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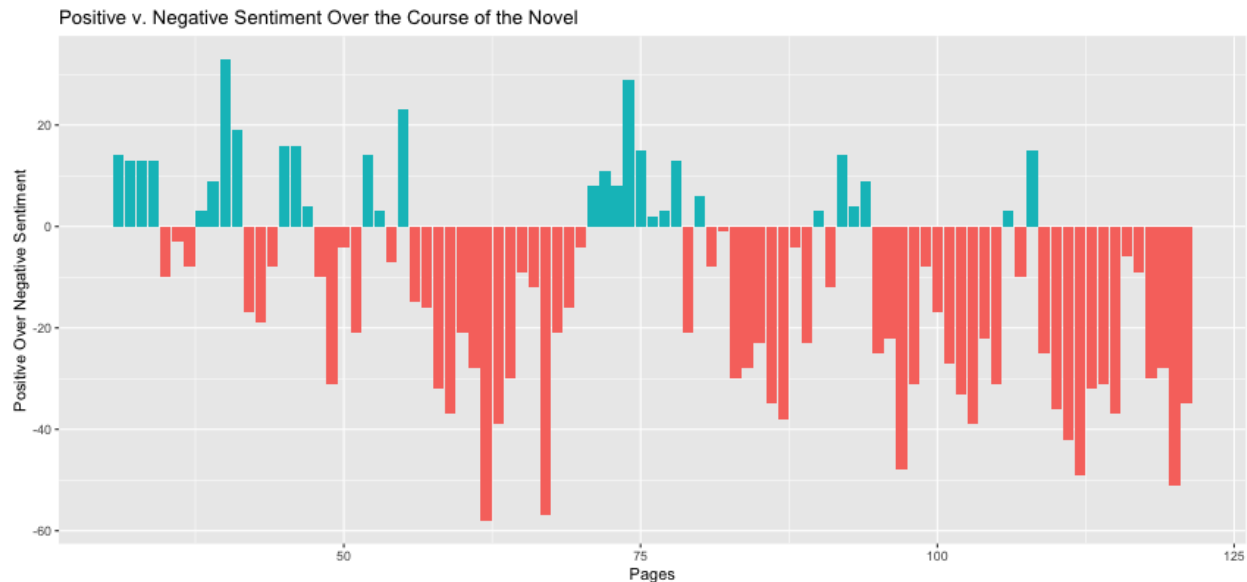
Gothic Literature Word Analysis

Monstrosity in literature, gothic lit in particular, tends to evoke very specific images. As an avid reader of horror literature, I wanted to look at text and word usage in some classic gothic literature texts. I chose five different gothic lit books to analyze the word and pronoun usage within after asking the question: how do these books use language to define monstrosity? The pronoun question stems from an observed shift in pronoun usage from he or she to it when the true nature of the creature or monster is revealed in many of the texts. This project sprung from a desire to see if that shift was traceable.

The focus shifted from looking primarily at pronoun usage to centering on the words authors use to signal gothic themes and monstrosity. The pages that follow include my attempts to investigate the individual words that the authors use and see if there is a similar pattern among the most frequently used words in each novel. Would such a pattern say anything about the works' gothicism? Can looking at word usage analytically help us identify negativity and monstrosity in literature?

The first graphic I made looked into positive over negative sentiment of the words over the course of each novel increments of every 70 lines or so. The trend of the novels was overwhelming on the negative side, which is not terribly surprising in books about death. The interesting thing about the graphs, that you can almost track the arc of the narrative along the

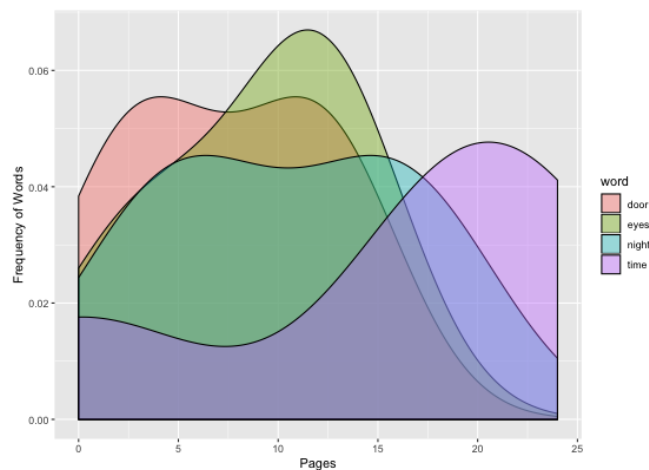
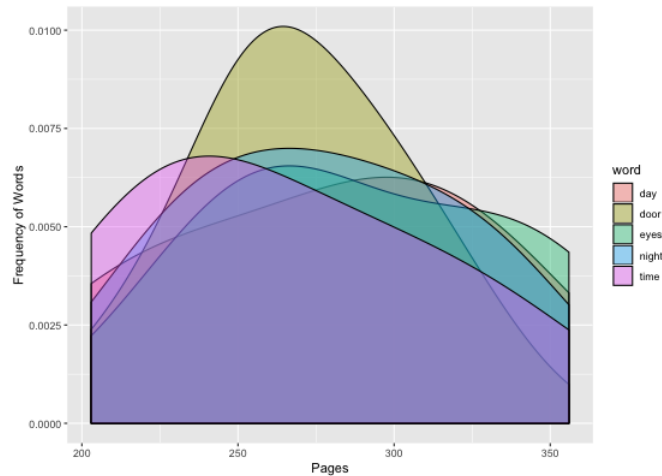
sentiment distribution. *Frankenstein* is the most overt example of this.



The first bit is with Walden, the Frankenstein shows up almost dead, he talks about his charmed childhood, then his mother dies, then he goes to school, then he creates the creature, etc. The model is useful in that it tells that most gothic books are more negative in sentiment than positive. Any other books I map this way, should follow this trend.

I moved next into looking at the words themselves. I chose the top ten most frequent words across all five novels, and created a density plot of the frequency over the course of the novel using increments of roughly ever 100 lines or so. These models complicate things. Time as the most common word, increases over the course of some and decreases over the course of others. It is hard to draw universal conclusions from these models. They are too different to make assumptions about word choice in gothic literature at large from. On the other hand, if you map pronoun usage over the course of the novels on top of the word monster, there is some overlap but not much. One has to take into account that some stories have more characters than others, and the monsters in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Phantom of the Opera* are arguably more human than the others.

Dracula (above) versus Jekyll and Hyde (below) Density plot of top 5 words for comparison



In conclusion, gothic language cannot really be tracked analytically by frequency of shared words according to these graphics, but I do think there are other avenues to investigate. I could compare the top ten words of each individual novel, not just the shared top ten, and see if they follow a similar arc of frequency across their own stories. I could also compare plot points, (though that would be difficult,) to see if similar words or sentiments occur at similar points in each story. Where does tone come into play and is it measurable? Who knows, but I sure had fun messing around with what I've got.