

THE UNCANNY AND THE BIZARRE AND THE EERIE: AN EXPLORATION OF GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN AND STEPHENIE MEYER'S THE TWILIGHT SAGA

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Abstract

Gothic as a literary form became the most popular kind of literature developed in England in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century with the works such as The Castle of Otranto, The Monk, and Melmoth the Wanderer. Horace Walpole started this genre of gothic fiction with The Castle Of Otranto (1764). Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, the author of Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus (1818), has very boldly and majestically described a giant or monster Frankenstein, who became the root cause of troubles in the novel. Likewise, Stephenie Meyer's The Twilight Saga, which also comes under the gothic genre, has full contents of gothic settings and various supernatural bloodthirsty demonic vampire-themed characters.

The motive of this research paper attempts to explore the gothic elements in the select works of Mary Shelley and Stephenie Meyer. It will deal with the full range of themes related to the gothic genre in the famous excellent works, as mentioned earlier. As both, the novelists attempt to make the world aware of the undead existing in this earthly sphere through their imagination. The work will explore not only the aberrant aspect of gothic literature but also the beast-human relationship, with the association of psychological and physiological circumstances creating the creepy, frightening, and shuddersome settings in these gothic narratives.

Keyword: mysterious, supernatural, gothic, demonic, bloodthirsty, monstrosity, humanely

1. ABOUT GOTHIC GENRE

The term "gothic" was originally a disparaging term applied to the style of medieval architectures with grandiose high point arches and high vaulted ceilings giving a feeling of mystery and horror. The mysterious, the grotesque, the haunted, the macabre, the harrowing supernatural flavor, and the gigantic dark castles are some of the basic features of the gothic genre. It can be visualized with the following lines from Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan*;

"This tower, patched unevenly with black ivy, arose like a mutilated finger from among the fists of knuckled masonry and pointed blasphemously at heaven. At night the owls made of it an echoing throat; by day it stood voiceless and cast its long shadow."¹

Gothic novels often take place in dim places such as old buildings, especially castles or rooms with secret passages, dungeons, or towers that serve as a background to the mysterious circumstances. The ghost story is, of course, a familiar type of Gothic story. Far distant locations that seem to the readers to be enigmatic always act as part of the atmosphere of the Gothic novel. Such a description given in the texts gives the readers the chill feelings among its readers. The characters in the Gothic genre, appear to be bridging the human realm and the paranormal dimension in the Gothic genre. Dracula lives as both a normal and an undead person, moving smoothly between the two worlds to achieve his goals.

2. FRANKENSTEIN AND TWILIGHT SAGA: IN CONTEXT TO THE GOTHIC GENRE

The early 19th century was not a good time to be a female writer, especially if one was brave enough to be a female novelist. Contemporary assumptions believed that no one was willing to read a woman's work; this theory was disproved by the fantastic success of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein*. *Frankenstein* was part of the Gothic literature revival, a genre that at the time of its publishing was only becoming popular in England. Gothic style was a response to The Age of Reason's humanistic, rationalist literature. There seems to be some contact between the Frankenstein monster and its maker because the creature exists everywhere Victor goes. The same happens in Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Saga*, where Cullen family lives, and they are families of vampires living together among humans. The beast also runs at near superhuman speed, joining Victor in the race of beastly creatures. Mary Shelley and Stephenie Meyer incorporate many elements in the gothic style to construct them in an unforgettable book form.

Frankenstein is often called as Shelley's, 'the first true work of science-fiction.' It is set up in continental Europe, primarily Switzerland and Germany, where many of Shelley's readers did not exist. Also, incorporating the scene of the quest through the Arctic regions takes us even further from England into regions that most readers have not ventured. The novel is engraved with violence and bloodshed, which constitutes the minimal features of the gothic genre. Mary Shelley and Stephenie Meyer combine several ingredients not only to display the annihilation and monstrosity aspects but also to create the humanely bondage and relationship with the uncanny creatures in these famous works. Gothic narratives concentrate on the paranormal and mystery similarly, throughout *Frankenstein*, Shelley used very mysterious circumstances to create the beast for Victor's Frankenstein, the vague situations in which Victor extracts body parts for his experiments and the use of unidentified modern technologies for inhuman purposes. It is a cautionary tale about a science student, Victor, who commits a blunder by making a deformed, hideous, enormous, dark-skinned, ugly monster that has become a troublemaker not only for his founder but also for his fellow humans. Mary Shelley depicts Victor in this work as a young boy fascinated with looking up the cause of nature and the development of humanity. He is shown to play with death by gathering some deceased

people's limbs, collecting in the courtyard, and graveyards from the graves.

"I thank you," he replied, "for your sympathy, but it is useless; my fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall repose in peace. I understand your feeling," continued he, perceiving that I wished to interrupt him; "but you are mistaken, my friend, if thus you will allow me to name you; nothing can alter my destiny listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined." (Preface, Letter 6)²

Frankenstein conveys to Walton in the above lines the conviction that the path of his life, his destiny is tied to the beast he made. This creation Victor has enslaved him in such a way that it has become his ultimate goal in life to destroy it.

Along with Mary, Stephenie Meyer, in *The Twilight Saga* (2005- 2010), complies with the features of a gothic literature work and can be called a gothic text than just a romance fiction. The readers are made aware of the various gothic qualities present in *Twilight Saga*, as the primary target of text was to display the elements of love and romance overlapped with an updated version of a typical fairytale with a vampire. Throughout her book, Meyer introduces the male and female characters to the animal world, utilizing predator and victim images, emphasizing the feral nature of the character but in a more subtle way.

The narrative of *The Twilight Saga* is mostly from the perspective of Isabella Swan, also called Bella, the young girl in her teens and a human creature in the novel who falls in love with a vampire, Edward Cullen, who is in his hundreds. Only one segment in the fourth book is from the angle of Jacob Black, who is a werewolf among the other characters. Isabella was a newcomer in the college where Edward, along with his other vampire family members, were also the students. Edward's charm was the center of gossip in the college as he is a vampire who possessed all the humanly characters and was the talk of the college as well as the town. He looked exactly like the other human beings and can do everything that humans can do. Edward, along with his vampire family, possessed supernatural powers like reading minds, smelling the werewolves around, sensing the danger around, having a glimpse of future, climbing the trees and mountains with the fired bullet's speed and many more. All these features of the bloodsuckers are shown in the saga by Stephenie Meyer. The weakness of these non-human characters is blood, which brings out their

actual traits and also the direct sunlight falling on their bodies. Stephenie has not only shown the vampires but also their rivals, the werewolves. Werewolves are human-friendly creatures and warm-blooded than vampires. Here in the story, Jacob and his clan belong to werewolves who usually are shown hunting vampires and protecting humans from them.

Isabella, the main heroine of the text, later falls in love with Edward and becomes a vampire-like them. Bella now possesses the power of developing a shield from her eyes and protect her loved ones. Meyre beautifully shows such traits of superhumans living among the earthly humans. In the book *Twilight* (2005), Edward transforms into a vampire for the first time, showing his sharp canines and eyes greedy for blood; such traits are enough for arousing horror among the readers. In work, Meyre has exhibited gothic qualities from other members of the Cullen family, like Alice, Jasper, Carlisle, Roselaine, and many others from his vampire clan. Stephenie has described two types of vampires, one the human-friendly vampires and others the non-friendly vampires. Edward's family and their relatives fall into the categories of human-friendly vampires. They are not shown harming the general population of the town. It is the other vampires who are attacking the general crowd and converting them to blood-suckers like them as they aim to make an army of their kind.

Bella is attracted to Edward from the starting of the novel as he kind of raises curiosity in her, which makes her explore more about him. She searches for his kind in libraries and scroll on the internet. She acknowledges herself enough about the cold-blooded, blood-suckers, super-creatures from where Edward and his breed belongs. Bella's other companion Jacob who belongs to the werewolves family also shares some gothic features. He can transform him from human into a giant wolf. Jacob and his family are real friends of humans. They have a powerful nose, and like humans, they are warm-blooded creatures. Usually noted they hunt the vampires as their service to protect humans. The novel ends with the union of Bella and Edward and having their own family. Their daughter also inherits the traits of vampires and she possesses the power of showing the future with her touch. Even in *Frankenstein*, Frankenstein searches for his female partner and desires to settle down and have his family. However, his creator, Victor, does not want to add more horrifying creatures on the

earth who can freely roam among the humans and haunt them.

Conclusion:

Mary Shelley and Stephenie Meyer, being the authors from different times, could impress the readers and beautifully justify their work despite all the criticism. They were women could amaze the viewers by bringing their work from gothic fiction, which is a challenge in itself, as it takes much effort to write in a genre that is not in many trends. Frankenstein, Edward, Alice, Jacob, and, in the end, even Isabella shares the characteristics of super-humans. Through them, both the authors could bring the variety in the characters and could bring into light the features of beastly, blood-sucking creatures living among the humans.

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