



**ISOLATION AND MADNESS IN MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN* (1818), EMILY BRONTË'S *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* (1847), AND STEPHEN KING'S *THE SHINING* (1977)**

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***Abstract***

*In this paper, the thematic development of the theme of isolation and madness in Gothic literature will be analyzed by comparing three works of literature *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë, and *The Shining* (1977) by Stephen King. Through a reflexive thematic analysis, the study follows the transition of the Romantic Sublime isolationism to the Domestic Gothic and eventually to the Modern Psychological trap. The paper contends that over time the origin of the madness shifted with the development of the genre whereby it was the focus of an external scientific transgression to internal psychological and hereditary corruption. The evidence indicates that the "Gothic Space" has not only declined to the Arctic wastes, but to the lobbies of a hotel, but the severity of the "Internal Monster" has also escalated, as the society began to experience anxiety about the self and the family unit.*

***Keywords:*** *Isolation, Gothic tradition, Internal Monster and madness*

**Introduction**

The Gothic tradition has traditionally been a means of delving into the deepest depths of human mind. The two pillars, which are interwoven at the center of this exploration, are Isolation, and Madness. The genre was redefined in the early 19th century when Mary Shelley created the so-called Modern Prometheus, an intellectual loner who created a real monster due to his literal seclusion. By the mid-Victorian era Emily Brontë moved this alienation to the Yorkshire moors, the rugged and domestic landscape of the moor which produced madness as a subsidiary of social ostracization and obsessive passion. Stephen King updated these tropes in the late 20th century when the author internalized the "haunted house" by making the Overlook hotel a psychological labyrinth where addiction and generational trauma are contributing factors. This paper makes a comparison between these three masterpieces in order to comprehend the way the Gothic Perimeter has changed during the last 200 years.

**Research Questions**

1. In what ways does the physical setting (The Arctic, The Moors, The Overlook Hotel) of each of the novels contribute to the psychological breakdown of the lead character?
2. In what respects is the Monster or Spectre within both works a reflection of the inner evil of isolation which has driven the particular character into madness?

**Research Objectives**

1. To examine how spatial isolation is linked to mental disintegration in the three various periods of the Gothic literature.
2. To determine and juxtapose linguistic and symbolic displays of the Monstrosity of the Self as a consequence of both social and physical isolation.



### Significance of the Study

The study is important since it traces the chronological internalization of terror. Whereas a number of studies emphasize the single Gothic novels, this comparative methodology offers a historical trend of the way in which the concept of madness is determined by literature. It provides information about the shift of Enlightenment-era perception of science as something too scary to be moral, to contemporary perception of the self as something too scary to be uncontrollable. The work can be considered useful to both Gothic studies and psychology in literature experts as well as individuals interested in the socio-cultural development of the Monster archetype.

### Literature Review

The Gothic literature has always associated the outward wilderness with the inner emptiness. It is made clear by Shelley (1818) that the human soul is chained by some minor ligaments (p. 37) that are easily cut down by individual ambition. Isolation of Victor is frequently considered by the critics to be a kind of denial of the feminine sphere of domesticity in favor of a sterile masculine laboratory.

The next step is the move toward the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when Brontë (1847) changes the theme of operation to Domestic Gothic. Isolation under such a regime is not an option, but a social punishment. The fact that according to Lockwood, the people in Wuthering Heights should be left alone forever by their species (p. 8) points out Victorian fear of the uncivilized self. The ghost of Catherine Linton is an embodiment of what Moers (1976) calls the Female Gothic - a spectral haunting that is based on the home lock-in.

Lastly, King, (1977) reflects the Urban/ Modern Gothic, the severity of the isolation is compounded by pathological circumstances. And indeed, as mentioned in the analysis, the Overlook Hotel is like a white tomb (King, 1977), which is reflective of sensory deprivation of the modern era. In contrast to the expansiveness of the Arctic of Shelley, the horror of King is confined, it turns out that the real monster is father-predator in the nuclear family.

The Anatomy of the Solitary Soul.

Possibly, this reflects Frankenstein's life, where the monster instills fear in both the townspeople and the author himself. This is perhaps a mirror image of the life of Frankenstein where the monster is the one who is feared by the townspeople and even the author himself.

The Gothic tradition has long been obsessed by the notion of the perimeter the border of civilization where the laws governing man no longer suffice and the mind is compelled to turn back upon itself. In Frankenstein by Mary Shelley, Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë and The Shining by Stephen King, isolation is not only some plot device, but it is a living thing, it is a living corrosion. It is the gloomy night (Shelley, 42) and the black frost (Brontë, 8) that solidifies the human heart to the point of breaking into insanity.

I. Fashioned Creature: Ontological Isolation in Frankenstein.

In the passages that are given, Shelley makes isolation one of the key vices that is inherent in the creation of self. Victor Frankenstein says, We are unfashioned animals, yet half made up (page 24). This line is the thesis to the madness that comes afterward. To half make up is to be half, and lack the other, the social reflection that makes life true.

The insanity of Victor is caused by a unique, intellectual seclusion. According to him, his soul has been motivated to create something new, to discover unexplored forces (page 42). This is the



secludedness of the Modern Prometheus. Victor decides his seclusion unlike the other characters. He withdraws to unknown forces and deepest secrets, cuts the little ligaments (page 37) which connect him to prosperity (social health) to destruction (madness).

This is reflected in the personal life of Shelley, which you have given. The proto-existentialism of the novel is informed by her feeling of being alone after the death of her children and husband (Introduction): Alone-alone-all-alone. We find when Victor identifies himself as the deplorable source and master (page 90) of his disaster the insanity of the man who has alienated himself so much that the only offspring he has is a monster. His insanity is the malady of the laboratory--a "gloomy evening of November" without an end.

II. Wretched Inmates: Social and Environmental Isolation in Wuthering Heights.

Although the isolation of Victor is intellectual, the characters in Wuthering Heights are isolated by the environment and the home. Lockwood, who is an outsider, is so quick to recognize the house as a location of the everlasting alienation with your race (page 8).

The black frost, the bleak hill-top (page 8) are not mere weather conditions, but moods of the people. One of the forms of madness that are fostered in the world of Brontes is that of misanthropy.

- Heathcliff Insanity: He is mentioned to be a surly owner whose attitude requires either fast entry or fast exit (page 3). The result is his isolation that was an attempt to create a barrier against the world that had denied him.

And, Catherine: madness within herself. In her diary she writes, How little did I think Hindley would ever cry me!. Her insanity is expressed in the form of a nightmare night and dreaming (page 20), in which the distinction between the dead and the living (the ghost at the window) is crumbling.

One of the most important instances of terror making one sadistic is identified in the given text. By having Lockwood, who is stuck in the snow, dream about the ghost and rub her wrist back and forth until the blood dripped (page 25), Brontë is demonstrating that being isolated deprives the person of the civilized aspect of their self and only primal, mad violence remains.

III. The White Tomb: The Psychological Isolation in The Shining.

Further on to the 20 th century, Stephen King develops the theme in The Shining, making the isolation something that cannot be evaded and manifests itself as a living being. The hotel, which is the Overlook, is referred to as a tomb around the living, which is white.

The mountains in Frankenstein are a sublime background; moors in Wuthering Heights a wilderness. In The Shining, it is an isolation trap. Inability to communicate contributes to madness of Jack Torrance. You have him internally as an officious little prick, and biting his tongue between his teeth to hold in a bray of laughter. This is the insanity of the Everyman. Isolation of Jack is aggravated by:

1. Sobriety as Isolation: The four months of being dry puts up a wall between him and his former identity.
2. Professional Isolation: This is his fixation on completing the play which turns out to be his jail.
3. Physical Isolation: The snow that covers the hotel without making a sound serves as a trigger to the start of the Overlook whispering to him.



Where Victor Frankenstein creates a monster to break his loneliness, and Heathcliff turns into a monster to get back at his, Jack Torrance is consumed by a monster (the Hotel) since his isolation has given him no external support to hold on to the reality.

**Comparison of the "First Spark" of Madness**

Element	Frankenstein	Wuthering Heights	The Shining
Source of Isolation	Scientific Ambition / Hubris	Social Class / Geographic Remote	Addiction / Physical Trapping
Manifestation	Physical illness & Nervous fever	Ghostly visions & Cruelty	Auditory hallucinations & Violence
The "Breaking Point"	The "Dreary Night" of creation	The "Broken Pane" of the window	The "Redrum" echo in the mind

**The Language of the Internal Void**

Madness in gothic literature can hardly be an abrupt decision; it is a process of linguistic and emotional laundering. Examining the particular use of words in your given text, we can observe an obvious transition between the Metaphysical (Shelley) and Visceral (Brontte) and Pathological (King).

Shelley and the Construction of the Soul.

According to the quotations of Frankenstein, madness is the failure of the spirit as a structure. Victor writes: So bizarrely are we built of souls, and bound up by small ligaments to either resource or decay (page 37).

The application of the term ligaments is critical. This was a medical term in the 19 th century but Shelley uses it to refer to the soul. This implies that the loneliness of Victor is a biological need that has been miscarried. His lunacy is termed as a fever and a dark nightmare. His inner story lacks control, as he is not subjected to the scrutiny of the eye of a friend, the observation that his dreams were not his own but in fact belonged to no one; he explained them, said, not to anyone. Shelley employs the terms of the Sublime to explain this insanity. The dreary November night and the blank and dreary northern shores (Introduction) are not simply texts which describe the weather, but verbal reflections of a head which is no more sociable, its social ligaments consciously gone. In the absence of any one to stand answer to, the hideous phantom of the mind is flesh and blood.

Terror and its Cruelty in Brontue.

In Wuthering Heights, the expression of madness is made using the language of animalistic regression. The loneliness of the moors deprives the "shameless little boys" and the "griffins" of civilized architecture (page 3) and makes them guttural gnarls and fangs.

Notice the linguistic change in Lockwood's encounter: "Terror made me cruel" (page 25). It is a deep psychological understanding of how isolating oneself is crazy. When the miserable prisoners of Wuthering Heights are denied access to the species they can no longer be empathetic.

The Ghostly Lexicon: Catherine is lachrymose and raving. Even in death, the isolation of the Heights is an inseparable gripe as her ghost shouts out let me in!

The Physicality of Madness: The madness, which is bloody, here, is in contrast to the nervous fever experienced by Victor. Lockwood scratches the wrist of the ghost using the broken pane



until the blood dripped and wetting the bedclothes (page 25). The isolation in this case does not simply make one lose his or her mind, but it also makes one lose his or her humanity.

King and the Sentient Labyrinth.

In the case of *The Shining*, madness language is disjointed and monotonous. Where Shelley employs a flowing and philosophical prose, King employs short jagged thoughts to demonstrate the mind rot of Jack Torrance.

The Internal Monologue: In your text, Jack thinks, officious little prick. This is the speech of suppressed vengeance. The Overlook in its isolation serves as a pressure-cooker.

Repetition as Madness: The most famous example is the line All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy which was mentioned in your quotes (this is the complete failure of language). In the case of complete isolation, communication stops being a connection instrument, it becomes a meaningless, monotonous clacking of typewriter keys.

The Thinking Environment: The hotel is whispering and looking in. The isolation in *The Shining* is not solitude, it is incarceration with the things not right. The white tomb of the snow gives an opportunity to experience a sensory deprivation that enables the hotel to transform into the reality of Jack. Cases like Jack having his hands clenched in his lap and working against one another (Quotes) reveal that his insanity is a physical struggle to hold back a bray of laughter which is in fact a scream of rage.

#### Comparative Analysis: The "Weapon" of Madness

Novel	The Physical Weapon	The Psychological Trigger	The Resulting Act
Frankenstein	The "Monster's" hands	Rejection/Abandonment	The murder of William/Elizabeth
Wuthering Heights	The "Broken Pane" / Social ruin	Loss of Catherine/Class shame	The destruction of the Linton line
The Shining	The Mallet / "Johnny"	Alcoholism/The "Shining"	The pursuit of Danny and Wendy

#### Synthesis: The Gothic "Trap"

In all three works, isolation acts as a **trap**.

1. For **Shelley**, it is a trap of the **intellect** (the laboratory).
2. For **Brontë**, it is a trap of the **moors** (the ancestral home).
3. For **King**, it is a trap of the **mind** (the hotel corridors).

The "madness" that results is a form of self-cannibalism. Because they have no "companion" (Shelley), no "species" (Brontë), and no "family" (King) to ground them, they turn their creative or protective energies inward until they explode outward in violence.

In **Part 4** of our 10,000-word analysis of **Theme 1: Isolation and Madness**, we shift our focus to **The Supernatural Mirror**. We will explore how the ghosts, phantoms, and monsters found in your provided text are not merely external threats, but are "psychic projections" of the isolation-induced madness of the protagonists.



## Theme 1: Isolation and Madness

### Part 4: The Supernatural Mirror—Phantoms of the Isolated Mind

In the Gothic tradition, the "ghost" is often the visual manifestation of a repressed truth. When a character is isolated, the mind can no longer distinguish between memory, guilt, and reality. The provided excerpts show that for Shelley, Brontë, and King, the supernatural is the final stage of madness: where the internal void becomes a visible "spectre."

#### I. Shelley: The "Hideous Phantom" as Intellectual Guilt

In the Introduction to *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley writes: **"I could not so easily get rid of my hideous phantom; still it haunted me"** (p. 10). This phrase refers to her creative process, but it perfectly mirrors Victor's psychological state.

Victor's isolation in his laboratory is a "waking dream." Because he has cut himself off from the "prosperity" of social ligaments, his mind produces a monster that represents his own transgression.

**The Ghost of Science:** The creature is described as having a **"wistfulness or longing in its expression"** and a **"desperate helplessness"** (p. 90). These are not just the creature's traits; they are the traits of Victor's own soul, which he has neglected.

**The Reflection:** When Victor calls himself the **"miserable origin and author,"** he acknowledges that the monster is a mirror. The "dreary night of November" marks the moment his internal madness—his hubris—takes a physical, terrifying shape that he cannot "get rid of."

#### II. Brontë: The "Tenacious Gripe" of the Past

In *Wuthering Heights*, the isolation of the moors allows the past to remain "active." Madness here is the inability to let go of what is gone.

The most striking evidence is Lockwood's dream of Catherine Linton. Lockwood, experiencing the "perpetual isolation" of the house, encounters a ghost that is **"maddening me with fear"** (p. 25).

**The Mirror of Heathcliff:** The ghost's cry, **"Let me in!"**, is the central theme of the novel's madness. Heathcliff's own madness is a lifelong state of being "haunted." Your text notes his **"anguish in the gush of grief"** and how he is **"powerfully affected"** (p. 27) by Lockwood's nightmare.

**The Broken Boundary:** The "broken pane" is the symbolic barrier between the isolated self and the "other." In his madness, Heathcliff doesn't see a ghost as a horror, but as a necessity. His isolation is so total that he prefers the company of a "spectre" to the living "wretched inmates" of the house.

#### III. King: The "Memory of the Hotel" as a Mirror of Failure

In *The Shining*, the ghosts are the most "mirror-like." The Overlook Hotel does not just haunt Jack; it reflects him.

**The Woman in Room 217:** As noted in your quotes, she has **"eyes like sockets filled with decay."** For Jack, this represents the decay of his own marriage and his "dead" career.

**The Ballroom Phantoms:** These are **"phantoms in fine dress, dancing to music that was long gone."** They represent the "greatness" Jack craves but cannot achieve because of his alcoholism.

**The Reflection in the Glass:** The quote **"Jack stared at his reflection and saw a stranger looking back"** is the ultimate symbol of isolation-induced madness. The "shining" is a gift that Danny uses to see the truth, but for Jack, the isolation of the hotel turns the "shining" into a



**distorting mirror.** The ghosts (like Grady) tell him what he already feels: that his family is a burden to his "art."

**Comparative Analysis: The Nature of the "Haunting"**

Novel	The "Mirror" / Spectre	What it Represents	Textual Evidence (Page/Quote)
Frankenstein	The Creature	Failed Ambition & Neglected Duty	"Miserable origin and author" (p. 90)
Wuthering Heights	Catherine's Ghost	Unresolved Grief & Lost Self	"Let me in! I'm come home!" (p. 25)
The Shining	Grady / The Hotel	Hereditary Failure & Addiction	"The hotel's memory was cruel."

**The "Waking Dream" vs. The "Nightmare"**

A key distinction in the evolution of these phantoms is the **level of control**:

1. **Shelley:** The author/creator seeks to "describe the spectre" (Introduction). Madness is an **invention**.
2. **Brontë:** The protagonist is "vexed at having related my ridiculous nightmare" (p. 27). Madness is an **intrusion**.
3. **King:** The hotel "welcomed Jack as if he had always belonged." Madness is a **surrender**.

In all three cases, the "ghost" only appears when the character is at their most isolated. This proves that in Gothic literature, the supernatural is the language the mind speaks when it has no one else to talk to.

**The Final Collapse—The Grave, the Ice, and the Fire**

The trajectory of Gothic madness always leads toward a "final silence." When isolation becomes total, the protagonist's world usually suffers a literal or symbolic explosion. In the texts provided, we see three distinct endings: the **frozen stillness** of *Frankenstein*, the **spiritual haunting** of *Wuthering Heights*, and the **volatile eruption** of *The Shining*.

**I. Frankenstein: The Arctic Silence and the Death of the Author**

For Victor Frankenstein, madness ends in the ultimate isolation: the Arctic. He follows his creature into a landscape where there is no life, only **"the blank and dreary northern shores"** (Introduction).

The textual evidence suggests that Victor's madness is only cured by death. He describes himself as being bound to **"ruin"** (p. 37). Because he could not "get rid of his hideous phantom," he is chased into a void where the "ligaments" of his soul finally snap.

**The Finality of Isolation:** Victor dies on a ship, surrounded by strangers, still isolated by his secret.

**The Creature's End:** The creature, too, seeks the **"lonely misery"** of the north to find his "funeral pile." Shelley suggests that for the "unfashioned creature," the only cure for the madness of being "half made up" is to be unmade entirely by fire and ice.



## II. Wuthering Heights: The Madness that Outlives the Body

In *Wuthering Heights*, the collapse is not an ending, but a **transition**. Heathcliff's madness reaches its peak when he ceases to eat or sleep, completely isolated within his "raving" for Catherine.

**The Transcendence of the Grave:** Your text notes the "anguish in the gush of grief" (p. 27). Heathcliff's final collapse is a willing surrender to the isolation of death. He wants to be buried with Catherine, literally dissolving the "broken pane" between them.

**The Haunting of the Moors:** Unlike Victor, Heathcliff's madness "haunts the pages" (to use Shelley's phrase) even after he is gone. The "wretched inmates" believe they see him walking the moors. Brontë argues that the isolation of the Heights is so powerful that it creates a **perpetual cycle** of haunting that even death cannot break.

## III. The Shining: The Boiler and the Bursting Point

In *The Shining*, the madness and isolation culminate in a literal explosion. The "trap" of the Overlook Hotel is finally sprung.

**The Boiler as Metaphor:** The "boiler downstairs ticked like a time bomb, patient and inevitable" (The Shining Quotations). This is the physical manifestation of Jack's mind. The isolation (the "white tomb") has caused the "pressure" of his madness to reach a critical point.

**The Final Erasure:** When Jack tells Danny, "I've been away, but now I'm back... forever and ever," it signifies the total loss of the "Self." Jack Torrance no longer exists; he is merely an extension of the hotel's "cruel memory."

**The Purification of Fire:** The explosion of the hotel is the only way to break the cycle of isolation. While *Frankenstein* ends in the cold, *The Shining* ends in a heat that consumes the "monstrous shapes" and the "father turned predator."

### Comparative Analysis: The "Aftermath" of Madness

Novel	The Final Setting	The State of the Protagonist	The "Moral" of Isolation
Frankenstein	The Frozen Arctic	Dead / Exhausted	Hubris in solitude leads to the "Ice" of the soul.
Wuthering Heights	The Gentry's Grave	Ghostly / Reunited	True love in isolation becomes a "Vampiric" haunting.
The Shining	The Burning Hotel	Erased / Consumed	Hereditary trauma in isolation is a "Time Bomb."

### Theme 1 Synthesis: Comparing the Evolution

Across these three works, the "evolution" of isolation and madness moves from the **External** to the **Internal**:

1. **1818 (*Frankenstein*):** Madness is a **choice** made by a scientist. Isolation is a physical place (the lab/the North).
2. **1847 (*Wuthering Heights*):** Madness is a **passion**. Isolation is a social condition (the moors/class).
3. **1977 (*The Shining*):** Madness is an **infection**. Isolation is a psychological state (addiction/the hotel).



The textual proof across all three shows that the "Gothic" is not just about scary houses or monsters; it is about the **terror of the mind** when it is left alone with its own "souls strangely constructed" (Shelley, 37).

Feature	Frankenstein (Shelley)	Wuthering Heights (Brontë)	The Shining (King)
Primary Catalyst	<b>Intellectual Hubris:</b> The pursuit of "unknown powers" and "mysteries of creation."	<b>Social Ostracization:</b> The "perpetual isolation" caused by class and the "black frost" of the moors.	<b>Internal Decay:</b> The "trap" of alcoholism, failed ambition, and hereditary trauma.
The Nature of Solitude	<b>Experimental:</b> Choosing the lab over the family ("accounted for them to nobody").	<b>Ancestral:</b> Being "fatherless" and forced into the "arch under the dresser."	<b>Pathological:</b> The "white tomb" of the snow acting as a sensory deprivation chamber.
Manifestation of Madness	<b>Nervous Fever:</b> The "grim terrors" and a soul "half made up."	<b>Misanthropic Rage:</b> "Terror made me cruel"; the "gush of grief" and "raving."	<b>Psychic Fragmentation:</b> "Repetition" (All work and no play) and the "whispering walls."
The "Spectral" Proxy	<b>The Creature:</b> A "hideous phantom" representing the creator's guilt.	<b>Catherine's Ghost:</b> A "tenacious gripe" from the past seeking to "be let in."	<b>The Hotel Guests:</b> "Phantoms in fine dress" reflecting Jack's own failures.
Textual Symbol of the Void	The "Blank and dreary northern shores" of the Tay/Arctic.	The "Broken Pane" of the window and the "bleak hill-top."	The "Corridors stretching on forever" and the ticking boiler.
Resolution of the Theme	<b>Exhaustion:</b> The silence of the ice; the "unfashioned creature" is unmade.	<b>Persistence:</b> The haunting continues; madness outlives the body on the moors.	<b>Explosion:</b> The "time bomb" of the mind and the hotel ignite.

This conclusion synthesizes the 10,000-word analysis of **Isolation and Madness**, drawing together the textual evidence from Shelley, Brontë, and King to finalize the argument on how the Gothic genre evolved over two centuries.



## Conclusion

### Synthesis of the Evolution of Gothic Madness

The comparative analysis of *Frankenstein*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *The Shining* reveals that while the Gothic "shiver" remains constant, the source of that terror has migrated from the **outer world to the inner mind**. Through the lens of isolation and madness, we see a genre that began by fearing the vastness of nature and ended by fearing the vastness of the human psyche.

#### I. The Migration of the "Gothic Space"

The textual proof shows a shrinking of the "haunted" perimeter. In **Shelley's** *Frankenstein*, isolation is found in the "unknown powers" of the laboratory and the "blank and dreary northern shores" (p. 42). The madness is expansive and sublime. By **Brontë's** *Wuthering Heights*, the isolation is compressed into the "bleak hill-top" (p. 8) and the domestic "arch under the dresser." Madness here is a social and ancestral infection. Finally, in **King's** *The Shining*, the isolation is a "trap" (Quotes) where the physical corridors of the Overlook Hotel serve as a 1:1 map of Jack Torrance's fractured mind.

#### II. The Evolution of the Monster

The "monster" in these texts has evolved from a **physical creation** to a **psychological reflection**: **The External Monster (*Frankenstein*)**: Victor's madness creates a literal, physical "Other" that he can chase into the Arctic ice.

**The Spectral Monster (*Wuthering Heights*)**: Heathcliff and Lockwood encounter a ghost at the "broken pane" (p. 25)—a bridge between the physical and the spiritual.

**The Internal Monster (*The Shining*)**: The monster is no longer a separate entity; it is the "father turned predator." Jack's madness is not a creation he can run from, but a history he "always belonged" to.

#### III. Final Reflection: The Enduring Power of the Isolated Mind

Mary Shelley's initial observation that "**strangely are our souls constructed**" (p. 37) remains the anchor for all three works. Whether it is the "slight ligaments" of the 19th-century soul or the "shining" of the 20th-century mind, the Gothic lesson remains the same: **Isolation is the catalyst that dissolves the human mask**. When the "ligaments" of society are removed, the protagonist is left only with the "hideous phantom" (Shelley) of their own making. Whether that results in the silence of the ice, the haunting of the moors, or the explosion of the hotel, the evolution of Gothic literature is ultimately a study of how humanity survives—or fails to survive—its own company.

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