

An Analysis of the Theme of Alienation in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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Introduction

A novel that seeks to answer questions that have confused both the author, Mary Shelley, and the readers of her time is, *Frankenstein* published in 1818. *Frankenstein* is mostly famous for the richness of ideas it asks mankind to confront, how knowledge could be used for good and evil purposes, how uneducated and deprived people were treated and how the influence of technology affected mankind. Critics were at first negative towards the first edition which was issued anonymously, mostly because they were confused by the speculation as to the identity of the author. Reviewers thought *Frankenstein* was horrible and disgusting but despite the reviews, it was a success almost immediately. The second edition of *Frankenstein* was published in 1823, and this time Mary Shelley was credited as the author.¹

The novel is about Viktor Frankenstein a young, brilliant scientist, who is obsessed with finding the secret of giving life. He works alone in his laboratory and he creates a living being out of the organs of dead men. The monstrous creation is at first gentle and sensitive but because of mankind's fear of its appearance, the monster is forced to hide away from society. The monster's anger and frustration towards mankind leads it to seek revenge on its creator which results in the killings of Victor's little brother, Victor's best friend and his wife. The monster takes its refuge at the North Pole where Victor pursues the monster in order to kill his creation once and for all. Instead Victor is fatally wounded by the monster and the story ends with the monster accusing mankind of lacking compassion before it vanishes into the Arctic sea with an ice raft.

Mary Shelley's novel is above all about the theme of alienation and the innocent victims that are affected by it. The author presents an exceptional character in Victor Frankenstein and his creation, the monster. They are like two halves of a character that cannot live without the other. In the end, this also leads to their ruin. The aim of this essay is to analyse the theme of

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankenstein#Genesis>

alienation in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and to present evidence that support the essay's purpose. The essay is divided into four chapters. The first chapter contains an introduction to the history of the gothic novel, and *Frankenstein's* place within it, and furthermore it also tells in short the life of Mary Shelley, and how the novel came to life. The second chapter analyses the theme of alienation in the three main characters of Victor Frankenstein, the monster, and Robert Walton. The third chapter deals with how the author uses a variety of meeting places as a method to demonstrate the character's alienation. Finally the fourth chapter deals with the issue of borderlines which the theme of alienation also can be linked to.

1.1 The gothic novel

There has always been a fascination with the dark and the unknown, and horror stories have throughout time always intrigued people and have existed as long as there have been oral and written literature. The term 'gothic' is used in many different fields; dark medieval architectural references, literature and also music and art. As Anneli Carlson mentions in *Female Gothic*, the literary term 'gothic' is often applied to a collection of novels written from the mid-18th century to around 1820, and refers to dark horrific terrors such as bloodsucking vampires and unexplainable events:" historically speaking the gothic novel was a general movement away from the classical order in eighteenth century towards a more imaginative aspect which at many points came in contact with the Romantic movement"².

After the period of Enlightenment swept through the western nations, it was possible to be both atheist and be considered reasonable. In former days people could still believe in witches and sorcery but the Enlightenment mostly brought an end to this form of superstition. Ghosts were now in fashion and people liked to be amused with stories about the unknown. The first gothic novel is considered to be *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, which was published in 1764. "Horace Walpole set the seal upon a new usage in English with his famous description of *The Castle of Otranto* as a (gothick) story in 1764."³ Gothic fiction was, for example, subsequently developed by a number of famous writers, such as Ann Radcliffe with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Matthew Lewis with *The Monk*. These authors later laid the foundation of what many people later came to refer to as 'Gothic'. When *Frankenstein* was published in 1818, its supernatural and romantic elements further broadened the literary term. Characteristics of the gothic novel often contain for example; large castles, ghosts, a young innocent girl murdered, and supernatural elements. Nature plays an important role with high mountains, storms, thunder, and forests. The scenery and the fantastical elements lead the

² Anneli Carlson, *Female Gothic. A study of The Works Wuthering Heights, The Mysteries of Udolpho and Frankenstein* (Luleå: luleå U of T, 1998) 4

³ David Punter, ed. *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000) 15

reader towards a gloomy atmosphere and contain thrilling elements that makes the reader's skin crawl.

1.2 The gothic style of *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley declares in her introduction to the text in 1831 that the intention with *Frankenstein* is to “speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror”⁴. Gothic novels focus on the supernatural and the mysterious, and the characters seem to link the mortal world with the supernatural world. In *Frankenstein*, Victor crosses the mortal world by experimenting with life and death, when creating a monster from the dead. As Victor is creating the monster, he gives it supernatural powers such as strength and enormous power, perhaps the best example being the scene in which Victor is chasing the monster towards the North Pole.

One of the most significant aspects of the gothic novel is the setting; it takes place in dark and distant places such as castles, dungeons and isolated places. The North Pole and the journey to Ireland where Victor ends up in a cell are a few of the numerous dark gothic places Mary Shelley uses to create a gloomy mysterious feeling in the novel. Other features of the gothic that can be found in *Frankenstein* are; sublime landscapes in forms of the Alps and the Arctic sea, and the fact that the monster is patched into life from corpses and compared to vampires. There is also a buried incest motif where Elizabeth, Victor's sister, plays the role.⁵

Some critics have argued that *Frankenstein* can be seen as a hybrid of both gothic and romanticism. During the Romantic period there was a special duplicity which vacillated between reason and emotion, between the ego and the id. It has been argued by some critics that *Frankenstein* cannot be totally labelled as belonging to the gothic genre. The critics support their argument by claiming that the author's intention is to engage the reader with

⁴ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein. Or the modern Prometheus* (1818; Berkshire: Cox & Wyman Ltd, 1994) 5

⁵ David Punter, ed. *A companion to the Gothic*, Nora Crook, 58

issues of the real world.⁶ Romance writers are concerned with nature, compassion of mankind, human feelings, freedom of the individual and rebellion against society. One romantic characteristic of *Frankenstein* is the monster, which symbolizes social rejection and is subsequently chased away because of its appearance and consequently rebels against society. *Frankenstein* also discusses many challenging questions regarding mankind and society.

1.3 The life of Mary Shelley and the genesis of *Frankenstein*

In the intro of 1831, the author answers the frequently asked question of “how I, then a young girl, came to think of and to dilate upon so very hideous an idea?”⁷ by referring to her parents as being distinguished literary celebrities and that she was, early in life, introduced to writing. Mary Shelley was born on August 30, 1797 in London, daughter to William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, both referred to as ‘radicals’. According to Johanna M. Smith: “both her parents were prominent in revolutionary movements that peaked in the late eighteenth century”⁸ England had moved from a primarily agricultural to an increasingly industrial economy and Mary Shelley lived during a time of chaotic change and these changes can be traced in her view of politics and ideologies of gender.⁹ Her life was surrounded with tragic events; her mother’s death only four weeks after giving birth, the deaths of her own three children, and the accidental death of her husband. Mary was 16 years old when she met her husband to be, Percy Bysshe Shelley in London. Since Percy was already married, Mary eloped with him to continental Europe several times. Only after Percy’s wife committed suicide could the couple get married. In the summer of 1816, Mary and Percy visited Geneva in Switzerland; they became neighbours to Lord Byron, another writer.¹⁰ The group of Mary, Percy, Byron and Byron’s friend Polidori spent their time together and because of the constant

⁶ Maurice Hindle, *Frankenstein* (1994; London: Penguin Books Ltd) 4

⁷ Shelley, 5

⁸ Johanna M. Smith, ed. *Frankenstein. Mary Shelley* (New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1992) 4

⁹ Johanna M. Smith, *Mary Shelley Revisited* (New York: Twayne publishers, 1996) 15

¹⁰ Johanna M. Smith, *Mary Shelley Revisited. Chronology*

rainfall, they spent their time indoors and thrilled each other by telling ghost stories. Lord Byron came up with the idea that each one of them should write their own ghost story. This is the genesis of the famous novel *Frankenstein*, which was at first only a few pages long but at the encouragement of her husband Percy, the story was lengthened and later published in 1818.¹¹ Mary Shelley died in 1851 at the age of fifty three. *Frankenstein* is, like Mary herself, rebellious towards society's inequality and industrialisation. The monster revolts against society because it is not welcome due to its repulsive appearance, Victor creates a monster out of patched bodies without considering the outcomes of the creation which can represent man's repulsion against industrialisation and new discoveries. *Frankenstein* is not the first gothic novel, yet it is a singular work that has become an unforgettable story which has been translated into numerous languages.

¹¹ Shelley, *Frankenstein. Or the modern Prometheus*, Intro 1831, 5

2.1 The theme of alienation in the character of Victor Frankenstein

Alienation is something Victor experiences his entire life in terms of his childhood and family, scientific work, and society. The character of Victor Frankenstein in Shelley's novel is a man of science and his goal in life is to follow his dream of understanding the miracles of the world. He spends almost his entire time recreating life in the form of a monster. However, he is not aware of the consequences. In the end Victor spends his remaining time in life trying to destroy the same creation he tried so hard to create. During his period at the university where he makes the experiments, Viktor isolates himself from society, and all his time and effort is devoted to the desire of knowledge.

At first he lives with his parents as an only child in a 'perfect' family. Over time he adopts a fascination for science and eagerly begins to educate himself. "I was, to a great degree, self taught with regard to my favourite studies. My father was not scientific, and I was left to struggle with a child's blindness, added to a student's thirst for knowledge."¹² Victor leaves his family in his younger years for studies in a different town and this does not seem to have any effect on him at all. He does not have any contact with his family, not even by letter. Any contact with his family takes place on his conditions. Victor's total attention goes to his scientific studies in Ingolstadt. He does not have many friends, and is not tempting to find any. Instead he locks himself up in his room studying, and is not bothered about being alone. The reader can understand from the novel that Victor has himself chosen this isolation from people. No one has forced him to a life in solitude. The only true friend he has is Clerval, and this friendship is also based on Victor's terms, but still he does not confide to Clerval about his troubles with the experiment.

Victor chooses to set up his laboratory "in a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house"¹³ in Ingolstadt as a replacement for the school's laboratory. It is a self imposed

¹² Shelley, 38

¹³ Shelley, 52

alienation he chooses due to the fact of his scientific experiments. He is in his laboratory creating the monster, even though he has not seen his family for a long time. Even if Victor chooses isolation, he many times insists that the only reason he is isolated, is because of the creature. One example is:” I must absent myself from all I loved while thus employed. Once commenced, it would quickly be achieved, and I might be restored to my family in peace and happiness.”¹⁴ At first Victor is alienated because of the creation of the monster and then subsequently because of keeping the secret of his creation. This finally leads to his downfall.

Subsequently, the experiment forces Victor to alienate himself from society and his family as a means of protecting fellow creatures from the monster. At the end of the experiment, he understands the consequences that arise from it and he is forced to alienate himself from the entire world while attempting to destroy his creation. The only communication Victor has with anyone else throughout the novel is with Walton at the ship. He confesses to Walton the story of his life and about the creature he has created.

Victor is also alienated from his surroundings because of his choice of scientific viewpoints. From his early years, Victor is fascinated by scientists like for example, Cornelius Agrippa who is considered to be a spokesperson for ancient science. Yet, he still continues to study them and is consequently also alone in his studies. He even blames his father for not having explained the principles of Agrippa and therefore also for his own ideas that lead him to disaster: “it is even possible that the train of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin.”¹⁵ The evidence is apparent; Victor chooses to alienate himself from others, friends, school, and family.

2.2 The theme of alienation in the character of the creature

The theme of alienation is also shown through Victor’s creation. Unlike its inventor, the creature does not choose to be alienated. Rather it is, in fact, others who isolate it because of

¹⁴ Shelley, 147

¹⁵ Shelley, 38

its hideous appearance. Actually, all the creature wants is to be loved, but after many attempts to fit into society, it realises that it will never be accepted by humans. The first experience with the world is when the creature opens its eyes, and sees Victor's scared look. Victor immediately flees. The creature's own 'father' rejects it even though he has made it; "unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep."¹⁶ The creature is left all alone with no information about where it is, who it is, and is like a new born child left alone in the enormous world.

The second experience the creature has with humans is by contact with the villagers, where they throw stones at it to make it leave them." I had hardly placed my foot within the door before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me."¹⁷ People are appalled and frightened of the creature and attempt to drive the creature away.

The rejection of the DeLacey family is the creature's third experience with humans. This is the first family that it comes in contact with, and also wants to be a part of. Because of its previous experience with humans the creature decides to hide, and secretly observe the family. The creature finds out "that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds."¹⁸ The creature believes that the language is "a godlike science"¹⁹ which will help it to be accepted and it learns the language by observing the DeLacey family. It also believes that if it could only tell the blind father its story, it would be accepted by their family. But it gets interrupted by the children when they enter the house, and in fear for their father's life they react by forcing the creature away with violence: "Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose

¹⁶ Shelley, 55

¹⁷ Shelley, 101

¹⁸ Shelley, 107

¹⁹ Shelley, 108

knees I clung; in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick.”²⁰ Once more the creature is rejected because of its hideous form. The blind father is the only person throughout the novel who is prepared to listen to the creature’s story, and become moved by it since he cannot see the monster. Even though the creature looked horrible, it is no fool, it realizes that its only chance for acceptance is the blind man, who could only judge him by its story and not by its appearance. According to Chris Baldick “the monster’s most convincingly human characteristic is of course his power of speech.”²¹ He explains that the traditional view of monsters is that they should be seen but not heard. In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley gives the creature its most important features, its very human needs and feelings.

The DeLacey family circle also shows the creature how anomalous its own position is without parents, friends, and relations. The creature longs for a family, to belong to something and at last be accepted. It has no equal and no lineage; it is just joined together by limbs of different corpses. This also reflects alienation, the creature has human features; the desire to be loved and to love, but still it does not fit into human society. The family symbolizes the creature’s first “school” of human nature, and the lesson it learns is that it does not fit in.²² This reflects both human and society’s basic view of our fellow creatures. Shelley hereby argues that deviance is not accepted by society.

The creature’s efforts to fit into society fails, it is beaten and humiliated. It declares;” should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No; from that moment I declared ever-lasting war against the species, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.”²³ Subsequent to these events, the creature finally realises that it will never be accepted or loved by mankind. The creature decides to retaliate with violence:” I

²⁰ Shelley, 130

²¹ Chris Baldick. *In Frankenstein’s Shadow. Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-century Writing* (1987, New York: Oxford University press Inc, 1996) 45

²² Smith. *Mary Shelley Revisited*. 45

²³ Shelley, 131

am malicious because I am miserable. Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind?"²⁴ It simply responds in the same way the humans have towards it, with violence. It is such devastating experiences that ultimately turn it into a murderer. The monster is innocent in the sense that it has not chosen alienation itself, this is also the reason why other innocent people are killed. Victor's younger brother William, an innocent boy, is killed, and their maid Justine, who by her name can be interpreted as justice, is falsely accused and later on also convicted of being William's murderer. Elizabeth explains the reason for Justine's destiny as "men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood."²⁵ Instead of the monster, mankind is now starting to be like monsters. Victor's friend Clerval and Elizabeth are also killed by the monster. Because of society's treatment of the innocent monster, people within the society are rewarded with the same coin.²⁶ In fact all the creature really wants is to escape alienation, and to have a wife to love and to be loved by.

As a last resort the creature demands that Victor create a female spouse to it for companionship. At first Victor considers it because of the creature's speech, and promises to create a woman for the creature. However, he regrets his promise and tears the female creation apart before it is finished. This leads to the creature retaliating by killing Elizabeth, Victor's wife to be by actions that are mostly based on revenge. The creature Victor has created becomes a monster because of its observations, and experiences of mankind. From the beginning it is a *tabula rasa* and is neither evil nor spiteful; it gets beaten and driven off because of its appearance. It is society and mankind that shapes the creature into a savage.

2.3 The theme of alienation in the character of Robert Walton

Robert Walton can be considered as the most important person in the novel. Shelley has given Walton a well integrated personality and compared with Victor and the creature, he represents

²⁴ Shelley, 140

²⁵ Shelley, 88

²⁶ Ronny Ambjörnsson, *Mansmyter, James Bond, Don Juan, Tarzan och andra grabbar* (Stockholm, Ordfront förlag, 1999) 118

a healthy human being. Walton chooses, like Victor, isolation with his expedition but on the other hand Walton also longs for companionship. He is the balance between Victor, who isolates himself from society, and the creature, which yearns for nothing but to be a part of the society. Walton is someone who can strive for distinction but at the same time turn back when his actions might harm others.²⁷ Unlike Victor, he is capable of seeing the result of his desire for knowledge. Walton is willing to cancel his expedition when the ship's crew want to return home because of the dangerous journey.

Walton's entire childhood was spent in loneliness, as he educated himself in a similar way to Victor. Another parallel reference to Victor is that Walton also chooses isolation because of his lust of knowledge: "there is a love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous, intertwined in all my projects, which hurries me out of the common pathways of men, even to the wild sea and unvisited regions I am about to explore."²⁸ Isolation can also be viewed as to an explanation for Walton's desire to go on an expedition "to unexplored regions"²⁹ far away from civilisation. The scenery of the tough climate increases the readers understanding of isolation. The only exception to Walton's isolation in comparison to Victor and the creature is the communication Walton has with his sister Mrs Saville in his letters.

²⁷ Stephen C. Behrendt, Ed. *Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein* (New York, The Modern Language Association of America, 1990) 70

²⁸ Shelley, 20

²⁹ Shelley, 19

3. Meeting places

Mary Shelley uses a variety of meeting places as a method of illustrating the characters' alienation throughout the novel. The home of Frankenstein could be seen as one meeting place. The family is portrayed as the ideal family, as they live in peace and harmony. The links to alienation in the home of Frankenstein revolve around how Victor chooses to leave his family, and Caroline's undertaking to help the disadvantaged in society.

Victor's mother, Caroline, comes from poor family conditions; her father seeks solitude because of some mistakes he has made as a merchant. The two are now forced into poverty, and loneliness plays a great part of their lives. Shortly, Caroline becomes the nursing angel that takes care of her ill father: "his daughter attended him with the greatest tenderness"³⁰ but after ten months he dies. Victor's father, who is a friend of Caroline's father, comes "like a protecting spirit to the poor girl"³¹ and two years after her father's death he marries Caroline. As a result, Caroline wants to help the poor and deprived that are marginalised from society, because of the reason that she had been there herself.

In fact, the Frankenstein family can be interpreted as representing the sanctuary of heaven. Affection and charity are features that are important for the family members. The character of Elizabeth is introduced as a symbol of an angel that has come to the family:

She appeared of a different stock. The four others were dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants; this child was thin and very fair. Her hair was the brightest living gold, and despite the poverty of her clothing, seemed to set a crown of distinction on her head /.../ the moulding of her face so expressive of sensibility and sweetness

³⁰ Shelley, 31

³¹ Shelley, 31

that none could behold her without looking on her as a distinct species, a being heaven-sent, and bearing a celestial stamp in all her features.³²

According to Maurice Hindle, who has made a critical study of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley has, when introducing Elizabeth, planted a link and a contrast with the creature that later appears. Elizabeth is a creature of heaven, where as the monster is the exact antithesis, a creature sent from hell.³³

However, Victor still decides to leave the sanctuary of his family due to his quest of following his dream. Even when his mother dies, he still decides to leave them. This also proves that Victor is not fully content with his life even though he has a wonderful, perfect family. One of the reasons for portraying the ideal family is to emphasize that Victor has himself to blame for the events that have resulted in him being miserably alone. The upbringing has not influenced him negatively. The other reason is to make a parallel to the DeLacey family, the monster's view of the perfect family. Both Victor and the creature have come in contact with the aspect of the ideal family.

Another important place Shelley uses to emphasize isolation is in Frankenstein's laboratory. After leaving his family for studies at the university, he totally commits himself to his scientific studies. Victor devotes so much time to these studies that he isolates himself from everyone, including his family. He sets up his laboratory at the top of his apartment in Ingolstadt. Victor lives in total isolation from his friends and surroundings: "And the same feelings which made me neglect the scenes around me caused me also to forget those friends who were so many miles absent, and whom I had not seen for so long a time."³⁴ Victor's family has, during two years been put aside because of his passion for creating a human life

³² Shelley, 33

³³ Hindle, 27

³⁴ Shelley, 52

out of dead body parts. Victor can be seen as God in a symbolic sense, the creator of human life.

The creature is born in Victor's laboratory, and from the moment it opens its eyes, it is rejected and left in isolation. "I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept."³⁵ Not even Victor, who has dedicated so much time to creating the monster, can force himself to stay and take care of it. This is the first of several rejections that the creature constantly encounters. Victor is terrified of being identified as the monster's originator and after his dream has been fulfilled, Victor becomes melancholy. Instead of rejoicing in his success, he isolates himself even more.

Shelley's novel begins with letters that Walton writes to his sister. These letters can be seen as a meeting place where Walton tells her about his isolation and loneliness. He has not got anyone to share his joy and misery with on the ship:" But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy; and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate in my joy"³⁶.

The ship is another meeting place. It is totally cut-off from civilisation on its path to remote places. Secondly, Walton feels alone, the crew on the ship cannot satisfy his wishes of companionship mainly because he is the leader and they are subordinate. Walton is isolated since he feels that he cannot participate in the crew's activities. Neither do they share the same dream that Walton desires to accomplish, nor do they fulfil his wishes of how this friend should be. "I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me, whose eyes would reply to mine."³⁷ Maurice Hindle also points out that Walton "is also gloomily certain that the

³⁵ Shelley, 98

³⁶ Shelley, 17

³⁷ Shelley, 17

near-double he seeks as a companion will not be found 'on the wide ocean'."³⁸ This leads to the fact that he misses a true friend, and that he feels alone with no one to confide his inner thoughts to. Apart from his letters to his sister, which in fact is only a one-way communication, he is alone. Therefore he is not totally satisfied with his life. On the other hand, isolation is nothing new to Walton; his whole childhood was spent in loneliness. Mary Shelley's novel shows in many ways the human nature natural desire to not be alone.

The mountains in Charmonix are also a place Shelley has used to increase the monster's and Frankenstein's alienation. The monster has avenged its creator by killing his loved ones. This causes enormous sorrow, anxiety, and despair for Victor. Once more he decides to isolate himself and withdraw "towards the valley of Charmounix."³⁹ Frankenstein decides to climb Mount Blanc, where he once again encounters the monster. The hatred Victor has towards the monster is endless but the reaction is nothing new to the monster. It is familiar with it although its entire essence desires nothing but approval.

The monster demands that Frankenstein follows it to its hut in the mountains, to hear its story. Victor feels for the first time his responsibility as a creator and listens to the monster's story. "I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creation were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness."⁴⁰ The monster now demands that Frankenstein should create another creature, a female image of himself, to escape a solitary life. Yet, the monster has understood that their life together would be on the outskirts of human society. Both Victor and the monster flee from the reality to the sublime nature in the Alps but for different reasons. The monster is forced to live in remote places, whereas Frankenstein seeks these isolated places to escape society.

³⁸ Hindle, 15

³⁹ Shelley, 90

⁴⁰ Shelley, 97

4. Borderlines

The main theme of alienation can also be linked to the borderlines which exist in the novel. Frankenstein's laboratory can be viewed as a border against the external world. This becomes clear since it is only Victor who has access to it, and he spends all his time there. People in his surroundings are completely unaware of what he is about to create, in his desire for glory.

Another border which is connected to alienation is the shed, where the monster decides to hide. "here, then, I retreated and lay down happy to have found a shelter, however miserable, from the inclemency of the season, and still more from the barbarity of man."⁴¹ The shed is located at the DeLacey's farm, and when protected by the shed's walls, the monster observes the family members. Due to its observation it also learns how human society functions. Even though the creature feels close to the people on the farm, it is not able to openly show itself to the others. At least not until it is capable of communicating with them. Only when the night comes with its covering darkness, is the creature able to move quite freely.

The night can also represent a border which separates the monster from society. In the night's safety the monster can for example, help the DeLacey family with some daily chores, or find some food to eat. "During the morning I attended the motions of the cottagers, and when they were dispersed in various occupations, I slept; the remainder of the day was spent in observing my friends. When they had retired to rest, if there was any moon or the night was star-light, I went into the woods and collected my own food and fuel for the cottage"⁴²

Despite the monster's freedom to move, it is still exposed to alienation and loneliness. There are no other human beings who are alive during the night. The night is left for outcasts and other living beings that are searching for shelter. One can say that the monster more or less lives in a non-man's-land where it has no contact with the people in its surroundings. The monster has acknowledged that people either get afraid of it and flee, or decide to attack it.

⁴¹ Shelley, 102

⁴² Shelley, 110

Windows are an additional border Shelley has applied to demonstrate the main theme. Each time this borderline occurs, it is usually the monster that is isolated from the fellowship. One example is when the monster observes the DeLacey family in total silence:

” I found that one of the windows of the cottage had formerly occupied a part of it, but the panes had been filled up with wood. In one of these was a small and almost imperceptible chink through which the eye could just penetrate.”⁴³ Another example is when Frankenstein is creating the female creature which the monster has demanded of him. During the creating process, the monster is watching the development through a window. It is watching Frankenstein to make sure that he commits to his promise. “I saw by the light of the moon the daemon, at the casement. A ghastly grin wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me, where I sat fulfilling the task which he had allotted me.”⁴⁴ The monster passes this borderline during the novel’s development. Frankenstein dreams one night that the monster will kill his beloved Elizabeth. This nightmare also comes true when the monster enters their bedroom through a window, and kills Elizabeth on her and Victor’s wedding night as it has threatened to do:

I saw at the open window a figure the most hideous and abhorred. A grin was on the face of the monster, he seemed to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my wife. I rushed towards the window, and drawing a pistol from my bosom, fired; but he eluded me, leapt from his station, and running with the swiftness of lightning, plunged into the lake.⁴⁵

One can say that every time the monster passes the borderlines and leaves its isolation, it ends up killing someone, for example, Elizabeth, and William.

⁴³ Shelley, 103

⁴⁴ Shelley, 160

⁴⁵ Shelley, 190

One additional borderline that supports the novel's main theme is when Frankenstein decides to hunt and kill the monster which occurs on the ices of the North Pole. The Arctic ice has two meanings. It can symbolize the rift which exists between Frankenstein and the monster. The creature seeks a father in Frankenstein meanwhile Victor does everything to forget the monster, and keep it as far away as possible. This gap and alienation means that the monster has from the day of its birth and to the end of the novel been left alone to meet the world. Frankenstein, on the other hand chooses one more time to be alone, and wishes nothing more than to get rid of his creation. The ice can also symbolize the border that exists between the ship and the world.

Maurice Hindle gives further examples of how the icy surroundings are connected with all the male protagonists' narrative; Walton's journey towards the North Pole, when Frankenstein tells his story when they are aboard the ship trapped in the solid Arctic ice, and when the creature tells its story to Victor at the mountain of Mount Blanc overlooking the sea of ice above Charmonix.⁴⁶ Hindle also declares that "having these stories told in such icy surroundings symbolically draws our attention to the conditions of social isolation"⁴⁷ The metaphor of ice demonstrates the cold, uninhabited, and unemotional element, where no human being can survive alone.

According to Maurice Hindle, Mary Shelley again and again uses images of cold and heat, ice and fire, dark and light in her text to symbolize ironically the destructive effects of Frankenstein's experiment to bring together the worlds of life and death.⁴⁸ Since the author uses images of antitheses such as heaven and hell, ice and fire, and dark and light throughout the novel, the borderlines become clearer and subsequently also easier to understand for the reader. Frankenstein's family represent heaven, and the monster represents hell. The monster is forced to live in the sheltering darkness; Victor is fascinated by the secrets of life, and the

⁴⁶ Hindle, 123

⁴⁷ Hindle, 124

⁴⁸ Hindle, 124

lighting which the author uses to represent the dark and the light. The reader can easily see the borderlines Mary Shelley has used in *Frankenstein*, and thereby it also has an important role in establishing the theme of alienation.

Conclusion

The theme of alienation is without a doubt one of the most important theme in *Frankenstein*. Alienation is the common denominator between the three main characters. Victor Frankenstein is perhaps the only character that more or less chooses alienation by himself because of his desire for knowledge. In the end Victor becomes the prisoner of his own creation. The monster, on the other hand, is from its 'birth' a *tabula rasa*, it is the experiences the monster encounters in life that reflect its actions. The monster is greeted with disgust and violence even though it comes with friendly intentions. Subsequently it is forced into alienation in order to survive, and becomes the savage that mankind believes it is. By giving the monster a voice, the reader can sympathize with the pain and suffering that is caused by humans. The third character, Robert Walton represents the healthy human being, and he also represents the balance between Victor and the monster. Walton has a bad and a good side which also can represent Victor's bad side and the monster's good side. Both these aspect represent the healthy human being. The characters in *Frankenstein* are all victims of alienation and loneliness. None of them have chosen by themselves to be in this situation, they are victims because of the actions of others and these actions have subsequently left them in the grip of isolation.

Mary Shelley presents society from the viewpoint of the weak and the poor via the monster. She points out to the reader how a human being comes to live alone without any sense of human connection, and in that sense lacks all attributes; money, possessions, and a good family name which are the ticket to acceptance. Shelley is really questioning what it means to be a human being. Nobody chooses by themselves to stand alone to meet the world's possibilities and setbacks.

The theme of alienation also follows a pattern that is repeated during the whole novel. The ship is an isolated vessel on its path to further isolated regions. Walton, who is the leader of

the ship, is in turn also isolated. Walton subsequently meets Victor, who is also isolated in various ways. The ship represents a meeting place, and it is the point where the story of Victor and his creation conjoins with Walton's. Shelley uses meeting places and borderlines as a method to illustrate the character's alienation and to establish the theme. The links are many and all of them help the reader to reflect on their importance.

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