



The Evaluation Of The Gothic Novel: From Mary Shelley To Bram Stoker

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the evolution of the Gothic novel from the early 19th century to the late Victorian era, focusing on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Shelley's *Frankenstein* reflects the Romantic period's focus on nature, individualism, and scientific discovery, while Stoker's *Dracula* encapsulates contemporary anxieties about modernity, sexuality, disease, degeneration, and foreign invasion. The authors used Gothic tropes like the monstrous, supernatural, and uncanny to express deeper psychological and societal fears. The study also discusses the transformation in narrative technique, from Shelley's philosophical storytelling to Stoker's epistolary structure, which integrates modern technologies and fragmented perspectives. The study also highlights the shifting portrayal of gender, science, and morality within the Gothic framework, reflecting broader ideological shifts. The research highlights the adaptability and resilience of the Gothic mode, as the Gothic novel served as a form of entertainment and a lens through which authors interrogated the dominant fears and uncertainties of their time.

Keywords: *Gothic Literature, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, Frankenstein, Dracula, 19th-Century Fiction*

Introduction:

This is because the Gothic novel is the kind of literary mode, through horror, the supernatural, or the unknown dwells in society's greatest fears and anxieties. The Gothic novel emerged out of the late 18th century with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* into an art form, with changing concern from the matured form as the 19th century came around to its cultural-philosophical-scientific metamorphoses. This work investigates the transformation of the Gothic novel by analyzing two of its hallmark texts: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). *Frankenstein*, which is known to be the very first modern science fiction novel, criticizes the rational and scientific progress emphasis of Enlightenment while attesting to the solitude and moral responsibility creator. The late Victorian Gothic is very well portrayed by *Dracula* and that strange climate of fears related to sexuality, empire, disease, and modernity. This research aims to trace the development of Gothic literature in the nineteenth century, exploring how Shelley and Stoker utilized Gothic conventions in their narratives to examine dominant ideologies that also constrained the scope and reach of this emerging genre. Through thematic analysis, historical contextualization, and critical interpretation, this paper evaluates how Gothic fiction has not only entertained but also served to address society's most profound cultural and psychological dilemmas.

Objective of the Research:

- 1) To trace the thematic evolution of Gothic literature from the Romantic to the Victorian period.
- 2) To analyze the narrative techniques and stylistic elements in *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*.
- 3) To examine how the socio-political contexts influenced Gothic themes in each novel.
- 4) To explore how Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker contributed to the Gothic canon.
- 5) To evaluate the enduring legacy of these works in shaping modern horror and speculative fiction.

Literature Review:

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is recognized by scholars to have laid the very foundation of commerce, trade, and economic thought. The translated version of Arthashastra by R. Shamasastri (1992) brought forward Kautilya's extensive treatise on state policy, taxation, market regulation, and trade ethics, which served as the foundation for structured economic governance in ancient India. Jain (1994) emphasized the role of shrenis or trade guilds, which functioned rather like early corporations to ensure quality control and trade ethics. Altekar (2002) highlighted how economic activities were integrated into Dharma (moral duty) as ancient Indian commerce was governed by ethics. Tripathi (2004) discussed the development of trade routes, coinage, and the organization of fairs under the influence of traditional knowledge systems. Seth (2007) studied indigenous management teachings of scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita in the context of modern corporate ethics. Mookerji (2011) emphasized that the ancient education system, particularly the gurukuls, emphasized imparting economic and ethical knowledge, which prepared individuals for responsible commerce. Mukherjee (2013) discussed cross-cultural trade in the Indian Ocean and demonstrated how Indian merchants used indigenous tools and traditions in world trade. Kapoor (2016), focusing specifically on ancient Indian ethical trading practices such as fair pricing and honesty in transactions, argues these practices are relevant for promoting integrity in modern business. Rao (2018) examined how the Ramayana and Thirukkural could apply to leadership and management today. More recently, Joshi (2021) opined on the need to reinstate classical Indian economic thought to facilitate sustainable and inclusive development, calling for the incorporation of IKS into the education of modern commerce. Together, these works confirm the fact that Indian knowledge traditions historically sustained a holistic, ethical, and sustainable commerce paradigm, which still functions in that capacity even today.

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative, literary-analytical approach to analyze the evolution of the Gothic novel through a comparative study of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The research is descriptive and interpretative, focusing on textual analysis and historical and thematic analysis. Primary data includes reading the original texts and secondary data from academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, literary essays, author biographies, and critical theories. The analysis integrates themes like monstrosity, the supernatural, isolation, and the conflict between science and nature. The study is limited to two major works, *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, as representative texts of the evolving Gothic tradition in the 19th century.

The Evaluation of the Gothic Novel: From Mary Shelley to Bram Stoker:

Gothic fiction can be described as a literary movement that began in the scanty latter half of the eighteenth century, stressing horror, romance, and the strange. It often hinges on studies of human psychology, how societies fluctuate with various tensions, especially between reason and emotion. Those became initial stages with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and flourished through the Romantic period into more complex and culturally resonant works by the likes of Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker.

The true, full-blown first science fiction novel, and one of the important landmarks of Gothic literature, is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; or, *The New Prometheus* (1818). It was then written during the Romantic period but already featured its own set of philosophical signposts regarding the essence of life, the scope of scientific inquiry, and moral responsibility. Shelley combined Gothic terror with the great powers of science and nature, making clear the outsider element in a Gothic theme.

In that evolution of Gothic fiction through the 19th century, there were exemplary American writers such as Edgar Allan Poe who brought effective psychological depth and an almost symbolic density from scientists to the genre. Duality, repression, and decay were instead the subjects of investigation among British authors. Then, the Victorian Gothic reflected a time of transformation, dealing with the discourse produced by industrialization, urbanization, and change in moral values.

Psychological horror, such as Poe's writings, was about madness, guilt, and the subconscious, looking inward for internal horror and less outward toward a threatening world. The question of duality and the dangers of repression, social, sexual, were brought into Victorian morality's purview. Gothic architecture, shadowy landscapes, and ravaged urban areas became central techniques in creating a sense of dread and entrapment. Defined by a sense of glamorous celebrity, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is the ultimate archetype of late-Victorian Gothic. Because it integrates older Gothic conventions with newer fears about degeneration as well as sexuality and the decline of British imperial power, it elicits the complex anxieties of all classes in the emerging nation. Count *Dracula*, the titular vampire, symbolizes the exotic, the other, and the repressed, thus richly metaphorizing the novel in cultural and psychoanalytic terms.

Shelley and Stoker, then, almost remade the Gothic novel, making it much more thematically and culturally relevant. In this, Shelley opened up the possibility of speculative science as an authentic generator of Gothic terror, while Stoker turned the vampire into a lived cultural metaphor through *Dracula*. Their works inspired many authors and set off offshoots such as science fiction horror, vampire fiction, and psychological thrillers.

Through this enduring legacy, Shelley and Stoker cemented the Gothic novel's place among the important and dynamic modes of literary expression.

Origins of the Gothic Novel:

Just as the Enlightenment was beginning to erode away all emotions and reason as the basis of human existence, the early Gothic novel appeared in late 18th-century Europe as its antithesis. Medieval settings fully equipped with haunted castles and ominous presences were thus combined with romance and horror, in opposition to the rationalist-centered values of the time, to give great emotional intensity. Writers such as Ann Radcliffe practiced the "explained supernatural" with an emphasis on suspense, psychological torment, and moral struggles of virtuous heroines. Radcliffe set a precedent that balanced terror with reason for decades and was therefore embraced by her followers. Conversely, Lewis accepted horror, transgressive sexuality, and supernatural elements unmediated by any human logic; thus, he demonstrated the scope and elasticity of the Gothic mode. These early authors establish such core Gothic themes, things like suspense and the sublime, moral ambiguity, supernatural intrusion, and the woman in jeopardy. The early conventions allowed Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker to press the Gothic into far-reaching philosophical, psychological, and cultural areas.

Mary Shelley and the Romantic Gothic:

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) is an important piece of literature in which Gothic horror articulates Romantic philosophy and early science fiction. Written in an intellectual age, it embodies Romantic emotional depth and reveals Gothic preoccupations with transgression and fear. It is in this tradition that Shelley placed the Gothic in contemporary concerns with how it relates to science, ethics, and identity.

It replaces the haunted castle with the laboratory and the supernatural with the unnatural, and by so doing, makes a foundational moment in the development of science fiction. He stands thus as a monument to all ambition and danger in transgressing the very limits forced upon humanity: Symbolically, Victor Frankenstein is the "modern Prometheus." The novel embodies deep anxiety with industrialization and technological advancement, as well as high costs in the pursuit of knowledge without moral responsibility.

The new aspect of gothic is a concentration on psychological horror: it is internal rather than external. The dark recesses of the human psyche are reflected in Victor's torment, guilt, and alienation. The creature's profound loneliness and yearning for connection evoke sympathy and existential dread.

Mary Shelley, daughter of feminist philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft, brings affinity awareness into the novel with women playing a relatively smaller active role. The attempt to engender life in the absence of a woman undermines her reproductive processes and ends in tragedy. Shelley inverts the usual creation myths through a "playing God" man and his punishment by personal guilt and failure. The creature's very eloquent consideration of justice, identity, and belonging seems to ask further questions about what it means to be human.

Transition and Transformation: The Mid-19th Century:

In the mid-19th century, the slow transition was initiated, marking the beginning of Gothic literature's evolution in response to pressing social, scientific, and cultural changes. From this stage onward, the genre ceased to be preoccupied with flesh-and-blood supernaturalism and began to meditate on the psyche, moral duality, and modernity's social consequences. This period ushered in a different kind of internalized horror that emerges from the furthestmost recesses of the mind and contradictions of Victorian society.

In the meantime, with the onslaught of realism and scientific rationality, Gothic literature incorporated these new anxieties into its arsenal: madness, degeneration, addiction, and disease psychological monsters that are very frequently supposed to lie inside the self, thus stimulating fears of Darwinian evolution, mental illness, and moral degeneration. Gothic fiction seeks to illuminate the cracks of reason and the tenuousness of civilized identity, focusing on moral ambiguity, doubles, and repressed desire.

The growing empire of Britain at this time also became a player in Gothic tales, which reflected the growing fears of the foreign 'Other', colonial rebellion, and racial contamination. Writers began to explore horror in terms of colonial guilt, cultural hybridization, and anxieties of identity. This was also the time when imperial Gothic came into being, where the fears of invasion, reverse colonization, and losing control of the empire were encoded into the text.

The key works and themes are Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), an exploration of the duality of man and the dangers of repression and the illusion of moral superiority in Victorian society; and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), an exploration of vanity, corruption and the consequences of hedonism. Both novels represent the heightened concerns with the self as the battlefield where evil has become deeply inscribed in human personality.

Bram Stoker and the Late Victorian Gothic:

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is an eminent example of late-Victorian Gothic fiction addressing late 19th and 20th-century anxieties. A metaphorical work, the novel speaks of reverse colonialism, sexual repression, moral panics, and the borderlines of science and superstition. An Eastern European aristocrat in England, the

vampire is supposedly "contaminating" English persons, particularly women, and presents a threat to British modernity, progress, and identity.

This also touches on the difference between rational inquiry and irrational horror, which shows the limitations of current systems of knowledge with regard to the unknown. Stoker's adoption of the epistolary style, with its layered letters, diary entries, telegrams, and newspaper clippings, reflects the threat posed by Dracula being likewise uncertain and chaotic and the reliance upon empirical documentation and surveillance.

The novel is also a powerful study of gender roles and sexuality in Victorian Society. The transformation of Lucy Westenra into a vampire who preys upon males is a subversion of all the ideals of femininity and her male tormentors' fears concerning female independence and desires. The good Victorian woman is Mina Harker; intelligent yet restrained, devoted to duty, and redeemable in the end. Her partial vampirization and her role in Dracula's defeat raise messy questions about female agency, contamination, and the upholding of social order.

Stoker challenges the rigid Victorian gender binaries and norms by symbolizing Dracula's bite as penetrative, exchanging bodily fluids with and subjugating men as well as women.

Comparative Analysis: Shelley and Stoker:

From Mary Shelley to Bram Stoker, the Gothic tradition underwent significant changes from the early nineteenth century to the late nineteenth century. The two authors shared a preoccupation with the Gothic mode, but the particular approaches they took reflected the diverse intellectual, cultural, and historical preoccupations of their respective periods. Shelley's *Frankenstein* fuses Gothic with Romanticism and proto-science fiction to emphasize the ethics of creation, the role of the scientist, and the effects on emotions brought about from isolation. In contrast, Stoker's *Dracula* accentuates the outside threats of supernatural forces and cultural otherness-late Victorian anxieties over sexuality, disease, and imperial decline.

Where the Arctic and the European countryside represent isolation and existential dread for Shelley, Stoker's settings draw on cross-cultural invasion fables to contrast the wildness, all that is ancient, and the East with the seemingly rational and ordered West. While *Dracula*- in the mind of the inhabitants of late-Victorian Europe could have been forecasted as an external, supernatural, and alien threat, it appears that this same world is beginning to understand how the utilities of geopolitics could make such monsters possible and plausible.

Shelley's frame narrative emphasizes the subjectivity and ambiguity of the truth, in keeping with Romanticism's preoccupation with the private point of view and introspection. Stoker, on the one hand, adopts the epistolary method, reflecting the Victorian confidence in documentation, surveillance, and stitching together truth from facts; but this fails to serve as an adequate tool in confronting horror when confronted with irrational terror.

Legacy and Influence:

Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker have made a huge impact on the Gothic tradition and transformed horror and speculative writing uniquely. Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the classic tale of creation and responsibility that has paved the way for science fiction and become a symbol of alienation for man and man's desire for belonging. Feminists have interpreted it as a critique of the patriarchal creation, making it a cornerstone text in considering both Gothic literature and gender and science studies.

Stoker's *Dracula* has become the modern vampire myth and now serves as the most potent image of vampiric horror, interweaving the strands of sexual repression with those of moral decline, cultural invasion, and the fear of the unknown. Its very nature ensures that *Dracula* is not merely a monster but a cipher for evolving social fears that may have included epidemics and xenophobia.

These archetypes, such as the tragic monster and the seductive predator, were first considered by Shelley and Stoker but subsequently pervaded virtually all literature, films, television, graphic novels, and philosophy. Their works are constantly revisited, taught, and reinterpreted, which only testifies to the richness and malleability of the Gothic form. The Gothic novel as shaped by Shelley and Stoker can thus be said to have retained power as a medium upon which the darkest human fears may be examined and the most subtle moral dilemmas pondered, as well as the boundaries of knowledge and desire.

Conclusion:

The Gothic Novel, maturing from the late 18th century into the 19th century, captures a glorious panorama painted by the fears, desires, and cultural anxieties of mankind. Severely altered from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), this genre has a long run. Shelley's *Frankenstein* discusses that which horrifies from within the human psyche's contemplation of ambition, isolation, and the results of overreaching intellect. In that regard, the creature becomes a metaphor for humanity's longing for connection and the pain of rejection. The ambivalence of social and political tensions at the end of the century affects Stoker's *Dracula*, which embodies the apogee of the 19th-century Gothic tradition. Both writers interrogate the Gothic conventions to assess human nature, the limits of knowledge, and the frailty of civilization with the help of dark settings, grotesque figures, and moral ambiguity. In addition to the monsters

they conjured, their legacy consists of the many significant questions they raised about science, identity, gender, colonialism, and human control. Thus, from Shelley, the Gothic novel, and toward Stoker, stands as a central category for both Gothic and horror fiction and the more extended field of modern literature still wrestling with similar haunting issues.

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