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## **The Evolution of the Gothic Novel: From *Frankenstein* to *Wuthering Heights***

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the evolution of the Gothic novel from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), highlighting the genre's transition from traditional supernatural horror to psychological and social complexity. Gothic fiction, originating with eighteenth-century works such as *The Castle of Otranto*, emphasized terror, mystery, and otherworldly forces, but Shelley redefined the form by combining Gothic conventions with Romantic philosophy and scientific inquiry, presenting themes of creation, alienation, and moral responsibility through her portrayal of Victor Frankenstein and his Creature. Brontë, writing nearly three decades later, advanced the Gothic mode by situating it within the raw landscapes of the Yorkshire moors and embedding supernatural presences within deeply human conflicts of love, revenge, and social inequality. Together, these works reveal the adaptability of the Gothic tradition, showing its capacity to reflect shifting cultural anxieties while evolving from externalized horror to inward psychological exploration.

**Keywords:** Frankenstein, Wuthering Heights, Gothic Novel, Romanticism, Psychological Exploration

### **Introduction**

The Gothic novel, emerging in the late eighteenth century with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), has continuously evolved as a literary form that reflects the anxieties, fears, and cultural shifts of its time, and its development from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)

to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) demonstrates both continuity and transformation within the genre. Early Gothic fiction was characterized by haunted castles, supernatural apparitions, melodrama, and an exploration of terror versus horror, but Shelley redefined these conventions by merging the Gothic with Romantic ideals and contemporary scientific debates, creating a narrative that interrogated human ambition, alienation, and the boundaries between life and death. *Frankenstein*'s significance lies not only in its use of the sublime landscapes and frame narratives typical of the Gothic but also in its introduction of psychological depth and the theme of monstrosity as a metaphor for social exclusion and moral responsibility, thereby shifting the focus from external horrors to internal conflicts. By the time Brontë published *Wuthering Heights*, the Gothic had further matured, absorbing elements of realism, psychological exploration, and social critique, with the Yorkshire moors replacing ruined castles as the locus of isolation and terror. Unlike Shelley's emphasis on science and creation, Brontë's Gothic world is charged with passion, revenge, and the destructive intensity of human relationships, where ghosts and supernatural presences blur the line between reality and imagination while reflecting the characters' inner turmoil. Both novels employ unconventional narrative structures—frame tales, multiple narrators, and temporal shifts—to deepen mystery and highlight subjectivity, marking an evolution from the externalized Gothic horrors of earlier writers to more complex explorations of human psychology, identity, and environment. Together, *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights* illustrate how the Gothic novel adapted to different cultural and intellectual contexts—Shelley's engaging with scientific revolution and Romantic philosophy, Brontë's confronting class, gender, and emotional excess—thereby transforming the Gothic into a vehicle not only for terror and suspense but also for profound commentary on the human condition.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the evolution of the Gothic novel by analyzing Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) as key milestones that illustrate the transformation of Gothic conventions across the early nineteenth century. By exploring how *Frankenstein* redefined Gothic horror through the fusion of science, Romantic philosophy, and the Promethean myth, and how *Wuthering Heights* extended the Gothic into psychological, social, and emotional terrains through its themes of passion, revenge, and haunting, the study aims to reveal the genre's adaptability to changing cultural contexts. This research seeks to demonstrate how the Gothic novel shifted from externalized supernatural

terrors to deeper psychological, social, and moral explorations, reflecting anxieties about science, industrialization, class, and gender. Ultimately, the study underscores the Gothic's resilience as a literary mode capable of interrogating human fears, desires, and conflicts across historical and cultural boundaries.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is limited to examining the evolution of the Gothic novel between the early nineteenth century, represented by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and the mid-nineteenth century, exemplified by Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). It focuses on how these two texts transform and expand Gothic conventions in response to the cultural, scientific, and social contexts of their times. The study considers key thematic elements such as the supernatural and the uncanny, the role of nature and landscape, the construction of otherness and monstrosity, and the psychological and moral dimensions of character. Additionally, it explores how narrative techniques—such as frame narratives and multiple perspectives—contribute to the Gothic atmosphere and complexity. While the primary emphasis remains on Shelley and Brontë, the study situates these works within the broader Gothic tradition, acknowledging earlier influences and highlighting their role in shaping the trajectory of Gothic literature in the Victorian era and beyond.

### **Definition of the Gothic Novel / Gothic Tradition**

The Gothic novel is a literary form that emerged in the late eighteenth century, characterized by its fusion of horror, romance, and the supernatural to evoke feelings of fear, wonder, and suspense, while simultaneously probing the boundaries between reason and emotion. Its key features include haunted or desolate settings such as castles, ruins, monasteries, or later, wild natural landscapes like moors and mountains, which create an atmosphere of isolation and dread. Supernatural elements, whether presented as genuine apparitions or psychological manifestations, serve to unsettle the reader and destabilize the distinction between reality and imagination. Central to the Gothic is the interplay between terror, which stimulates the imagination and heightens suspense, and horror, which produces visceral shock through graphic or grotesque revelations. This duality allows Gothic literature to explore both the sublime power of nature and the darker recesses of the human mind. The genre originated with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), often regarded as the first Gothic novel, which established motifs such as ancient curses, family secrets, labyrinthine architecture, and the

blending of medievalism with modern sensibilities. Walpole's innovation was quickly developed by writers like Ann Radcliffe, who emphasized psychological terror and the sublime, and Matthew Gregory Lewis, whose *The Monk* (1796) intensified the Gothic with lurid horror and transgressive themes. Rooted in the social, political, and religious upheavals of its age, the Gothic novel thus became a medium for expressing collective anxieties and unresolved cultural tensions, laying the foundation for later masterpieces such as *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights*.

### **Early Gothic Traditions: Before *Frankenstein***

The Gothic novel, before the appearance of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), underwent a rich and complex development during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, reflecting both the cultural anxieties of its age and the aesthetic experiments of its writers, and this tradition was inaugurated by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), widely regarded as the first Gothic novel. Walpole combined medieval romance with supernatural intrusions, establishing core Gothic motifs such as haunted castles, ancient prophecies, hidden lineages, family secrets, and uncanny apparitions, and his use of labyrinthine architecture, subterranean passages, and monstrous imagery such as the giant helmet crashing from the sky provided a template that subsequent Gothic writers would rework and refine. *Otranto* was revolutionary in its deliberate blending of the fantastic with contemporary sensibilities, balancing the improbable with a quasi-historical medieval setting, thereby appealing to readers' fascination with both feudal nostalgia and the unsettling supernatural. Building upon Walpole's foundation, Ann Radcliffe in the 1790s became the genre's most celebrated figure, especially with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), where she emphasized terror over horror and introduced a heightened psychological dimension. Radcliffe's novels are renowned for their evocation of the sublime, with vast mountains, dark forests, and ruined abbeys functioning as both scenic backdrops and mirrors of inner emotion, embodying Romantic aesthetics within Gothic frameworks. She was careful to maintain suspense by attributing apparently supernatural events to natural or rational causes, a device that elevated the reader's imagination and distinguished her art of terror from the paralytic shocks of horror. In contrast, Matthew Gregory Lewis in *The Monk* (1796) embraced horror without restraint, shocking contemporary audiences with its lurid depictions of violence, demonic pacts, sexual corruption, and blasphemous transgressions, thereby exposing the Gothic's potential for social and moral critique. Whereas Radcliffe's picturesque landscapes cultivated awe and fear in equal measure,

Lewis's grotesque spectacles confronted readers with unambiguous depravity and sensational excess. Alongside them, writers such as Clara Reeve with *The Old English Baron* (1778) and Charles Maturin with *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) enriched the Gothic with philosophical depth, theological dilemmas, and moral ambiguity, demonstrating the genre's flexibility in accommodating diverse themes while maintaining its fascination with ghosts, ruins, secret passages, and pseudo-medieval settings that symbolized repression, hidden desire, and unresolved cultural tensions. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the Gothic began to intersect with Romanticism, leading to transitional works that shifted the genre's focus from purely external horrors to inward psychological struggles and broader intellectual questions. Romanticism's emphasis on imagination, emotion, and the sublime found natural expression in Gothic landscapes, where storms, desolate moors, and rugged mountains became outward projections of human passion and despair. Moreover, the era's engagement with Enlightenment rationalism, revolutionary upheavals, and the rise of modern science introduced new discourses into Gothic writing, as anxieties about unchecked ambition, industrial change, and the limits of human knowledge started to infiltrate narratives once dominated by medievalism and superstition. This blending of Gothic and Romantic modes prepared the ground for Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which the Gothic's traditional concern with the supernatural was transformed into a meditation on science, creation, alienation, and responsibility, and where Romantic anxieties about isolation, ambition, and the sublime were embedded within a narrative of terror. Thus, before *Frankenstein*, the Gothic tradition had already evolved from Walpole's medieval fantasies through Radcliffe's sublime terror and Lewis's lurid horror to the transitional works of the Romantic era, laying the aesthetic and thematic foundation for a profound reconfiguration of the Gothic novel in the early nineteenth century.

### ***Frankenstein* (1818) and Its Innovations**

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) is often regarded as a revolutionary moment in the history of Gothic fiction because it reconfigured the genre's traditional reliance on haunted castles, medieval settings, and supernatural terrors by situating Gothic themes within the intellectual climate of Romanticism and the scientific revolution, thus inaugurating a hybrid form that combined Gothic imagination with philosophical and scientific inquiry. Central to the novel is its appropriation of the Prometheus myth, which symbolizes human ambition and the defiance of natural and divine limits; Victor Frankenstein's quest to create life reflects the hubris of Enlightenment rationality and the unrestrained pursuit of

knowledge, embodying the dangers of overreaching science when divorced from ethical responsibility. This fusion of Gothic with science represented a radical innovation, as Shelley replaced spectral apparitions and diabolic pacts with the rational but horrifying possibility of reanimation, grounding her tale in contemporary debates about galvanism, materialism, and the boundaries between life and death. Beyond its scientific allegory, *Frankenstein* deepens the Gothic through its exploration of alienation, monstrosity, and otherness, with both Victor and his Creature embodying psychological dimensions of guilt, despair, and rejection. The Creature, though outwardly monstrous, is endowed with profound sensitivity and intelligence, making him a mirror of social exclusion and a critique of humanity's inability to accept difference; Victor, conversely, becomes the true "monster" through his moral failure, obsessive ambition, and neglect of responsibility. This inversion destabilizes Gothic conventions by shifting the source of horror from external supernatural forces to internal human flaws, anxieties, and ethical dilemmas. Shelley further enriched the Gothic through her deployment of landscape and setting, using the sublime natural world—towering Alps, stormy skies, desolate Arctic expanses—as both a Romantic aesthetic device and a psychological backdrop that reflects the isolation and inner torment of her characters. The mountains provide moments of awe and temporary respite, while the Arctic wasteland embodies ultimate desolation, mirroring Victor's obsessive pursuit and the Creature's endless suffering; thus, the sublime is not merely decorative but deeply entwined with the novel's exploration of terror, despair, and the fragility of human ambition. At the same time, these sublime landscapes are often juxtaposed with grotesque and horrific scenes—the reanimation of lifeless body parts, the murders of loved ones—which create a contrast between nature's grandeur and humanity's moral corruption, intensifying the Gothic atmosphere. Another key innovation lies in Shelley's narrative structure, which employs a complex series of frame narratives and embedded stories, beginning with Captain Walton's letters, moving through Victor's confessional account, and incorporating the Creature's own tale, before returning to Walton's perspective. This multi-layered design, with its shifts in point of view, generates a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity, compelling the reader to question truth, bias, and reliability, while also amplifying suspense by delaying revelations and recontextualizing events through different perspectives. The effect is a Gothic polyphony in which no single voice dominates, and each narrator becomes both subject and witness of terror, allowing Shelley to probe the psychological depths of ambition, desire, and despair. In this way, the novel dismantles the straightforward linearity of earlier Gothic fiction and replaces it with a more modern structure that reflects the fragmented,

subjective nature of human experience. Ultimately, *Frankenstein* represents a turning point in Gothic literature, where the traditional tropes of haunted architecture, family secrets, and supernatural demons gave way to philosophical, psychological, and scientific concerns that spoke directly to Shelley's historical moment. By intertwining the myth of Prometheus with Enlightenment science, by reimagining monstrosity as a metaphor for social alienation and ethical responsibility, by employing sublime landscapes as mirrors of human isolation, and by innovating with a complex narrative structure that foregrounds subjectivity, Shelley transformed the Gothic novel into a profound meditation on the dangers and possibilities of human creativity. Her work not only preserved the Gothic's preoccupation with terror and the unknown but also expanded its scope, ensuring its continued relevance and adaptability, and laying the foundation for subsequent Gothic texts such as *Wuthering Heights*, which would carry the genre further into psychological and social terrain.

### **Gothic After *Frankenstein* up to *Wuthering Heights***

The period following the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1818 and leading up to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* in 1847 witnessed a crucial phase in the evolution of Gothic literature, one marked by the emergence of "Dark Romanticism," the proliferation of new Gothic works that reimagined supernatural conventions, and the increasing integration of social critique into Gothic themes, collectively reflecting a shift from externalized horrors to the exploration of human psychology, cultural anxieties, and the darker recesses of the human spirit. The Dark Romanticism movement, associated with figures such as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and later Charles Baudelaire, emphasized the inherent darkness of human nature and the inevitability of sin, guilt, and self-destruction, diverging from the earlier Gothic reliance on external supernatural forces. In this phase, evil was increasingly understood not as an intrusion from the outside world but as something rooted in the human psyche, manifested through obsession, madness, and moral corruption; thus, Gothic terror became more psychological, exploring themes such as alienation, moral ambiguity, and the uncanny presence of evil within ordinary existence. Shelley's innovations in *Frankenstein*, which had already shifted the locus of terror from haunted castles to scientific ambition and social rejection, influenced subsequent works such as John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), widely considered the first modern vampire tale, which transformed folkloric superstition into an aristocratic predator haunting London society, thereby embedding Gothic horror into contemporary social and cultural settings. This text, along with later works like James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs*

and *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), which depicted religious fanaticism and psychological fragmentation, demonstrated the growing Gothic preoccupation with doubles, fragmented identities, and the blurring of moral categories. Such texts built upon the Gothic's earlier fascination with monstrosity but recast it through lenses of psychology, identity, and moral degeneration, moving the genre closer to the concerns of Brontë's later novel. At the same time, Gothic fiction between *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights* increasingly incorporated elements of social critique, using its atmosphere of terror and unease to interrogate questions of class, gender, colonialism, and industrialization. The Byronic hero, epitomized by Polidori's vampire and later Heathcliff, embodied both seductive charisma and destructive power, raising questions about authority, social transgression, and the limits of individual desire. Women in Gothic fiction of this period were often trapped between roles of victimhood and resistance, reflecting contemporary debates about female agency and the limitations of patriarchal structures, while colonial anxieties found expression in depictions of "foreign" or "othered" figures, whose presence in English settings symbolized fears of cultural contamination or imperial retribution. Industrialization and rapid urbanization further reshaped Gothic concerns, as desolate landscapes and haunted castles gave way to crowded cities, oppressive social hierarchies, and the alienation of modern life, themes subtly echoed in both vampire fiction and domestic Gothic narratives. The interplay of Gothic and Romanticism during this period was thus both aesthetic and ideological: Romanticism's fascination with the sublime, the imagination, and the darker side of passion dovetailed with Gothic motifs of death, decay, and terror, producing works that blurred the boundaries between the two traditions while expanding their thematic scope. This fusion prepared the ground for *Wuthering Heights*, which absorbed Gothic conventions—haunted settings, supernatural apparitions, revenge-driven narratives—but translated them into the realm of human relationships and social structures, with the Yorkshire moors replacing castles and abbeys as the symbolic landscape of isolation, passion, and despair. In this transitional period, Gothic literature became not only a repository of supernatural terrors but also a sophisticated mode of cultural reflection, dramatizing psychological turmoil, moral ambiguity, and social anxieties that resonated with the rapidly changing nineteenth-century world. Thus, the Gothic between *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights* represents a stage of profound experimentation, where Dark Romanticism deepened the exploration of inner evil, works like *The Vampyre* reimagined Gothic figures in modern contexts, and the genre's capacity for social critique expanded to engage with pressing issues of class, gender, colonialism, and industrialization, ensuring that by the time Brontë wrote her

novel, the Gothic had evolved into a flexible and multifaceted form capable of capturing both the uncanny forces of the imagination and the harsh realities of human existence.

### ***Wuthering Heights* (1847) as Gothic Evolution**

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) represents a significant stage in the evolution of the Gothic novel, marking a shift from externalized supernatural terror to a deeper engagement with human passion, psychological complexity, and social conflict, while retaining and transforming many of the conventions that had defined Gothic fiction since Walpole and Shelley. The novel's central themes—love, revenge, suffering, and the uncanny merging of the natural and supernatural—illustrate Brontë's reimagining of Gothic tropes for a mid-nineteenth-century audience. Ghosts and spectral presences, such as Catherine's apparition at the window, blur the line between reality and imagination, infusing the narrative with an uncanny atmosphere while simultaneously symbolizing unresolved emotional bonds that transcend death. The novel's Gothic intensity lies not only in its supernatural suggestions but also in its relentless exploration of destructive love and generational cycles of revenge, where passion itself becomes a haunting force as terrifying as any ghost. The setting of the Yorkshire moors is equally central to its Gothic character, with the landscape and weather functioning as psychological mirrors of the characters' emotional turmoil. The bleak, storm-swept moors, the isolation of Wuthering Heights, and the slightly more refined but still stifling Thrushcross Grange all serve as symbolic spaces of confinement and intensity, reflecting the duality of wild passion and social restraint. The landscape becomes almost a character in its own right, embodying the wildness and violence that permeate the novel and echoing Romantic conceptions of the sublime while intensifying Gothic themes of isolation and dread. Characterization in *Wuthering Heights* further distinguishes it as an innovative Gothic work, especially in the figure of Heathcliff, who embodies the Byronic hero while simultaneously verging on the demonic. His ambiguous origins, obsessive love for Catherine, and implacable desire for revenge mark him as both victim and villain, resisting simplistic moral categorization. Catherine herself embodies contradiction, torn between her spiritual affinity with Heathcliff and her social aspirations through Edgar Linton, and her eventual decline highlights the destructive consequences of divided desire. Other characters, such as Hindley and Isabella, reinforce the novel's preoccupation with cycles of cruelty, suffering, and revenge, illustrating Brontë's refusal to present virtuous heroines or irredeemable villains; instead, she crafts morally complex figures whose actions reflect the volatility of human passion and the

constraints of social structures. This moral ambiguity intensifies the Gothic atmosphere by presenting human beings themselves as the locus of terror and tragedy, rather than external supernatural agents. Equally innovative is the novel's narrative structure, which employs framing devices and multiple voices, beginning with Lockwood's perspective and moving into Nelly Dean's detailed account, while also incorporating fragments of other characters' stories through memory, letters, and hearsay. This complex layering of narrators creates a sense of temporal distance, unreliability, and multiplicity, reinforcing the Gothic themes of uncertainty and ambiguity. The structure disrupts linear chronology, weaving past and present together in ways that highlight the haunting persistence of memory and the cyclical nature of suffering and revenge, ensuring that the story feels both inescapably fated and deeply subjective. The framing narrative also invites readers to question the reliability of perception, as Lockwood and Nelly each impose their own biases and limitations on the story, intensifying the Gothic sense of mystery and instability. Thus, Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is not merely a Gothic novel but a radical evolution of the genre, where the supernatural is integrated into the fabric of human psychology, the setting embodies the ferocity of passion, characters defy moral absolutes, and narrative structure destabilizes truth while amplifying suspense. By transforming traditional Gothic conventions—haunted castles become windswept moors, supernatural terrors become emotional obsessions, villains and heroines dissolve into morally ambiguous figures—Brontë crafted a work that expands the Gothic into realms of psychological depth and social critique, making *Wuthering Heights* a landmark in the genre's nineteenth-century evolution.

### **Comparing *Frankenstein* & *Wuthering Heights***

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) stand as milestones in the Gothic tradition, yet their differences reveal the genre's capacity to evolve from the exploration of supernatural terror and scientific anxieties to the depiction of destructive human passion and social conflict, and comparing the two novels illustrates how Gothic conventions were adapted to reflect distinct thematic, cultural, and historical concerns. In their handling of the supernatural and the uncanny, both novels blur the line between rational explanation and the realm of the inexplicable, yet they do so in profoundly different ways: *Frankenstein* resists overt supernaturalism by rooting its horror in scientific experimentation, using the uncanny animation of the Creature to provoke questions about the boundaries of life, death, and human responsibility, while *Wuthering Heights* incorporates ghostly apparitions such as Catherine's spectral presence to suggest that memory, love, and guilt can transcend

death, though the true terror lies not in the supernatural itself but in the psychological and emotional obsessions of its characters. Nature further distinguishes the two novels, as Shelley situates her narrative within the Romantic sublime—the Alpine mountains, stormy skies, and Arctic wastes—that evoke awe, isolation, and grandeur while underscoring the characters’ alienation and ambition, whereas Brontë portrays the Yorkshire moors as a more brutal, elemental landscape, where storms, winds, and desolation mirror the raw intensity of passion and revenge, serving less as sublime transcendence and more as a stark reflection of human ferocity and confinement. The social and historical contexts of the two novels also shape their Gothic innovations: *Frankenstein* emerges from an era of scientific revolution, Enlightenment rationality, and early industrialization, where debates about galvanism, creation, and human progress exposed fears of unchecked ambition and the moral consequences of discovery, while *Wuthering Heights*, written amid Victorian anxieties about class, property, and gender roles, uses Gothic intensity to interrogate the destructive force of social hierarchies and the repression of desire. Victor Frankenstein embodies the dangers of Enlightenment hubris and the perils of masculine ambition, while Heathcliff represents the outsider who disrupts rigid class structures, embodying both the threat of social upheaval and the destructive consequences of exclusion and revenge. The theme of otherness and monstrosity crystallizes the comparison between the two novels: Shelley’s Creature, though physically grotesque, possesses deep sensitivity and intelligence, making him a poignant figure of alienation and rejected humanity, while Heathcliff, though not monstrous in body, is rendered monstrous through his obsessive love, cruelty, and relentless desire for vengeance, embodying the destructive potential of social marginalization and ungoverned passion. Both figures function as outsiders who expose the hypocrisies and failures of the societies that reject them—whether the Creature cast out by his creator and denied companionship, or Heathcliff ostracized for his ambiguous origins and denied social legitimacy—and in doing so, they redefine monstrosity not as an external supernatural force but as a mirror of human cruelty, obsession, and injustice. Ultimately, comparing *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights* reveals how the Gothic novel, within three decades, shifted from dramatizing the anxieties of science, creation, and alienation in Shelley’s work to portraying the ferocity of passion, revenge, and social conflict in Brontë’s, with both novels demonstrating the genre’s ability to adapt its treatment of the uncanny, its use of landscape, and its representation of otherness to reflect evolving cultural preoccupations, thereby ensuring the Gothic’s continued vitality as a mode of psychological, social, and philosophical exploration.

## Literature Review

The Gothic novel has long been recognized as a flexible and dynamic genre, capable of reflecting shifting cultural, philosophical, and psychological concerns across different periods. In this context, *Frankenstein* (1818/1831) by Mary Shelley and *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë are central texts that highlight the transformation of Gothic conventions in the nineteenth century. Subedi (2007) provides a foundational study of both novels as Gothic works, situating them within the lineage of earlier Gothic traditions while emphasizing their innovative qualities. He argues that Shelley's use of science, alienation, and the Promethean myth redefined Gothic horror, while Brontë's intense exploration of love, revenge, and supernatural suggestion extended Gothic motifs into psychological and social terrains. Subedi's analysis underscores how these novels not only belong to the Gothic tradition but also reshape it, making them crucial to any discussion of the genre's evolution.

Building on this, Lillevik (2013) examines how the Gothic has been reimagined in contemporary young adult literature, comparing Shelley and Brontë's novels with modern texts like *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (2013) and *The Book of Living Secrets* (2012). Her research highlights the endurance and adaptability of Gothic tropes such as haunting, monstrosity, and obsession, showing how nineteenth-century innovations remain relevant in modern narratives that address contemporary adolescent anxieties. By contrasting past and present, Lillevik demonstrates that Gothic literature's ability to interrogate themes of identity, fear, and desire is not confined to the nineteenth century but continues to evolve, reflecting new cultural contexts while maintaining links to its origins. This comparative approach enriches the understanding of Gothic continuity and transformation.

Monsour (2018) takes a different perspective by focusing on narrative strategies, particularly the use of unreliable male narrators like Walton, Victor, and Lockwood, who mediate female-authored Gothic tales. She argues that Shelley and Brontë's narrative frameworks complicate the authority of the male voice, allowing space for female creativity and subversion within a male-dominated literary landscape. By framing the Gothic through male narrators while undermining their reliability, both authors engage in subtle critiques of gendered authority,

positioning their texts as interventions into patriarchal literary culture. This insight adds depth to the understanding of Gothic narrative form, showing how structure itself can be a site of resistance and innovation.

Complementing this perspective, Mikulová (2016) and Wolfreys (2006) explore the broader cultural transformations of the Gothic during the nineteenth century. Mikulová emphasizes how Gothic motifs evolved in response to Romanticism, industrialization, and Victorian morality, situating Shelley and Brontë within a cultural matrix where anxieties about science, class, and morality reshaped the genre. Wolfreys, in turn, identifies the persistence of Gothic in the Victorian imagination, noting how themes of terror, repression, and the uncanny migrated into urban settings and social critique, paving the way for later works like Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Stoker's *Dracula*. Together, their studies reveal that the Gothic was not static but constantly redefined by the historical forces of its time, with *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights* standing as pivotal examples of this transformation.

Finally, other scholars enrich this discussion by highlighting key thematic and aesthetic dimensions of the Gothic. Diver (2011) uses an interdisciplinary approach to explore Gothic notions of monstrosity and othering, connecting Shelley's exploration of the Creature with broader questions of identity and legitimacy in legal and cultural discourse. Irina (2015) provides a general overview of Gothic fiction, outlining its central features—haunted settings, supernatural presences, psychological terror—which serve as a framework for understanding Shelley and Brontë's innovations. Beriotto (2012), meanwhile, draws on Edmund Burke's aesthetic theory of the sublime to analyze how *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights* employ landscapes—Alpine peaks, Arctic wastes, and Yorkshire moors—as mirrors of human passion, alienation, and suffering. These perspectives deepen the appreciation of how Gothic aesthetics intersect with philosophical, legal, and cultural discourses, reinforcing the argument that the genre functions as a versatile mode of exploring human fear and desire.

In sum, the reviewed literature demonstrates that scholarship on *Frankenstein* and *Wuthering Heights* has consistently emphasized their role in reshaping Gothic conventions while also reflecting broader cultural and intellectual movements of their time. From Subedi's foundational analysis of their Gothic traits, to Lillevik's exploration of their legacy in young adult fiction, to Monsour's attention to narrative and authorship, and to broader cultural studies by Mikulová, Wolfreys, Diver, Irina, and Beriotto, the critical discourse underscores that these

novels are not merely products of the Gothic tradition but transformative works that expanded its scope. The literature collectively highlights how Shelley and Brontë infused the Gothic with psychological, social, and philosophical depth, ensuring its continued adaptability into modern contexts and solidifying its place as a central mode of literary and cultural expression.

## Conclusion

The evolution of the Gothic novel from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) reflects a significant transformation in the genre's themes, settings, and narrative strategies, demonstrating its capacity to adapt to shifting cultural, scientific, and social anxieties. Shelley's novel redefined the Gothic by merging traditional terror with Enlightenment rationalism and Romantic philosophy, replacing medieval castles with laboratories and sublime landscapes, and substituting supernatural demons with the monstrous consequences of scientific ambition. By contrast, Brontë's work shifted the Gothic focus to the realm of destructive human passion, class conflict, and psychological intensity, where ghosts and spectral presences embody unresolved emotional trauma and where the wild Yorkshire moors serve as both backdrop and symbol of human ferocity. Together, the two novels show the Gothic's flexibility: in Shelley, it interrogates questions of creation, alienation, and responsibility in the context of the scientific revolution and early industrialization, while in Brontë, it exposes the tensions of class, gender, and social exclusion in Victorian society. Both works emphasize otherness and the outsider—the Creature as the rejected, alien figure of modern science, Heathcliff as the socially marginalized, vengeful Byronic hero—demonstrating that monstrosity is not simply supernatural but deeply rooted in human psychology and social structures. Beyond *Wuthering Heights*, the Gothic continued to evolve in the late Victorian period, finding new expressions in the sensation novel, the vampire tales of Sheridan Le Fanu and Bram Stoker, and the urban Gothic of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, while in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it has persisted in modern Gothic fiction, horror cinema, and psychological thrillers. Ultimately, the trajectory from *Frankenstein* to *Wuthering Heights* demonstrates that the Gothic novel is not a static form bound by ruins and ghosts but a dynamic mode capable of interrogating the deepest fears, desires, and uncertainties of every age.

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