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GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES

Trabajo de Fin de Grado

The Concept of 'Nature' in Gothic and Romantic Literature

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Abstract

The aim of the following work is to explore how the concept of 'Nature' appears in 19th Century English literature by comparing the different uses that both Romantic poets and Gothic novelists made of it. Due to the fact that Nature is a recurrent thematic element in several literary movements, this work will focus on the notion that the 19th Century English authors had of it and, thus, how they depicted this vision of Nature in their literary works in an unprecedented way. Two main parts of analysis are proposed: the first one focuses on the concept of 'Nature' in the English Romantic poetry, whilst the second one refers to its use in the Gothic novel. Both parts consist of brief analyses of different literary excerpts that are compared between them in order to appreciate the similarities and differences in the ways in which Nature was conceived by different poets and novelists of this period.

Keywords: Nature, Romanticism, 19th Century, English poetry, Gothic novel.

Resumen

El siguiente trabajo tiene como propósito explorar cómo aparece el concepto de «Naturaleza» en la literatura inglesa del Siglo XIX mediante la comparación de los diferentes usos que le dieron tanto los poetas del Romanticismo como los novelistas góticos. Al ser la Naturaleza un elemento temático recurrente en varios movimientos literarios, este trabajo se centrará en la concepción que tenían los escritores ingleses del Siglo XIX y, por lo tanto, en cómo presentaron esta visión de la Naturaleza en sus obras literarias de forma nunca vista hasta la fecha. Se plantean dos partes principales de análisis: la primera se centra en el concepto de «Naturaleza» en la poesía inglesa del Romanticismo, mientras que la segunda hace referencia a su uso en la novela gótica. Ambas partes ofrecen análisis breves de diferentes extractos literarios comparados entre sí para apreciar las similitudes y diferencias con las que la Naturaleza era vista por los diferentes poetas y novelistas de la época.

Palabras clave: Naturaleza, Romanticismo, Siglo XIX, poesía inglesa, novela gótica.

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0. INTRODUCTION

In all things of nature there is something marvellous
Aristotle

Nature has always fascinated men since the very beginning of their existence. Our ancestors found themselves surrounded by it and realised that their survival depended basically on it. Thanks to their intelligence, men were able to use nature and transform it, yet unable to understand its complexity. That is the reason why the concept of ‘Nature’ often appears not only in literature, but also in all types of artistic representations: music, painting, sculpture, etc. Aristotle was not the first nor the last one to talk about the marvellous mysteries of Nature, that is to say, the unknown, the hidden aspects of Nature with which human thinkers such as philosophers and writers have struggled over centuries, either to explain these aspects or depict them. Such is the fascination caused by Nature that it has appeared in literary works from very different periods. In the 19th Century, Nature became a central motif in literature, but rather from being a conventional archetype to be followed, every writer within the period conceived it in their own, unique way.

It is important to take into account that artistic periods usually emerge as a rejection of the established artistic conventions of the time: the Baroque chaos as opposed to the Renaissance order, the Romantic imagination as opposed to the Enlightenment reason, and so on and so forth. It is due to this ‘rejection’ of the previous artistic conventions that Nature gains in importance during the 19th Century: “nature – with its uncontrollable power, unpredictability, and potential for cataclysmic extremes – offered an alternative to the ordered world of Enlightenment thought” (Galitz). In other words, the Romantic artists saw a powerful mystery in Nature which challenged the established artistic conventions “as a response to the disillusionment with the Enlightenment values of reason and order” (Ibid).

It has been argued by many critics that Romanticism focuses on the power of creativity and imagination. It is known that Romantic artists had a strong interest in far away, exotic places, and it should be taken into account that these remote places could only be conceived inside the mind of the author by using the power of imagination. This is the “essence of Romanticism, and the principle that allowed the Romantics to create a new conception of the world around them” (Bravo 143). In other words, the Romantic writers were able to create settings and stories that surpassed reality thanks to the power of imagination. Furthermore, there are many themes of recurrence that the Romantics often include in their works, such as the innocence of children in Blake’s *Songs of Innocence*, the emphasis on simplicity in Wordsworth’s poems, the presence of the supernatural in Coleridge’s... However, there is one central theme common to all these writers, and that is the theme of Nature, which is “the muse of their creations” (141).

This ‘muse’ can take many different forms in Romantic literature: a mysterious woman, a wild animal, a beautiful landscape, etc.; although its presence is always noticeable, for it was the highest element of creation, as opposed to the Renaissance conception of the man being the centre of the universe. This figure of the *Uomo Universale* or ‘universal man’ was replaced, becoming “just one more component of that great source of life and creativity: Nature” (139). In other words, men were no longer the central focus of interest but a part of a greater whole, which was Nature. That is the reason why the Romantics put emphasis on Nature’s beauty and power. Considering the fact that the theme of Nature in Romanticism has awoken the interest of many critics, this work will briefly analyse several extracts of the literature of the period to explore the dichotomy of Nature and writer: the muse whose powerful forces give shape to the writer’s works and the author who depicts their own conception of this natural power.

1. NATURE AND THE ENGLISH ROMANTIC POETS

Poetry is the image of man and nature
William Wordsworth

In order to understand why the Romantics gave so much importance to Nature, one should remember what Wordsworth and Coleridge stated in their *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of poems which is generally considered a literary revolution that marked the beginning of the English Romantic period in literature. In this preface, they set the principles of an innovative way of writing poetry, that is to say, they stated what poetry should be by defining the role of poetry and the poet, who is, in the end, a man speaking to other men. According to Wordsworth, this collection of poems is a selection of the real language of men, so the language used conveys feelings in simple and unelaborated expressions, avoiding previous forms of writing, such as poetic diction or personification. Common speech was accompanied by a description of incidents and situations from common, rustic life. Therefore, the subject of poetry is ordinary men and ordinary lives.

Another thing is that Wordsworth believed that the Enlightenment Reason was limited, so he relied on the power of imagination and creativity, often linked with childhood. Wordsworth also criticised his predecessors, inasmuch as he thought that their poetry was full of shallowness and vulgarity. He thought that anyone who liked that type of poetry would struggle to understand the simplicity of these new poems. However, the most important point that Wordsworth made in this preface was to point out the importance of Nature. He believed that a corrupted person who wanted to renovate themselves had to go back to Nature, for 'man' and 'Nature' are essentially adapted to each other: the mind of men is the mirror of Nature. This preface, thus, could be considered as a Romantic 'manifesto' which comprised the principles of a new style of poetry.

1.1. William Blake. Excerpts from *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*

One of the most distinctive features of Blake's poetry is his use of visual imagery to depict his poems. For a better appreciation of this, please find in the appendix all Blake's poems that are quoted in this section. Being a Romantic poet, he presents the concept of 'Nature' in many of his works. In *The Echoing Green*, from *Songs of Innocence*, he compares human life with the course of a day, and structures the poem so that the dawn represents the beginning of life (and poem) and the sunset represents the end of life (and poem):

The Sun does arise,
 And make happy the skies;
 The merry bells ring
 To welcome the Spring; (1-4)
 ...
 The Sun does descend,
 And our sports have an end (22-23)

The spring is a conventional symbol of youth that represents the early childhood. The arrival of spring is welcomed by a sunny sky and ringing bells. This poem offers a contrast between youth and old age, between the children's innocence and the greyness of the later years, characterised by a strong feeling of nostalgia that arises when the old people see the children playing in the natural setting which is the Echoing Green: "Such, such were the joys / When we all, girls and boys, / In our youth-time were seen / On the Echoing Green." (17-20). Children are happily playing games in Nature, while old people watch them and remember when they used to enjoy it in the same way, knowing that they cannot go back to these happy days. Whilst the light of day is linked to life, the dark is related to death, as it can be seen in the last two lines of the poem: "And sport no more seen / On the darkening green." (29-30). Note the replacement of the word 'echoing' for 'darkening': when night comes, children stop playing and go back home, so their voices do not echo anymore.

Another similar Blake's poem, also from *Songs of Innocence*, is the *Nurse's Song*. A group of children playing in a natural setting can be found again. As night comes, their nurse tells them to stop playing and go home, so the structure of both poems is very similar:

Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies (5-8)

Once again, Blake portrays children as part of Nature, together with other animals such as birds and sheep: "And we cannot go to sleep; / Besides, in the sky the little birds fly, / And the hills are all covered with sheep." (10-12). Children do not want to go to sleep because these animals are still seen where they are. The nurse allows them to keep playing "till the light fades away" (13), so children "shouted and laughed, / And all the hills echoed." (15-16). This final line of the poem could be a reference to *The Echoing Green*. Another reference to this poem can be found in the other version of the *Nurse's Song* from *Songs of Experience*. This time, children remind the Nurse of her wasted youth, just as children in the *Echoing green* reminded the old people: "The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind, / My face turns green and pale." (3-4). In this occasion, the nurse warns children not to waste their youth playing, because their adulthood and old age is getting closer: "Your spring and your day are wasted in play, / And your winter and night in disguise" (7-8). One more time, spring and day represent childhood, just as winter represents the adulthood and night represents death.

A different vision of Nature is found in Blake's *The Sick Rose* and *A Poison Tree*, both from *Songs of Experience*. In the first one, the rose is not only a literary rose, the conventional symbol of love, but also a beautiful natural object that has been infected by a worm. This worm could be a reference to the Biblical serpent from the Garden of Eden. In line 5, Blake writes that this worm "Has found out thy bed", and that "his dark secret love / Does thy life destroy" (7-8). These lines imply that not only the rose is sick, but also love itself. The rose

connotes sexual pleasure and at the same time, the shame and secrecy that is sometimes attached to love.

The worm is not the only Biblical reference in Blake's poems, since there is also a reference to the Biblical apple in *A Poison Tree*, in which the hidden wrath of the narrator grows more and more as a poison tree which gives an apple that represents desire and temptation. This apple is stolen by the narrator's enemy, making him die:

And [my wrath] grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree. (9-16).

The moral of the story is clear: wrath becomes more dangerous when it is hidden instead of being spoken out. Hence, all these different poems show that Blake works with Nature as he works with his poems: with the use of doubles. In *Songs of Innocence*, Nature is something idyllic, joyful and innocent, whilst in *Songs of Experience* it turns to be something mysterious and even dangerous.

1.2. Nature in the poems of William Wordsworth

When thinking of Nature in Romanticism, the figure of William Wordsworth is crucial to understand the development of this theme. As it has been mentioned before, he believed in a close connection between man and Nature, and this can be clearly appreciated when reading his poems. Like Blake, Wordsworth also introduces the theme of the innocence of the children in some of his poems. Thus, in *Anecdote for Fathers*, for instance, we find a conversation between a father and his son. They used to live in Kilve, in a farm near the shore, but now they live in Liswyn, London. This change of residence represents the distancing from Nature. Their lives in Liswyn are regulated by rules, whilst "[a]t Kilve there was no weather-

cock” (55), which means that their lives were more spontaneous. The child of the poem represents the simplicity that the father has lost when growing up. His son is closer to Nature, he is more innocent.

Another example of this relationship between children and Nature can be found in *We Are Seven*. When the narrator asks the little girl how many siblings she has, she answers that they are seven, even though the narrator realises that two of them are dead. The narrator perceives the situation by the use of adult reason, whilst the little girl sees it with innocence. It is an antithesis between adult thinking and child thinking, between reason and imagination. She refuses to believe the narrator when he says that they are five, not seven: “But they are dead; those two are dead!” (65); “The little Maid would have her will, / And said, ‘Nay, we are seven!’” (68-69). This alludes to the idea that their two siblings still live through Nature, through the circle of life. Once again, this poem offers a clear example of the simplicity that age takes away from adults.

In *Lines Composed upon Westminster Bridge*, Wordsworth describes what he sees as he stands on Westminster Bridge, saying that “Earth has not anything to show more fair” (1). The curious thing is that he is not talking about a natural setting but a city. He describes the objects made by humans and Nature does not appear until line 7 “Open unto the fields, and to the sky”. Even if the city is not a part of Nature, they are not in conflict, because the air is “smokeless” (8). Wordsworth personifies this city and gives a new vision of human-made things, implying that they can live in Nature without causing conflict.

Lines Composed a few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, commonly known as “Tintern Abbey”, is one of the most famous hymns on Nature. It is basically a description of a landscape that Wordsworth had already visited before. It is, thus, a poem in which memories and feelings interact. The narrator states that he has changed since he was there. In those days, Nature was everything for him: “For nature then ...

/ To me was all in all” (72, 75), but now “That time is past” (83). However, he is not sad, because he has learned:

To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity (88-91).

Even if those days are gone, he can now perceive Nature in a different way, as something more powerful and deep. By revisiting this landscape, Wordsworth feels the power of Nature again. When he mentions his sister, he says that if he dies and she gets sad, the memories of this natural setting, the “healing thoughts” (144), will cheer her. Thus, Nature is like a nurse of souls, a guardian which will protect her sister.

In *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, Wordsworth links again childhood and Nature. As in “Tintern Abbey”, the narrator remembers a time when he was very close to Nature, but now he is unable to go back to that moment: “[t]he things which I have seen I now can see no more” (9). Wordsworth implies that adulthood is a shadow of an earlier, purer existence, which is childhood, and that this is forgotten when growing up. Furthermore, all the natural elements mentioned provide a sense of constant unity: “Ye blessed Creatures ... my heart is at your festival” (36). According to this poem, our birth is just “a sleep and a forgetting” (58), and “Heaven lies about us in our infancy” (66). This means that men come from a purer realm that they still can recall when they are children, but later they “forget the glories” (84) that they have known. However, the narrator realises that even if he has forgotten his divine origin, he is now able to understand Nature in a deeper, more mature way. Moreover, the narrator is aware of his ability to connect with his childhood through memories, and thus, to connect with Nature through his childhood. The poem compares childhood with eternity and immortality, because it seems not to finish ever, so once it is ended, we can still remember those days, we “have power to make / Our noisy years seem moments in the being / Of the eternal Silence” (154-156). Therefore, we can rely on our memories to connect with the lost glory of the natural world.

Finally, in *The Tables Turned*, Wordsworth tells the reader to leave their books and enjoy Nature: “Come forth into the light of things, / Let Nature be your Teacher” (15-16), since the best way to learn is to experience, and Nature has more to teach than books. According to him, we kill knowledge when we try to understand it, “[w]e murder to dissect” (28). Therefore, we should go outside and experience things by ourselves rather than reading someone else’s experiences. Mother Nature is so wise that “She has a world of ... Spontaneous wisdom” (17-19) and “One impulse from a vernal wood / May teach you more of ... moral evil and of good, / Than all the sages can” (21-24), which means that she teaches not only good things but also evil and morality. Thus, we should reject science and art and simply get closer to Nature: “Enough of Science and of Art ... Come forth, and bring with you a heart / That watches and receives” (29-32).

1.3. Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

One of the main differences that are made between Wordsworth and Coleridge is that Wordsworth’s poetry deals with the natural, whilst Coleridge’s deals with the supernatural. It is known that the power of dreams and imagination is a recurrent motif in his poetry. A clear example of this can be found in *Kubla Khan*, one of his best known poems due to the fact that it was written after an opium-influenced dream, thus the subtitle of the poem: “A Vision In A Dream”. In this poem, “Coleridge remarks on the elements of nature with unparalleled exoticism, depicting the environment where he sets his visions” (Bravo 141). The narrator tells the story of how Kubla Khan travelled to the land of Xanadu, where he finds landscapes that could not exist in reality, such as the “sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice” (Coleridge 35). This exotic place is an idealised place, a *locus amoenus*. The narrator’s admiration of the wonders of Nature can be noted in this poem when he describes the contrasting composition of the extreme fantasy which is Xanadu, with its “caverns measureless to man” (26).

Coleridge is exploring the depths of dreams by presenting this natural setting which could only exist in the realm of imagination.

The presence of the supernatural element is central in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge's longest poem. The Albatross, which was considered a symbol of good luck and hope by the sailors, was killed by the protagonist. Like an allegory of Christ, when it is killed, the crew is lost, confused and hopeless. That is the punishment the mariner has to suffer, isolation, plus the corpse of the bird hung around his neck: "Instead of the cross, the Albatross / about my neck was hung" (141-142). When the crew is about to die of thirst, the mariner finds a distant ship. They thought that they were saved, but as the ship came closer, they saw two supernatural figures: Death and Life-in-Death, portrayed by a pale woman. "And the twain were casting dice; / 'The game is done! I've won! I've won'" (196-197) said the Life-in-Death, which means that the fate of the mariner has been decided: all the crew dies except him, who is unable to die and becomes "[a]lone, alone, all, all alone, / Alone on a wide wide sea!" (232-233).

Then we find the mention of big water-snakes. The mariner could appreciate beauty on them so he blessed them, which liberated him from his curse, making the corpse of the Albatross fall from his neck. Therefore, the supernatural, which is represented by the beautiful coloured snakes, is what saves the mariner, releasing him. Another supernatural element is the apparition of the spirits of the dead men's bodies who came back and began to perform their old sailor's tasks. At the end of the poem, the mariner gives an advice to the wedding guest:

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the deat God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all. (614-618).

Here we find the importance of Nature: all creatures deserve to live and to be loved, since killing the Albatross cursed the mariner and blessing the sea creatures absolved him. Thus, human mind and Nature are united by love and community.

1.4. Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*

Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* offers a good example of how he praised the beauty of Nature in all its forms. In Canto II, for instance, Lord Byron presents Nature as an ideal travel companion for men: "To sit on the rocks ... To climb the trackless mountain all unseen ... This is not Solitude" (II.25). For him, being alone with Nature is not really being alone, since he enjoys its company; he even prefers it instead of the company of men. This is due to the fact that "la naturaleza y el poeta-héroe se sienten íntimamente unidos ... los dos se entienden perfectamente" (Sánchez 149). However, Byron does not only present the fair aspects of Nature in these Cantos, but also its dangerous and cruel side:

And could the ceaseless vultures cease to prey
On self-condemning bosoms, it were here,
Where Nature, nor too sombre nor too gay,
Wild but not rude, awful yet not austere, (III.59)

Hence, Lord Byron managed to depict Nature as something that can be tranquil and wild at the same time. There are some moments in the poem when the protagonist feels that he is unable to live with other humans because he has little in common with them. In those moments when it seems that nobody understands him, Nature does, because they both "spake / A mutual language" (III.13). Thus, poet and Nature are closely, intimately united: "Where rose the mountains, / there to him were friends" (Ibid). These two stanzas illustrate and sum up the treatment that Byron gives to Nature in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:

He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below. (III.45)

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but Nature more, (IV.178)

As it can be seen, Lord Byron elevates Nature to its highest level, letting us know of its greatness that allows him to escape and find relief when he cannot find it in society.

1.5. Shelley's *Ozymandias* and Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*

Ozymandias is one of Shelley's works in which one can see the theme of the superiority of Nature over humanity. In this poem, the narrator meets "a traveller from an antique land" (1) which tells him about the ruins of a statue in the desert. The following words are written in the pedestal of the statue: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" (10-11). That name is a reference to the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, who was called Ozymandias by the Greeks. The statue itself is a metaphor of the human power against the natural power: this statue is now eroded, old, "[n]othing besides remains" (12), but the "level sands" (14) are still there. In other words, despite being a great statue, almost nothing of its past greatness remains now. Therefore, this implies that even the most powerful empires eventually disappear, as opposed to Nature, which remains forever.

It should be taken into account that Shelley wrote this poem just after France's hegemony in Europe had ended due to Napoleon's defeat. One should remember that Shelley usually incorporates political references and critics in his poems, like in *England In 1819*. Another thing is that it is important to note that the thing that remains is the inscription of Ozymandias' words, so Shelley is implying that words are more important than physical things, because words last when material things do not. Therefore, poetry is the ultimate form of art that lasts when other human creations, no matter how great they are, cannot. Ozymandias thought that his statue – and his empire – would last forever, but human creations have nothing to do against the power of Nature, represented in this poem by the wind that eroded the statue, reducing it to almost nothing.

As for Keats, his *Ode to a Nightingale* offers a good example of his views towards Nature. This poem is related to Coleridge's *Kubla Kahn* "in that it describes a choice and rare experience, intentionally remote from the commonplace" (Harter 211), since the poem starts

with the narrator admitting that he has a headache, maybe because he has drunk or due to “some dull opiate” (Keats 3). He then hears the voice of a nightingale that sings somewhere in the forest and describes it with a “light-winged Dryad of the trees” (7). It is important to take into account that Keats makes use of Greek mythology in many of his poems, thus comparing the nightingale with a nymph of the trees. Back to the poem, the narrator states that he “might drink, and leave the world unseen” (19), that is to say, to use alcohol to forget everything related to his human troubles. He is aware of the fact that nothing lasts forever, since “youth grows pale” (26) and “Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes” (29), so he tells the nightingale to fly away and he will follow it through poetry, not through alcohol, “not charioted by Bacchus” (32). That is another mythological reference to the god of wine. The “viewless wings of Poesy” (33) will allow him to go with the nightingale.

The nightingale represents the beauty of Nature that transcends through death and time, because it “wast not born for death, immortal Bird!” (61). Due to its immortal condition, the voice of the nightingale will always be heard by all types of people: “The voice I hear this passing night was heard / In ancient days by emperor and clown” (63-64). At the end of the poem, when the nightingale flies away, the narrator regrets that his imagination has failed, since he is not able to remember whether the nightingale’s music was real or not. He cannot even tell whether everything has been a dream or not:

Adieu! Adieu! Thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now ‘tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music: – Do I wake or sleep? (75-80).

The transcendence of Nature and its beauty, together with the use of an imaginative escape, helps to create the mysterious figure of the nightingale and its melody. This nightingale is immortal, and so is Nature.

2. NATURE IN THE GOTHIC NOVEL

One of the main characteristics of this literary genre regarding Nature is the importance that Gothic writers gave to the setting of their novels. It is important to point out that these settings in Gothic fiction contribute to evoke that characteristic feeling of horror by presenting gloomy, remote landscapes such as ruins of old castles or mansions. These ruined settings offer a vision of Nature as something terrifying and obscure. As Burke argues, “dark, confused, uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions, than those have which are more clear and determinate” (68). In other words, by presenting the mysterious aspects of Nature in their settings, together with other elements, Gothic novelists were able to create stories which inspired a sense of fear to the unknown.

In order to understand why Gothic novels focus on the theme of horror, it should be noted that these types of feelings “excitaban al público provocando una respuesta estética, psicológica o emocional, y los escritores, conscientes de esta demanda, apelaban con éxito a estos resortes anímicos” (Álvarez 15). This literary genre was very popular back then, so writers took advantage of that and exploited these Gothic features, which, as Álvarez points out, consist of “unas convenciones muy estrechas y una relativa pobreza de temas que se suceden con insistencia” (19). It has already been mentioned that these novels tend to be set in ruined, wild landscapes, where “[l]as fuerzas de la naturaleza se desatan en forma de tormentas ... y refuerzan la violencia de las escenas” (20-21). One will find as recurrent elements those of darkness, evil, supernatural creatures, and so on and so forth. Nevertheless, as it happens with Romantic poetry, every novelist conceived this genre in their own way, giving a special treatment to their works that differentiated them from the novels of the other writers. Despite the fact that Gothic thematic elements are few, each author decided which ones to highlight and which ones to omit.

2.1. Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

As it has been already mentioned, the setting plays a very important role in the Gothic novel. Mrs. Radcliffe's famous novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho, A Romance; Interspersed with Some Pieces of Poetry*, considered an archetype of this literary genre by many critics, offers a clear example of this. Such an emphasis on the description of Nature made Mrs. Radcliffe achieve the arousal of "the sense of wonder and mystery; she threw a glamor over landscape" (Hale 105). Moreover, this novel "is characterized by an ardent delight in natural beauty" (104). This can be appreciated in several parts of the novel where Emily admires Nature:

Emily wished to trip along the turf, so green and bright with dew, and to taste the full delight of that liberty, which the lizard seemed to enjoy as he bounded along the brow of the cliffs; while Valancourt often stopped to speak with the travelers, and with social feeling to point out to them the peculiar objects of his admiration. (Radcliffe 36).

For Emily, Nature is like a friend, a confidant that provides her freedom and security, for the contemplation of the natural setting offers her a shelter in which she feels safe. Furthermore, the abrupt landscape represents her inner fears. Nature is, thus, like a mirror of Emily's soul.

There are several Gothic elements that can be found in the novel, such as the old, dark castle with hidden corridors, which is described as follows:

All without was silent and dark, unless that could be called light, which was only the faint glimmer of the stars, shewing imperfectly the outline of the mountains, the western towers of the castle and the ramparts below, where a solitary sentinel was pacing. What an image of repose did this scene present! The fierce and terrible passions, too, which so often agitated the inhabitants of this edifice, seemed now hushed in sleep; - those mysterious workings, that rouse the elements of man's nature into tempest - were calm. Emily's heart was not so; but her sufferings, though deep, partook of the gentle character of her mind. Hers was a silent anguish, weeping, yet enduring; not the wild energy of passion, inflaming imagination, bearing down the barriers of reason and living in a world of its own. (329).

It can be seen that Emily is making a comparison between her inner self and the interior of the castle, so this element could be considered a metaphor of her own mind.

The descriptions of Nature occur with frequency and they are characterised for being full of details. As Álvarez argues, there is “nada de revolucionario desde el punto de vista estético, aunque la calidad descriptiva cobre en ocasiones carácter de protagonista” (36). An example of this can be found when Emily is travelling to the castle for the first time:

As the travellers still ascended among the pine forests, steep rose over steep, the mountains seemed to multiply, as they went, and what was the summit of one eminence proved to be only the base of another ... From this sublime scene the travellers continued to ascend among the pines, till they entered a narrow pass of the mountains which shut out every feature of the distant country, and, in its stead, exhibited only tremendous crags, impending over the road, where no vestige of humanity ... appeared (Radcliffe 225).

Mrs. Radcliffe depicts this wild landscape through Emily's eyes in order to isolate the setting from the outer world, thus creating the perfect scenario for the Gothic castle surrounded by the sublime aspects of Nature. The arrival of Emily to this castle for the first time is described a few paragraphs later:

‘There,’ said Montoni speaking for the first time in several hours, ‘is Udolpho.’

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain ... the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening (226).

Therefore, in all these descriptions of Nature, one can appreciate how its sublime and beautiful aspects are combined in order to depict the Gothic setting of the story and also to bring forth a sense of melancholy that is reflected in Emily's personality during the novel.

2.2 Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*

Different approaches can be taken to discuss the concept of Nature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Firstly, we find the character of Victor, who wants to conquer death with the use of science, defying the natural laws of life. This constitutes a sin against Nature that leads to the creation of the Frankenstein's creature, a figure that reminds the reader that the laws of Nature should not be violated. In other words, this creature is a reminder of what happens when men try to surpass the boundaries between their humanity and the superiority of Nature, which in this novel is elevated to a deity, like an example of God.

At the same time, Nature represents a source of knowledge, since Victor tries to "penetrar en los lugares más recónditos de la naturaleza en busca del secreto de la vida" (González de la Llana). However, he realises that no matter how much he researches, Nature will never be fully understood by men:

The untaught peasant beheld the elements around him and was acquainted with their practical uses. The most learned philosopher knew little more. He had partially unveiled the face of Nature, but her immortal lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery. He might dissect, anatomize, and give names; but, not to speak of a final cause, causes in their secondary and tertiary grades were utterly unknown to him. I had gazed upon the fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human beings from entering the citadel of nature, and rashly and ignorantly I had repined. (Shelley 24).

Another interesting point is that despite being a monster, Victor's creation seems sometimes more humanised than his creator, as it can be noted when the creature reproaches Victor:

All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us ... Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel (73).

This Biblical reference to Adam and Eve brings again the theme of defying the established rules. The creature's realisation of his situation leads to a change in his attitude

towards Nature. At first he wanted to find peace and serenity in it, but then he realises that what at the beginning seemed like beautiful Nature turned out to be a taunt of his state: “O! What a miserable night I passed! The cold stars shone in mockery ... All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment” (105). Since the beauty of Nature is like a traitor that does not improve the creature’s situation, he tries to look for the answer to his internal doubts in the devastated and dark parts of Nature: “The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are my refuge” (74). There is, thus, a change in which Nature is perceived: its beauty cannot ease the creature’s pain, so he finds shelter in its obscure facet.

The crucial moment when every trace of humanity is vanished from the creature is marked by his encounter with William, the little boy, which represents the innocence of childhood. He has no preconceived prejudices: “Suddenly, as I gazed on him, an idea seized me that this little creature was unprejudiced and had lived too short a time to have imbibed horror of deformity” (110). He thinks that he will be able to educate him as his friend so he will not be alone. However, as soon as the child sees his deformity, he screams: “Let me go ... monster! Ugly wretch!” (Ibid). The creature realises that he will not be able to inspire love, so the only option left is to inspire fear as a monster:

I will reveal my injuries; if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear, and chiefly towards you my arch-enemy, because my creator, do I swear inextinguishable hatred. Have a care; I will work at your destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you shall curse the hour of your birth. (113).

Therefore, it can be noted that when children’s innocence and Nature’s beauty fail to console him, the creature turns into an evil monster. The role of Nature as a guardian of souls that Wordsworth described is not seen in this novel, maybe due to the fact that this creature was born from the violations of natural laws. Yet still, the creature is able to find relief in the sublime aspects of Nature. There is a clear evolution in his approach to Nature that goes from the beauty to the sublime, the first one unable to give an answer to his existence, the second one offering a refuge for his disastrous condition.

3. CONCLUSION

As it has been demonstrated through all these different examples, the concept of 'Nature' was a central part of 19th Century English literature. The complex aspects of the natural world fascinated these writers, who tried to depict them in their works. The powers of Nature offered an unpredictable yet beautiful chaos which inspired new forms of description in literature and also provided them with many resources to create stories and convey feelings in a way that had not been done before. However, as it has been seen in this work, every writer within the period decided how to use all these new creative elements that Nature provided.

In *Songs of Innocence*, William Blake often links children and Nature. He uses the theme of the innocence of the children to place them closer to the natural world, thus making them one more part of nature, together with other animals. He also uses several natural symbols to refer to human life, such as the spring and youth, or the sunset and the fading of life. However, he also manages to depict another facet of Nature, the one presented in *Songs of Experience*. Here, Nature is attached to mystery; it evolves from something harmless where children can play into something wild and unknown. Thus, he presents Nature as a duality, as something beautiful and dangerous at the same time. Blake was not the only poet who made a connection between children and Nature. This is also presented in many of William Wordsworth's poems, implying that children's existence is purer and more imaginative, allowing them to reach something that adults had lost when growing up. Nevertheless, he relies on the power of memories to get back to this purer state, so that all people can enjoy Nature, which will help them when they feel sad or lost. Wordsworth also elevates Nature to the supreme knowledge, like a deity, which can provide infinite knowledge to anyone who looks for it. Together with Wordsworth, Coleridge believed in the superiority of nature, yet he

prefers to rely on the power of dreams to approach to natural settings that escape from reality. Apart from creating these impossible landscapes, he also argues that all the creations of Nature should be respected and loved, since he considers that humans and natural creatures are united because they are all part of Nature.

The later Romantics also presented this theme in some of his works. For Lord Byron, it is an escape route to run away from the troubles of society and find relief in it. He manages to depict Nature as something fair and cruel at the same time, giving it a greatness that could not be compared to anything else. Shelley also believed in this greatness of Nature, which could not be reached by any form of human creation. No matter how much humans try to put their creation in the same level with Nature's, since its greatness is far beyond what humanity can reach. This immortality of Nature was also depicted by Keats. He argues that Nature's beauty can transcend through time since it is immortal. Furthermore, he related Nature with mystery and even the supernatural.

With regard to the Gothic novel, it has been proven that Nature provided novelists with the elements that they needed to create landscapes in which set their stories. Ann Radcliffe uses Nature as a place where her character Emily can meditate. Mrs. Radcliffe also connects Emily's feelings with Nature through its beautiful and sublime aspects. As for Mary Shelley, she offers an innovative view of what happens when someone dares to defy Nature and its laws. She also presents not only the beautiful aspects of it but also the sublime ones.

All these different approaches to the concept of 'Nature' show how important it was for the literature of this period, but also illustrate the different ways in which every author used it. There is no wonder why Nature became a central motif in the 19th Century, as it was the focal point by which all literary works passed, collecting different aspects of its whole depending on the author's intentions. That is why Nature is present in the literature of this period as one of the main elements that give shape to a wide variety of poems and novels.

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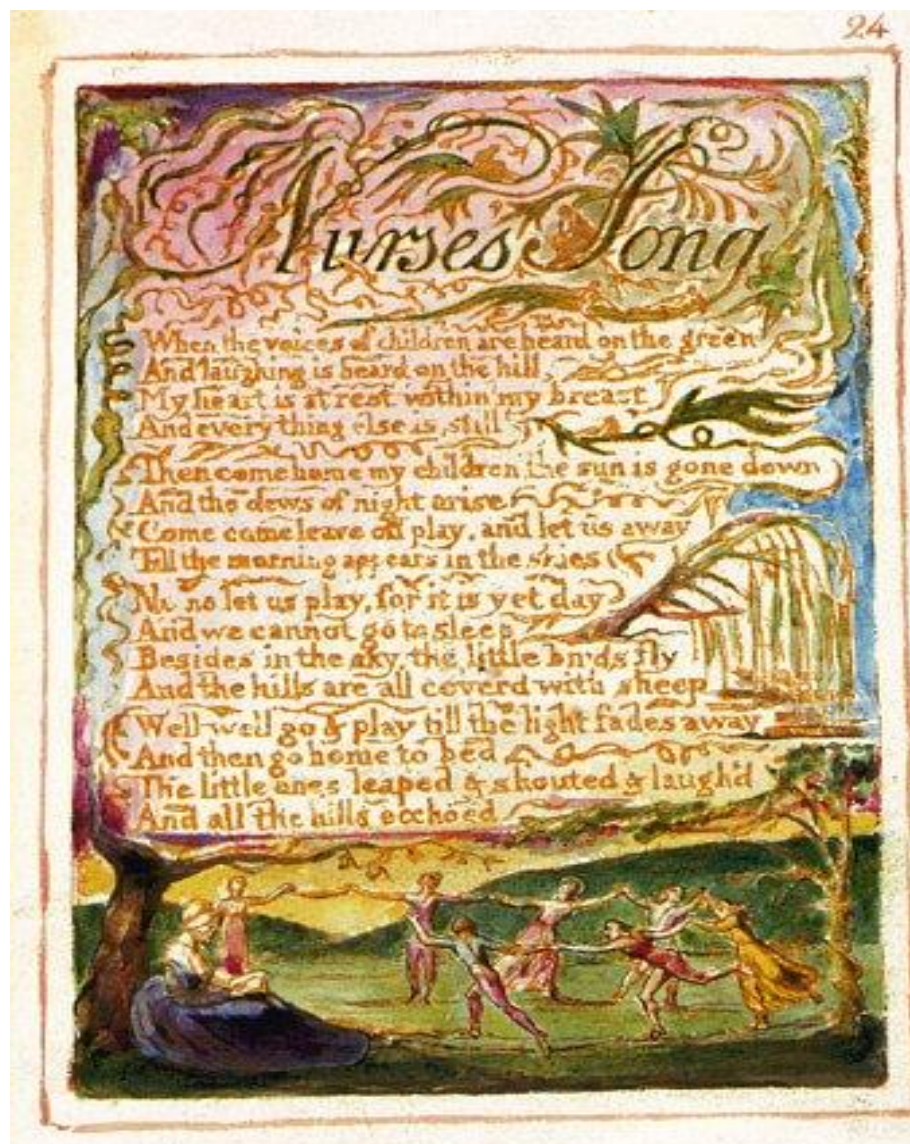
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5. APPENDIX

This appendix contains all Blake's poems that have been cited in this work and can be used to see how he united poetry and painting, depicting Nature not only poetically but also visually.



Blake, William. "The Echoing Green." *Songs of Innocence*. 1789.



Blake, William. "Nurse's Song." *Songs of Innocence*. 1789.



Blake, William. "Nurse's Song." *Songs of Experience*. 1794.



Blake, William. "The Sick Rose." *Songs of Experience*. 1794.



Blake, William. "A Poison Tree." *Songs of Experience*. 1794.