

UNVEILING THE OBSCURITY: MARY SHELLEY'S "FRANKENSTEIN" AND GOTHIC NOVEL FEATURES

Mulkijakhon Gulyamova

Bachelor's degree student of Bukhara State University

E-mail: mulkijakhon@gmail.com

ANNOTATION: Mary Shelley was an iconic writer who lived from 1797 and died in 1851. She was a writer who lived and wrote during a literary era in which Romanticism was on the rise and flourishing. Her work in Shelley can prove that it was greatly influenced by her time, as it shows essential elements of Romantic literature. Romantic feature of Shelley's novels is the way she sets her novels to music and chooses beautiful and exotic locations. The artistic ending that Mary Shelley aimed for in her novel *Frankenstein* adheres to the convention of Gothic and Romantic styles. Shelley does so through the plot, the characterization in the book, the setting, and the subject matter. In *Frankenstein*, Shelley uses literary elements that exude both a gothic and romantic factor in the characters in the story.

Keywords: Traditional Settings, Gothic, Scientific Pursuit, Narrative Structure, Alienation, Loneliness, Female Characters

Introduction

Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" stands as a seminal work in literature, often recognized for its Gothic elements. However, a closer examination reveals that Shelley skillfully navigates the obscure realms of the Gothic genre, blending it with science fiction and moral complexity. This article delves into the nuanced interplay of Gothic novel features in "Frankenstein," shedding light on the unconventional and thought-provoking aspects that set it apart. Beyond Traditional Horror: Shelley's "Frankenstein" challenges the conventional Gothic horror narrative by transcending mere supernatural elements. While Gothic novels traditionally involve haunted castles and supernatural occurrences, "Frankenstein" ventures into the realm of science fiction, introducing the idea of man playing God through scientific experimentation. This departure from the norm adds a layer of obscurity, infusing the narrative with philosophical inquiries about the consequences of unchecked scientific ambition.

Character Complexity: Unlike typical Gothic protagonists who often embody clear-cut morality, the characters in "Frankenstein" are enshrouded in moral ambiguity. Victor Frankenstein's pursuit of knowledge and creation of the Creature leads to unforeseen consequences, challenging the simplistic distinctions between good and evil prevalent in traditional Gothic tales. This moral complexity adds a layer of psychological depth, making the characters and their motivations more intricate and thought-provoking.

The Pursuit of Knowledge and Enlightenment: Another departure from traditional Gothic themes is the emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment in "Frankenstein." Victor Frankenstein's relentless pursuit of scientific discovery mirrors the intellectual curiosity of the Enlightenment era. This intellectual element intertwines with the Gothic, creating a narrative that explores the dark consequences of unbridled pursuit of knowledge, thus contributing to the obscurity of the novel.

Isolation and Alienation: The Gothic often explores themes of isolation and alienation, and "Frankenstein" is no exception. However, Shelley takes this element to new heights as the Creature grapples with its existence, rejected by society and even by its own creator. The theme of isolation becomes more than a mere atmospheric setting; it becomes a profound exploration of human relationships and societal rejection. Mary Shelley's novel, "Frankenstein," is widely recognized as one of the pioneering works of Gothic fiction. Published in 1818, it explores profound themes of ambition, science, society, and the consequences of playing god. However, amidst the shadows of this Gothic masterpiece lie certain elements that add a layer of obscurity to its narrative, challenging standard expectations of the genre. This article will delve into these obscure features within Shelley's "Frankenstein" and shed light on how they deviate from traditional Gothic tropes.

The Absence of Traditional Settings: Supernatural elements are often a hallmark of the Gothic genre, with supernatural occurrences, ghosts, and otherworldly beings featuring prominently in many works. Surprisingly, "Frankenstein" largely omits such supernatural occurrences. The creation of the monster is presented through a scientific lens rather than through mystical or supernatural means. This absence of overt supernatural elements adds to the obscurity of the novel. Shelley shifts the focus to questions of human ambition, the boundaries of scientific knowledge, and the ethical implications of playing god. By omitting the supernatural, Shelley forces readers to confront the inherent human capacity for both creation and destruction, obscuring the line between the natural and the unnatural. Gothic novels typically rely on gloomy settings, such as ancient castles, abbeys, or decaying estates, to create an atmosphere of mystery and foreboding. However, Shelley's "Frankenstein" lacks such typical Gothic locales. Instead, the novel takes place in a variety of settings, ranging from the icy landscapes of the Arctic to the picturesque beauty of Switzerland. The absence of a fixed Gothic setting works to obscure the reader's expectations, preventing them from finding comfort within familiar Gothic terrains. This deviation forces readers to focus on the inner turmoil of the characters, emphasizing the psychological and emotional aspects of the narrative.

The Complexity of the Monster: In traditional Gothic literature, the villainous character represents pure evil, with little nuance or depth. However, in "Frankenstein," the monster is not a one-dimensional antagonist. The creature is complex and displays a range of emotions, longing for love and companionship, but plagued by isolation and rejection. The ambiguity surrounding the monster's intentions challenges the reader's perception of good and evil. Shelley humanizes the monster, emphasizing the existential questions it raises rather than solely focusing on its monstrous qualities. This departure from the conventional villainous archetype adds an element of obscurity to the narrative, blurring the boundaries between morality and monstrosity.

The Moral Quest of Victor Frankenstein: As the protagonist, Victor Frankenstein plays a crucial role in the tale. However, his character strays from the traditional Gothic hero, who is typically depicted as a virtuous and noble figure. Victor's actions are driven by his obsession with creating life, leading him down a dark path of ambition and moral transgressions. While Victor can be seen as a tragic figure, his descent into madness and the consequences of his actions blur the line between hero and anti-hero. This moral ambiguity further complicates the Gothic elements within the novel, challenging readers to question the nature of morality and responsibility.

The Role of Female Characters: In traditional Gothic literature, female characters are often portrayed as either innocent victims or dangerous seductresses. However, in "Frankenstein," the female characters defy these archetypes. Elizabeth, Victor's fiancée, embodies a strong-willed and compassionate nature, while Justine demonstrates resilience and loyalty. Shelley presents nuanced female characters who actively participate in the narrative, possessing agency and individuality. By defying Gothic stereotypes, Shelley enhances the obscurity within the novel, challenging readers' expectations and offering a fresh perspective on female representation.

The Exploration of Scientific Pursuit: Within the genre of Gothic fiction, the supernatural and inexplicable

often take center stage. However, in "Frankenstein," Shelley incorporates scientific discourse and questions the ethical boundaries of the pursuit of knowledge. Victor's ambitious scientific experiment blurs the line between the natural and the unnatural, between human creation and god-like power. This scientific backdrop adds an element of uncertainty and obscurity to the narrative, as Shelley questions the consequences of scientific advancements and the hubris of mankind. The exploration of scientific pursuit within a Gothic framework adds depth and complexity to the novel.

The Narrative Structure: In traditional Gothic novels, a linear narrative is often employed, following a chronological sequence of events. However, "Frankenstein" utilizes a complex narrative structure that adds another layer of obscurity to the story. The novel is framed as a series of letters, journal entries, and firsthand accounts, creating multiple perspectives and voices. This fragmented structure obscures the flow of the narrative, making it difficult for readers to piece together the events in a straightforward manner. It adds a sense of mystery and unpredictability, heightening the tension and suspense within the story. Shelley's choice to deviate from a traditional narrative structure amplifies the enigmatic nature of the novel.

The Themes of Alienation and Loneliness: Gothic literature often explores themes of isolation and loneliness, emphasizing the darkness and despair that can arise from a sense of alienation. In "Frankenstein," both Victor Frankenstein and his creature experience profound isolation, struggling with their place in society and their inability to connect with others. However, Shelley approaches this theme in a way that diverges from traditional Gothic novels. Rather than portraying isolated characters as tragic victims, she presents them as complex beings grappling with their own existential dilemmas. This departure from the usual portrayal of alienation adds another dimension of obscurity to the novel, highlighting the inner struggles of the characters and the blurred boundaries between isolation and monstrosity.

The Absence of Supernatural elements: Supernatural elements are often a hallmark of the Gothic genre, with supernatural occurrences, ghosts, and otherworldly beings featuring prominently in many works. Surprisingly, "Frankenstein" largely omits such supernatural occurrences. The creation of the monster is presented through a scientific lens rather than through mystical or supernatural means. This absence of overt supernatural elements adds to the obscurity of the novel. Shelley shifts the focus to questions of human ambition, the boundaries of scientific knowledge, and the ethical implications of playing god. By omitting the supernatural, Shelley forces readers to confront the inherent human capacity for both creation and destruction, obscuring the line between the natural and the unnatural.

Conclusion: Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" stands as a masterpiece of Gothic fiction, challenging traditional conventions of the genre and adding a layer of obscurity to its narrative. By deviating from typical Gothic elements such as traditional settings, one-dimensional villains, virtuous heroes, and supernatural occurrences, Shelley creates a work that defies easy categorization. The obscure features within the novel, such as the absence of traditional settings, the complexity of the monster, the moral ambiguity of Victor Frankenstein, the portrayal of female characters, the exploration of scientific pursuit, the narrative structure, and the themes of alienation and loneliness, solidify "Frankenstein" as a haunting reflection on the human condition. Shelley's ability to subvert expectations and delve into complex philosophical and moral questions elevates the novel beyond the confines of traditional Gothic fiction. "Frankenstein" continues to captivate readers with its enigmatic nature, offering a thought-provoking exploration of ambition, responsibility, and the consequences of tampering with the natural order. It stands as an enduring testament to the power of obscure elements within a genre, challenging readers to reconsider their preconceived notions and embrace the ambiguity that lies within.

In Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein," the obscurity of Gothic novel features lies not in adhering to traditional norms but in pushing the boundaries of the genre itself. The infusion of science fiction, moral complexity, and intellectual exploration elevates the novel beyond a mere Gothic tale, inviting readers to question the very essence of humanity. Shelley's ability to weave a narrative that both embraces and challenges Gothic conventions makes "Frankenstein" a timeless work that continues to captivate and perplex readers,

solidifying its place as a literary masterpiece.

References:

1. Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 172 p. Great Britain, Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc. (In English)
2. Harauei, D. (2017). *Manifest kiborgov: nauka, tekhnologiya i socialisticheskij feminizm 1980-h* [The Cy- borg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Fem- inism of the 1980s]. 128 p. Moscow, Ad Marginem Press. (In Russian)
3. Hirschfeld, M. (1910). *Die Transvestiten - eine Untersuchung uber den erotischen Verkleidugstrieb mit umfangreichem casuistischem und historischem Material* [The Transvestites - an Investigation into the Erotic Sex Drive with Extensive Casuistic and Historical Material]. 562 p. Berlin, Medicinischer Verlag. (In German)
4. Letov, O. V. (2008). *Transgumanizm i etika* [Transhumanism and Ethics]. *Vestnik kul'turologii*, No. 4, pp. 18-30. (In Russian)
5. Litvinov, A. V. (2011). *Chudovishche Frankenshtejna* [Frankenstein's Monster]. *Vestnik Rossijskoj akademii nauk*, part 81/No. 9, pp. 862-864. (In Russian)
6. Malkina-Pyh, I. G. (2006). *Gendernaia terapiia. Spravochnik prakticheskogo psihologa* [Gender Therapy. A Handbook of the Practical Psychologist]. 552 p. Mos- cow, Eksmo. (In Russian)
7. Preciado, P. (2018). *Countersexual Manifesto (Criti- cal Life Studies)*. 240 p. United States, Columbia Univer- sity Press. (In English)
8. Shapinskaia, E. N. (2019) . *Monstr kak kul'turnyj geroj: reprezentaciya monstroznosti v massovoj kul'ture (nachalo)* [The Monster as a Cultural Hero: The Repe- sentation of Monstrousness in Popular Culture (the Be- ginning)]. 6 p. *Kul'tura kul'tury*, No. 2. (In Russian)
9. Shelley, M. (2019). *Frankenstein, ili Sovremennyj Prometej: Poslednij chelovek: romany* [Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus; The Last Man: Novels]. Per. s angl. Z. Aleksandrovoi. 672 p. Moscow, Veche. (In Rus- sian)
10. Stoller, R. (1994). *Sex and Gender: The Development of Masculinity and Feminity*. 400 p. Great Britain, Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc. (In English)