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The Portrayal of Female Victimization through Male Monstrosity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of Master Degree in English Language: Civilization and Literature

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Dedication

I dedicate my work to my family and many friends.

My loving parents, Leulmi and Haoua DEBBIHI, for their never-ending love and constant

support.

My brother Mohamed, for his continued encouragement.

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Abstract

The present study focuses on the issue of identifying the elements implemented in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to portray female victimization and how this vision is served through male oppression against females. It also determines the nature of those male and female characters and their importance in depicting Mary Shelley's message in the light of several critics' views of the novel. The study employs the feminist approach that promotes and calls for gender equality and reflects on women's representation in literature and the psychoanalytical approach that criticizes the perverse and transgressive elements of *Frankenstein* especially as seen in the characters of Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein and The Monster. Finally, this study demonstrates the significance of the writings of Mary Shelley; it helps understand that the society to which *Frankenstein* belonged was still a period of severe social disparity between men and women. In addition, it examines how the novel portrayed women and men.

Key Words: female, male, victimization, monstrosity, feminism

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General Introduction

There were numerous cultural, political, social, but above all, scientific advances in the period where Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was first published. The writing process of the novel and its first and subsequent appearances came when the world-changing impact of the French Revolution and the First Industrial Revolution was as powerful as ever. Therefore, in the light of the Enlightenment and its rational basis, people have now been able to acquire previously unfathomable knowledge of the human body and how it works and does things that were previously only conceivable in their imagination. And it is precisely this scientific development that provides the most exciting and often discussed facets of Shelley's fiction to this day, along with the moral questions lingering over all the inventions.

Because of the extravagant intellectual period in which Mary Shelley wrote and published *Frankenstein*, there are broad analytical interpretations of her work. The novel is a complicated piece of art intertwined with vague contradictions such as detachment from society and interaction in it. Such contradictions embedded within the book keep on being discussed by literary critics from numerous analytical approaches that increase *Frankenstein*'s importance as a novel whose contradictions are still as essential today as they were in the nineteenth-century.

In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley uses the unprecedented notion of male procreation to accurately identify and sharply criticize the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries' unfavorable positions of women. Inspired by Mary Wollstonecraft, her mother, and one of the earliest feminist writers, Shelley portrays the inevitable negative results of the society's strict gender division. This gender division meant that, while the personal or emotional sphere of life represents the female domain, the public area of life is known as the male realm. *Frankenstein* serves as the protest of the author against the general concept of female inferiority and her status acts as an emerging female writer in a male-dominated world.

The issues discussed in this research seek to prove that Shelley's *Frankenstein* is not just a fictional work whose main themes have no connection with the real world in which its author has lived. Quite the opposite, this research's objective is to discover how the fictional world of Shelley and its norms represent the attitudes of her time's society.

In regard to the aims of the dissertation, it focuses primarily on the fact that the society to which Mary Shelley and her *Frankenstein* belonged is still a period of severe social disparity between men and women in both the world of literature and life in general. It tends to give the giant leaps of change in a number of its aspects.

Moreover, this research addresses the feminist side in the 1818 and 1831 versions of *Frankenstein* and the way Mary Shelley draws attention to women's suffering and weakness by actually creating weak female victim characters that die one by one throughout the development of the novel. It also sheds light on how her characters spend all their time suffering the mistreatment they endure from their society and the men they love, living their lives in the domestic sphere alone. The following research questions are formulated to consider these aspects, and the main focus of this work is to answer and investigate them:

- How does the novel *Frankenstein* portray Woman and Man?

- How does the novel approach feminism?

- How is the elimination of female characters portrayed in the novel?

- In what way the male oppression contributes to female victimization within the novel?

In order to answer the research questions, a feminist approach will be used in order to highlight gender inequality and reflect on women's representation in literature, paying attention to women's perspectives, concerns, and values. Also, a psychoanalytical approach will be

grounded to criticize the perverse and transgressive elements of *Frankenstein*, especially as seen in the characters Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and The Monster.

In light of the scope, this research is divided into three chapters. Chapter one presents a theoretical framework. It introduces the approaches applied in the novel with a deep emphasis on their background and principles.

Chapter two is a literary analysis of the novel. It sheds light on the female victimization in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* through a detailed description of the female characters' subordination, as well as highlighting feminist concepts at the novel's core.

On the other hand, chapter three focuses on the subversion of the male voice in *Frankenstein* via a detailed description of the novel's male characters. Also, it reveals the fatal consequences of obeying and abiding traditional gender roles in *Frankenstein*.

Chapter One:

Theoretical Framework of Feminist and Psychoanalytical Critique

Theoretical Framework of Feminist and Psychoanalytical

1.1   Introduction

If asked to share the very first thoughts that come into one's mind when thinking of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* novel, very few average readers, if any, would think of its female characters and their contribution to the story as a whole. This fact should not come as a surprise for the novel does indeed focus on its male protagonists' lives but a small room for the females' role in it. This study, however, aims to shed light on the fact that *Frankenstein* is in no way merely a depiction of women's inferiority of the time.

Bearing that in mind, this chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework to the study of feminism issues and male characters' psyches. Moreover, it introduces the literary approaches and how they will interpret this literary work. Therefore, it is devoted to the adopted theories for the novel's analysis, from the feminist view with the study of the underlying feminist ideas in *Frankenstein*, and the psychoanalytic approach through the analysis of the male characters' psychology.

1.2   Theory of Feminism as an Ideological Perspective

Lois Tyson describes the feminist theory as the concept concerned with how women's economic, political, social, and psychological inequality is strengthened or weakened by literature or other cultural productions (83). It also includes a variety of ideas representing women's diversity worldwide. Feminism opposes mainstream theory with new ways of tackling social issues, calling for the replacement of the ruling patriarchal order with a structure that stresses equal rights, justice and equality (Tong).

Feminist theory points at how elements of today's culture are fundamentally patriarchal and seek to uncover sexism in writing about women, which can take

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explicit and implicit forms. This sexism and misogyny can reach into various areas of our culture. Lois Tyson states that "Perhaps the most chilling example...is found in the world of modern medicine, where drugs prescribed for both sexes have been tested on male subjects only" (84).

Feminist criticism is also concerned with less obvious ways of marginalization, such as removing women writers from the traditional literary canon. Lois Tyson notes that there is a tendency to underrepresent the contribution of women writers unless the critical or historical viewpoint is feminist (85).

The feminist theory is a common and complex one. Many feminists disagree with it on many points, but many feminist scholars agree on four fundamental principles. First, working to enhance equality because feminists want to be more involved in combating inequality to raise awareness of gender equality. Second, expanding human choice by supporting the principle of equal opportunity for both sexes. Third, eliminating gender stratification by objecting to traditional standards and laws, which generate gender inequality. Last, ending sexual violence and promoting sexual freedom by advocating that women should have control over their sexual identity without any men's permissions and threats.

Patriarchy is a social order created and dominated by males. Males hold the primary power in patriarchy, and predominate and control the social life altogether. Father figure, for example, has the absolute authority over children and woman as the center of the family within a traditional family. Thus, this circumstance reflects the social order directly and determines the order according to the male supremacy principle. Society is not equal due to the current patriarchal order despite the equal rights written, in practice, on the law codes (Lockard 111, 112).

Feminism, as a struggle of women's movement against sexism, battles against all forms of inequality between the genders. Yet, several women are looking out the different windows to find a solution to society's problems. Therefore, feminist ideology is allowed to make various forms of definitions. Every definition of feminism relies on the main concepts of the ideologies, history, culture and beliefs.

1.2.1   Radical Feminism

A feminist perspective, which calls for a radical rearrangement of male supremacist society and the elimination of gender inequality in all social and economic contexts (Tong). Radical feminists want to liberate both men and women from the rigid gender roles placed on them by society. They reject all forms of patriarchy, the stereotypes which are placed on both sexes and sometimes they also reject men. The radical feminists are divided into two groups: Radical-Libertarian Feminism and Radical-Cultural Feminism.

Firstly, Radical-Libertarian Feminists, who believe in the complete abolishing of the patriarchal system that oppresses women and that women should be free to exercise total freedom of sex and reproduction. Secondly, Radical-Cultural Feminists, who emphasize that women should embrace their femininity because it is better than masculinity. This radical feminism type urges women to escape the institution of obligatory heterosexuality.

1.2.2   Liberal Feminism

This feminist perspective is essentially described as an individualist form of feminist theory. Liberal feminists argue that society holds the false belief that women are by nature, less intellectually and physically able than men. This misbelief causes all kinds of discrimination in social life. So liberal feminists, according to Andrew

Heywood, believe that: "female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that blocks women's entrance to success in the so-called public world."

1.2.3 Marxist-Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminist theory examines the relationship between women's oppression and other social oppressions, such as racism and economic inequality. Socialist feminists argue that class struggle and gender inequality are directly linked. They also believe that no one, particularly women, can experience true freedom in a class-based society. Socialist feminism is a two-pronged ideology that widens the argument of Marxist feminism of the function of capitalism in the oppression of women, and the theory of radical feminism about the role of gender and the patriarchy. Socialist feminists oppose the principal argument of radical feminism that patriarchy is women's sole or primary source of oppression.

1.2.4 Cultural Feminism

This feminist theory viewpoint is used to refute the idea that there is a "female nature" or "female essence" or similar attempts to revalidate characteristics assigned to femininity (Alcoff 405). Cultural feminists claim there are fundamental biological differences between men and women and that women should celebrate these differences. Women are inherently gentler and kinder. Due to these differences, there would be no more war if women ruled the world, and it would be a better place.

In essence, a women's method is the right and better way for everyone. Linda Alcoff illustrates: "Man has said that woman can be defined, delineated, captured, understood, explained, and diagnosed to a level of determination never accorded to man himself, who is conceived as a rational animal with free will" (410).

1.2.5   Ecofeminism

This theory centers on the connection between "humans to the nonhuman world" (Tong). Patriarchy is harmful to women as well as to the world, according to ecofeminists. There is a connection between the urge of a male to dominate unruly women and the wild. Men feel as if to have full power; they must tame and conquer both. Ecofeminists say it is this urge that destroys women as well as the earth. This feminist theory supposedly aims to eliminate all forms of social inequality, not just discrimination against women and the environment.

1.3   Historical Evolution of Feminism

In the twentieth century, feminism became a global movement, although the end of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of the emergence of feminism as a worldwide movement. In 1892, Paris hosted the first international congress to use the word feminist in its title. Feminism has been more of a Western movement from the beginning, and the connections between feminists in Europe and North America were critical for its spread. In several dictionaries, the definition of feminism is a doctrine aimed at improving the position of women. If gender equality is central to that aim, attempts to categorize feminism must take into account the notion that it embraces both equality and difference (Rogers 258-259).

Charles Fourier was the first to use the concept of feminism in the eighteenth century. Fourier argued that women could be granted more rights and freedom to progress in society. He also argued that all sexual expressions should be accepted so long as there is no exploitation of people, and that "affirming one's difference" would enhance social inclusion (Goldstein 91).

The first contributions to feminism emerged in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries among the publications of Marie Le Jars de Gourney, Christine Pizan, Olympe de Gouges, Mary Wollstonecraft and Hedwig Dohm. The society initially claimed human rights were male rights due to patriarchal order. The feminine identity was not recognized. Nevertheless, in 1793, Olympe de Gouges, a French political activist, opposed the case and proposed that "the declaration of human rights" be adopted, for the equality between women and men (Mousset 99). During the Reign of Terror, she was executed by guillotine, for violating the revolutionary government system and for her close connection with the Girondist. The women's movement gained acceleration after her execution.

1.4 Waves of Feminism

Feminist theory scholars analyze the past of feminism as three separate waves. The following section discusses all three of these waves. It also explains how each of them started and spread. Moreover, this section focuses on the three waves of feminism's key concerns and issues.

1.4.1 The First Wave Feminism

'First Wave Feminism' is a term widely used in European and North American feminist movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They fought for women's voting rights and professional involvement. Mary Wollstonecraft is a pioneer of the first wave feminism. In 1792, she published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* Wollstonecraft argued that if women are provided with the same education and opportunities as men, they would be equal to men in every way. She opposes an inequality inflicted on women (Code 15).

During this time, the feminists' concerns were about schooling, jobs, marriage

laws and the intelligent middle-class single woman's dilemma. They were concerned primarily with the issues of working-class white women of the upper-middle class. Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth are first-wave feminist intellectuals in America. They struggled for social, civil and religious conditions and women's rights.

The feminism of the twentieth century concludes the first wave of feminism that addresses inequality, collective social and political concerns and women's self-determination. It also developed and has divided into broad areas as reformist and revolutionaries. Reformist feminists are liberal, and revolutionaries are radicals, socialists and Marxists (Nehere 6).

1.4.2   The Second Wave Feminism

The second wave feminism originally came from the writings of Juliet Mitchell, the British feminist, with an ideology of radicalism based on economic and social conditions. In the 1960s to 1990s, many feminists were mainly associated with social movements, i.e. the anti-Vietnam demonstrations and the civil rights movement. They fought for reproductive rights, legalizing abortion and birth control. Also, they struggled for analyzing gender differences, achieving equal rights in the political and economic spheres and obtaining sexual liberation.

Second-wave feminists concentrated on socio-economic issues such as job equality, sexual harassment, and discriminations based on gender, race, sexuality, class, age, performance, ethnicity, religion and political outcomes. These feminists succeeded in the fields of sexual freedom, equal funding for women and integrating workplace and political areas. It is noticeable that, in 1968, the U.S. feminists fought against the beauty contest to stop discriminatory practices among women for race,

color, expressions, etc. with the sense of male oppression and use.

British activists, on the other hand, fought for equal pay for equal work. Feminism was devoted to providing critical strategic analysis of the dynamics of structural power, theoretical presuppositions, social practices and institutions that exploit and marginalize women and effect social change. The second wave feminists differed dramatically from the early attempts to portray women as a caste, class or homogeneous community. They committed themselves to develop analytical methods to explore points of convergence and divergence in the lives of women.

1.4.3 The Third Wave Feminism

Rebecca Walker, an American feminist writer, has coined the term 'Third Wave Feminism' which aims at economic and social equality (Nehere 7). The main concerns of this third wave feminism are sexual freedom, including women from various groups such as race, religion, bisexual, transgender and low income. Nevertheless, these feminists mostly fought for reproductive rights, protection from violence at home, workplace and public place, economic rights, recognition of caring employment, sex discrimination act, more female parliamentarians, religious rights as women clergy, rabbis and workplace equality, i.e., more men at home and more women at work.

1.5 Psychoanalytic Approach

This section of the research addresses the historical background of psychoanalysis. It also discusses the various psychoanalytical theories to literary works: repression and the unconscious, infantile sexuality, the interpretation of dreams, the Oedipus complex, and the instincts' theory.

1.5.1 Historical Background of Psychoanalysis

One of the most influential theories in the 20th century was psychoanalysis. The foundation of this approach was adapted from the theories of Sigmund Fraud and the psychiatrist Carl Jung from Switzerland. The founding father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, had been brought into the field of psychology for personal reasons. His obsessive personality and "penchant for rejecting people who did not totally agree with him," had entirely determined the history of psychoanalysis (Boeree). Psychoanalysis is altogether a form of treatment, a theory, and an "investigative tool" (Boeree). Freud made repeated use of each of these three aspects of psychoanalysis to progress our comprehension of human mental functioning.

In the 1880s, Freud began his psychoanalytical research while trying to treat behavioral disorders in his Viennese patients. He called the disorders 'hysteria,' and started treating them by listening to his patients talk about their problems. Freud concluded, based on this research, that the action of people is influenced by their unconsciousness. The idea that human beings are motivated, or even guided, by impulses, fears, needs and disputes they do not know about.

Freud believed that childhood's events influenced the unconscious. He arranged these events into stages of development involving parental relationships, desire's drives and pleasure where children concentrate, according to him, on various parts of their body (Richter 1015). These stages represent basic levels of desire, but they also include fear of loss [loss of genitals, loss of affection from parents, and loss of life] and repression.

However, Tyson reminds the reader that: "repression doesn't eliminate our painful experiences and emotions...we unconsciously behave in ways that will allow

us to 'play out'...our conflicted feelings about the painful experiences and emotions we repress" (15). To keep this problem hidden in one's unconsciousness, Freud claimed that a person develops defenses such as selective perception and memory, denial, displacement, illusion, fear of intimacy and fear of death, among others.

Freud proposed that human's interests and unconscious disputes give rise to three sections of the mind. These sections work together to create complex human attitudes and they battle for dominance as the human being develops from infancy to childhood, to adulthood. The mental activities divide into three mental zones: the id, the ego, and the superego.

The only element of personality that existed from birth is the id. It is considered by Freud as a concept of enjoyment, which is completely unconscious and contains the instinctive and primitive acts. The role of the id, according to Freud, is to fulfill our instincts and urges without the consciousness of moral restraint or social norms. The ego, on the other hand, is controlled by moral values; it governs the id's instinctual desires and fulfills these desires in practical and socially acceptable ways (Richter 1015).

Additionally, superego is the personality aspect that adopts the moral standards and beliefs gained from the environment. It reflects the ethical constraints that repress desires or the drives of the id since these urges in society are inappropriate. The superego works to civilize and idealize the behavior of humans; it transforms the values of the ego from reasonable to idealistic. The ego is, therefore, the bridge between the id and the superego; it meets the needs of the id in a social context.

1.5.2 The Various Psychoanalytical Theories to Literary Works

The Psychoanalytic approach centers on the psychology of characters in a novel,

a play, a film, or a narrative and treats them as if they were real human beings. This approach analyzes the characters' psychology by trying to understand the kind of motivation that drive these characters, and whether or not Freud's, or other psychologists', theories are applicable to them. The reader or the researcher cannot understand the psychology of characters without understanding the Freudian theories. The main theories of Freud regarding repression, sexuality, the interpretation of dreams and instincts can now be illustrated.

1.5.2.1 Repression and the Unconscious

Freud differentiated between the level of mental activity concerning conscious and unconscious; he stresses on the unconscious aspects of the human psyche. Reasoning that everything a patient has forgotten must have been quite disturbing, frightening, traumatic and embarrassing; Freud argued that it was precisely for this reason that it was removed from conscious memory. Freud hypothesized that any powerful emotion or impulse that was unpleasant in the neurotic, continued to function in the unconscious domain where it maintained its complete "cathexis" or energy investment (Habib 574).

That is the procedure that Freud called repression. He considered it to be the primary defensive mechanism in which the ego was obliged to defend itself against any renewed danger from the repressed urge of permanent energy investment. Freud regarded repression as the cornerstone of neuroses' understanding. His latest findings changed the nature of the physician's task: "He was no longer simply redirecting an impulse which had found an abnormal outlet, but rather attempting to uncover repressions and to replace them with conscious acts of judgment. From this time on, Freud called his investigative method not catharsis but psychoanalysis" (Habib 574).

1.5.2.2   Infantile Sexuality

The subsequent arguments made by Freud, regarding child sexuality, elicited even more aggression and resentment from the society surrounding him. While Freud was studying the disputes between the sexual impulses of subjects and their resistance to psychoanalytic criticism of sexuality, he was led back into the childhood period of the life of patients. He found that in this period, the nature of subsequent nervous disorders was developed. Habib states that the claim of Freud, that the sexual function started in childhood, "profoundly contradicted conventional beliefs and prejudices, expressed in theology, poetry, and popular opinion, about the "innocence" of childhood" (575).

Moreover, Freud not only saw sexuality as active from the start of a person's life, but he also saw normal adult sexual life as the result of a long and complicated evolution of an individual's sexual function. At first, this function is linked to other essential functions of the body and only gains freedom from them and focuses on the reproductive function afterward. Initially, the sexual function manifests itself in component instincts categorized according to different erotogenic areas in the body. Therefore, the sexual activity at first seeks its objects of enjoyment in the body of the subject itself. The first operational step is controlled by "the oral components; there follows an anal-sadistic stage; and only then does sexuality concentrate its expression through the genitals as serving the end of reproduction" (Habib 575).

1.5.2.3   The Interpretation of Dreams

In Freud's view, free association and experienced interpretation enabled psychoanalysis to make another breakthrough that violated traditional scientific wisdom and that is "to discover the meaning of dreams" (Habib 576). Ancient cultures

attached different kinds of meaning to dreams, such as foreseeing the future or reflecting a means of communication between divine and human.

Furthermore, modern science considered that reading dreams belonged to the domain of superstition. But psychoanalysis stressed that dreams could be interpreted scientifically. The analyst may conclude a thought structure from the impressions created by the dreamer, composed of concealed dream-thoughts. Habib declares that "these were expressed not directly but only as translated and distorted into the manifest dream, which was composed largely of visual images" (576).

In Freud's study, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he claimed that among the latent dream-thoughts, one stands out and controls the dream's creation, by using the remains of the day. This thought is a pleasant impulse, and the dream reflects the impulse's satisfaction. Freud adds that during sleep, the ego focuses on relaxing its energy spending on repression. The unconscious instinct makes use of this chance to make its way into consciousness via the dream. Nevertheless, the ego keeps some of its repressive resistance as a kind of dream censorship: the latent dream-thoughts are forced to undergo modifications, so that the dream's real meaning stays unrecognizable. Freud thus identified a dream as "the disguised fulfillment of a repressed wish" (28).

The dream-work or mechanism, by which the latent thoughts are transformed into the dream's manifest or explicit content, occurs through several functions: condensation of the parts of the dream's preconscious material, displacement of the dream's mental emphasis; and dramatization of the entire dream through conversion into a visual image (Habib 577). Although a dream communicates fulfillment of a repressed desire, it can also continue the previous waking day's preconscious action,

expressing a purpose, a threat, or a reflection. Psychoanalysis may take advantage of this dual dream function to gain knowledge of the conscious and unconscious processes of the patient.

1.5.2.4   The Oedipus Complex

Freud assumed the Oedipus complex to be one of the most strongly determining factors in the child's development. In essence, the Oedipus complex includes the need of children for their parents, and the tension that occurs when children grow and understand that they are not the absolute focus of the attention of their mother. David Richter also explains that the Oedipus complex starts between the third and sixth years of the infant in a late period of the infant's sexuality and takes a different form in males than in females (1016).

Freud claimed that both girls and boys desire to possess their mothers, but as they grow older, they start to feel that the mother's attention to the father frustrates their claim to exclusive attention. Freud continued that children link this dispute of care to the intimate relationship between mother and father, which excludes them. He believed that the outcome is a catastrophic fury against the father and a possessive desire towards the mother.

However, Freud found out that the Oedipus complex varies between boys and girls in terms of "the functioning of the related castration complex" (Richer 1016). In brief, Freud believed that the boys fantasized during the Oedipal rivalry, meaning between boys and their fathers, that punishment for their outrage should come in the form of castration. Moreover, Freud argued that when boys work through this fear successfully, they learn to bond with their fathers in the hope of acquiring a woman like their mother one day.

On the other hand, the castration complex in girls does not take the form of anxiety. The outcome is a wave of frustrated anger in which the girl transfers her sexual desire from the mother to the father. Freud argued that the girl's rejected advances towards her father, would ultimately give way to a desire to possess a man like her father later in life. He also believed that the effect of the unconscious, id, ego, superego, the defenses and the Oedipus complex was unavoidable and that these aspects of the mind influence all the attitudes and even dreams of adults.

1.5.2.5   The Theory of the Instincts

The ongoing observations of Freud guided him to believe that the neuroses' nucleus was the Oedipus complex. Habib comments that "it was both the climax of infantile sexual life and the foundation for all of the later developments of sexuality" (577). This, in turn, escorted Freud to assume that neurologists were unable to address problems that ordinary people had solved. Psychoanalysis, in other words, demonstrated the psychology of the normal human mind.

Before the Oedipal period, in which the libido is bound to the parent's images, there is a phase of "narcissism or self-love in which the subject's libido has his own ego for an object" (Habib 577). Freud guessed that this condition never stops entirely, and this libido moves back and forth from the self to the world's objects throughout his life. In other words, narcissistic libido is constantly converted into an object-libido, and vice versa, along with being exemplified in a state of being in love where the subject can move from state of self-sacrifice to self-indulgence. These factors caused Freud to redevelop the repression's mechanism.

Freud argued that the significant agency of repression was the self-preservation instincts or the "ego-instincts" (Freud 36). These instincts are what constitute the

narcissistic libido. Narcissistic libido opposes the object-libido in the process of repression; the self-preservative impulses protect themselves against the demands of object-love.

1.6 Conclusion

To conclude, feminism is addressed as a series of movements and ideologies intended to identify, establish, and defend equal political, economic, and social rights for women. Feminism also has several variations; however, they all center on women's oppression. Additionally, feminism can be seen in literature, where it refers to how literary works are interpreted in both production and reception.

On the other hand, the psychoanalytic approach, as a secondary approach that focuses on the unconscious mind rather than the conscious mind, is built upon the fundamental idea that the behavior is defined by incidents from one's past that are settled in the unconscious mind. Furthermore, it has made a lasting impression on literature, by influencing fictional works that embody elements of psychoanalytic theory and acting as the foundation for psychoanalytic literary criticism, where literature is criticized via the psychoanalytic theory's framework.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a remarkable work of fiction that both mirrors and speaks toward the social systems of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in an extremely clever way. Its unique approach for portraying the obvious real-life problems and female concerns is always a fruitful topic for discussion. Therefore, through this study, *Frankenstein*'s novel will be interpreted and analyzed from the viewpoint of feminism in literature and psychoanalytic literary criticism to analyze the novel from various angles and help solve the research problem.

Chapter Two:

Female Victimization in Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein

Female Victimization in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

2.1   Introduction

Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley's mother, was one of the greatest defenders of women's rights at the time. Yet, her daughter's first novel, *Frankenstein*, gave little attention to the female characters, and it was told from the perspectives of three men. This contradiction puzzled the readers' minds, but for those willing to read between the lines of this apparent neglect of female representation, it will be surprising to discover the truth behind *Frankenstein*'s male-dominated society. Smolka argues that *Frankenstein*'s readers "may have the impression that Mary Shelley had very little to say about the social position of women since the women in the novel have little to say themselves" (25). Still, this way of interpreting the novel could not be far from the author's true intentions.

This chapter is an attempt to prove that Shelley's act of limiting her female characters to be weak and vulnerable helped her to deliver a realistic portrayal and a harsh criticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries unfair social status of women. Additionally, it will show that she represents her mother's feminist values by portraying the destructive impact that male domination can have on society. This chapter will also try to reveal that the novel is perhaps indeed a complicated work with a deep feminist framework emphasizing the importance of women repeatedly.

2.2   The Feminine Essence in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

This section sheds light on the social and historical background of *Frankenstein*'s novel. Moreover, it provides a detailed description of women's subordination in the book by discussing five of its female characters: Margaret Walton, Elizabeth Lavenza, Justine Moritz, Caroline Beaufort, and the Female Monster.

Female Victimization in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

2.2.1   Social and Historical Background of the Novel

Frankenstein or *The Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Shelley, was first published in 1818. Its second edition was published in 1823, followed by another revised version, referred to by the author as her "hideous progeny" in the preface to the novel's third edition, published in 1831. The writing process of the novel came at a time when the world-changing impact of the French Revolution and the First Industrial Revolution was as powerful as ever. There were numerous cultural, political, but above all scientific advances in that period; their thorough elaboration in *Frankenstein* shows that Shelley knew their nature well. Ellis notes that "Shelley had an active interest in, and a sophisticated understanding of, some important scientific debates of her time on electricity and the origin of life" (2).

Moreover, in the light of the Enlightenment, individuals have now been able to gain knowledge of the human body that was incomprehensible, and do things that were possible only in their imagination. And it is precisely this scientific development that gives Shelley's fiction the most interesting aspects to this day, alongside the moral questions which linger over all the inventions.

The society to which Mary Shelley and her novel belonged was still a period of extreme social imbalance between men and women, in the literary world and life in general. Literary authors worked hard to oppose that notion of inequality between genders. John Stuart Mill, one of the nineteenth-century British philosophers, testifies that the central social issue of the period is that its "system (...) entirely subordinates the weaker sex to the stronger" (7). Put differently, he illustrates that the notion of a woman as an independent human being with its rights was looked down upon and with profound disgust.

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Fifty-one years after the first publication of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, *The Subjection of Women*, Mill's most influential work on the inferior status of women in society, was published. Therefore, it can be established that the problems he points to in his essay were undeniably present in her time. Undoubtedly, Shelley had enough trouble trying to express herself in terms of her subordinate role as a woman in such a discriminating society, let alone attempting to gain an esteemed position as a female writer. Louise Othello Knudsen clarifies that "Women were not expected to write, and it was common belief that they did not even possess the talent of creating a text" (73).

During the Romantic period, Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*, which was both original and unique. Furthermore, the difficulties she faced as a female writer at the beginning of her career worsened because the two most popular Romantic authors who encouraged her first to write it were her spouse, Percy Shelley, and Lord Byron. Also, *Frankenstein*, an incredible work of fiction created by a female writer, reflected an issue of its time. Its underlying messages aimed at making Shelley's male-dominated society more controversial during the time in which the book was written. Besides, she indirectly and severely criticized the male-biased society where she lived. Thus, it is not surprising to understand why Shelley chose to publish her *Frankenstein* first without claiming her authorship.

2.2.2 Detailed Description of Women's Subordination

This section is both a description of female characters in Shelley's novel, as described by her, and an examination of the connection between every male character depraved from a female part. Furthermore, it discusses the life difficulties of the women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Margaret Walton, Elizabeth Lavenza, Justine Moritz, Caroline Beaufort, and the Female Monster are the five characters that will be addressed in terms of female oppression.

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2.2.2.1   Margret Saville Walton

Mrs. Margaret Saville is the first female character in the book to appear. Her appearance in the novel helps to highlight a significant feature. That feature is Shelley's entire male-dominated narrative structure that operates, according to Bennett and Curran, as "a metaphor for men's commanding power over women's lives" (2). Thus, it can be inferred that the quiet and receptive manner of Margaret in fact sets a pattern for women's overall portrayal in the novel. In other words, this element of conveying and deliberately ignoring Margaret's words and attitudes by her brother is a potent mechanism used to transform all female characters in *Frankenstein* to be, perhaps, nothing more than an audience for the stories of men. Even Knudsen manages to conclude that Margaret's role is only "a tool of communication" (13).

This transformation of women into merely a male audience occurs both literally and symbolically. Literally, because men convey the stories of all the women the reader learns about throughout the novel. Robert Walton is the first narrator, followed by Victor Frankenstein then the Monster. Also, the symbolic transformation indicates that women are not allowed to express themselves and that their views are not taken seriously, regardless of the topic on which they attempt to influence men. In short, women were not permitted to pry into the affairs of men.

Hence, the words of Margret, who, according to Walton, "have regarded" his "enterprise" with "such evil forebodings" (Shelley 2) and her clear thoughts' transmission to him, have failed to distract him from his goal. Additionally, Walton asks her to "Continue to write to [him] by every opportunity (…) to support [his] spirits" (9) which openly reveals his condescension towards Margaret and her opinions, along with complaining about a lack of a male friend with whom he was

willing to share his experience and ambition.

This complaint about the absence of a male friend that Walton reveals to his sister is another example of the subordination of females in Shelley's time; Walton is unable to find someone he would share with his vast knowledge. He cannot find this person, whether in his sister or any other female. Margaret, as a woman, never had the chance to learn the things he did, such as science, because, according to Knudsen, "education was intended for men only, whereas childbirth, childcare, and domestic life in general was reserved for the women" (15). Also, in one of Walton's last letters, he informs the readers that Margaret is at home and might be happy with "a husband, and lovely children" (Shelley 178).

Therefore, the character of Margaret is a way of understanding the role of the other female characters of Shelley. The conclusions the reader draws from the book about her role relate to any other female character in the novel. There is absolutely no difference between these females because according to Berthold Schoene-Harwood: "Women could only have a domestic life where their roles constituted on nothing but caretaking and serving, while the men enjoyed many advantages in life publicly and had the chance to pursue any career they wanted" (100).

2.2.2.2 Elizabeth Lavenza

Elizabeth Lavenza is the second female character to be addressed. She portrays a perfect example of an affectionate woman that has been continually pressured from birth to ignore her own needs and desires in order to fully surrender herself to a man and anyone else in need of her affection. Her character is possibly the most suppressed female character in the novel as her submission comes from both the external forces as well as from her internal, profoundly embedded mentality that a

woman should be submissive always and without an excuse.

From the very beginning of the novel, the first example of Elizabeth's subjugation by others can be observed. Elizabeth is the daughter of the sister of Alphonse Frankenstein, Victor's father. Her mother was married to an Italian gentleman and later died, leaving Elizabeth to be cared for by her father. But soon enough, her father ended up marrying another woman and sent Elizabeth to the Frankenstein's. The father of Elizabeth treated her like an item which needed to be cared for after his wife's death, a burden that must be lifted off of him, and "commodifying [her] much as one might in a business negotiation" (Bennett and Curran 2).

Likewise, in the 1831 version, Victor's mother found Elizabeth in an Italian family of poor farmers after her birth parents died and left her with the care of this family. So, she decides to foster her and just before she gets to stay with the Frankenstein's, Victor's mother Caroline will be happy to declare that she has "a pretty present for [her] Victor— tomorrow he shall have it" (Shelley 30); as if Elizabeth were a possession. A statement such as this, coming from a female, brings another significant element of female subjugation; it only serves to illustrate the disastrous consequences of such a view of women from a female perspective.

The inferiority rooted in Caroline's mentality does not allow her to protest against her position. Bennett and Curran view her "as much a victim of the dominant power system as its proponent" (5) to the extent that she even acts in the same manner with other females; thus, referring to Elizabeth as an object. Moreover, a real feature of the patriarchal society of Shelley's time shows when it was also Caroline who "determined" that Elizabeth should be "[Victor's] future wife; a design which [Elizabeth] never found reason to repent" (Shelley18).

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Furthermore, the relationship between Elizabeth and Caroline emphasizes the idea that powerful affection is a female trait. At the beginning of the novel, Elizabeth catches scarlet fever, and because Caroline "could no longer debar herself from" taking care of Elizabeth, she goes to her "long before the danger of infection was past" (26), becomes ill herself, and dies shortly after it. This kind of sacrifice that a woman is willing to take for another human shows the female's trait of selflessness, a characteristic which is possessed by none of the male characters in the novel. Similarly, this trait can be observed in the behavior of Elizabeth after the death of Caroline as Victor states the following:

> My mother's death, and my speedy departure, depressed our spirits; but Elizabeth endeavoured to renew the spirit of cheerfulness in our little society. (...) She determined to fulfil her duties with the greatest exactness; and she felt that that most imperious duty, of rendering her uncle and cousins happy, had devolved upon her. She consoled me, amused her uncle, instructed my brothers; and I never beheld her so enchanting as at this time, when she was continually endeavouring to contribute to the happiness of others, entirely forgetful of herself. (26)

Victor Frankenstein is the next to continue exercising his control over Elizabeth. He is her fiancé and husband for a brief period until the Monster kills her in her wedding. When it comes to Victor, Shelley extremely limits the role of Elizabeth. In the book, Elizabeth does nothing but writing to him, waiting for him, and worrying about his safety. She keeps repeating to him that "[She] would sacrifice [her] life to [his] peace" (Shelley 75). Also, Elizabeth never questions his acts nor dares to contradict them. All she wishes for is that one day he will respond to one of her many letters.

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Another example of Elizabeth's inferiority is the letter in which she begs Victor to confess if he fell in love with another. At the same time, Elizabeth expresses her fear that her demand might "give [him] pain," and if so, he must "not let this letter disturb [him]" (Shelley 156) and encourages him to take as much time as he needs to reply. On the other hand, Victor's actions reflect the apparent lack of respect for Elizabeth as an equal person. One of the few times he mentioned her, Victor described his feelings for her saying that "[He] loved to tend on her, as [he] should on a favourite animal" (18). This statement may seem like a casual comment, but it does expose the degrading attitude of men towards women.

Nonetheless, it is essential to clarify that this is not only Victor's narcissism or egotism but also the entire society's attitude towards women. Victor thinks of Elizabeth in this way, as they both adopted from an early age their pre-positions in society. Bennett and Curran note that "her education [was] limited to reading poetry and admiring nature on her own while Frankenstein [attended] a local school" (4). Likewise, Victor's father refuses Elizabeth's suggestion for the potential career of Ernest, Victor's younger brother, when she demonstrates that because of his love of nature and fresh air, it would be much more fitting for him to become a farmer rather than a lawyer. Moreover, Alphonse smiles and says "that [she] ought to be an advocate [herself]" (Shelley 48), putting an end to her proposal.

Therefore, the widespread of a prejudiced mindset that allowed women to take an interest in banal things, meanwhile awareness and involvement in the real world were reserved only for men, can be observed here again. Wollstonecraft explains that at the time, men were inclined to "considering females rather as women than human creatures" (6), based on the incorrect assumption that the female reasoning capacity is weaker than that of a man. As a result, women were consciously and deliberately cut

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off from every aspect of life except for the household.

Also, Wollstonecraft's claim, that marriage is "the only way women can rise in the world" (9), strengthens when it comes to Elizabeth. This view manifests itself in Victor's words; he refuses to tell his fiancé about the Monster and what he did in Ingolstadt until they are married. He says to her that "[He] will confide [his] tale of misery and terror to [her] the day after [their] marriage shall take place" for "there must be perfect confidence between [them]" (Shelley 158), basically implying that despite her constant devotion, he still does not trust her enough to share his problems.

While Victor openly puts Elizabeth's life at great risk by not warning her about the Monster and his killing plans, he continues in this adamant assumption that under no circumstances should women be allowed to participate in men's affairs, let alone if they are not married. This case supports the argument of Wollstonecraft by demonstrating just how profoundly the society of their time was prejudiced.

The last and by far, the essential example of Victor Frankenstein's rule over Elizabeth's life is how her life ends. It is the selfishness of Victor, hidden under the pretense of thinking of the greater good by refusing to create a female companion for the Monster, which causes the horrific death of Elizabeth on the Monster's hands. When the Monster threatens Victor by saying: "I will be with you on your wedding-night" (Shelley 142), Victor instantly concludes that his own life is the one at risk, never stopping to think twice and realizing that the Monster may try to kill Elizabeth.

2.2.2.3 Justine Moritz

The third female character in question is Justine Moritz, a maid at the Frankenstein's household and yet another ideal female portrayal. Louise Othello Knudsen describes her as the "pretty, domesticated, virtuous, passive and devoted to

others" (53). She endures the same kind of helplessness and subordination from men, which mostly leads to her demise. Moreover, Justine displays her loving personality throughout the novel. First, she suffers a lot after the death of her mistress Caroline. Then, she listens to Elizabeth's concerns and helps her during Victor's stay in Ingolstadt when he fails to answer her letters. Last, she is "warmly attached" to Victor's little brother, William, and worries about him "like a most affectionate mother" (Shelley 64).

Later, a sequence of events leads Justine to be an exact representation of a submissive woman and portrays women's lack of control over their own lives. These events are first, the murder of little William on the hands of the Monster, a male character who is the creation of yet another man. Second, while Justine is asleep, the Monster intentionally frames her for the murder he committed, by putting William's locket in her pocket. And last, though Victor knew that the murderer was the Monster and not Justine, he chooses to do nothing to prove her innocence; on top of that, he claims that he is more hurt than Justine by those false accusations: "The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom, and would not forego their hold" (Shelley 135).

Although Victor's statement seems incredibly selfish, it is, in fact, the innate female self-denial characteristic of Justine that emphasizes the damaging influence of patriarchal education in the time of Shelley. Justine is not worried about her freedom, but by the question of loyalty to her master and mistress, indicating how women did not learn to fight for themselves. She declared: "I truly thank [Victor] (…) It removes more than half my misfortune; and I feel as if I could die in peace, now that my innocence is acknowledged by you, dear lady, and your cousin" (Shelley 83). Her lack of ability to save herself from prosecution, as well as the vain attempt of Elizabeth to

testify to Justine's good nature, speaks again to prove the subjection of females.

2.2.2.4 Caroline Beaufort

One more female character is Caroline Beaufort, Victor's mother, and Elizabeth Lavenza's aunt, who has already been mentioned in connection to Elizabeth's inferior position. At the beginning of chapter one, Shelley reveals how Alphonse Frankenstein has made Caroline his wife: "He passed his younger days perpetually occupied by the affairs of his country; and it was not until the decline of life that he thought of marrying, and bestowing on the state sons who might carry his virtues and his name down to posterity" (16). The narrator here offers more evidence of social injustice between women and men. Besides reinforcing the belief that it is only reasonable for men to be educated and devote the majority of their time to business, there is the issue of seeing women as mere objects used for giving birth to children.

Furthermore, Shelley uses Caroline's character to portray how the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' society looked upon independent women. She does that by telling a brief history of Caroline's life before she married Alphonse and had his children. Caroline's father, who had lost all his money due to some unfortunate events, was a good friend of Mr. Frankenstein's. After that, he became ill and could not take care of his daughter, which, according to the time's embedded belief, meant that Caroline is in massive trouble due to her lack of any male to protect her.

Despite that, Caroline managed to support herself and her father "by various means contrived to earn a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life" (Shelley 17). Her bravery would probably nowadays be considered a natural action. Still, Victor describes his mother as "a mind of an uncommon mould" (17), which is an indication that Shelley's readers were not used to this kind of thing at that time. However, strong

social constraints against women prevented her from being bravely independent and made her believe that she needs a man. Therefore, Alphonse was "like a protecting spirit" to her, and she "committed herself to his care" (17). Knudsen declares that when Caroline married and became a mother, she embodied "the ideal of the proper lady, devoted to her family at the cost of own identity and aspirations" (11).

2.2.2.5   The Female Monster

Last but not the least important, the incomplete Female Monster. Also, another female victim of Victor Frankenstein and his Monster. Victor informs Walton that he destroyed the Female Monster before finishing her formation because he realized that "she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate (…) in murder and wretchedness" (Shelley 139), and imagined what might occur when this female comes into being:

> She, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal, might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. They might even hate each other (...) and might he not conceive a greater abhorrence for it when it came before his eyes in the female form? She also might turn with disgust from him to the superior beauty of man; she might quit him, and he be again alone, exasperated by the fresh provocation of being deserted by one of his own species. (139)

Victor's statement means that was the Female Monster to be created, she might rebel against him and refuse to serve the purpose of her creation, which is being the Monster's companion. In other words, he is afraid of her having a free will that would allow her to determine her identity and existence without any male's control. In Victor's eyes, female independence becomes a great danger.

However, had he found a way to control her, he would have kept her alive, and that illustrates how women generally had to obey and be submissive to men's desire. Cynthia Pon speculates that "had the female creature been completed, she would have been made to order according to the desire of the male creature" (43). In other words, it is as if women are permitted to exist as long as they do not pose any threat to men's ego.

Additionally, the Monster says to Victor: "I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself: the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another" (Shelley 121). This means that the Monster desires to have a female like himself to control and cast his sadness and misery on her, in the hope that she will tolerate him since she is created the same way as him. A female monster who, if kept alive, has no option but to stay with the male monster because the entire world rejects her as well. Consequently, the destiny of the Female Monster is decided even before her existence.

Eventually, the portrayal of Mary Shelley of the female characters mentioned leads to the conclusion that women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries endured a lot of injustice with relation to their status in society as they were excluded from every aspect of life apart from the private one, which is their emotions. In general, they were entirely denied the right to be educated like men and constantly urged to be safely settled in the domestic sphere, serving their roles as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers without complaining about the inequalities they face in their lives.

2.3   Feminist Concepts at the Core of *Frankenstein*

Shelley's five female characters addressed in the previous section represent the inferior status of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These women

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were viewed as poorly educated, lacked a good personality, were satisfied with their lives, yet seemed as objects at the men's hands, and some of them were eventually killed by the end of the novel. Moreover, men frequently play a crucial role in their deaths, as seen in the cases of Elizabeth, Justine and the Female Monster.

However, if one recognizes the literary heritage in which Shelley was born, one would find it confusing that the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, a famous feminist critic known for her strong opinions embedded in gender equality, would appear to be writing her first book, *Frankenstein*, with no regard to the portrayal of her female characters. At a superficial glance, Shelley's female characters seem to go against all that Wollstonecraft wishes for women to be, and that is to be educated, strong, and smart. Wollstonecraft's most famous feminist document, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, fights for the then-radical perspective of women's minds being equal to that of men and should be treated as such.

A closer analysis of the novel, therefore, shows that the exact opposite is accurate. Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* to portray her mother's feminist messages. The female portrayal in the book is also a representative of what can happen to women and men in society if the warnings of Wollstonecraft are ignored. It seems that the criticism in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was not as nearly as direct as her mother's, but Anne K. Mellor believes that Shelley was undoubtedly influenced by her mother's work and "specifically portrays the consequences of a social construction of gender which values men over women" (*Usurping the Female* 116). Thus, one can conclude that Shelley wrote about her time's submissive women to criticize any element of women's social oppression.

Besides, Mary Shelley chose to portray her novel through a male-dominated narrative on purpose to highlight in the story and, in general, the central problem of

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the society. It is, as Knudsen clarifies, "That the women are not allowed a voice in the story is a direct parallel to the real world, where the male sex was authorised to speak and women were not" (57). He continues: "Her feministic critique can therefore be seen as a non-verbal critique since it is the women's lack of voice that is essential" (73).

Furthermore, there are two main ways in which Shelley's novel criticizes the societal norms by embracing her mother's opinion that the clear division between males and females' role is harmful to society in general. The most persuasive argument of many critics who support this view is that those female characters, upon whom Shelley strengthens the female status within her society, end up being dead. According to Smolka, their death is directly related to "their obedience to the role prescribed for them by the male patriarchal society which deprives them of any ability to save themselves" (26).

For instance, Caroline, who sacrifices herself and dies as a direct result of her caring nature, Mellor explains that Caroline's behavior "incarnates a patriarchal ideal of female devotion and self-sacrifice" (*Usurping the Female* 116). There is also the obedient Justine, whose cruel prosecution aims to represent the society's condition. Justine's death is the most significant attack by Shelley on the inequality of patriarchal political systems, which created a great deal of social evil.

There is, however, one character in the novel who indicates that Shelley's criticism was specific, not general. The character is Safie, the Arabian woman in love with Felix De Lacey. Knudsen describes her as "an independent, strong, passionate, and courageous woman" (55) who flees from her father and lives a happy life with the De Lacey's, unlike any of the women in Frankenstein's family.

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On the other hand, the second element of Shelley's critique that reflects the ideas of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is that, according to some critics, *Frankenstein* not only criticizes women's alienation from life's public domain, but also exposes the dangers of the intentional separation of men from the private or emotional aspects of their lives. The destructive effects that men and their ambitions can have on society are numerous. A perfect example of such man is Victor Frankenstein. Anne K. Mellor notes that "Frankenstein cannot work and love at the same time," and that "he fails to feel empathy for the creature he is constructing" (*Usurping the Female* 116). Since all the Monster ever wanted was to be loved, Victor's lack of affection towards him ends up being the leading cause of the Monster's revenge.

2.3.1 Exclusion of Women from the Reproduction Cycle

The exclusion of women from the reproductive cycle may seem to seriously deprive women of most of their essential role in society. Nevertheless, this is the most persuasive point in both Wollstonecraft and Shelley's claim that the absolute separation in gender is harmful not only to women but also to society in general. According to Mellor, and from a feminist perspective, Shelley's *Frankenstein*'s central theme is to assume "what happens when a man tries to have a baby without a woman" (*Making a Monster* 40). Similarly, the easiest way to interpret it as a text that represents a feminist theory is to conclude that Victor Frankenstein's story ends with a very tragic outcome precisely because he sought to have a baby without a woman.

The "gift of creation," as Knudsen refers to it (16), is perhaps the only privilege women have over men. Frankenstein's attempt to exclude women from this process reinforces the desire that men have to undermine women's role in society further. As a result, the failure of this attempt, suggests that Shelley did not advocate against male

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social domination merely because of its negative effect on women's lives. What she tried to reveal was that such an attempt had had a profoundly negative impact on men too. Earnest states that "by creating an intense collapse of boundaries, Shelley critiques the patriarchal insistence on a strictly divided gender dichotomy" (6).

The core idea of Victor's desire to practice superiority over women, by taking away their most natural role, is that only a monster might be the outcome of such an unusual act of reproduction in which women have become unnecessary. Moreover, Michal Smolka agrees with the exact reason for Frankenstein's tragic fate and those around him, as well as with Shelley's underlying message:

> There is a succession of tragic incidents that are the outgrowth of malfunctioning relationships between (…) men and women (or husband and wife). The male vanity is an element that corrupts the principles of a functioning family by considering 'himself' as superior to the female element. Defying equal mutual partnership, the male ego locks himself out of the basics of human society – the family. And this is the core of Mary Shelley's message – the counter productivity of such a behaviour since the man has situated himself outside the sphere of family intimacy and offspring breeding. (31)

Victor failed because he did not provide enough care for his Monster. After all, parental love could have stopped the Monster's violent actions. Also, the main reason Victor was unable to care for his Monster was due to the division between male and female in the realm of life. During that time, men ought to be rational, while women ought to be emotional, which deprived Frankenstein of "the mothering and nurturance [a child] requires," that was explicitly linked to the female gender at the time (Mellor, *Making a Monster* 51).

Male's egotism and arrogance at the expense of females can be seen clearly in

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Victor's following words: "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve their" (Shelley 37). This quote demonstrates the differences between men and women; the most significant female role was giving birth, and the following selflessness and deep love for the children. Despite this being considered a natural phenomenon, women have received no recognition for their childbirth or child raising struggles. Contrarily, Victor, who worked hard to create his Monster, but never knew labor's actual pains or its following love, believes himself deserving an everlasting recognition.

Feminist literary critics also explain Victor's urgent need to usurp women's role in the reproduction process. They argue that his acts stem from the fear of female sexuality and men's general desire to control women. Smolka illustrates the general attitude of men towards women and that "any effective liberation of women's position in society would weaken the patriarchal constitution," is originated in men's "unconscious horror of female sexuality." He adds, "The power of human reproduction it enables poses a threat to the established patriarchal network which then resorts to science and laws to manipulate, control and oppress women" (7).

Eventually, Victor did manage to exclude women from the reproduction process via science's help. Mellor tries to develop the theory above claiming that:

> A woman who is sexually liberated, free to choose her own life, her own sexual partner (by force, if necessary), and to propagate at will can appear only monstrously ugly to Victor Frankenstein, for she defies that sexist aesthetic that insists that women be small, delicate, modest, passive, and sexually pleasing -- but available only to their lawful husbands. (*Usurping the Female* 120)

Moreover, this explains why Victor destroys the Female Monster before it is even created. He feared that she might become worse than his Monster, yet he was even more horrified at the thought of her ability to have children. Frankenstein declared that "one of the first results of those sympathies for which the dæmon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror" (Shelley 139). And since Frankenstein has been interested in creating things all by himself, with no women's involvement, the Female Monster had to be destroyed in fear of her decision to breed in the future.

To conclude, the intentional exclusion of women by Victor Frankenstein from the process of creating another human being can be compared with the real and literary world dominated by men who usurp the right of women to be creative as well. Louise Othello Knudsen states, "The male scientist who created without a female was not only a warning against the rapidly developing science but also bespoke of an increasing marginalization of women in society and in literature" (10).

2.3.2 The Absence of Women and its Fatal Outcomes

The submissive portrayal of female characters in *Frankenstein* helped Mary Shelley to reveal how her generation treated women. However, this section aims to illustrate that the absence of female characters in Shelley's *Frankenstein* causes the downfall of male characters and leads to the launching of a catastrophic series of events in the novel. Moreover, the very absence of these female characters is what makes them so valuable. The two female role models whose absence triggers the novel's main events are the mother figure and the female partner.

Layla Earnest points out that *Frankenstein* is a "story about motherless children" (5). Therefore, the significance of the mother's absence in the novel should be

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acknowledged. Practically, every character grows up without a mother or endures the pain of her loss. First, Caroline, Elizabeth, and Safie are characters who lost their mothers at an earlier age. Second, the Monster created by Victor is born without a mother; meanwhile, the mother in the De Lacey family is not even mentioned. Also, Justine becomes motherless when her mother dies "on the first approach of cold weather" (Shelley 49). Earnest relates that Shelley used this, characters without mothers, as a coping mechanism to deal with her mother's absence (13).

Nevertheless, it is the death of Caroline, Victor's mother, that can be considered the instigator of the novel's crucial events. Earnest claims that "Victor's dead mother, constantly haunts the texts," and that the primary motive for Victor's creation of his Monster is the desire to recreate her somehow (6). Moreover, this offers a new viewpoint on the original reason for Victor to create the Monster, which is often viewed as an act of complete male egotism.

Then, there is the Monster's character whose desire for a female partner extends the disastrous series of events that began with his maker. Mary Jacobus offers a description of the Monster's mindset by saying: "Literally unmothered, he fantasizes acceptance by a series of women but founders in imagined rebuffs and ends in violence" (102). The Monster initially suffers because of his mother's rejection, Victor, but then his misery turns to anger only when he encounters the De Lacey family and sees how they treat one another with love and care. Afterwards, he thinks about being with a female partner as a means of becoming a regular part of society; he says, "I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of existence and events, from which I am now excluded" (Shelley 123).

Having killed little William, the Monster notices a locket with Caroline's image and becomes even more furious because he knows that no woman will ever love him:

In spite of my malignity, it softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark eyes, fringed by deep lashes, and her lovely lips; but presently my rage returned: I remembered that I was for ever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow; and that she whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have changed that air of divine benignity to one expressive of disgust and affright. (Shelley 119)

2.4   Conclusion

Frankenstein may seem like a novel that avoids femininity by creating strong male characters with weak female characters. But in reality, and in doing so, it represents the rigid division between male and female responsibilities. Also, it depicts the general female helplessness and restriction to domesticity, which eventually destroyed women. Moreover, Shelley's novel portrays female significance and the detrimental effects of her absence.

In conclusion, it is easy to see that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a remarkable work of literature that simultaneously reflects and speaks against the social structure of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in an exceptionally sophisticated way.

Chapter Three:

Male Monstrosity in Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein

Chapter Three:

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3.1 Introduction

The novel *Frankenstein* has a complicated storytelling style. At its heart is the story of the Monster, introduced in the story of Victor Frankenstein, presented in the epistolary story of Robert Walton. The novel's total frame is symmetrical, i.e., it starts with Robert's letters, moves to Victor's story, then transitions on to the Monster's narrative, and to Victor yet again, then finishes with Walton's notes. The reader is therefore subjected to multiple versions and viewpoints of the same story. The unusual structure of Shelley, not to settle to a single narrator and a specified narrative, gives different perceptions to the reader (Wolschak 1).

This chapter is an attempt to shed light on the novel's three male narrators, Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein and the Monster. Also, it shows how their monstrosity directly and partially contributes to the fatal doom of each of the female characters surrounding them. Moreover, this chapter proves that female's victimization in *Frankenstein* is not only a consequence of male's oppression but also a result of abiding by traditional gender roles of the patriarchal society.

3.2 The Male Voice's Subversion in *Frankenstein*

The narrative framework of Shelley's novel is a complex one; it consists of narratives inside narratives. All *Frankenstein*'s male narrators, who are Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the Monster, happen to be involved in journeys that detach them from intimate relations with women and lead them to the North Polar's desolate, frozen regions. Current approaches to *Frankenstein*'s novel has concluded that the men's tales in it indeed presents feminist concepts, particularly the tale of Victor, that shows his schemes to usurp women's role in childbirth by trying to create life on his own.

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Consequently, Victor Frankenstein could only create a male character, and one that is monstrous as well. Moreover, when he examines his almost finished female monster, which he created as the Monster's companion, Victor finds himself disgusted by her appearance, the thought of her being independent, her ability to breed, and decides to tear her apart. Ellen Moers claims that Victor's laboratory attitude replicates his attitude as a narrator, exposing his worries of allowing women to be independent (81-82).

Throughout the novel, each male narrator of the three seeks to undermine females' power of speech, even at those times when they tell the stories of these women briefly. Their intentional elimination of the viewpoints of females creates in the context of the novel a misogyny which condemns male characters to destruction, and that leads to the suffering of women. According to James P. Davis: "The three men may undermine the female voice, but Shelley subverts their subversion, revealing the social consequences of their misogyny and, by implication, the broader historical effects of the masculine literary tradition that they embody" (307).

3.3   Detailed Description of *Frankenstein*'s Male Characters

Robert Walton is the first male narrator. In letters sent to his sister Margaret, he writes about his journey to the Arctic. The narration of Walton begins and concludes the book; therefore, shaping the whole novel as he listens to the tale about Victor and the Monster and narrates it. The second narration is told by the main male character, Victor Frankenstein. Once Victor meets Robert on the latter's boat, after Victor is saved from freezing to death, Frankenstein informs Walton about his past. The Narration of the Monster is the third and final one. His narrative is told to Robert by Victor and contains the actual language used by the Monster from when he met Victor. Hence, the perspective of the Monster is transmitted to Robert by Victor.

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This intricate form of narration gives the reader the viewpoint of the Monster with regard to Victor's, thereby presenting different views of the same story. Moreover, the three storytellers are males; thus, the readers will only have the male viewpoint of interacting with female characters throughout the novel. As for the female characters, even when they are present, they are still somehow submissive and absent. Additionally, this apparent neglect of the female viewpoint sheds light on the attention that these males give to their pursuits and aspirations. Also, the view of males is noticeable in situations where women's characters are marginalized; Victor demonstrates that on numerous occasions. Cynthia Pon describes this as a "theme of the masculine quest" (35), in which the male protagonists are excessively occupied with their goals and important journeys to care about their families.

3.3.1   Robert Walton

Robert Walton is the first male narrator to be discussed thoroughly. Walton is depicted as someone who fully separates himself from society; he is unsteady, unpredictable, and lonely. Robert's only way of communing with his sister Margret Saville, who lives in England while he is in an isolated journey in the Arctic, is by letters. Via these letters, Robert frequently reveals his true feelings to Margaret. Sometimes, he refers to their close relationship as siblings by ending his letters with kind words to fake more intimate ties: "Farewell, my dear, excellent, Margaret. Heaven shower down blessings on you, and save me, that I may again and again testify my gratitude for all your love and kindness. Your affectionate brother" (Shelley 6). Nevertheless, Walton continues to fail to maintain that link between his social life and isolated journey, since it can be deduced that Margaret probably never even receives those letters.

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Moreover, the narration of Robert may seem brief. Still, it demonstrates more than enough evidence of patriarchal beliefs, such as pretending to know his sister's feelings or worrying about his well-being. Also, it seems that the letters are something of an alibi to Robert to write about his quest to himself. The dream of Walton is to be famous, and the purpose of his voyage is to achieve it. He attempted and failed to be known as a poet at a certain point in his life, as he did remind his sister: "I also became a poet (…) You are well acquainted with my failure, and how heavily I bore the disappointment" (Shelley 5). The letters are unlikely to arrive at Margaret while Robert is on his quest, which might indicate that instead of talking to his sister, he is attempting to boost his ego.

Washington Irving mentions that "man is the creature of interest and ambition. His nature leads him forth into the struggle and bustle of the world (…) He seeks for fame, for fortune (…) and domination over his fellow-men" (74); therefore, Robert is certainly facing pressure to excel because of his previous failures and so he reveals his goals in his letters. Also, Walton is pleased to encounter Victor because he found in him the intelligent companion he longed for and could not find among the sailors. Afterwards, the friendship between these two men became so deep that Robert writes to his sister that he loves Victor Frankenstein just like a brother.

Furthermore, Robert Walton's usage of particular vocabulary in his letters demonstrates to what extent he is self-involved. For instance, several phrases are starting with the pronoun "I;" James W. Pennebaker declares that "If someone uses the pronoun "I," it's a sign of self-focus." Besides, rather than wondering how Margaret is going to feel when she reads his letters, Walton predicts her reaction by saying: "You will rejoice to hear" (Shelley 2), "you cannot contest" (4), and "You may deem me romantic" (7).

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Additionally, there is a passage in Robert's fourth letter that indicates how men and women are expected to react differently when seeing the appearance of someone like Victor, who is fainted in the cold: "there was a human being within it, whom the sailors were persuading to enter the vessel (…) he appeared satisfied, and consented to come on board. Good God! Margaret, if you had seen the man who thus capitulated for his safety, your surprise would have been boundless" (Shelley 11). In the quotation, Walton claims that the reaction of his sister would be "boundless" upon seeing the looks of Victor, implying that when seeing his appearance, she would be incapable of controlling her feelings or unable to deal with the situation as he did.

On the other hand, and in the same letter, Robert portrays himself reacting in a more rational way by "[attempting] to carry [Victor] into the cabin" and "[bringing] him back to the deck, and [restoring] him to animation by rubbing him with brandy, and forcing him to swallow a small quantity" (Shelley 11). Likewise, Walton does not imply being worried, impacted emotionally, or anxious about Victor but insists on illustrating the actions he took. Washington Irving asserts that in similar conditions, a woman appears to be depicted as less rational and more emotional because "she embarks her whole soul in the traffic of affection" (74).

Despite Margaret being just a letters' receiver, it is possible that her role in the story, mostly doing nothing but being a recipient, is far more crucial than Robert's part, who is doing a whole lot of actions. If it were not for Margaret, Walton's need to write down about his quest would have vanished or seized to exist altogether; thus, Victor's story would have been unheard-of. This might be an implication that although the female characters may seem invisible and calm, their role is still essential.

The absence of Margaret is noteworthy since she is the only female character portrayed that never gets a chance to speak or be physically seen. Jessica Allen

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Hanssen writes, "Margaret's lack of characterization becomes more powerful than her physical presence could have been (…) We are forced to create her might-have-been for ourselves, a truly writerly experience where highly significant parts of the linear narrative are not explicitly narrated but are nevertheless a part of the novel's matrix of meaning." Therefore, and since it is not mentioned whether or not the letters reached Margaret, the question remains unanswered as to who retells the story.

Numerous scholars have observed that, because of the mutual initials of Margaret Walton Saville and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, it is possible to assume Margaret as Shelley. Among those scholars is Leila Silvana May, who writes a more convincing argument arguing that "the connection between Mary and Margaret can be traced to the latter's position "outside" the textual frame-removed from the "confines" of the familial frame-and to Mary's desire to place herself in a like position" (682). Hence, Margaret's embodiment as the letter's receiver might be the manner used by Shelley to express her real world and position as a female in 1818. The existence of Shelley, as well as most of the novel's female characters, is being repeatedly marginalized due to men who put their aspirations first.

3.3.2 Victor Frankenstein

The second narrator to be discussed is Victor Frankenstein. The story of Victor is conveyed to Walton from a first-person perspective. Amid meeting Robert for the first time, Victor lies terribly ill in the cabin, to the point that it can be assumed he is on the verge of death. Both Victor and Robert display similar desires about changing the world via discoveries while isolating themselves from their loved ones. In addition, Victor has a female partner that he considers "more than sister" (Shelley 29), named Elizabeth. He introduces her as "the beautiful and adored companion of all

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[his] occupations and [his] pleasures" (29). Even though Victor's words express love, it is plain to see that he often uses adjectives that describe looks instead of a character.

Portia Tshegofatso Leoto believes that "Patriarchy strives to exercise control by defining what beauty is, controlling the mobility of women, exerting violence and constructing social norms that impact on women's lived experiences." Therefore, patriarchal expectations about women's bodies suggest that if they are to be deserving of love and affection, females must be beautiful and appealing. When Victor is a child, there is a quote showing the beginning of his patriarchal thinking after his mother, Caroline, presents Elizabeth as his gift: "I, with childish seriousness, interpreted her words literally and looked upon Elizabeth as mine—mine to protect, love, and cherish" (Shelley 30). He even labels her as "a possession of [his] own" (30). In like manner, Victor keeps behaving in this possessive attitude and continues to refer to Elizabeth as "[his] Elizabeth," thus insinuating that he owns her.

The extent to which Caroline is immersed in patriarchal thinking also becomes evident by introducing Elizabeth to Victor as a gift. She also portrays the standard patriarchal woman, as Victor refers to her as soft, tranquil, and dedicated to taking care of her father (Shelley 26). Furthermore, her part in the story is brief since she dies due to being the only one willing to take care of sick Elizabeth after the latter caught scarlet fever. Even though Caroline is cautioned against the risk she is about to take, "During [Elizabeth's] illness many arguments had been urged to persuade my mother to refrain from attending upon her" (39), she still chooses to sacrifice her well-being. Following Caroline's death, Victor refers to her as his "angel mother" (80), because by risking herself to look after Elizabeth, she embraced and encouraged stereotypical roles of genders.

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Nevertheless, once Caroline is severely ill, Victor somehow does not aid Elizabeth to look after his mother as he is busy getting ready for a trip to the university of Ingolstadt to study. Then, after Caroline dies, the thoughts of Victor are nothing but the following: "My mother was dead, but we had still duties which we ought to perform; we must continue our course with the rest, and learn to think ourselves fortunate, whilst one remains whom the spoiler has not seized. My journey to Ingolstadt, which had been deferred by these events, was now again determined upon." (Shelley 27). Thus, despite the death of his mother, he is bent on continuing his journey of seeking knowledge.

Now that Caroline is dead, Elizabeth has to take on the role of the family's caregiver. According to Victor, "She indeed veiled her grief and strove to act the comforter to [them] all. She looked steadily on life and assumed its duties with courage and zeal" (Shelley 41). Even though she is mourning as well, she also had to be a consoler to everyone; and it seems that the responsibilities of Caroline are now hers alone to engage. Therefore, Elizabeth is expected to be the next standard patriarchal woman. However, in Victor's perspective, Elizabeth was all too pleased with her new role: "Never was she so enchanting as at this time, when she recalled the sunshine of her smiles and spent them upon us"(41).

Although Elizabeth is still mourning, she attempts with delight to embrace this new role assigned to her. Also, there is no sign in the novel that indicates Elizabeth's resentment of the current situation of her life or all the responsibilities that she is expected to take. Now she is bound to the Frankenstein's household as a housekeeper, a caregiver, and a stay at home mother for William, Victor's youngest brother. In the meantime, Victor appreciates her and her selflessness from a distance and does not even offer to help because he is so wrapped up in his studies.

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The maidservant of the Frankenstein residence, Justine, is described by Victor as "tranquil," "exquisitely beautiful," and "calm." Again, Victor refers to females by using patriarchal society's descriptions of women (Shelley 62). Moreover, Justine appears to be yet another stereotypical patriarchal woman by playing the role of the affectionate mother. She cares for her mother, then Caroline's health, and helps in raising William as well. The moment that the Monster kills William and frames Justine for the killing, she is arrested for murder and brought to court. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is shocked by the death of William, begins to weep continually, and unjustly accuses herself of being the cause of his death (55). Once more, she is feeling guilty for things she had no control over.

In the course of the trial of Justine, Elizabeth appeals to the tribunal to rescue her. Yet, she fails to do so. However, this act is still significant since, regardless of the usual submission of females, Elizabeth attempts to help Justine, and does so in the courthouse's patriarchal atmosphere. Elizabeth admits the act she is about to take in the trial saying, "It may therefore be judged indecent in [her] to come forward on this occasion" (Shelley 64) and proceeds to defend Justine's innocence. Still, Justine confesses that she has committed the murder: "I did confess, but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins. The God of heaven forgive me!" (66). However, she has been forced into this resolution by her "confessor" (66). The latter kept threatening Justine with hellfire if she does not confess the sin she made.

Additionally, the innocence of Justine could have been granted had Victor been the one to appeal to the jury. Because, whereas the patriarchal society forced Justine to admit to a murder she did not do, as a man, the argument of Frankenstein would have held more authenticity than Elizabeth's. From the very beginning, Victor begins

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to suspect that the Monster is the one responsible for William's murder; however, he does not utter a word about his allegations and allows Justine's execution. Meanwhile, in the middle of Justine's death penalty, Victor is worried only about himself despite being knowledgeable of her innocence:

> I believed in her innocence; I knew it. Could the dæmon, who had (I did not for a minute doubt) murdered my brother, also in his hellish sport have betrayed the innocent to death and ignominy. I could not sustain the horror of my situation; and when I perceived that the popular voice, and the countenances of the judges, had already condemned my unhappy victim, I rushed out of the court in agony. The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom, and would not forego their hold. (Shelley 65)

And since Victor would more than likely have had a much better opportunity to rescue Justine, unlike Elizabeth, he still chose never to put his reputation at stake. Therefore, when Elizabeth is actively pledging for the innocence of Justine, Victor stays quiet rather than taking the blame for the actions of the Monster. Also, it is worth mentioning how ironic it is that Victor feels that his agony is more significant than Justine's death penalty. This state of affairs shows how conventional gender roles are deeply rooted in the atmosphere of the novel.

As for Elizabeth, she proceeds on giving up her happiness for Victor's sake seeking nothing from him in return. Moreover, she continues to prove that she only cares for his well-being: "My uncle will send me news of your health; and if I see but one smile on your lips when we meet, occasioned by this or any other exertion of mine, I shall need no other happiness" (Shelley 156). The final sacrifice of Elizabeth occurs as the Monster kills her as a result of Victor's negligence. Since Victor is

responsible for the creation and misery of the Monster, he also becomes responsible for his decisions, including the one that leads to the death of Elizabeth.

Furthermore, Victor assumes that the Monster is chasing him to fulfill his threat of being with him on his wedding-night (Shelley 157). But, as shown before, Victor only cared for himself and took every precaution to defend his person if the Monster attacks him (159). Thus, he abandons Elizabeth behind despite knowing that the Monster is near.

Caroline, Justine, and Elizabeth are all females who suffer needlessly then die because of two reasons. First, due to the extreme self-centeredness of Victor, that relates to standard patriarchal ways of giving priority to the necessities of men at the cost of the women's essentials. Second, since they are self-sacrificing females who try to put everyone else's happiness before theirs. Such female characters reflect the stereotypic women of the patriarchal society that live their entire lives in the house and are eventually killed to convince the readers that a life free from gender roles traditions is a better and more fulfilling kind of life for females.

3.3.3   The Monster

The Monster is the last narrator to be addressed. His relationship with the De Lacey family will also be discussed. Since the Monster acquires moral values and social standards through observation only, his viewpoint provides readers with clarity on conventional gender roles ignorance. Moreover, by observing the De Lacey family, the Monster is taught to speak and begin comprehending social norms. He is also shown the significance of pleasing others at the expense of his happiness, which is undoubtedly a stereotypically female trait:

They placed food before the old man, when they reserved none for themselves.

This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the

night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption; but when I found

that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained, and satisfied

myself with berries, nuts, and roots, which I gathered from a neighbouring

wood. (Shelley 90)

Furthermore, and at a specific time, the Monster aims to meet the De Lacey's, but he imagines that they would be disgusted with him, so he plans to win their favor and love with his gentle demeanor and conciliating words (Shelley 94). It can be concluded, thus, that the Monster is the only male character who is driven by love and affection instead of fame and scientific ambitions. Additionally, he chooses to learn what is generally considered to be female values. Hence, being free from morals, social standards, and patriarchal norms, the Monster cherishes and respects the customs of women, even while observing both genders. As a result, women's conventions should be accepted in a patriarchal atmosphere. The Monster goes against the standards of conventional gender roles, which are probably the main reason he remains alive in the novel.

Also, Victor's failure to provide care and affection to the Monster contributed to the killing of several characters by the latter. These characters are William, Justine, Elizabeth, and Henry Clerval, Victor's friend. The main objective of the Monster is to torture Victor because he is the reason behind his suffering, and thus starts killing Victor's loved ones. After the Monster murders William, he justifies his deed by saying that "not [he], but [Justine], shall suffer; the murder [he has] committed because [he is] forever robbed of all that she could give [him]," meaning female love, and that "she shall atone. The crime had its source in her; be hers the punishment!" (Shelley 172). Therefore, the Monster acts due to a lack of affection, which signifies that female traits are essential in life.

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During the novel's events, the Monster develops a need and a wish for a female companion and demands Victor create one for him. The reason behind this demand could be that Felix and Safie's relationship influences the Monster. Felix is the De Lacey's son, while Safie is an Arab woman that provides a great deal to the reader. Safie is described at first by her apparent female features. She has a "musical" voice with hair which is "shining raven black and curiously braided." Her eyes are "dark, but gentle, although animated" (Shelley 95).

Nevertheless, Safie has more to offer than beautiful looks. She is the only female figure who is not murdered. Her survival could be the result of her being the single female character to break free from some of the novel's patriarchal standards. Furthermore, Safie is a traveler, but traveling is a men's custom in the story, with male characters traveling and exploring the world, whereas female characters stay at home. Thus, Safie challenges gender stereotypes. According to Esther K. Mbithi, "a character like Safie, more than Caroline, Elizabeth or Agatha, makes the discrimination of women in the eighteenth-century Europe glaringly obvious" (44).

Moreover, the appearance of Safie and the Monster differs completely; yet, they share many other things. For instance, they have the same desire to be a member of the De Lacey family; they share the same female features of being caring and compassionate; they are both lost, unwanted, vagabonds, and in need of care and love. The Monster continues to behave kindly with the De Lacey's by doing daily tasks around the cottage without them being aware; unfortunately, these small gestures are not enough, so when they see the Monster for the first time, they attack him out of fear. But the benefits of physical appearance become evident as Safie is accepted into the De Lacey family while the Monster is not. This confirms that being beautiful is praised while being the contrary is deemed worthless, which indicates that the novel's

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society is a patriarchal one in the way that it relies solely on looks.

On the other hand, the Monster is interested in understanding human intentions and emotions, which is why he is curious about Felix's unhappiness: "I was inquisitive to know why Felix appeared so miserable" (Shelley 94). His concern could be a result of the fact that he experienced a similar feeling to this when the angry and frightened villagers have chased him. However, Felix is no longer as miserable once he encounters Safie, "Felix seemed ravished with delight when he saw her, every trait of sorrow vanished from his face, and it instantly expressed a degree of ecstatic joy, of which I could hardly have believed it capable; his eyes sparkled, as his cheek flushed with pleasure" (95-96). As soon as Felix kisses the hand of Safie, he proclaims that he owns her, referring to her as "his sweet Arabian" (96).

Simultaneously, Felix represents to the Monster an example of how a male should behave. Therefore, he acquires how men act when watching the De Lacey's. Felix is nice and decent, which is why the Monster is like that at first. When Felix and his sister Agatha go outside, the Monster attempts to speak with their father. Because the father is blind, he is unaffected by the hideous looks of the Monster. However, this does not last long, for when Felix and Agatha come back to the cottage and see the Monster with their father, they panic and chase him away. This act profoundly impacts the Monster because he felt deceived by Felix as if they were actual friends.

The Monster's pain becomes clear near the novel's ending as he speaks to Robert, "I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix, who drove his friend from his door with contumely?" (Shelley 185). Felix's deception haunts the Monster because the latter formed a strong tie with him, a tie that was impossible to be formed with Victor. Moreover, the fact

that Felix was the only name mentioned by the Monster at the end implies that he is the most significant male character to the Monster, and shows that Felix is the sole male character not complying with traditional gender roles.

Being sad and depressed, the Monster desires to be happy and, after observing Felix, concludes that a female companion is necessary for his happiness. Hence, the Monster demands the creation of a female from Victor. Victor contemplates this demand and starts to create a female for the Monster, and then he changes his mind and tears her apart. There are several reasons for his destruction of the Female Monster; among them are his worries that a female monster would become as strong as the Monster. Besides, Victor fears that she will have a mind of her own and will not be controlled by the male Monster. He is frightened as well by the capabilities of the female Monster to bear children and its implications.

After Victor destroys the Female Monster, the Monster promises revenge. The Monster is angry because he knows that he will have to spend his life being alone. On the other hand, Victor is terrified of a female freed from the social norms meant to control women. A female that stereotypical gender roles would not affect her, leading to a female monster free to determine anything she desires.

3.4   The Destructive Powers of Obeying Traditional Gender Roles in

  Frankenstein

  Caroline, Justine, and Elizabeth are all self-sacrificing females who suffer and die because they seek to satisfy others instead of themselves. The place of these women in society is at home, like mothers or wives, whereas the men work as tradesmen, scientists, or travelers from outside the household. Victor, the lead character, seems to lack all the female traits and ends up tortured by the Monster's revenge. The Monster attempts to find a role model without being influenced by

stereotypical gender roles. That is because Victor refused to guide him or be his male role model. Therefore, the Monster is left with a fixation to kill anyone close to his original role model, Victor. So, when Victor's loved ones are all killed, he becomes as lonely as the Monster.

Moreover, it would appear that both Robert and Victor have a similar sense of irresponsibility and the same sort of aspirations. Therefore, they both face trouble; Robert is trapped in the arctic, and Victor loses his mind. It thus demonstrates to the reader the results of abiding by the standards of both genders excessively. However, Safie is about the only exception amongst the females. She has all the female characteristics with several male traits as well, and she proves the reader that an independent woman can indeed obtain success, joy, and satisfaction. Also, it is noteworthy that Safie is the extreme opposite of all the other females, and this is possibly why she manages to survive. Hence, *Frankenstein* tries to tell readers that following conventional gender norms is like a death penalty while behaving against patriarchal values is gratifying.

In the novel, there is an emphasis on the stereotypical gender roles by the use of male storytellers who care only little about the female characters. Instead, these men concentrate on their dreams and aspirations. Contrarily, the females are inactive and seldom seen or heard of, and Victor frequently only talks about their physical characteristics. This indicates to the readers how unimportant female characters are compared to males.

3.5   Conclusion

Both the male and female characters in *Frankenstein* follow the stereotypical roles that their patriarchal society assigns for them. Therefore, they suffer tragic endings and terrible deaths. Men seek fame and ambition all around the world, while

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women stay at home to be loyal wives to their husbands and devoted mothers to their children. However, Safie and the Monster are the only ones who manage to survive because they broke free from the traditional norms that instruct how men and women should be.

Frankenstein, in conclusion, is a novel that succeeds in criticizing conventional gender roles by eliminating the characters that obey them while the few exceptions that reject them survive.

General Conclusion

Superficially, *Frankenstein* appears like a novel that, by creating strong and successful male characters with beautiful and weak female characters, avoids femininity. But underneath, the novel reflects Mary Shelley's own struggle to survive among brilliant and wealthy poets like Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and others who may have induced her anxieties to communicate and prove herself in their presence.

The dissertation has tried to explain how Mary Shelley portrayed her feminist message in the novel *Frankenstein*, by focusing on male and female characters to demonstrate women's pain and loss of speech, men's egotism, and the fatal consequences of abiding stereotypical gender roles. A female companion's rejection is apparent throughout the novel. In contrast, the men follow their ambitions, separate themselves from the women, and do not even think of them as fair partners to share their thoughts with them.

This research has aimed to answer the major question: What are the elements implemented in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to portray female victimization, and how do male oppression and monstrosity vis-à-vis females serve this vision? The study has then proved that *Frankenstein*'s novel is by no means merely a portrayal of the inferiority of women of the period, but a complicated work with a robust feminist framework that continually emphasizes the importance of women.

On the other hand, this research has portrayed the nature of those male and female characters and their importance in depicting Mary Shelley's message, and has; therefore, determined the elements implemented in *Frankenstein*'s novel that has stressed male oppression against females, and that has drawn attention to women's sufferings and weaknesses. It also has mentioned how these males and females have obeyed their society's pre-assigned roles. The females have spent all their time suffering the mistreatment they have endured from their society and the men they love. In contrast, the men have separated themselves from their women and the

environment in pursuit of success and ambitions. In conclusion, and in doing so, the thesis has pointed out to these male and female characters' tragic dooms by the novel's end to indicate the destructive powers of accepting and following society's traditional gender roles.

الملخص

يركز هذا البحث على مسألة تحديد العناصر التي تم تنفيذها في رواية فرانكنشتاين الخاصة بماري شيلي لتصوير مظاهر الإيذاء الذي تعرضت له الإناث من خلال قمع الذكور لهن. وكذلك تناقش هذه الدراسة الطرق التي استعملتها شيلي لتقدم رؤيتها وتلفت الانتباه لضعف ومعاناة المرأة عن طريق خلقها لشخصيات أنثوية ضعيفة تموت واحدة تلو الأخرى خلال تقدم أحداث الرواية. بالإضافة إلى ما ذكر، يحدد البحث طبيعة الشخصيات الذكورية والأنثوية وأهميتها في إظهار رسالة ماري شيلي في ضوء العديد من الانتقادات للرواية. أيضا، تستخدم الدراسة النهج النسوي الذي يشجع ويدعو إلى المساواة بين الجنسين وينعكس على تمثيل المرأة في الأدب ونهج التحليل النفسي الذي ينتقد العناصر الشاذة والمتعدية لفرانكنشتاين خاصة كما رأينا في شخصيات روبرت والتون وفيكتور فرانكنشتاين والوحش. أخيرًا، توضح هذه الدراسة أهمية كتابات ماري شيلي، وتساعد على فهم أن المجتمع الذي تنتمي إليه رواية فرانكنشتاين كان لا يزال مجتمع يتخلله التفاوت الاجتماعي الشديد وعدم المساواة في الحقوق بين الرجال والنساء، وكيف أن التزام الشخصيات بالأدوار المعينة لهم مسبقا من طرف مجتمعهم هذا أدت إلى موتهم المحتم.

كلمات مفتاحيه: نسوية، ماري شيلي، فرانكنشتاين، ضحية، مجتمع ذكوري، وحشية

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