rain could not penetrate; the ground was dry; and it presented to me then as exquisite and divine a retreat as *Pandæmonium* appeared to the dæmons of hell after their sufferings in the lake of fire.”⁸²

As he walks inside he compares the hut with *Pandemonium*, the sentence is a reference to a capital city of hell from John Milton's novel “Paradise Lost”.⁸³ The text suggests the similarities between the hut and the Pandemonium and similarities between

⁸¹ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 108

⁸² Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 111

⁸³ MILTON, John a SOMERVELL, D. C. *Milton's Paradise Lost*. Online. E. P. Dutton and Company, 1920. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/miltonsparadisemilton/page/8/mode/2up>.

the monster and the demons. By using the negative comparison positively, he acknowledges his differences from other people and animals, and he relates to the terrifying appearance of demons.

The next part depicts the monster's feelings after he finds a family of peasants and begins to observe them.

“I felt sensations of a peculiar and over-powering nature: they were a *mixture of pain and pleasure*, such as I had never before experienced, either from *hunger or cold, warmth or food*; and I withdrew from the window, unable to bear these emotions”⁸⁴

The text again shows an interest in the individual mental processes and focuses on the monster's reflections regarding his new experience. The monster's bittersweet emotions are compared to the physical sensations and are emphasised over them as the monster is unable to withstand them.

“These thoughts *exhilarated me*, and led me to apply with fresh ardour to *the acquiring the art of language*. My organs were indeed harsh, but supple; and although my voice was very unlike the soft music of their tones, yet I pronounced such words as I understood with tolerable ease. It was as *the ass and the lap-dog*; yet surely the gentle ass, whose intentions were affectionate, although his manners were rude, deserved better treatment than blows and execration.”⁸⁵

This is the moment that the monster decides to learn a language by observing the family. The text includes a reference to Aesop's fable *The Ass and the Lapdog*⁸⁶ which serves as a mirroring story to his situation. In the fable, the ass in an effort of being accepted by his master tries to act as the lapdog, whom the master adores, he is however seen as rude and gets punished. The monster compares himself with the ass and acknowledges his differences from others, but he nevertheless stays positive and is

⁸⁴ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 114

⁸⁵ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 123

⁸⁶ AESOP. *The Ass and the Lap Dog*. Online. Dostupné z: <https://read.gov/aesop/108.html>.

overcome with joy in hopes of being accepted once he learns how to communicate with others.

“My spirits were elevated by *the enchanting appearance of nature*; *the past* was blotted from my memory, *the present* was tranquil, and *the future* gilded by bright rays of hope, and anticipations of joy.”⁸⁷

The monster’s feelings of hope are complemented by the depiction of nature, and his mood is reflected by the beauty of his surroundings. He compares the miserable past, with his vision of a better future.

“I cannot describe to you *the agony* that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. Oh, *that I had for ever remained in my native wood, nor known or felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat!*”⁸⁸

As the monster gets more knowledgeable, he is overcome by agony; the more he understands the more he is aware of his situation and the more he feels hopeless. The content of the text once again emphasises the psychological pain over the physical.

„Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone.”⁸⁹

Here the monster makes a comparison of himself with Adam, the God created man from the Old Testament of the Holy Bible.⁹⁰ In this case, The monster Learns about

⁸⁷ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 123

⁸⁸ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 130

⁸⁹ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 141-142

⁹⁰ *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments*. Online. American Baptist Publication Society, 1913. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/holybiblecontain00philuoft/mode/2up>.

Adam as he reads through *Paradise Lost*⁹¹ and he notices similarities between him and Adam. The reference is used as a highlight of similar situations, however, in the monster's case he is not provided the benefits of being unique, instead, he suffers. This also provides an indirect comparison of Frankenstein, playing God and negatively affecting the lives of innocent people; here are prevalent elements of power and constraint.

The following example takes place in the home of the poor family; after the monster approaches the blind man De Lacey with the intent of asking for a favour. They have a pleasant conversation as the old man does not acknowledge the monster's appearance. and when the rest of De Lacey's family arrives, the scared monster begs the old man to protect him.

„At that moment I heard the steps of my younger protectors. I had not a moment to lose; but, seizing the hand of the old man, I cried, ‘Now is the time! — *save and protect me!* You and your family are the friends whom I seek. Do not you desert me in the hour of trial!’ “ ‘Great God!’ exclaimed the old man, ‘who are you?’ “At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered.“⁹²

This part presents the scene of the monster's efforts to befriend the family. It shows moments of horror as the monster grabs the old man's hand; the steps of the forthcoming family build the tension until the scene reaches its climax with their arrival.

Afterwards, the monster is bashed away from the house and after a while, the frightened family moves out and leaves. The following part describes the moment when the monster realises that the family is gone.

“I continued for the remainder of the day in my hovel in *a state of utter and stupid despair*. My protectors had departed, and had broken *the only link that held me to the world*. For the first time the feelings of *revenge and hatred filled my bosom*, and I did

⁹¹ MILTON, John a SOMERVELL, D. C. *Milton's Paradise Lost*. Online. E. P. Dutton and Company, 1920. Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/miltonsparadiselmilton/page/8/mode/2up>.

⁹² Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 148

not strive to controul them; but, allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my mind towards *injury and death*.“⁹³

The monster, hopeful up until this point is now fully devastated and loses all hope. The treatment he receives is reflected in his inner state and as he accepts the way he is perceived he leans toward evil and hate. The shift from hopelessness to malice creates an ominous moment of Horror.

The following moment takes place right after the monster finishes telling his story to Victor and concerns the monster’s request.

„We may not part until you have promised to comply with my requisition. I am alone, and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must *be of the same species, and have the same defects*. This being you must create.“⁹⁴

As the monster throughout his tragic journey recognises his differences as a reason for his loneliness, he loses his hope of acceptance by other species and seeks it in another creature similar to him. That is why he asks Victor for a favour of creating a female counterpart for him. The Romantic element of individuality is in the case of the monster, portrayed very tragically, he is portrayed as empathetic and compassionate in nature, the circumstances however make him spiteful and affect him so much, he becomes as selfish as Victor.

The monster finishes his tale, states his demands, and the story continues to be narrated by Victor Frankenstein. Afterwards Follows an excerpt which takes place after Victor Henry and Elizabeth come back from their trip to Chamounix.

“For myself, I was passive in all their arrangements; and the gentle affection of my beloved Elizabeth was inadequate to draw me from the depth of my despair. The

⁹³ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 151-152

⁹⁴ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 158

promise I had made to the dæmon weighed upon my mind, like *Dante's iron cowl* on the heads of the hellish *hypocrites*.”⁹⁵

Victor describes his conflicted thoughts after promising the creation of a female counterpart to the monster. This inner conflict is compared to another reference of Dante's *Inferno*, as Victor feels like a hypocrite for doing something against his values and morals. In *The Inferno*, Dante encounters the hypocrites, they are depicted as wearing cowls or cloaks that are beautiful on the outside, but they are filled with lead making the cloak heavy and the hypocrites suffer.

*“Their outside Was overlaid with gold, dazzling to view, But leaden all within, and of such weight. That Frederick's compared to these were straw.”*⁹⁶

The comparison helps emphasise Victor's situation highlighting his suffering.

3.3 Volume III

Volume III begins with Victor dealing with his inner conflict and preparing for the creation of another monster. This part of the book is overflowed with elements of nature and travel as Victor's circumstances force him to travel to gather the needed knowledge to construct a female body. These moments are filled with sublime atmosphere and the suspense and horror aspects are set aside for a while. The monster's power over Victor is now, however, more prevalent than before.

“DAY after day, week after week, passed away on my return to Geneva; and I could not collect the courage to recommence my work. I feared the vengeance of the disappointed fiend, yet I was unable to overcome my repugnance to the task which was enjoined me.”⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 164

⁹⁶ ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Dante's Inferno*. Online. New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1866? Dostupné z: <https://archive.org/details/dantesinferno00dantuoft>. p. 122

⁹⁷ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 169

Victor's thoughts show his reluctance to the agreement, he delays the work as he cannot bring himself to create another being that is capable of murder. His fear of the monster forces him to proceed eventually and he leaves Geneva for his research.

The next excerpt concerns the meeting of Victor and Henry in Strasburg.

“He pointed out to me *the shifting colours of the landscape, and the appearances of the sky*. “*This is what it is to live;*” he cried, “*now I enjoy existence!* But you, my dear Frankenstein, wherefore are you desponding and sorrowful?” In truth, I was occupied *by gloomy thoughts, and neither saw the descent of the evening star, nor the golden sunrise reflected in the Rhine.*”⁹⁸

Henry makes remarks on the beauty of the vicinity, he is completely astounded, and the surroundings reflect on his mood. Victor, on the other hand, overcome by bad thoughts, is not able to show appreciation for the landscape. The text depicts how the inner state of a person affects the exterior and overshadows the Romantic beauty of nature.

“But even human sympathies were not sufficient to satisfy his eager mind. The scenery of external nature, which others regard only with admiration, he loved with ardour: — — — — “*The sounding cataract Haunted him like a passion: the tall rock, The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood, Their colours and their forms, were then to him An appetite; a feeling, and a love, That had no need of a remoter charm, By thought supplied, or any interest Unborrowed from the eye.*”⁹⁹

As seen plenty of times in the provided examples, Mary Shelley has a habit of using references, and comparisons of texts by other authors to support, reinforce or exaggerate the feelings and emotions of the characters. This piece of text shows Romantic elements of Henry's exaggerated admiration of nature. His feelings are

⁹⁸ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 174

⁹⁹ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 176

reinforced by the use of a line from William Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey".¹⁰⁰

*"I enjoyed this scene; and yet my enjoyment was embittered both by the memory of the past, and the anticipation of the future. I was formed for peaceful happiness. During my youthful days discontent never visited my mind"*¹⁰¹

Here, Victor's appreciation for nature is again overshadowed by his miserable inner state. His distorted thinking is followed by the romantic aspect of reminiscing over the distant past and the simpler times of childhood.

After some time of travelling together, Victor and Henry part ways, the next excerpt describes Victor leaving for Scotland's Orkneys. In the following parts, due to the absence of Henry's enthusiasm, the sublime nature becomes less emphasised, the focus is brought on Victor's reflections and the atmosphere becomes gloomier.

"On the whole island there were but three miserable huts, and one of these was vacant when I arrived. This I hired. It contained but two rooms, and these exhibited all the squalidness of the most miserable penury."¹⁰²

The text depicts the strange atmosphere of the place and describes the three huts. The appearance of the huts suggests the element of strange places which recur in Gothic literature. Hiring one of the huts enforces the gloomy atmosphere which complements the dark nature of Victor's task and the current point of the novel.

"Thus situated, employed in the most detestable occupation, immersed in a solitude where nothing could for an instant call my attention from the actual scene in which I

¹⁰⁰ WORDSWORTH, William. *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798*. Online. 1793. Dostupné z: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45527/lines-composed-a-few-miles-above-tintern-abbey-on-revisiting-the-banks-of-the-wye-during-a-tour-july-13-1798>.

¹⁰¹ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 181

¹⁰² Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 185

was engaged, *my spirits became unequal; I grew restless and nervous. Every moment I feared to meet my persecutor.*”

As Victor proceeds, the gloomy, miserable atmosphere intensifies; the tension of the story increases and Victor's mental state worsens. His isolation and solitude make him increasingly restless and terrified.

After some time as Victor progresses in his work, he notices the monster behind the window.

“I trembled, and my heart failed within me; when, on looking up, I saw, by the light of the moon, the dæmon at the casement. *A ghastly grin wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me, where I sat fulfilling the task which he had allotted to me.*” (--) “As I looked on him, *his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery.* I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and, trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged.”¹⁰³

Elements of terror and horror are strongly expressed as Victor depicts the appearance of the monster. The monster's distinctive hideous features influence the way he is depicted and understood by others, therefore from Victor's perspective, the monster expresses signs of evil, however, this might be caused just by the influence of his appearance. When the sight of the creature disgusts Victor, he destroys his work and the monster howls making the atmosphere even more horrific and tense as the howl belongs among the elements of the haunting sounds of the Gothic Literature.

Victor is afterwards creepily approached by the monster and adamantly resists and refuses his wishes.

“Devil, cease; and do not poison the air with these sounds of malice. I have declared my resolution to you, and I am no coward to bend beneath words. Leave me; I am

¹⁰³ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 190

inexorable.” “It is well. I go; but remember, *I shall be with you on your wedding-night.*”¹⁰⁴

As Victor grabs his courage, he shouts at the monster making him realise that Victor is adamant this time. The monster then makes a threatening remark and leaves, the silence after closes off the scene full of terror and horror.

The following part concerns the aftermath of Victor’s decision to destroy his work and dismiss the monster’s wishes. As the monster leaves after their conflict and Victor gets rid of the remains of the female creature, the sense of mysterious tension prevails.

“I entered the room where the corpse lay, and was led up to the coffin. How can I describe my sensations on beholding it? I feel yet parched with *horror*, nor can I reflect on that terrible moment without *shuddering and agony*, that faintly reminds me of the anguish of the recognition.”¹⁰⁵

This is the scene where Victor finds out that the body of a strangled man is Henry Clerval. The Gloomy setting complements the horror Victor is witnessing and his pain is expressed in an overly exaggerated manner. An element of death is present in many parts of the novel, this time however, as Victor is overcome by despair and his health starts progressively deteriorating he loses his will to live.

After Victor falls into an illness, he wakes up in prison after two months and the next part describes his desperation as he cries.

“Why did I not die? More miserable than man ever was before, why did I not sink into forgetfulness and rest? “ (--) “But I was doomed to live; and, in two months, found myself as awaking from a dream, in a prison, stretched on a wretched bed, surrounded by gaolers, turnkeys, bolts, and all the miserable apparatus of a dungeon.”¹⁰⁶

Victor's mental state severely worsens as he begins to often wish for death. The element of suicidality becomes more relevant and some other following paragraphs of

¹⁰⁴ Shelley, Mary, Frankenstein p. 193

¹⁰⁵ Shelley, Mary, Frankenstein p. 203

¹⁰⁶ Shelley, Mary, Frankenstein p. 204

the novel show Victor's increased suicidality as well. The prison in which Victor resides might be regarded as one of the strange places often present in Gothic literature.

“and when I thought on what had passed, a real *insanity possessed me*; sometimes I was furious, and burnt with rage, sometimes low and despondent. I neither spoke or looked, but sat motionless, bewildered by the multitude of miseries that overcame me.”¹⁰⁷

This example contains an element of madness, in Victor's case it is not portrayed as a complete loss of touch with reality, instead, Victor's state is described just as irrational and unpredictable; he is not completely lost, his state of being is however certainly deteriorating quickly as he reminisces on the monster's threats.

As the marriage of Victor and Elizabeth is getting closer, the atmosphere becomes more tense and he becomes more paranoid, bringing a pistol and a dagger with him at all times.

“Those were the last moments of my life during which I enjoyed the feeling of happiness. We passed rapidly along: the sun was hot, but we were sheltered from its rays by a kind of canopy, while we enjoyed the beauty of the scene”¹⁰⁸

This part of the text describes the last happy moments of Victor's life, bringing the element of beautiful nature and atmosphere before the last part of the story. It may be regarded as a moment of *the calm before the storm*.

While Victor is expecting the monster to come murder him, he is taken by surprise as the monster's plan was to kill Elizabeth all along.

“when suddenly *I heard a shrill and dreadful scream*. It came from the room into which Elizabeth had retired. As I heard it, the whole truth rushed into my mind, *my arms dropped, the motion of every muscle and fibre was suspended; I could feel the blood trickling in my veins, and tingling in the extremities of my limbs.*”

¹⁰⁷ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 219

¹⁰⁸ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 222

In this moment the tension is released as Victor hears Elizabeth's scream, he realises the monster's schemes and is overcome by terror. The text includes the terror element of scream a detailed description of Victor's physical reaction to the anguish.

Overcome by despair, and hatred, along with nothing to lose, Victor is determined to find the monster and get revenge. He follows him to the North Pole and they get separated after a long chase; afterwards, Victor meets and is saved by Robert Walton and his crew.

Victor finishes his story and the rest of the novel is narrated by Robert Walton.

“He endeavoured to soothe me as a nurse does a child, and reverted to my tale as the effects of delirium. “Man,” I cried, “how ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom! Cease; you know not what it is you say.” I broke from the house angry and disturbed, and retired to meditate on some other mode of action.”¹⁰⁹

“YOU have read this strange and terrific story, Margaret; and do you not feel your blood congealed with horror, like that which even now curdles mine? Sometimes, seized with sudden agony, he could not continue his tale; at others, his voice broken, yet piercing, uttered with difficulty the words so replete with agony.”¹¹⁰

Robert Walton closes the story near its end with other letters to his sister, addressing her in direct speech, the same way as in the beginning, emphasising the mysterious and intense atmosphere of the story. This part of the text also confirms that the whole story has been retold through letters to Mrs. Saville as the context suggests.

Before the story ends Robert approaches the monster, who kneels before the body of Victor Frankenstein, and they have a conversation.

“But soon,” *he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm*, “I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral

¹⁰⁹ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 232

¹¹⁰ Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein p. 242

pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell.” He sprung from the cabin-window, as he said this, upon the ice-raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance.”¹¹¹

The last example from the novel shows the elements of death and the Romantic suicidality as the monster describes his departure. The emphasis on the calm expressions of his emotions releases the tension and the rest of the narration fades as the monster disappears in the dark of a distance, closing of the novel.

¹¹¹ Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* p. 257-258

Conclusion

In conclusion, the goal of the thesis was to offer a closer look at the literary context of the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. In the first part, the thesis introduced the term Gothic as a way of introduction to the following terms. Then the thesis delved into and defined the Gothic and Romantic elements and established a background for the literary analysis. The thesis also provided the characterisation of the turning point of the 19th century in English literature and presented the social changes and events related to the cultural shifts of the period.

The thesis also briefly delved into the life of the author Mary Shelley, and provided information about her tragedies, her family life, and presented the circumstances, challenges and inspirations, such as the reading of German ghost stories, the agreement with Lord Byron and her husband Percy Bysshe Shelly to create a story based on the supernatural, or her dreams, that influenced the creation of *Frankenstein*. The thesis also provided a summary of the story and its important plot points and described characters relevant to the analysis. The thesis along with the description of the characters, highlighted the three narrators of the novel, as well as specified the changes in narration.

The main section of the thesis dealt with the analysis and focused on the interpretation of the horror, gothic and romantic elements and commented on their relevancy to the characters. The Analysis provided samples of text in chronological order and included some of the most relevant plot points and aspects. The thesis tried to highlight and point out the themes such as the surroundings, the atmosphere, the landscapes and beauties of nature, the gothic suspense, the topics of death, suicidality and the supernatural, the occurrence of strange places feelings of constraint, struggle, fear, terror, horror, and hopelessness. The thesis also provided context for the references to other historical authors, personalities, and lines of texts from the literary works by other authors, which Mary Shelley often used in her own work.

To conclude this thesis, it is possible to say that the work provides a deeper look into Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein* and helps with the acknowledgement and better understanding of its elements.

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