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INTERTEXTUALITY WITHIN MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN* STRUCTURES AND

STABILIZES LANGUAGE COUNTERING MALE ROMANTIC-ERA WRITERS'

SUBJECTIFICATION OF THE WORLD

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BY

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ABSTRACT

Intertextuality within Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* Structures and Stabilizes Language

Countering Male Romantic-era writers' Subjectification of the World

By Kayleigh Kumiko Setoda

Critics have constantly engaged in the topic of how male Romantic-era writers' views of language influenced their writing, in particular their subjective and arbitrary descriptions and illustrations of the world to create new meanings of objects, thoughts and ideas. Yet, despite the numerous critiques on male writers, there is a lack of research and examination of women Romantic-era writers' reflections on and responses to the male writers' views of language and how the male writers' views of language influence their writing. In particular, Mary Shelley is one such writer that subjects the male writers' beliefs of language to critique in her novel *Frankenstein.* This essay argues that in *Frankenstein,* Mary's use of intertexuality combats the subjective view of language found in the male writers' works because the intertextual moments within literature expands the engagement and understanding of language beyond the dimensions of personal and subjective views. The interweaving of and references to Percy Shelley's works, the Bible and Milton's *Paradise Lost* in her writing, I claim, structures and stabilizes language in order to reveal a larger context of the meaning of words that reinforce a universal understanding of a correlation between words, objects and definitions.

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In recent years, Romantic-era critics have been preoccupied with the discussion about theories of language and linguistic representation within Romantic writing. William Keach has been one of the most vocal critics on the topic of Romanticism and language, particularly with respect to the theoretical understanding of linguistic representation among Romantic-era writers. In his essay "Romanticism and Language", for example, Keach explores the Romantic engagement with Enlightenment theories about language, particularly with the discordance between words, thoughts, objects, and their meanings. Such an engagement according to Keach is too crucial to the problem of "arbitrary power", the subject of Keach's book of that title, which focuses on the tensions of politics, language, and human agency. He argues that the tension that results from thinking about "arbitrary power" as a fixed feature of political critique on one hand and as an unfixed, indeterminate feature of linguistic signs on the other anticipate the tensions within Postmodern theories of language today.

While Keach's exploration of the contradictory and double meaning of the arbitrary has done much to complicate our understanding of the connection between Romantic and Postmodern theories of language, particularly with respect to the problems both share, Keach's failure to consider issues of gender leaves open the question of how women, as one might reasonably expect given the critical attention to gender in Romantic era writing, approached theories of language and potential of language for representation. In this paper, I will consider the complex ways in which women engage the ideas of language largely in terms of the treatment of language by male writers. In particular, I will examine Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* which emphasizes intertextuality in order to stabilize language through allusions to

and exact quotations from Percy Shelley's works, the Bible, and Milton. In addition, I will consider her revisions from the 1818 text to 1831 text where she complicates and alters Percy's revision. In tying all of these components together, I argue that the intertextuality as a mode of writing in Mary Shelley's novel reveals how Mary Shelley expands her critique of Romanticism and language outside of her novel by responding to, and resolving male writers' struggles with the arbitrariness of language; she is able to structure and stabilize language through her examination of a correlation between language, nature, and universal laws forms a larger context for the meaning of words and objects.

Locke, Enlightenment Theories of Language and Percy Shelley

In both his works, Keach discusses how the Romantic writers complicate the issues of language that arise in Enlightenment era thinking about the subjectivity of language. Keach references John Locke as a representative of Enlightenment thinking about language. In his work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in particular the third book entitled "Of Words", Locke discusses how empiricism and one's internal and subjective knowledge formulate the individual's language (III.ii.2). John Locke argues, "words in their primary or immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the Ideas in the Mind of him that uses them" (III.ii.2; 405). According to Locke, not only are words a representation of man's own thoughts, but also words are specific creations of every man. Locke details the creation of words, as "a voluntary Imposition, whereby such a Word is made arbitrarily the Mark of such an *Idea* [… and] how imperfectly, soever, or carelessly those *Ideas* are collected from the Things, which they are supposed to represent" (III.ii.2; 405). When Locke points out that the words are "made arbitrarily the Mark of such an *Idea"*, the word "arbitrarily" relates to the "imperfectly" and "carelessly" formulation of language (III.ii.2; 405). This relationship between words and ideas is not perfect, but rather it is arbitrary because it is a creation of man's mind. Locke believes that language is abstract because of the discordance between words and their representation or meaning, which he discusses one's subjective views and experiences that help formulate their language allowing language to be indeterminate.

Locke's theories develop and become more complex in the Romantic era because of the Romantic writers' fascination with the intrinsic and subjective relationship between thoughts and words (Keach, "Romanticism and Language", 114). Language "is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of [man's] internal being" which allows the writers and poets of this

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period to have freedom because it "is more plastic and obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation" (Shelley, *Defense of Poetry, Shelley's Poetry and Prose,* 513). The personalization of words is no longer seen as a negative aspect of language, but rather a positive and beneficial tool for the Romantic-era writers. It is an example of their control and manipulation over language which they view as positive and liberating ability, since language and words become their creation. The Romantic writers find stability and control in language due to the subjective relationship between thoughts and words.

Percy believes there is a correlation between the formulation of language and one's imagination, as Keach writes:

> that the poet in history must take advantage of the potential in the arbitrary relation
> between words and thoughts to turn language against its own tyrannical and capricious
> 'dominion' (Wordsworth's word) over thinking.... language as it exists does not and
> perhaps cannot be made to conform [because].... the dualism of mind and matter inheres
> in the very structure of our language. ("Romanticism and Language", 123)

Keach discusses Percy as a representation of the male Romantic writer's notions about language, as an abstract entity that alters and changes because of the malleability of human thought. However, the consistency of language through the use of subjectivity becomes more complex when Keach describes how the male writers use the word "arbitrary" as also a modifier for the word "power" in order to define how power is a determinate and tyrannical force. When the writers tied these two words together, the dual and contradictory definitions created problems in the stabilization of meaning. Their subjective views of particular words and language in general directly contrast the fixed meaning of words. Due to their inability to separate their writing from the political connotations, in particular tyrannical and despotic power, the writers subjectivity

forces them to further distance themselves from a concrete formulation of language. These contradictory meanings are an issue that these writers try to explain, but in doing so, these hubristic writers in their desire to explain the unknowable further complicate and distort language.

However, Romantic writers find themselves conflicted when they attempt to explain their conception and usage of "arbitrary" as both a description of power and language. "Arbitrary" on the one hand describes a determinate feature of power, and on the other describes an indeterminate and capricious feature of language due to its foundations in the subjectivity of language as well as the impact of social and cultural interaction on language. In turn, Romantic writing reflects the amalgamation of the determinate, subjective conscious of the writer and the indeterminate cultural and societal impact on the writer; ultimately, revealing a post-structuralist approach, the impossibility of defining a concrete and accurate signifying system because the system is always changing, that embraces the arbitrariness of words (Keach, *Arbitray Power,* 1-22).

As Locke argued words are created and varied due to each individual's personal thoughts and emotions, Shelley also argues for the variation and subjectivity of words. In Percy Shelley's *Defence of Poetry,* Shelley discusses his interpretation of the characteristics of language in poetry and in everyday speech. Percy addresses how "language is arbitrarily produced by the imagination and has relation to thoughts alone", and he praises this very aspect of language and embraces the malleability of words (*Shelley's Poetry and Prose,* 513). He defines arbitrary to mean that language does not accurately explain what it tries to describe or represent, such as an object or idea, but instead reflects a person's personal and subjective point of view.

Yet, despite the subjectivity of language, Percy embraces its subjectivity in order to try to stabilize the arbitrariness of language. The personalization of language roots language in the poet himself in order to structure language. The ability of words to be a personal reflection of the poet is a thing of admiration and exultation because it is always in support for creativity and new possibilities into the unknown. In addition, the imagination is another key factor in the formulation of words that supports the male writers' desire for things beyond the natural world. However, a problem arises in relying on the individual thoughts and creations of man because it reinforces a political implication that arbitrary and despotic governments can take control on the basis of their own subjective view of a "proper" government.

Although "arbitrary" contains two contrasting definitions a problem due to the personalization of language, Percy Shelley tries to explain how subjectivity within language stabilizes the contradictory and conflicting meanings of words. He embraces and advocates for the subjectivity and arbitrary aspects of language because it reflects one's individual thought in the words they speak. In turn, he sees these aspects of language as a way to represent the "actions and passions of our internal being" (*Shelley's Poetry and Prose,* 513). According to Percy, although language can at times represent instability of meaning, it is still a reflection of a person's individuality, which is the very essence that creates the colorful, distinct, and creative form of language within one's speech. Percy is an advocate of language as a personal tool in order to create diversity and represent personal expression, ultimately, transforming language into "various and delicate combinations" from person to person (513). These transformations create new meanings and interpretations that exemplify language as a lively creation. This is an imperative aspect of Percy's theory about language because it reveals that the arbitrariness of language can be manipulated and changed to express accurately the "passions of our internal

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being [and is]…. obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation" (513). According to Percy, the arbitrariness of language stabilizes because of the description of language as subjective.

In looking at the section of Percy's poem "Mutability", which Mary Shelley alludes to within *Frankenstein,* he clarifies his theory and presents clear examples of how the arbitrariness of language is a beautiful tool to express a person's ideas and thoughts. "Mutability" is an exemplification of Percy's usage of contradictory language to portray his own thoughts about the mutability of the world and the emotional fluctuations of a person that take place from one day to the next. These emotions are different, but they are "the same! –For, be it joy or sorrow,/The path of [their] departure still is free" (line 13-14). Even though these emotions are polar opposites, they both disappear after the day departs. Each day differs, but all of the emotions that man feels follow the same path to disappear once the day passes into the next. Percy ties a contradicting relationship between joy and sorrow explaining how both function the same way to explain one's feelings and emotions. The contrasting statement creates ambiguity once he writes, "It is the same! –For, be it joy or sorrow" (line 13). In tying these two emotions together, the ambiguity of the comparison is unclear until he explains how both follow the same cyclical pattern of the changes and differences from one day to the next.

Percy's personal opinion dominates his poem and reinforces his support of the use of contradictory and ambiguous words to reflect his own thoughts, but his intellectual understanding of how the universe works reinforces his observations of the contradicting aspects of language that he remarks on in the poem. In creating an ambiguous relationship between joy and sorrow, Percy illuminates his thoughts about life's mutability through his comparison to the changes and fluctuations of human emotions. Nothing stays constant in a person's life, days

change and emotions change. The variability of each day expands into numerous possibilities for each person to experience their own emotions and feelings during the day. Every day is different because a "man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow" (line 15). In creating a simile by using the word "like", he demonstrates a comparison in order to explain his example and the subjectivity of his thoughts (line 15). The use of a simile reveals his opinions of and thought about how these two entities are similar (line 15). The word helps to create a link between Percy's thoughts to be able to express clearly his opinions about life. This reveals how a person's thoughts are difficult to explain, but in using words to create links and chains to represent a more clear understanding of their thoughts reveal the positives of the arbitrariness of language. Percy believes that these connections between thoughts and words allow for the speaker to be in control and is a positive aspect even if it is subjective. However, this continues to further complicate and obfuscate the arbitrariness of language, because it creates multiple connections between words and thoughts, which further deconstructs and destabilizes the structures of language.

Enlightenment Theories of Religion, Percy and Mary Shelley

Locke was not only a contributing philosopher in terms of the Romantic-era writers' theories about language, but also a contributing philosophe in terms of their theories about religion. Within the Romantic period, the French Revolution caused much strife, pain and confusion especially in terms of an individual's religious views. In addition to backlash from the Revolution's events and violence, the fact that the time period was right after the Enlightenment contributed to the negative outlook of religion. Robert Maniquis suggests that:

> the primordial Romantic spiritual event is actually a spiritualized empiricist moment, a heuristic moment, or an epistemological model of beginnings, in which the new Romantic Adam is born, one who must feel the electric connections of body and mind before he can understand the origins of God. ("Religion, Revolution, Romanticism", 20)

Romantic philosophy on religion and language derive from empiricist ideas mainly from Lockean thought. As discussed previously, Lockean thought in turn transforms within the Romantic period to the writers' desire to understand and grasp the unknown or the inexplicable. This idea and drive not only applies to language, but also carries over into the Romantic-era writers' belief about God and religion through "a new mental faculty that had to precede any hope in purely rational political or sacramental religious order, and […] Romantic writers called this mental faculty by an old name – the imagination" ("Religion, Revolution, Romanticism", 18). The imagination becomes a transcending entity that allows the Romantic writers to not only transcend and clarify language, but also religion. This ability "allowed those without a truly immediate God – and with anguish at that absence – to write with the same power" ("Religion, Revolution, Romanticism", 25). These writers thought and believed that through the imagination one is able to be God-like by their formulation of subjective meanings and words.

One of the most prominent writers that exemplify the Romantic writers' use of the imagination to gain clarity and omnipotence is Percy "Shelley, the Romantic poet most vociferously hostile to Christian dogma" (Brisman, "Mysterious Tongue: Shelley and the Language of Christianity", 392). Percy strongly and openly opposed religion, in particular Christianity. The most prominent examples of his opposition are within his poetry such as *Adonais* and *Alastor*. Both poems deal with life and death, and transcending thoughts into an unknown spiritual area beyond the grasp of man. For example, stanza 52 of *Adonais* is one of the most prominent examples of Shelley's atheism:

> The One remains, the many change and pass;
>
> Heaven's light forever shines; Earth's shadows fly;
>
> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
>
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
>
> Until death tramples it to fragments. – Die,
>
> If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
>
> Follow where all is fled! (11. lines 460-67).

Percy's disbelief in Heaven and of everlasting life after death is a prominent feature of this stanza. In particular, the caesura in line 465 and then the two following lines is a proclamation of how death is the end and there is nothing beyond life. In death, "all is fled" and destroyed into "fragments"; life is just a fragile thing that can be broken, but never to be fixed or restored (11. lines 465 & 467). In addition, when death occurs nothing remains on earth or transcends into a scared place. Percy is an advocate for the ability within life to transcend and to "[stain] the white radiance of Eternity" (464). It is not after life that one is able to achieve knowledge of and into the unknown, but rather it is during life that one is able to achieve an omnipotent power similar

to God. The works that these writers establish become their legacy, ultimately granting them immortality forever because their words are set in stone. Their earthly achievements grant them immortality because there works are given praise and attention in the media as seen in the success of Percy and other Romantic male writers' works within the period.

In looking at an opposition to Percy's and other male Romantics' opinion about religion, one can compare the religious perspectives of Percy and Mary Shelley, in order to+ see how drastically different and opposite the perspectives are. Unlike Percy, who did not believe in God, Mary "believed in the existence of a beneficent Power, a loving God who created the physical and the metaphysical world (Hogsette, "Metaphysical Interactions in *Frankenstein*", 537). Mary's journals reinforce her belief in God and her opinion about His loving and caring demeanor. For instance, in her journal entry dated October 5, 1839:

> The God that made this beautiful world (and I was then at Lerici, surrounded by the most beautiful manifestation of the visible creation) made that into which I go; as there is beauty and love here, such is there, and I felt as if my spirit would when it left my frame be received and sustained by a beneficent and gentle Power. (Jones, *Mary Shelley's Journal,* 208)

Mary believes that God is the natural and necessary creator of the world and wholeheartedly praises His creations. It is important to note that Mary does not find God an oppressive force, but rather "a beneficent and gentle Power" (208). God is not a formidable and terrifying being that intends to harm mankind, but rather embraces and loves all of His creations. Not only does Mary believe that God is The Creator, but also believes in a highly systemized moral and ethical Christian standards. Within her journal, she writes, "I think also that I have found true humility [...], an ardent love for the immutable laws of right, much native goodness of emotion, and purity

of thought" (Jones, *Mary Shelley's Journal,*189). The world and nature have unchangeable laws that remain stagnant in order to maintain the moral and ethically rules of mankind. These "immutable laws of right" are the natural laws that mankind should perform. She believes that any acts against the natural laws of God are wrong.

Mary disapproves of Percy's rejection of the unchanging natural laws in order to manipulate language to create his own subjective meaning; since he's actions are attempts to gain omnipotence through writing. In attempting to gain God-like power and control over creating entities within the world, Percy refutes obeying universal or God's laws. Mary believes that in "humility" an individual is able to truly appreciate and have "an ardent love for the immutable laws of right" (Jones, *Mary Shelley's Journal,* 189). Since Percy is not humble or modest in any way due to his egotistical drive for knowledge, he is unable to respect or even acknowledge the natural laws that Mary follows. Percy's desire is to gain immortality and become God-like in the present, which he views language as a pathway to gain what he desires. It addition, language provides a way for Percy to objectify and subjectify words according to his views and opinions. Language becomes his creation due to his personal opinions and use of imagination upon the formulation of works. According to her beliefs, Mary does not approve of these selfish and prideful acts that Percy continuously commits. Furthermore, she is not silent about her opinion of his acts but vocalizes her response in her writing, in particular *Frankenstein*.

Victor's Subjectification of the World and Parallel to Percy Shelley

The male Romantics' thoughts and ideas about the representation of the arbitrariness of language are evident and clear within Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. She represents and reflects on their ideas about language and other unknown entities of the world through Victor's insistent drive to satisfy his search for knowledge and meaning. Even at a young age when Victor reads Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus, he strived "with the greatest diligences into the search of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life" (69). It is important to note that Victor does not read classic literature, such as stories with moral or ethical lessons, or any literature, but rather he just reads philosophical and science texts. His fixation on philosophy and science drives his search for meaning and glory in discovering unknown aspects of life. However, his search also follows with tragic loss and suffering. Once Victor plans to go to a university for further education to satisfy his desire for knowledge, "the first misfortune of [his] life occur[s] –an omen, as it were, of [his] future misery" (71). Victor's mother passes away from obtaining a sickness from Elizabeth. Victor's journey to gain knowledge comes with a price of losing all those that are close to him. It begins with his mother as a warning or "omen, as it were, of [his] future misery", but continues to evolve and become more tragic as the death toll increases (71).

Victor attempts to gain clarity through knowledge and creating life, but in his failure in doing so he continues to search for clarity in the natural. This is not enough because of his desire "to discover so astonishing a secret […] of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (79). His thirst for knowledge and creating life in order to become God-like is ultimately his downfall that continues the chain of misfortune and loss in his life. Once Victor brings the creature to life, he quickly discusses how to not "allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility […and does not think that] the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to the rule" (83).

Knowledge fails him in trying to obtain omnipotence and God-like ability. Victor looks out into the world sees all the problems that are yet to be solved behind the visible world. However, in his failure of going beyond the natural world, Victor tries to discern what that meaning is within the visible world, in particular within nature.

He is unable to find clarity in knowledge, but his insatiable desire for understanding drives him to look for clarity in nature. Based on the descriptions of his interpretations of and thoughts about nature, he believes he found it through subjectification of the world. After the deaths of William and Justine, Victor goes off into the Alpine in order to relieve his anguish about the recent events. Victor solitarily takes a long journey around the mountains and glaciers near Mont Blanc. He looks at the surrounding scenery and comments on his feelings while treading through the cold and inhospitable climate. Looking at the glacier Montanvert, he describes his feelings as "sublime ecstasy [that transports him]…. from obscure world to light and joy. The sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnizing [his] mind, and causing [him] to forget the passing cares of life" (123). The inability to formulate words accurately creates a contradictory relationship where the sublime evokes fear and terror within a person when experiencing the effects of nature, and this overwhelming fear and terror turns Victor's "obscure world to light and joy" (123). The ambiguity of his language reflects his subjective view of nature which represents Victor's conflict between his desire to continue to control nature, like in his creation of the creature, and admiring nature's beauty, as a powerful entity. His language portrays the internal conflict within himself that possibly shows Mary's agreement with and support of Percy's argument about the subjectivity and ambiguity of language. Mary leads the reader into a clear example of male Romantic-era writers' thoughts and ideas, but quickly reveals within her narrative the flaws of this way of thinking.

Victor's descriptions of nature, especially the descriptions of Mont Blanc reinforce the clarity of his speech. The "awful and majestic in nature" allow Victor to be at peace and forget his troubles (123). Although it is a frightening description of the mountain, it calms him and makes him forget his troubles, which is similar to Percy's "Mont Blanc" description of the mountains that teach "awful doubt, or faith so mild" (line 77). The appearance of nature fills Victor and Percy with dread, and fear or faithful submission to its immense power. As individual work's the meanings and descriptions of both Percy and Victor are abstract. However, the contradicting feelings that they feel is clear and non-ambiguous because Mary's use of the interweaving of the texts to reveal a comprehensive definition rather than a solitary and subjective meaning. Mary's descriptions of the images of nature throughout the rest of the novel interconnect Percy and Victor's hubris desires to attain the unknowable and the inaccessible; revealing that in trying to control these unknowable entities, a person is unable to truly understand or stabilize meaning about them, but rather in doing this a person complicates and distorts the unknown. The natural world is not an entity that one is able to discern its meaning but rather it is an entity that Victor and Percy can use for reflecting their own opinions and selves onto an object. The reason why these objects become clear is due to Victor's objectification of these natural objects fostered by his Faustian pursuit of meaning.

In describing the unknowable aspects of nature as a mysterious and enigmatic structure, Mary is able to exemplify the fixed structures and rules of nature that clarify and stabilize the meaning of language. The clarity and precision about the descriptions of nature becomes most prevalent when Victor continues to look upon Mont Blanc and describes its power and magnificence, as well as its connection to political power, within *Frankenstein*. Although it may seem that the descriptions of Mont Blanc are contradictory and arbitrary, the contradictory words

actually are a clear description of the entity because of the particular aspects of the power of nature. Victor's description of Mont Blanc reflects his conflicting ideas and emotions about nature. Once Victor reaches Montanvert, he looks over at "Mont Blanc, the supreme and magnificent.... in awful majesty" (122; 124). Once again in describing nature, as "supreme", "magnificent", "awful" and "majesty", Mary addresses nature's impression on man and Victor, which is reminiscent of Percy Shelley's description within "Mont Blanc" with "its subject mountains their unearthly forms/Pile around it" (lines 62-63). The other mountains are Mont Blanc's subjects that surround it and heed to its power and might. Percy describes Mont Blanc as a monarch over its valley, much like when Mary describes Victor's interpretation of Mont Blanc as the "supreme and magnificent" as well as its "majesty", she indicates Victor's similarity to Percy on his comprehension of the importance and power of nature on man as an entity to respect much like a lord or a king (122; 124).

However in the use of "awful", Mary addresses the sublime within nature, and how the effect of the sublime creates a mix of emotions, in particular fear (124). To Victor, Mont Blanc is reverentially terrifying, sublime, and intimidating, yet it is a "wonderful and stupendous scene" (124). It encompasses terror, power, and joy. Mary situates Victor's ideas about nature as a reflection of Percy's own ideas about nature, as well as how nature is a reflection of political power and rule within their current time period. In interconnecting the descriptions of Mont Blanc between Percy and Victor, Mary critically displays the contradictory ways in which the word "arbitrary" appears as both a description of language and power. When "arbitrary" describes power, it is descriptive phrase that defines the tyrannical, despotic monarchy and aristocracy during that time, especially in relation to the American and French Revolution. When "arbitrary" describes language, it is a phrase that defines the indeterminate and random creation

of language (Keach, *Arbitrary Power,* 4). The contradictory language becomes a reflection of the determinate description of the conscious of the entire culture and society. Thus the description of nature constantly reflects not only Victor and Percy's conflict, but also the entire cultures conflict about nature as a supreme entity that possesses both beauty and destruction reflecting the issues of governmental rule of the time period. Even though the description is a contradiction, Mary's reference to Percy creates a clear representation of similar individual's perception about nature.

Although it appears that Victor begins to extract meaning by looking at nature, his subjectification of nature is wrongful and leads him further away from clarity. When Victor's descriptions and emotions become less abstract and more clear when he continues to gaze at Montanvert, as well as when he looks upon Mont Blanc, his emotions convey a realization of failure and disappointment. He is able to gain clarity when he identifies that "the sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnizing [his] mind" (123). His emotions when looking upon nature allows him to objectify nature and become meditative about the world. This is reminiscent of his initial feelings about nature in the beginning of the novel where Victor constantly desires clarity and understanding of the world around him that drives him to create life; this is similar to the way in which Percy Shelley desires to understand the arbitrariness of language by observing how words are subject to the perceptions and opinions of the speaker. When this moment sparks thoughts about his early desire for knowledge, it also sparks thoughts about how his desire led to his failure of attaining knowledge and his unnatural creation. In looking towards nature for meaning, Victor draws himself closer to understanding his failure in connecting to the world around him and the world beyond.

Mary portrays Victor as a figure that meditates on his problems, but fails at completely obtaining his goal of omnipotence and God-like knowledge. The failure not only refers to Victor's goal of becoming omnipotent, but also refers to the male writers' failure in the stabilization of language. Victor is also a representation of Percy Shelley because of their similar characteristics and desires to obtain what is out of their reach. On the one hand, Victor contemplates the ways of nature and how to create life, but realizes his failure of attempting to create a living being. His contemplation happens when looking at Montanvert, "the sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnizing [his] mind" (123). On the other hand, Percy contemplates the arbitrariness of language in his essay "On Life" where he begins to see the problems and complications of viewing subjectivity and the imagination as a way to stabilize and structure language.

Mary continues to draw connections between Percy and Victor in terms of their failure to represent the world correctly when Victor gazes at Mont Blanc in its entire splendor and glory, and describes his "heart, which was before sorrowful, now swelled with something like joy" (124). Mont Blanc makes him feel joy and happiness, however it is not completely joy; he feels "something like joy" because Mont Blanc and other formations in nature remind him of his creation (124). He cannot completely be joyful when looking at Mont Blanc because of the lingering emotions as a reminder that his creation still exists and of his own shortcomings and failures of mimicking nature's power. Victor's frustration is similar to Percy's notions in his essay "On Life" about how:

> it is difficult to find terms adequate to express so subtle a conception as that to which
> the Intellectual Philosophy has conducted us. We are on that verge where words abandon
> us, and what wonder if we grow dizzy to look down the dark abyss of how little we

know. (*Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, 508)

Although Percy discusses how the subjectivity of language is the solution to understanding the arbitrariness of language, he realizes that this creates problems of validity, and ultimately complicates and destabilizes language even further. Both Victor and Percy try to solve their problems in similar, erroneous ways that eventually leads them to regret their decisions and unable to fix them.

Percy and Victor's beliefs are in constant conflict with Mary's opinions and beliefs. Within her novel, she tries to contrast and distance herself from their ideas especially their belief in the transcendence of thoughts and ideas into the realm of the scared and the unknown. This ideology sets up her formulation and characterization of the role of Victor as a terrible and unnatural creator within *Frankenstein.* Her belief in God as a natural creator is present throughout the novel particularly during the negative portrayal of Victor. Although Mary does a convincing job at setting up Victor to be the antagonist within the novel, Percy's additions to the text during his editing of the novel portrays Victor in a more forgiving light as a misunderstood and almost sympathetic character. These countering portrayals of Victor are due to Percy and Victor's similar interests – both want to reach and obtain for the unknown by any means. Anne Mellor (1988) argues that at times when Percy would edit Mary's work he would try to undermine Victor's villain persona. In particular, she points to the moment:

> When Mary described Frankenstein's mingled dread and relief, on the eve of his departure to England, at the thought that at least he would lure the monster away from his family and friends, Percy disastrously persuaded her to introduce into Frankenstein's meditations the possibility "of the reverse," of the creature's staying behind in Geneva. (*Mary Shelley Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters,* 63).

In having Victor worry about the safety of others above his own, Percy reveals a caring and loving Victor, which is not what Mary's characterization of Victor is. Mellor suggests that this edit disrupts the overarching characterization of Victor "as an egotist who perceives only his feelings and danger" (63). Percy's similar attributes to Victor suggest that "Percy, sometimes as blind as Frankenstein himself, softened or eliminated his errors" (63). Percy, like Victor, indulges in a subjective morality and materialism that blinds his surroundings and at times would emotionally abuse Mary. The subjectivity of these two damages their relationships and overall, reinforces their egotism. Although Mary tries to advocate for an overall natural law and order of the universe that should be followed, Percy's contributions and edits of her work allows readers to view Victor in a more sympathetic appeal, which diminishes her overall claims and opinions within the novel.

Another important aspect of Percy's contributions to *Frankenstein* that further support the differences between Percy and Mary's religious views is his desire to lessen the Christian moral basis within the novel. According to Alan Rauch in *Useful Knowledge: The Victorians, Morality, and the March of Intellect* (2001), Mary's theism sought to hold science accountable to Christian ethics, while Percy's antitheistic view separated science from any ethical standards (126-27). Also, in support of this contrasting and conflicting views between the two writers within the novel, Anne Mellor points out that "Percy tried to undermine this notion of a functioning 'heaven' by adding his own atheistic concept of a universe created and controlled by pure Power or energy, 'as the mechanical impulse of some power of which I was unconscious" (202:16-17) (*Mary Shelley Her Life Her Fiction Her Monsters,* 64). Percy purposefully implements his antitheistic views by complicating the idea of heaven and in turn, "asserts his own faith is some arbitrary, unthinking power that operates as a mere unconscious impulse upon the mechanistic

human" (Hogsette, Metaphysical Interactions in *Frankenstein, 544).* In editing Mary's work, Percy often wrote his own opinions and reflections, ultimately disrupting the themes and tone within the novel. Many critics, including those above, have discussed how these remaining edits by Percy reveal how Mary was unable to be confidant in her own writing or her own ideas.

Yet, despite multiple critics analysis of the contrasting worldviews of Percy and Mary, there still remains a lack of analysis of Mary's response to Percy and other Romantic-era writers' worldview within her writing. Although it appears that Mary directly responds to Percy, she actually responds and critiques all the male romantics that desire and attempt to transcend the natural world in order to gain God-like understanding and clarity. Critics, like Anne Mellor and David Hogsette, that acknowledge the different religious opinions of Mary Shelley and other male Romantic writers overlook the allusions to and direct quotations from the Bible and Milton to further support their claims about the importance of a natural and God induced creation.

Mary Shelly's Use of Intertexuality

In setting up a direct parallel between the Bible and *Frankenstein*, it is impossible to overlook an exaltation of a biblical and Christian basis for society. Since Mary believed in God and natural universal laws that are immutable, she expounds on the problems of these writers' subjectivity and desires, and the result of what occurs when one tries to go beyond and against the natural laws. Praises of Christianity not only revolves in the stratosphere of the novel, but also the entire British society in the 19th century in order to critique male Romantics desire for the unknown, which was a direct defiance against the natural order of life. *Frankenstein* is her exemplary novel of the actions and consequences of the male Romantics ideas in order to educate and warn against these selfish and material desires based upon a larger literary context in order to reinforce her claims against them.

One of the biblical and natural rules of the world that Mary conveys in her writing is that creation belongs to God or "a beneficent and gentle Power" beyond the powers of man (Jones, *Mary Shelley's Journal*, 208). The supreme power or God is the overseer of the world, and most importantly the observer of man, who supports and comforts mankind as His creation. Mary makes a strong distinction between the natural creator, God, and the transgressive Victor within her novel. In abandoning the creature that Victor creates, the creature feels like "a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; [he] knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but, feeling pain invade [him] on all sides, [he] sat down and wept" (121). The scene that the creature paints for Victor is an allusion to Psalm 137:1 in the Bible. Psalm 137:1 discusses the Israelites "by the rivers of Babylon" sitting and weeping "when [they] remembered Zion". They feel sadness and pain because they are unable to enter the holy and promised city of Jerusalem. It is the place where they belong, but it is not in their reach because of opposing forces keeping them wandering in the desert.

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Similarly the Creature desires to be in a place to call home, but he cannot enter this place because of the oppressive Victor that is unable to perform his duties as a creator. Unlike the Israelites that are able to enter their promised land, the creature is unable to access a home because Victor will not warm the hearts of his fellow man so that they may accept the creature and make him feel welcome as a fellow member of their community. Ultimately, Victor leaves the creature completely alone. This prevents the creature to have access to a place to call home with a lovely companion because of Victor's selfish desire and hubristic tendencies. Victor wants to gain ultimate control and knowledge similar to God, but when he is given the opportunity to be God-like, he is unable to fulfill the task. Victor robs his creation of the necessary and rightful home because of his inability to be "a beneficent and gentle" creator that in turn causes other characters in the novel to disapprove of him (Jones, *Mary Shelley's Journal*, 208).

Critics, such as Robert Ryan, emphasize how the novel is a parody of Biblical stories, in particular Job, because of the emphasis of the creator and created dichotomy between Victor and the creature. Victor is God and the creature is Job. According to Ryan, "*Frankenstein* seems as much as a parody of Job as of Genesis" (Mary Shelley's Christian Monster, 153). The creature is a counter example of Job, but a representation of the misdeeds of the characters from Genesis. Unlike Job who does not curse God even while he is suffering, the creature builds up hatred and resentment ultimately cursing Victor. Ryan suggests that the creature is Job, if Job takes "his wife's advice […to agree] at last to curse his Creator and die" (153). When the creature does this act of cursing Victor and fighting back with violence, it:

"serves only to accentuate the difference between the two figures, demonstrating again the

creature's peculiar isolation from the sublimities as well as the consolations of the Judaeo-

Christian religious tradition he accepts as true and from which he has so strangely been

precluded" (153).

Critics, like Ryan, points out an important contrast between these characters that is impossible to

overlook in regards to the entire novel.

Although Ryan makes a compelling argument for *Frankenstein* as a parody of Job and of

Genesis, but this argument lacks acknowledgment of the depth and usage of the allusions to Job

and Genesis within the novel. The allusions function as a clear sign to reveal the parallel

narratives between these two works. This parallel narrative highlights and exposes the problems

and negative outcomes when man tries to become omnipotent and a creator, while advocating

and promoting the importance of natural ways of life and God's power as the only creator.

Trying to obtain the unknown forces the seeker to abandon the earthly and natural pleasures;

these pleasures ground humanity to the earth in order to maintain the natural way of life[1]. When

the individual goes beyond the natural laws and seeks the unknown, the pleasures of the natural

world turn away from the individual. This divide becomes a representation of defiance against

the natural rules creating animosity and hatred between the two forces. Mary's creature is the

representation of the earthly material that the seekers abandon in their journey for uncovering the

unknown. Not only does the creature profess his feelings of abandonment and despair to Victor,

but also to all seekers of the unknown. The creature laments how "no Eve soothed [his] sorrows,

or shared [his] thoughts; [He] was alone. [He] remembered Adam's supplication to his Creator;

but where was [his]? [His Creator] had abandoned [him], and, in the bitterness of [his] heart, [he]

cursed [his Creator]" (145). Victor abandons his creation to a sad and lonely state without ever

first sympathizing with his creation or supporting his creation. The creation does not act

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[1] 1. Percy Shelley's *Alastor*: The Poet tries to find a perfect companion, similar to him, while trying to obtain
ultimate knowledge of the world and beyond. However, the Poet dies trying to obtain these impossible goals. Percy
portrays this attempt as admirable and all men should try to strive for things beyond their means.

violently toward Victor or curse him to provoke Victor to abandon his creation. This abandonment is similar to God's abandonment of Job in Job 1:11 and 2:9 from the Bible. Although God allows terrible things to happen to Job in order to prove to Satan that Job was a faithful follower, God previously praised and allowed Job to have good fortune because of his devotion. Unlike God, Victor does not allow his creation to initially show his devotion to him, but rather Victor abandons his creation at the onset. Thus, there is justification for why the creature rejects and curses Victor. Victor is just a man and cannot fulfill the tasks and responsibilities that are necessary for a creator, which is why he abandons his creation. Similarly when man tries to go beyond God and obtain the unknown in order to become omnipotent, man abandons earth and is unable to fulfill his responsibilities that come with trying to obtain the unknown because the result is something that is unnatural or destructive.

Although destruction and unnatural events can occur when man tries to obtain the unknown, when the seeker abandons their search for the unknown, the entire world rejoices and the rules of nature reapply. Victor's creation is not completely resentful or revengeful against mankind forever. He wants to belong and have a home both literally and figuratively amongst man. He laments and tells Victor how "if any being felt emotions of benevolence towards [the creature], [he] should return them an hundred and an hundred fold; for that one creature's sake, [he] would make peace with the whole kind" (169-170). Although in a couple of pages previous to this quote the creature discusses how he cursed Victor for abandoning him, he is able to forgive Victor and mankind as a whole if just one person shows him kindness. Since the creature represents earth, earth is able to forgive those that go against the natural way of the world and God. In Genesis 18:23-33, God told Abraham He would spare all of Sodom, if Abraham were able to show the righteousness of man's hearts that lived in Sodom. Similarly, Victor needs to

become righteous & show mercy to his creation or any man needs to show him kindness in order for the creature to pardon all the harsh treatment he received. The creature even suggests the possibility of Victor creating a female creature in order for his creature to have company. However, none of these possibilities occurs because of Victor's inability to think about others. Filled with anger and resentments, the creature takes his revenge out on Victor, much like the way that God destroyed Sodom because their inability to right their wrongs. The creature becomes a symbol of the potential destruction of man when man transgresses against God and nature. Man must stop trying to gain omnipotence by challenging the natural laws in society, in particular the male Romantics, in order for nature to take control and work naturally because if man continues to strive for the unknown destruction will occur.

When Elizabeth writes to Victor to come back in order for them to get married, Victor realizes that the deed of creating life cannot be forgiven or taken back but rather he must pay the price. Victor "read and re-read her letter, and some softened feelings stole into [his] heart, and dared to whisper paradisiacal dreams of love and joy; but the apple was already eaten, and the angel's arm bared to drive [him] from all hope" (192-193). Mary continues to draw the connections between the universal laws and God's divine status as creator. Once Victor creates life, he is not only revolting against natural law, but also God's law. The metaphor regarding the apple is an allusion to Genesis 3:24, which discusses the scene in the Garden of Eden and the first sin. The desire of the apple is the desire for God-like knowledge within the Bible and within *Frankenstein.* Victor's thirst for knowledge is the tempting feeling that drives him to literally create life and figuratively bite the apple. The damage has long since passed and he realizes that some force will "drive [him] from all hope" and the "paradisiacal dream of love and joy" (192-193). His deed forces him out of Paradise and away from Elizabeth. Similar to Satan, and Adam

and Eve, Victor commits a sin of pride, which is the worst sin of all. Victor lacks understanding and knowledge about key literary examples of morality that provide a basis for how society should act so bad events will not keep repeating. This is due to his love for philosophical and science texts that encourage his desire to question natural laws and push the boundaries of known facts and truths. The connections between the Bible and Victor's actions emphasize the importance in following natural law in order to elucidate how there are consequences for a person's prideful actions.

It is undeniable that *Frankenstein* has a Miltonic mode throughout the novel, especially since Mary alludes to *Paradise Lost* so often within the work. This is an area in regards to the critique of the novel that has been heavily interpreted and discussed amongst critics. David Soyka is one such critic that discusses how "the Miltonic theme of the created's rejection of the creator, and the earthly havoc this rejection causes, Shelley suggests through her characterization of Victor Frankenstein that it is God's hubris and subsequent lack of interest in His Creation that lays the groundwork for human wickedness" ("*Frankenstein* and the Miltonic Creation of Evil", 166-7). Victor is not a false God, but rather a representation of God himself as a cruel and distant Creator. To further draw the connection between Victor and God, Soyka's discussion of Victor's abandonment of the creature is an example of "Milton's *Paradise Lost* depiction of God as disappointed in His creation of Satan […] God casts Satan out forever from his domain. Similarly, Frankenstein's disappointment in his creation causes him to cast out the Monster" (170). The creature is similar to Milton's Satan in regards of being at times a sympathetic character that is thrown out of the arms of his creator. Although Soyka makes a compelling argument about how to view the obvious allusions to Milton, Soyka's argument lacks depth and precision into how the particular references and quotations of Milton function within the novel.

Within *Frankenstein*, Mary constantly compares Victor and Milton's Satan. Victor often quotes from *Paradise Lost* to discuss how, like Satan, he is forever damned because of his prideful sins against the natural world. After the creature commits his final act of revenge by killing Elizabeth, Victor swears to follow the creature to the ends of the earth in order to kill his creation. Victor laments and expresses how "cold, want, and fatigue, were the least pains which [he] was destined to endure; [he] was cursed by some devil, and carried about with [him his] eternal hell" (204). This lamentation is similar to Satan's lament in *Paradise Lost* IV.75 and IX.467. Satan desires to go back to Heaven when he looks upon Eden, but cannot because he "[himself is] Hell", the embodiment of hell, and repentance will not grant him forgiveness *Paradise Lost* IV.75. This allusion is all throughout the novel, mostly referenced by Victor. Victor is Satan because both are unable to be given forgiveness because they do not feel true guilt in their actions due to their prideful ways. Pride is the main emotion that holds these characters back from truly repenting in order to gain forgiveness. Pride is their eternal hell that follows them around, which is similar to how the male Romantics are prideful in their works. Their works represent their pride, which is always a part of their personality and legacy. Similar to Victor, these writers forged their own path due to their desire to find meaning through subjectification of the world. Subjectifying objects in the world is a prideful act that entraps these writers in an eternal hell by keeping them in isolation due to their personalizing and isolating writing.

The eternal hell is not just an encompassing space that surrounds the characters, but also a permanent domain due to pride. Although Victor looks back at his mistakes and talks to Walton about where he went wrong, Victor's "speculations and hopes are as nothing; and, like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, [he is] chained in an eternal hell" (211). This is a

reference to Milton's Satan in the first book discussing about the aftermath of his mutiny. Satan, like Victor, desires omnipotence and fails at achieving it, but rather is forever in chains in hell. Satan was God's best and favorite angel, but Satan's pride made him want to revolt against God because he thought he was more powerful than God. Victor understands the mistakes he made and realizes that he must remain in his state because he is unable to give up on trying to attain the unknown. Satan must control and lead the other demons, but still acts selfishly and alone when he tempts Eve. In addition, Victor must be responsible for his creation, but refuses to take responsibility for his mistake, but would rather destroy it and pretend nothing ever happened. However, Victor must remain in his hell in order to take responsibility for the wrongs he did in the past.

The male writers fail to knowledge the writings of Milton to show how their behavior is similar to Satan's behavior. The writers' ability to forge their own path creates their own hell that they must be a part of and never able to get out of it because of prideful behavior in creating their own meaning of the world that already is set due to natural laws. Like Satan's hell is a pseudo-Heaven, their meaning and their view of the world is a pseudo world. It is perverse and different because it is a subjectified version of the world rather than the natural world. In creating personal versions of the natural world, the writers try to become creators like God, but they ultimately further themselves away from the natural world. This separation isolates the writers rather than immerses them into the world. Their language is the subjective tool that not only denies the incorporation of their predecessors but also is a tool that is strictly exclusive to them, which distorts a universal meaning of objects and ideas.

In addition to creating a larger literary context to support how one is able to stabilize language by the incorporation of ideology of previous literature into each new and current work,

Mary's allusions to and exact quotations of the then current male Romantics show how the male writers saw language as a subjective tool to help define meaning in the world, rather than a collective world view understanding of the world that all men can understand. In her ability to quote and reference them, she subjects them to critic and characterizes their behavior and ideologies in Victor revealing the problems of the subjectification of the world and the consequences. In her exact quotations of Percy Shelley's "Mutability", Mary develops the connection between Victor and Percy further. When he discusses how the world around us, in particular nature, is able to easily rouse man's emotions, Victor anachronistically quotes "Mutability". Victor discusses how emotional and impressionistic society is unlike Mont Blanc and nature that remains steadfast and sturdy. However, the poem discusses how life and time stops for no man, but continues to change and progress forward even if there are good or bad days. No matter what choices man makes or his actions he commits, the day "is the same: for, be it joy or sorrow,/The path of its departure still is free" (line 13-14). Each day is similar to the next because time is fleeting and continues to move forward to the next day. Futhermore, "Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow,/ Nought may endure but mutability" (line 15-16). Man's emotions and thoughts continuously change from one day to the next, so his days are never the same because of man's fluctuating emotions.

Although on the surface it looks as if Victor quotes this poem incorrectly, Mary quotes "Mutability" in order to link Victor and Percy's perceptions through the comparison between man and nature's role in regards to the world. Unlike men, nature remains steadfast and stoic from one day to the next. In quoting the poem, man remains unaccustomed to the ever changing ways of life, but tries to be "superior to those apparent in the brute" (*Frankenstein,* 124). Nature is the determinate, superior being that represents stability because they follow specific and fixed

rules of the world. Victor represents how man violates these rules in trying to gain superiority over nature, but it is impossible to overcome and rule over nature. Man's desire to become superior over nature is a parallel to Percy and male Romantics' desire, in general, to stabilize language through the use of the subjective relationship between words and thoughts. However, this will not work because the subjective relationship is similar to the mutability of man's life from day to day. Both the subjective relationships between words and thoughts, and the mutability of man's life change constantly and do not remain stable. In creating this comparison between male Romantics' critique on language and the mutability of man's life, Mary stabilizes language in her representation of the stoic and steadfast ways of nature. Nature becomes the reflection of determinate and concrete ways of language.

When men try to violate and alter the rules of nature, like Victor does when he creates the creature, they transgress against nature destabilizing and distorting the natural rules. The hubris of men that destabilizes the natural rules of the universe is similar to the ways that male Romantic writers attempt to try to dissect and stabilize the unknowable aspects of language through their own subjective ways. Mary explicitly represents these similarities in the revision from the 1818 text to 1831 text where she complicates and alters Percy's revision. As Mary was writing *Frankenstein*, Percy read and edited her work. Mary kept his alterations and additions to her work. One of his additions to her work is within Volume 1 Chapter 1 of her 1818 edition of her *Frankenstein* where Mary describes the differences between Victor and Elizabeth. Percy's addition to Mary's descriptions of the contrast between Victor and Elizabeth are the sentences:

I [Victor] delighted in investigating the facts relative to the actual world; she [Elizabeth] busied herself [Elizabeth] in following the aërial creation of the poets. The world was to me [Victor] a secret, which I [Victor] desired to discover; to her [Elizabeth] it was a

vacancy, which she [Elizabeth] sought to people with imaginations of her [Elizabeth]

own. (66)

Percy describes Victor as a man that concerns himself with prevalent matters of the world and

the mysteries of the unknown within the world. In contrast, Percy describes Elizabeth as a

woman that spends her time lost in imagination and thought about poetry and lacks

understanding of "the actual world" (66). As Anne Mellor in *Mary Shelley Her Life Her Fiction*

Her Monsters argues "Percy Shelley consistently read[s] Victor Frankenstein sympathetically

[… and] Percy, sometimes as blind as Frankenstein himself, [would soften or eliminate] his

errors" (63). Percy directly focuses on the fact that Victor is intelligent and knowledgeable about

the important issues of the world that are similar to his own, while Elizabeth focuses on issues

that are not real or important according to his opinion.

However, in Mary's 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* she alters Percy's addition within her

work representing a more positive and realistic view of Elizabeth. Some critics suggest that in

her 1831 edition, that "not only is Victor Frankenstein held less responsible for his actions, but

his actions are presented more positively" (Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her*

Monsters, 173). Although at times it does appear to be that Victor is less responsible, but the

alterations that she makes in her 1831 edition in regards to Percy's addition reveals Victor as

more responsible for his actions and as a representation for male Romantic writers. Mary edits

Percy's addition and describes her own point of view about Victor. She changes the two

sentences and elongates them with her sentences:

I [Victor] was capable of a more intense application, and was more deeply smitten with

the thirst of knowledge. She [Elizabeth] busied herself with following the aerial creations

of the poets; and in the majestic wondrous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home –

the sublime shapes of the mountains; the changes of the seasons; tempest and clam; the

silence of winter, and the life and turbulence of our Alpine summers – she found ample

scope for admiration and delight. While my [Victor] companion contemplated with a

serious and satisfied spirit the magnificent appearances of things, I [Victor] delighted in

investigating their causes. The world was to me a secret which I [Victor] desired to

divine. (*Frankenstein,* 324-325)

Mary omits Percy's discussion of Victor's desire to investigate facts of "the actual world" and

she replaces it with "deeply smitten with the thirst of knowledge…. [in order to understand what]

causes" the changes and characteristics of nature (66; 324-325). Victor no longer appears to be

more concerned with more relevant things than Elizabeth, but rather their interests are the same

except Victor desires to know more. Mary portrays Victor as an obsessive and driven character

that desires more knowledge than what is necessary to know. In listing the numerous aspects of

nature that affects Elizabeth with wonder and amazement, Mary illuminates how much

amazement and wonder there is in nature, but it is not enough for Victor to accept it, but rather

drives him to want to know more. While Elizabeth accepts and appreciates her surroundings,

Victor desires to know the causes and dissect the truth from nature.

Victor's desire to understand more about nature and try to uncover its truths is similar to

the male Romantic writers' desire and attempts to try to stabilize language. Through their

attempts to try to stabilize language, they further complicate the issue with the addition of how

words reflect the subjective point of view of their speaker. When Mary edits Percy's addition in

the 1831 edition of her novel, she directly responds to the theories of how to stabilize language

that Percy engages in his works. Victor becomes a representation of Percy because both desire to

know more than is necessary and eventually, both fail at their attempts to understand the

complexity of the unknowable within the world. In her 1831 edition, Mary is able to be more explicit in her comparison between Percy and Victor, as well as gain agency in her ability to edit Percy's previous addition to her work.

In the 1831 edition, Elizabeth becomes less of a woman that fancies books and art, but more of a character that appreciates and understands nature and the natural changes of the world. Elizabeth, like Mary, understands that there are obvious lessons and universal laws that are fixed and clear. Both do not question it, like Victor and Percy do, but rather accept the world as it is "with a serious and satisfied spirit [about] the magnificent appearances of things" (325). In describing Elizabeth's acceptance as "serious and satisfied", Mary discusses that true acceptance of things that one cannot explain will create satisfaction and understanding. The truth is within nature because nature optimizes power, truth and knowledge. Her rewriting of the characterization of Elizabeth reinforces a more positive and empowering characteristic found in other female writers and women in general. This suggests that other female writers also reinforce a natural order of things that every man must follow the universal laws. Once Victor and Percy try to quench their hubristic desire to understand the unknown through any means necessary, they further complicate the problem.

Victor's insatiable desire for more knowledge derives from his lack of reading the important texts, such as the Bible and Milton, in order to understand how there are universal laws that man abides by to ensure balance in the world; on the contrary, Elizabeth and the creature are the characters that learn about these important texts and follow their warnings and lessons in order to embrace the world around them. In particular, the creature learns language by observing the De Lacey family interact with one another, but more importantly he refines his observations of the family by reading *Paradise Lost, Plutarch's Lives* and the *Sorrows of Werter.* The creature

creates meaning the natural way by observing the lessons of these predecessors and incorporating the lessons from the text into his own life. In reading *Sorrows of Werter*, the creature "applied much personally to [his] own feelings and condition" (142). In reading *Plutarch's Lives,* it "elevated [him] above the wretched sphere of [his] own reflections, to admire and love the heroes of past ages [… and he] felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within [him], and abhorrence for vice" (143). Finally in reading *Paradise Lost*, "it moved every feeling of wonder and awe, that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting" (143). Each of these texts teaches him about the trials, the suffering, the rights and wrongs of humanity. These texts provide a basis of our society and how one should act differently to combat repeating unfortunate events. They also emphasize the importance of one's duty as a creation and creature of earth in regards to maintaining and reinforcing the natural laws that continue to pass down to each generation.

The creature is able to stabilize language in his engagement with all of the previous works of literature. The creature becomes an intertextual moment within the novel because of his integration of all the previous stories and works in order to prevent a repetition of mistakes. However, he is also a symbol of Victor's creation and reflects the dangers of the engagement with the arbitrary power and the subjectification of the world. Victor's creation represents both the right way of how we define language and find meaning in the world and the result of a person engagement with the arbitrary power and subjectivity of language.

Conclusion

Within *Frankenstein,* Mary stresses the importance of reading previous literary texts for educational purposes in order to maintain the status quo of the world. Her belief is the world contains certain universal, natural laws that provide a balance and harmony. Mary's belief in Christianity and God reinforces her understanding of the connection between natural laws and God. In particular, she stresses the importance of not revolting against these rules in a prideful manner. Victor's transgression against the natural laws when he creates life is the exemplary moment within the novel that is a reference to the male Romantic authors of the time period she critiques. The male writers' rejection of natural law and their predecessors' warnings leads them down a path of subjectification of the world and isolation due to their prideful desire to try to understand the unknowns of the world.

Male writers' advocacy of language as a subjective tool allows them to create meaning due to the power of the imagination. However, this subjective language transforms language into a personal reflection of a person's own mind and thoughts. This poses a problem because of the integration of multiple definitions and meanings for one object creating at times contradicting, and arbitrary language. In creating meaning through the imagination, a person creates a personalized language rather than a universal language that is understood by all.

In particular, Percy Shelley's advocacy for the imagination and his antitheistic beliefs contribute to his subjectification of the world. Mary's overtly Christian beliefs combat Percy's atheist beliefs within her novel in her portrayal of Victor. Victor becomes the symbol of male writers and most importantly Percy. Victor's drive for knowledge and personal gain in order to obtain omnipotence is his flaw that all the writers possess. The misfortunes and problems that occur within the novel due to Victor's hubris are the warnings that Mary tries to convey to those

that go against natural law. Victor's hubris can be further explicated in the connections between particular characters within the male Romantic writers' works. Further understanding of how Victor is a negative portrayal of the characters within their works can possibly further draw the connection that Mary critiques these writers explicitly through the characterization of Victor.

Besides the important characterization of Victor within the novel, the discussion of Elizabeth's characterization is an aspect of the novel that one might argue incorporates more female voices. Especially in the changes of Elizabeth's character between the 1818 version and 1831 version of the novel, further development and understanding could further emphasize the differences between Mary and the male writers. In addition, Elizabeth's characterization seems to be more than just a reflection of Mary's thoughts and ideas, but rather a vessel for a more broad range of female Romantic voices and opinions about their male counterparts.

Furthermore, the characterization of the creature is an additional topic of interest that needs further study. As argued, the creature becomes the ultimate example of the intertexuality within the novel. On the one hand, he learns and understands language and natural laws in the correct way, according to Mary, because he reads literature and understands the importance of how a society should function and the duties of every man. On the other, he is the creation of the wrong way of understanding language through personal gain and prideful, unquenchable thirst for knowledge. How can we explicate further on the creature's dual role in the novel and how does this understanding of the creature further critique male writers? Overall, the duality of the creature is an important aspect of the novel that needs further research and study. The creature's function within the novel is more than a quasi-creation of a man, but rather a mixture of what Mary understands as good or evil. In developing these ideas, the reader is able to better

understand the importance of the intertexual moments within *Frankenstein* as a constant critique

and response to the other writers within the time period.

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