

## ***Sturm Und Drang a Precursor to the Emergence of 'The Man of Agency' In English Romanticism***

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Romantic Movement in English Literature, literary scholars generally overlook the fact that English Romanticism takes its roots in German Literature, mostly from a specific movement deemed as anti-Rationalism and focused on the value of emotions to the point of irrationalism. This pre-romantic movement known as Sturm und Drang, similar to English Romanticism, urges society to go back to their nature and their human core by way of embracing their emotions. Within the scope of German Literature, specifically in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, one can see these elements of the Sturm und Drang yet related to another concept coined as *Kraftmensch*. English Romanticism, mostly, deals with the positive emotions of human nature whereas in the Sturm und Drang the focus of the authors is dealing with negative emotions of human nature. Furthermore, it is safe to say that both English and German literature's Romantic Movements, though by different methods, urge people to go back to their core as a way of reuniting with nature itself to experience the sublime (in terms of Edmund Burke and the Kantian *Sublime*) rather than lose their nature by being confined by pure science of the rationalist perspective and neglecting their emotional self. Namely, while the main focus of English Romanticism is love and beauty, Sturm und Drang focuses on chaos and death. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss and highlight the emergence of English Romanticism and place elements of the German Sturm und Drang Movement as its precursor whilst using the primary romantic novel of English literature: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as an example.

***Keywords:*** *English Romanticism, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Sturm und Drang, Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther*

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## ÖZ

Edebiyat bilimiyle uğraşan akademisyenlerin çoğu Mary Shelley'nin *Frankenstein*'ını İngiliz Edebiyatının Romantik Akım kategorisine yerleştirirken, İngiliz Romantizminin köklerini Alman Edebiyatının anti-Rasyonalizm olarak da adlandırılabilen ve irrasyonalizm noktasına değin duyguların önemine odaklanan özgül bir hareketinden aldığı gerçeğini genellikle göz ardı ederler. Sturm und Drang olarak da bilinen bu romantizm öncesi hareket, İngiliz Romantizmine benzer şekilde, toplumu duygularını kucaklamak suretiyle kendi doğalarına ve insani özlerine geri dönmeye davet eder. Alman Edebiyatı kapsamında, özellikle Goethe'nin *Genç Werther'in Acıları* adlı eserinde, Sturm und Drang'ın bu unsurları görülebilir, dahası doğrudan doğruya *Kraftmensch* olarak adlandırılan başka bir kavramla da sıkı sıkıya ilişkilidir. İngiliz Romantizmi çoğunlukla insan doğasının barındırdığı olumlu duygularla ilgilenirken, Sturm und Drang'da yazarların odak noktası daha ziyade insan doğasının taşıdığı olumsuz daha doğrusu karamsar duygularıdır. Ayrıca, hem İngiliz hem de Alman edebiyatının Romantik Akımlarının, farklı yöntemlerle de olsa, insanları duygusal benliklerini ihmal eden ve rasyonalist bakış açısının saf bilimine hapsolup doğalarını dahası özlerini kaybetmek yerine, yüce olanı (Edmund Burke ve Kantçı terminolojiyle *Yücelik*) deneyimlemek için doğanın kendisiyle özdeşleşmenin bir yolu olarak özlerine dönmeye teşvik ettiğini söylemek yanlış olmayacaktır. Diğer bir ifadeyle, İngiliz Romantizminin odağı aşk ve güzellik iken, Sturm und Drang kaos ve ölüme odaklanır. Bu bakış açısından hareketle, Alman Sturm und Drang akımı İngiliz Romantizminin ortaya çıkışına bir nevi öncü akım hatta pre-romantik olarak konumlandırılarak, Sturm und Drang akımının İngiliz Romantik akımına iz düşümü Shelley'nin *Frankenstein*'i üzerinden ele alınacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *İngiliz Romantizmi, Mary Shelley'nin Frankenstein'i, Sturm und Drang, Goethe'nin Genç Werther'in Acıları*

“Ironically, England was now to receive its stimulus from Germany, from ideas which had in fact originated on her shores and had been elaborated abroad while they were more or less ignored at home. ... in spite of the success of *Werther*...”

- Lilian R. Furst, 126

## INTRODUCTION

The Romantic Movement in literature is commonly and accurately attributed to “English Romanticism”. However, one might realize that this movement with all its glamour did not suddenly surface into the world of literature. When delving deeper into the origins of Romanticism and specifically the English Romantic Movement in literature, the initial literary work stands out as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*, highlighting most of the philosophical as well as the scientific issues present in its day and age. Though one might ask, how Romanticism emerged, and how it was triggered, in other words, one might consider there to be a precursor which one could claim as pre-romanticism.

The expression “Sturm und Drang” is generally and very loosely translated as “Storm and Stress” (Hill, 2003, p. 1) however for the sake of preventing misuse of the term, rather than utilizing the English translation, the original term is going to be used throughout this article. For the most part, it has been argued that Sturm und Drang emerged as a movement in Germany in the 18<sup>th</sup> century an opposing line of thought to the Enlightenment or rather its emphasis being put on reason. This emergence owing to the fact that with the ascend of rationalism in Europe general society had started to rely more and more on the concept of logos in line with reasoning and scientific thought based on empirical evidence. This in turn led to the emotions and the spiritual existence of humankind being neglected or even dismissed. Humanity seemed more and more concerned with rationality, dismissing a supposed “natural core” connected to whatever lay beyond reason and reasoning and was considered to be attached to the internal emotions of oneself (Hill, 2003, p. 5). Furthermore, the oppositional rise of the Sturm und Drang movement was meant to remind humanity of its actual being that could not or should not just be confined to an external world of reasoning but actually promoted irrationality as a way to find back to one’s core and origins again leading to another term strongly connected to the movement, namely the concept of *Kraftmensch*. In his article, A Titan in Extenuating Circumstances: Sturm und Drang and the Kraftmensch, Alan Leidner (1989) stated that toward the end of the 1700s, German playwrights and prominently Friederich Maximilian Klingler coined the term *Kraftmensch*. The violence attributed to this new man of action, as most likely Leidner puts it, “...seems to sum up the essence of Sturm und Drang” while also mentioning that this man of action poses “...an impulsive individuality that appears to need no authority beyond itself” (Leidner, 1989. p. 178).

As it will be further discussed this notion of violence will be associated with the terms of violation as an act of agency in accordance with Georges Bataille's argument which in turn is observable in the coining protagonists of the English Romantic narrative.

The most prominent author of the movement of Sturm und Drang, sometimes even considered the initial author to give life to the core teachings of the movement mirrored in literary works is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) and on the level of stage plays it is Friedrich Maximilian Klingler (1752–1831). They, as the initiators of a thought put to word by creating protagonists who are or grow into becoming a *Kraftmensch* are commonly referred to as the '*Stürmer und Dränger*' (Hill, 2003, p. 2). Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which is going to be one of the focal points of this article, clarifies the German perspective of the Sturm und Drang movement as a precursor to the rise of English Romanticism.

In terms of literature in general, one can argue that different genres reflect the emergence of different protagonist types, the Sturm und Drang movement presenting the *Kraftmensch* whilst English Romanticism's most prominent protagonist, the Byronic Hero is born. The coining protagonist of English Romanticism known as Dr. Frankenstein seems to be based on the archetype of the Sturm und Drang protagonist, namely the *Kraftmensch*. Further, this undeniable relation is most easily observable when the protagonist that each movement produces is analyzed in comparison based on the degree of their agency. Therefore, the argumentation concerning the Emergence of English Romanticism based on a German movement is better emphasized when the gradual progression of the *Kraftmensch* in its anglicized counterpart is traced.

This progression showcases itself in the example of poetry categorized under English Romanticism in Lord Byron's 'Unfinished' *Hyperion*. On the other hand, when it comes to the category of prose, one can encounter Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* within the same literary movement. This article aims to point out the fact that English Romanticism has taken its roots from an 18<sup>th</sup>-century German Movement called Sturm und Drang and substantiates this argument utilizing the adaption of the evolved, even perfected *Kraftmensch* within English Literature as reflected in Shelley's protagonist Dr. Frankenstein. Therefore, beginning with certain similarities linking Sturm und Drang and English Romanticism as diachronic literary

instances are going to be discussed based on the most prominent works that have coined the emergence of both movements which are selected as Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* while also referring to Lord Byron's *Hyperion*. It is common knowledge that Lord Byron is known to be in admiration of J.W. Goethe and highly influenced by the German literary movement (Stokoe, 1963 p. 159), in turn influencing Shelley, leading up to the penning of *Frankenstein*.

## DISCUSSION

English Romanticism encompasses several prominent literary works both prose and poetic as previously mentioned which coin the movement as belonging to the Anglo-Saxon tradition. However, often – either intentionally or due to dismissal- the effects of other literary works and basic movements seem to be overlooked or dismissed as being the initiating source and precursor of English Romanticism. On this note, a German-originated movement known as Sturm und Drang can be distinctively singled out as being the precursor to English Romanticism both in style, aim, philosophy, and the construction of protagonists. This relation becomes only more plausible when Lord Byron's obvious admiration of Goethe and the trending German literary movement promoting irrationality and the experiencing of emotions in favor of rationalism is taken into consideration. It is not to say that the Sturm und Drang movement is a version of German Romanticism, but rather a forethought pointing towards a specific direction with the aim of favoring one's inner world and true human core being unified with nature that can only be experienced via letting free emotions reign to the point of irrationality and experiencing the sublime.

It is suggested that a human is not merely under the command of logos/ reason and should be reinvesting in getting in touch with one's divine origins which lies beyond the empirical universe of objects and scientific reason. This line of thought seems to be imported to the English tradition during Lord Byron's efforts of adopting an artistic style that tends to emphasize the promotion of emotional experience again in the attempts to reunite one's humanity with nature itself in search of transcendence. Going back to Byron's attempted *Hyperion*, it is arguably easy to see the connection to ancient Greek philosophy in which exactly this nature-mimetic wholeness with the universe as a form of existence is promoted. The same influence can be observed in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as

the coining piece of literature for the English Romantic movement though, here, there is an equal emphasis on scientific progress as much as the free reign of emotions and the promotion of irrationality including the creation of the primary English *Kraftmensch* protagonist. In other words, the evolved and perfected man of agency. The importance of this now-anglicized protagonist rests in the undeniable reality that the *Kraftmensch* is a creation of the Sturm und Drang. Another common denominator seems to be this proposed introvertiveness via nature which can be then seen in English Romanticism just as much as in the German movement of the Sturm und Drang though with a higher degree of agency and violence in terms of being more fearless in violating standing rational norms, which can also be labeled as taboos. Hence, to be able to show these similarities the elements of Sturm und Drang are going to be pointed out using Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* which is the coining literary work of said movement and presenting the original *Kraftmensch* protagonist Werther. Retrospectively, discovered elements are going to be applied to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to emphasize a direct connection between the two movements and the construction of protagonists.

Anthony Backes (1994) states that "Frankenstein has been seen as a critique of the Industrial Revolution, of value-free experimental science, and of romantic Prometheanism ..." (Backes, 1944, p. 34) due to the fact that with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, the focus of society has been shifted towards the technological developments and scientific facts. During this period, steam engines started to be produced which eased transportation, Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) *On The Origins of Species* was published therefore the theory of Evolution, and also Charles Babbage (1791-1871) is regarded as the father of computer sciences since he designed the notion of the analytical engine (Greenblatt, 2006 p. 1538-1545). These technological developments are surely to be categorized as the milestones of a society thriving on science, empiricism, and the dominance of reason. An additional emphasis should be laid on the scientific discovery of Galvani known as Galvanism and due to its direct influence on Mary Shelley's work as the reason counterpart to the irrational emotions given free reign as encountered within her coining narrative.

David S. Hogsette's article *Metaphysical Intersections in Frankenstein: Mary Shelley's Theistic Investigation of Scientific Materialism and Transgressive Autonomy* where he states that "The novel is arguably

one of the most influential works in the conceptual practice of science and technology and Mary Shelley one of the most influential thinkers” (Hogsette, 2011 p. 532). In light of this, one can argue that the importance of Shelley’s work is not confined to literature but is considered a scientific inspiration in terms of the novelty of Galvanism. Furthermore, Galvani’s innovations and his later experiments have an impact not only on *Frankenstein* but also on other science-fiction novels, whereby one might consider Galvani as a real-life *Kraftmensch*. Mary (Wollstonecraft) Shelley’s encounter with this scientific novelty seems to be related to a journey undertaken with Percy Bysshe Shelley to Genova to meet Lord Byron. During this time, she was said to be already well-versed in the scientific arguments of Galvani and Volta and also in every detail that Aldini produced. It is also stated that during that time, especially in Switzerland and Italy, Galvanism and ‘reanimation’, which can be thought of as a direct reference to *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley does not utilize the word Galvanism in her novel however she only mentions it in the preface of the second edition of the book published in 1831 (Kızıltan & Dalkılıç 2022, p. 256-258). This reference strongly indicates that the fantasy of defying mortality with reanimation is not a fictitious daydream taken out of a novel but on the contrary, it is the actual inspiration behind Shelley’s protagonist Dr. Frankenstein.

These scientific facts and technological developments also demonstrate themselves in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* when Dr. Victor Frankenstein utilizes electricity to create a monster, which is also an indication that he becomes a man of agency or more accurately a *Kraftmensch* since he is no longer in need of a creator; himself becoming a creator of his monster. This again indicates a direct connection to the line of thought promoted by Sturm und Drang. The same notion also is indicative of the fact that with Galvanism, humankind no longer needs to be in awe of God (Hogsette, 2011 p. 532). Hence the subtitle of the novel refers to “... *the modern Prometheus*”. This indicates a distancing from the necessity of transcendence via the experiencing of the sublime since God is no longer held in awe. Whereas Nietzsche observes that “...*God is dead*” and in line presents his version of the evolved *Kraftmensch* which he labels “...*Übermensch*...” indicating that he is referring to a new relationship between humankind and nature (Nietzsche, 2006 p. 5). Hence, the age of reason has subdued the sublimity of a creating and omnipotent God since Nietzsche argues that “Human being is something that must be overcome”

meaning that the human limitations of being subservient to anything out of reach of the human limitations need overcoming (Nietzsche, 2006 p. 5). Following this thought, one is expected to overreach and transcend which seems to take its emergence from the notions of Burke and Kant merged with the later understanding of the German-originated *Kraftmensch* via experiencing the sublime. This transcendence and sublime experience being regarded as the divine or wholeness with the universe which can only be achieved via spiritual connection to nature and transcendence by way of sublimation for humanity to regain its human core which now, with the dominance of reason, has been alienated from its true purpose (Gardner, 1999), (Kant, 2007).

In other words, Kant argues that the experience of the sublime allows for transcendence and a metaphorical unification with one's core as summarized in Esma Tezcan's Ph.D. thesis focusing on love, sexuality, and death in Western tradition as argued:

According to Kant, the sublime lies in the human experience of nature. Through this experience, the limitation, mortality, and smallness of human beings in the face of the sublime, and thus, in fact, the divine, are pointed out. It is impossible for the human mind and imagination to comprehend these phenomena of nature, which challenge the human mind, in the face of their actional appearance and their terrifying motion. Therefore, the human soul feels pleasure mixed with terrible pain. In this respect Kant gives the example of the virtuous man's fear of God; the virtuous man fears God, but he fears God without actually being frightened by God. For example, in the face of natural phenomena, disasters or hurricanes, etc., man's ability to resist is reduced to insignificance and pettiness. On the other hand, the more frightening their appearance, the more attractive they will be perceived as, and they will be regarded as sublime, especially when they are witnessed from a safe distance. (Tezcan, 2018. p. 21-22)<sup>3</sup>

Again, the concept of sublimation stands out as a bridge between the German and English traditions which can be seen as yet a further link verifying the main argument of this article in placing the German Sturm und Drang tradition at the root of English Romanticism and the construction of protagonists with agency. The necessary effect of terror as an opening emotion toward the sublime and hence transcendence can be observed in both traditions. Kant, representing the German traditions' take on the matter is the latter one to propose this approximately 50 years after the initial statement was made by Edmund Burke representing the English tradition. Though Burke was the first to address the issue of the

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<sup>3</sup> The block citation given above has obtained from a Ph.D. thesis for German Literature as can be found in the references and the original language is Turkish. Hence all translations have been done by the author of this article.



sublime, the notion as a philosophical approach was primarily adopted into the literary tradition of the German *Stürmer und Dränger* only later to be incorporated into English Romanticism. Nonetheless, both Kant and Burke are almost identical in their postulations though where the former's focus is on the link between sublimity and terror whereas the latter is more concerned with its relation to beauty.

Edmund Burke (1729) commences his postulations regarding the notion of the sublime in his book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* arguing that there is a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. Whereas the beautiful object with its gradual variation elicits feelings of love and tenderness, on the contrary, the sublime is the locus of awe and terror (Burke, 1764 p. 60). Fred Botting in his *Gothic*, whilst elaborating on Burke's take on the sublime states that "the terror was akin to the sense of wonderment and awe accompanying religious experience. Sublimity offered intimations of a great, if not divine, power" (Botting, 1999 p. 26). In other words, the sublime seems to be associated with a divine experience, or at least a realization of one's mortality as well as the perception of an existence beyond one's comprehension (Kant, 2007). This, in turn, can be singled out as one of the core obstacles trying to be overcome by humanity in terms of being absolved from inevitable mortality.

Following this comprehension as to the nature of the sublime, its association with the term terror needs elaboration. Both Burke and Kant insist that the key to experiencing the sublime lies solely in invoking the feeling of terror, hence opening a gateway towards a broader perception not limited by the confines of the rational mind. In complete agreement with Burke and Kant, Ann Radcliffe, an author very much in the vein of Mary Shelley, although focusing on the gothic element rather than on the Romantic movement, elaborates on the consequences of experiencing horror and terror and the distinction between these experiences shed light on what either of these feelings are capable of. In Ann Radcliffe's writings as well as in Botting's arguments on the subject referencing Radcliffe's notions of horror, it is deduced as a feeling that stuns, even freezes the faculties of the mind. On the other hand, however much like Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant suggest, Ann Radcliffe places the feeling of terror as an *a priori* condition for experiencing the sublime in so far as she posits that "...objects of terror not only give it a sense of its own power but, in the appreciation of awful

sublimity, suggest the power of a divine order..." (Botting, 1999 p. 48).

After having emphasized the ever-stronger growing link between the Sturm und Drang movement as a precursor to English Romanticism including the construction of its protagonist, the notion of the sublime and its utilization within the narratives belonging to either movement can be analyzed as a verification of the model of the coining narratives namely Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which is considered one of the first literary works that transduces with the movement and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Both selected narratives feature very specific common denominators inherent to English Romanticism though unmistakably taking its roots in German Sturm und Drang. An important distinction however is to understand the literary strands hailing from both traditions and how they affect one another. Lilian R. Furst in her article *Romanticism in Historical Perspective* boldly draws the battle lines between the two traditions by stating the following:

To suggest, however, that Romanticism should really be called 'Germanticism' on account of its essentially Germanic roots and spirit is an exaggeration, not to say a distortion in view of its early sources in England, although it is not without some element of truth, and high incidence of German words used in connection with Romanticism... in itself indicates Romanticism's deep entrenchment in Germany (Furst, 1968 p. 123).

As much as Furst's position on the relation between the two traditions seems counterproductive to the aim of this article when looked upon closely it is a verification of the initial suggestion regarding Sturm und Drang as a precursor to English Romanticism. Furst posits that English Pre-Romanticism has adopted the transcendentalism of the German philosophers of the Jena school, those who also gave rise to German Romanticism itself. This in turn emphasizes the fact that German Romanticism as a movement succeeds English Romanticism. In other words, the Romantic movement in Germany postdates English Romanticism which is not to say that both take their roots in German transcendental philosophy which is deemed rather the school of thought on which Sturm und Drang is the creative artistic expression. Hence again, though English Romanticism is certainly not to be considered Germanticism -in Furst's terminology-, it is evident that the philosophy, the aim, and the urge towards the sublime do emerge from the Sturm und Drang movement (Furst, 1968 p. 124). This is only more obvious when the selected narratives for this article are put side by

side in terms of analyzing the irrefutable markers that derive from the movement of Sturm und Drang such as the concept of the *Kraftmensch*, *Kraftnatur*, the experiencing of the sublime and the promotion of free reigning emotions to the point of irrationality and unification with nature. The notion of *Kraftmensch* is one of the most crucial notions in binding the two traditions with one another and showcasing the origins of English Romanticism in Sturm und Drang. *Kraftmensch* consists of two German words coined by Klinger, and it can also be referred to as *Kraftgenie* and/or *Machtmensch* meaning “...urkräftiger Mensch, Kraftnatur...”, ‘natively powerful person, one of powerful nature’ (Leidner, 1989 p. 179) which seems to be the definition of the protagonist constructions prominent in both traditions.

The protagonist of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Doctor Victor Frankenstein, who by utilizing an electrical current revives a corpse and creates his monster. In becoming a creator, himself, now he contemplates his ‘beautiful’ creation by watching his lungs fill with air and lastly, its yellow eyes open. He goes on by not being able to explain his emotions (Shelley, 1999 p. 45). This incapability of not being able to express his awe -being petrified to utter a word- at his creation can be thought of as a reference to first what Radcliffe discusses as terror and then what Burke and Kant argue as the sublime.

In Mary Shelley’s narrative the title is already indicative of the notion in reference to Prometheus linking the ancient Greek myth of creation directly to the understanding of the agency emphasized in the *Kraftmensch*. Mary Shelley’s novel is not just *Frankenstein* but *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus* and the ‘creator’ of humankind according to Greek mythology. According to the original myth, during the process of cosmogony Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus is tasked with this duty by the Olympian Gods. Epimetheus, whose name etymologically means *afterthought* acts without thinking about the consequences of his actions thoroughly as his name obviously indicates. He commences by creating animals whereby giving them the best gifts to survive such as strength, swiftness, courage, and many more until no gifts remain to bestow upon humankind ensuring their survival. When Epimetheus realizes his shortcomings against humankind in adequately equipping them, he consults his brother, Prometheus, etymologically meaning *forethought* who is the wiser of the two. Hence the duty of compensating for this inadequacy falls

upon Prometheus the Wise who in his love for humankind violates the set taboo of the Olympian Gods to make humankind superior to all other creations by initially granting them divine knowledge and mobility. He makes them erect and upright like Gods whereafter he ascends to Olympus, to be more precise to the sun, and there, he lights a burning torch, which is interpreted not only as fire but as a metaphor for divine knowledge (Hamilton, 2017 p.101).

This interpretation, in turn, can be directly associated with the *Genesis* narrative of Adam and Eve's original sin of violating God's ordain and eating from the forbidden "...tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (New Living Translation, Holy Bible. 1996. Genesis 2:9). With this forbidden act, they can be seen as gaining agency by overreaching their human limitations and becoming akin to the divine again verifiable by God's statement "Then the LORD God said, 'The people have become as we are, knowing everything, both good and evil. What if they eat the fruit of the tree of life? Then they will live forever!'" (NLT, Holy Bible. 1996. Genesis 3:22). It can be argued that Adam and Eve do become the initial *Kraftmensch(-en)* in gaining divine knowledge and becoming like God by violation of the divine taboo. However, they are banned from the Garden of Eden to be prevented from complete agency by becoming immortal like God too, which is the exact obstacle Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein is adamant to overcome.

Adam and Eve are yet not fully divine since they are still mortal and the fact that they have violated the divine law will be further relevant as Georges Bataille makes use of the term in *Erotism: Death & Sensuality* whilst associating it with other terms such as death, taboos, and the suspension of taboos in alignment with sublimation and gaining agency. Furthermore, Bataille draws a parallel between the notion of work and thereby being cut off from violence where he again associates the term violence with the term violation, since he argues that violation is a violent act against the taboo in motion. He continues by positing that death in itself can be understood as the greatest and final violent act toward a human, violating the animate body of the being and rendering it inanimate since "...violence is always the cause of death. It may have acted through magical means, but someone is always responsible, someone is always a murderer" (Bataille, 1986 p. 47). This violation understood as an act of ultimate violence nonetheless necessitates a culprit, be it divine or human.

According to Bataille, this is also how taboos seem to have come into effect “The taboo which lays hold on the others at the side of a corpse is the distance they put between themselves and violence, by which they cut themselves off from violence” (Bataille, 1986 p. 45). Apparently, for Bataille, the relation between death, the uncanny sight of a corpse, and violence is evident due to the horror of death irking one away whilst the safe distance between one and death itself -since one merely gazes upon the corpse and is not yet dead- invokes terror setting one in awe. “The horror of the corpse as a symbol of violence and as a threat of the contagiousness of violence...” (Bataille, 1986 p. 45). This description of Bataille is directly relatable with the consequence of Radcliffe’s notion of terror whilst it points to Burke and Kant’s definition of the sublime. Whereby Kant’s labeling of the sublime can be considered as something divine and out of reach belonging to the noumenal universe which is beyond us, as opposed to the phenomenal universe humankind resides in. Much like Plato once suggested a distinction between the realm of Ideas and Kant’s noumenal verses phenomenal universe, Bataille sets an identical distinction between the sacred world beyond us which is the universe of the divine from which taboos hail, and the profane world in which humankind tries to distance itself from immanent death (Bataille, 1986 p. 44-45).

Following this line of thought, Shelley’s protagonist Dr. Frankenstein seems to have violated any and every primal taboo associated with the sacred and divine law. Even the fact that the animated creation of Dr. Frankenstein is an assembled corpse draws attention to the protagonist’s awkward position between the sacred and profane world. On the one hand, he creates, breathes life, and renders a corpse animate, rescuing it from its violated state. By doing so he assumes the role reserved for God and himself violates a taboo. Furthermore, in alignment with Bataille’s suggestion, Dr. Frankenstein, gazing at the monster’s corpse is horrifying. By rendering the corpse animate and assuming a divine role, the protagonist is on the one hand still horrified by the violent nature of his creation which can be considered more as un-dead rather than alive. Therefore, the protagonist Dr. Frankenstein needs to distance himself from the monster of his own creation. On the other hand, his horror gradually transforms into a feeling of being terrified and in awe of his own divine accomplishment. Dr. Frankenstein finds himself having finally overreached death itself and taken the second step towards divinity, not only by overcoming mortality via modern science and electricity quite like Nietzsche suggests hence,

indicating the agency of an *Übermensch* or in context with this article's assumptions the portrayal of the protagonist as an evolved *Kraftmensch*.

This can be again associated with the metaphor of ancient Greek mythological creation symbolized by Zeus' lightning bolt- since Dr. Frankenstein uses the same method to create. But also, his reaction in observance of his act of creation is identical to that of the God of the Old Testament. When Victor Frankenstein animated his monster, he could only utter the word 'beautiful'. This is almost a replica of the Genesis narrative where God creates humankind and the universe, "Then God said, "Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life ... and he saw that it was excellent in every way (NLT, Holy Bible. 1996. Genesis 1:26-31). Taking the quote from the Bible referring to God's creation of mankind, the initial emphasis should be laid on the fact that God, after the act of creating takes a step back, looks upon his creation, and contemplates its excellence much like Dr. Frankenstein contemplates his creation and deems it beautiful.

At this point Dr. Frankenstein's referring to his monstrous creation as beautiful is relevant since it is not the external beauty that is being referred to but the beauty of creation itself. Just like the God of the Old Testament adds to the end of each creational act where it is stated that: "...And God saw that it was good" (NLT, Holy Bible. 1996. Genesis 1:25). This connection efficiently showcases the agency of the *Kraftmensch* who creates beauty, an irrational beauty with a hideous exterior as a defiant act against God and the taboo regarding mortality. In this sense what *Kraftmensch(-en)* tried to accomplish is to complete what God has left unfinished, and imperfect, their aim being agency, becoming the man of action who in all irrationality has the courage to perfect creation and overcome being human. Moreover, in so doing imitating the divine act but also by violating the taboo associated with the reluctance of God to let people become immortal and divine like him by eating from the Tree of Life (NLT, Holy Bible. 1996. Genesis 3:22). Nevertheless, the un-dead creation is not a perfected human being but rather an animated corpse hence in alignment with Bataille's suggestion a distancing from it is necessary and inevitable -as also seen at the end of the narrative- because the corpse, even though it is dead/un-dead does not stop being a threat to the living. On the contrary "It constitutes a supernatural peril which can be 'caught' from the dead body ... If they had to bury the corpse it is less in order to keep it safe than to keep themselves safe from

its contagion” (Bataille, 1986 p. 46). Although it is important to point out that regardless of the condition of the created monster, the overreaching accomplishment of the protagonist remains a prominent example of agency. When the acts of Shelley’s protagonist are taken into consideration, Dr. Frankenstein can be labeled as a full-fledged *Kraftmensch*, although he commits all the possible divine taboo violations, he does come into the experience of the sublime via the feeling of terror exactly as Burke and Kant describe the experience. Moreover, the component that links any sublime experience is also present since the created monster is not one invoking horror – which according to Radcliffe stuns the senses- but he is one invoking terror, who again in Radcliffe’s terminology opens the senses, lifts the spirit, and enables the experience of the sublime (Botting, 1999 p. 26-27).

The portrayal of the *Kraftmensch* takes a different turn in Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* mainly because the protagonist Werther is a precursor to its English counterpart Dr. Frankenstein which now is not the reflection of the Sturm und Drang’s more naïve and still not completely developed *Kraftmensch*. David Hill argues that the main argument of the Sturm und Drang is a mere individualism and/or reflection of the modern consciousness (Hill, 2003, p. 34). Therefore, in Goethe’s narrative, the readers find themselves going through Werther’s letters addressed to Wilhelm, where he generally talks about his affection for Charlotte, who is already engaged to Albert. The novel evolves around this love triangle apart from the criticism of social classes as one of the general markers of the movement. Even though Werther is aware that he cannot be with Lotte, which is the focal point of the plot, his feelings intensify day by day. Towards the end of the novel, Werther’s inner emotional turmoil can be considered as a direct implication of his self-demise and eventual suicide. In this sense this coining narrative of the Sturm und Drang does not emphasize the love story but the inner world and nature of a Sturm und Drang protagonist set on the internal evaluation within his self to gradually progress towards the experiencing of the sublime as cited by David Hill from Goethe’s Maifest: “Ich kehre in mich selbst zurück, und finde eine Welt!” (Hill, 2003, p.34), which can be loosely translated as “I turn within myself and find there a world!” (Hill, 2003, p.43). Hill continues to argue that Werther can be considered as the only character in the narrative who finds himself. With this notion of ‘finding oneself’ happy thus he realizes that choosing death -gaining agency over his own life- is always a possible

option (Hill, 2003, p. 34-35). As was discussed before since Werther can neither create nor overcome mortality -as Dr. Frankenstein is able to and play God- he gains the agency of his death at least in terms of when he is to die.

Committing suicide, therefore, can be thought of as the act of agency taken by Werther -usually reserved for God being the invisible culprit behind all human mortality. Now Goethe's protagonist, in a very naïve way, has violated the taboo of taking one's own life in the sense of playing God, hence experiencing a subtle version of the sublime though not as grandiose as Shelley's protagonist. Nonetheless as a result of this action, one can state that by violating God's taboo regarding suicide, Werther has successfully become a *Kraftmensch*. Though it is important to emphasize that Werther's journey is more focused on self-fulfillment and becoming one with nature and the experiencing of the sublime which is the reflection of the discourse of Sturm und Drang, Dr. Frankenstein's agency, in alignment with Romanticism is rather set on becoming the divine or rising above God in one's agency. In other words, as Nietzsche later posits, in overcoming being human. However, the utilization of nature is prominent as well as key to the aim of each narrative in regard to the experience of the sublime. The notion of nature and the condition of the weather in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is a vital tool to invoke the proper circumstances in reflecting the inner world of the protagonist's progression to *Kraftmensch* which is a direct genre marker of Sturm und Drang. Initially, the reader is greeted by the protagonist, Werther, where he can be found in complete harmony with nature itself, which can be an implication that he is content with the scenery where he is free from alienation (Hill, 2003, p. 34-35). Here, nature seems to be utilized as a metaphor of unity, of wholeness with oneself and the universe, hence the sublime. Joyce S. Walker stated in his article Sex, Suicide, and the Sublime: A Reading of Goethe's "Werther" that:

I contend that *Die Leiden des Jungen Werther* may be read in a way that emphasizes the dramatic interplay of beauty and sublimity in the hero's mind... The movement from the beautiful to the sublime is reflected in Werther's consciousness and projected onto nature... (Walker, 1999 p. 208-209).

On the other hand, what Werther feels in terms of his emotions also affects the weather around him, for example, when he meets Lotte for the first time, due to his extreme internal emotions, a storm interrupts their dance, reflecting Werther's own emotions and creating a real storm which affects



his life. This reversed reflection also indicates a unity wherein it is obvious that not just Werther's emotions are reflected in nature but in reversal, nature itself or the weather conditions change in accordance with the emotional state of the protagonist. In another example, Werther is in a small room in a country inn writing a letter to Lotte stating that he is only staying there due to a severe storm because he was looking for shelter (Goethe, 2021 p. 42). Here the emphasis is on nature having an immediate relationship with the protagonists' conscious and unconscious mind and emotions, which can be thought of as, yet again, an indicator of the Sturm und Drang Movement.

Mary Shelley, throughout her narrative of *Frankenstein*, depicts a clear scene in which she narrates the natural beauties and natural catastrophic phenomena. These forces of nature can be linked with the sublime, as Kant and Burke argued. As Radcliffe also suggests the only way of experiencing the sublime is through the notion of terror.

In a similar manner, during Shelley's narration, there are several depictions of the North Pole, the Alps, and the mountains of Jura. "Storms are one of the main sources of the sublime in nature, as they contain [...] the two main elements: danger, and therefore fear and terror, and vastness" (Román, 2014/2015 p. 3). Therefore, it is safe to assume that those natural phenomena are widely used throughout the narrative by Mary Shelley to construct metaphors of the sublime. In addition, said phenomena are perfect tools to draw a parallel with Burke and Kant's suggestions, in terms of Radcliffe's terror and horror notions. It is observable that the most crucial role nature demonstrates is that it leads to a state of awe again as described by Kant and Burke. In terms of the sense of nature, one can argue that the narrator is giving a visual representation of the condition of the weather by descriptions like the sky is full of clouds, or that it is about to start raining, or that a storm is rising and that he can hear it (Shelley, 1999 p. 59). Yet another worth mentioning example can be taken from Chapter 10 where it is stated that "The rain was pouring in torrents, and thick mists hid the summits of mountains..." (Shelley, 1999 p. 75). All these examples regarding the descriptions of nature and weather throughout the narrative are not just utilized as ambient components but very purposefully engaged as an essential reflection of the relationship between man and nature.

Romantic and Gothic markers such as the uncanny environment and again in line with its precursor Sturm und Drang are utilized to highlight the

experience of the sublime whilst constructing a protagonist engaged in inner unification and unified with the universe. However, this type of relation with nature and it being utilized as a gateway condition towards the sublime seems only reserved for humankind. In other words, one way or the other, whether the protagonist violates divine taboos in an effort to mimic God or is in awe of the divine within a transcendent mind state, human is human and confined by the laws of nature, hence is within the agency degree mirrored by Sturm und Drang's *Kraftmensch*. Any transgression- such as Dr. Frankenstein achieving the role of life creator or bringing an end to immortality is reflective of a higher degree of agency, more parallel with what Nietzsche will later refer to as overcoming being human. Though, in end effect, overcome by the force of nature itself either by causing fatal harm or by a guilty conscience, in regard to the non-human monster however "...the daemon can easily surpass these boundaries and abrupt territories, demonstrates the superiority of the monster not only over human race, but also over nature itself" (Román, 2014/2015 p. 6).

## **CONCLUSION**

The main argumentation of this article being to place Sturm und Drang as a precursor movement giving rise to English Romanticism, and whether this assumption can be verified with the construct of protagonists relevant to each movement has traced a diachrony of philosophical thought schools evidently affecting and transforming the succeeding approaches. As was argued previously, human nature and emotions have been neglected with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution with science and rationalism. Sturm und Drang, as a German-originated movement opposed this idea of rationalism and this led to Goethe penning *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, in which the author attempts to defy rationalism by giving reign to the irrationality of emotions and urges the individual to reunite with nature resulting in a unification with the universe whereas the English Romantic Movement takes this aim a step further to achieve overcoming human boundaries with a higher degree of defiance and violation.

Shelley's *Frankenstein* not only creates a similar atmosphere of narration but also goes beyond what the Stürmer und Dränger have done. Shelley utilizes the scientific developments of the era and defies God's taboo related to mortality in terms of overcoming the human boundaries of perpetual death. Therefore, it is evident that Shelley's protagonist Dr. Frankenstein exceeds Goethe's protagonist, Werther, in the degree of gaining agency.

Not only does Shelley's protagonist achieve the state of having an agency over death, but also Goethe's protagonist, therefore, with these violations both protagonists could experience the sublime, as first Burke and then Kant argued. This is what Nietzsche means by *Übermensch*, which can be thought of as overcoming being human. Yet it is important to keep in mind that, as Radcliffe posits, terror is the only way to experience the sublime, which is in both narratives Dr. Frankenstein and Werther experience.

It is, therefore, assumed that what Goethe started with Werther, who defies God's taboo and gains an agency over his own death, in contribution to the Movement of Sturm und Drang in terms of *Kraftmensch* was adopted by the Anglo-Saxon tradition and perfected by Mary Shelley. Shelley produces an anglicized, perfected, and full-fledged version of the *Kraftmensch*, namely Dr. Victor Frankenstein in other words as Furst states: “[into the Anglo-Saxon tradition] ... was now added to the transcendentalism of the German philosophers...” (Furst, 1968 p. 124). While Werther defies God's taboo by committing suicide Dr. Frankenstein takes a more grandiose step and animates a corpse, creating a monster, taking the role reserved for God. In both narratives, the protagonists' acts can be considered as the defiance of God's taboo, as Bataille argued, which eventually promotes them as *Kraftmensch(-en)*. Once more taking reference from Furst, “England with a galaxy of fine poets in Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, and Byron assumed the primacy which has been Germany's. Not that there was ever a Romantic ‘school’ in England as there had been in Germany...” (Furst, 1968 p. 130). Hence, the interplay of German and English traditions in relation to Sturm und Drang being a precursor of English Romanticism can be verified by the construct of the German *Kraftmensch* and how its finalized portrayal as a man of complete agency overcoming being human can be placed within the coining narrative of the movement reflected by Dr. Victor Frankenstein.

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