



“ALL HUMAN KIND SINNED AGAINST ME”: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE CREATURE AS THE “OTHER” IN MARY SHELLEY'S NOVEL “ FRANKENSTEIN”

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Abstract: The term “Other” is popular in cultural and literary studies. Edward Said proposed the idea of “the Other” in his work *Orientalism* (1978) . Othering is the occurrence in which some groups or individuals are labelled as not fitting in within the norms of a social group. They are excluded and discriminated to be ‘the other’. The concept of the “Other” can be found in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* . The creature is excluded by his representation as inhuman throughout the novel. The novel shows how society alienates anyone who does not suit its taste. By studying the creature’s appearance, the language and the creature’s interaction with other characters it can be understood how Victor Frankenstein’s creation is alienated and is denied the status of a human being. This paper focuses on the concept of the “Other” originally as the part of a post -colonial theory. This paper will analyse the idea of the “Other” within Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* particularly in regards to the character of the creature.

Key words: Other, Discrimination, Exclusion ,Alienation, Post-colonial , Creature, Appearance.

For ages society has placed stereotypes on those individuals who are different. Society has never been kind to people who do not fit anywhere. Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* is an example of a literary text that depicts how people look down upon a being that is anatomically different from them. *Frankenstein* portrays how social prejudices against physical deformities can usually classify a person as bad or monstrous. The idea of 'other' and the act of 'othering' is a powerful idea that is used in many literary texts. In this novel we witness the birth of an innocent creature whose intentions are misinterpreted by society. Because of his physical deformity the creature is abandoned by his creator. He is also excluded from the society. In the novel, Shelley represents the creature as a marginalized figure. From the moment he comes to life, his physical differences mark him as an 'other'. Despite his attempts, the creature is unable to assimilate into the mainstream culture. He remains 'the other' because of his physical characteristics.

"What am I?" asks the creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein (1818)*. The Monster, a creation of scientific experiment, and not human by birth, seeks to become more human, more acceptable, and more understood. Indeed, this questions are central to the core of human self-understanding. Frankenstein illustrates in details how the creature is transformed into a monster. He is initially created by Victor Frankenstein, a 'scientist' who brings life to a being similar yet entirely different from himself only to denounce it as a filthy monster. The creature, however, does not act like a monster from the beginning. It is only after he encounters people who deny and degrade him that he turns himself into the monstrous being. Immediately upon his "birth", he is established as "other" by his own creator. Through Frankenstein's description of his creation, it is established that while he possess human features, he is still something other than human.

Victor Frankenstein becomes obsessed with pursuing scientific advancements, and is eventually able to create a living being. The creature becomes excluded from society, and tries to humanize himself through the knowledge of language. The novel suggests that the creature cannot be accepted as human because he is a singular being, and therefore cannot be a part of a community. The creature tries to use language as a tool to communicate with humans, thus trying to compensate for his singular appearance. He uses his acquired language in hopes of establishing relations, in order to become a part of the human community. He desires companionship and goes to considerable lengths to be accepted. The creature recognises that people communicate through sounds, and this can result in specific emotions. The creature tries to make connection that will enable him to live alongside humans in a community. He is able to voice his concerns, but because of his appearance, he cannot be considered Human and is therefore denied the rights of a man. He is labelled as a murderer, but is not allowed to speak on his behalf. The creature's ability to reason and communicate does not allow him to be a part of the human community. Therefore, he is excluded from society.

Victor calls his creation a "lifeless thing". The creature's status is ambiguous, and he is already being rejected by Victor in the sense that he is considering the creature as something that is inhumane. Also interesting is that Victor notices that the creature is lying at his feet. The scene is of the creature being physically below Victor. This scene gives the impression of Victor being raised above the creature, both literally and figuratively. This cold description implies that Victor is something superior to the creature. Victor clearly does not recognise the creature

as a human, and in fact sees him as something inferior. Victor does not see him as a being that could be a part of human community.

At the moment of his birth, the creature is entirely benevolent: he affectionately reaches out to Frankenstein, only to have the latter violently abandon him. Despite his frightful appearance, he is as innocent as a new-born child. Victor treats the creature cruelly. He renounces the creature at the moment of its birth. The creature is considered deformed; while certain aspects of the creature's appearance are described as being individually pleasant, the focus is on the monster's skin and eyes, two features which are most prominently used to define race. People of Middle Eastern or Asian descent are often described as having "brown" or "yellow" skin, as if these particular shades are variations of a default. Shelley's use of colour within the novel further exemplifies this colourism. By defining the creature's colouring as "other", Frankenstein is able to consider the creature as part of its own race, separate from Frankenstein and all other human beings simply by virtue of appearance, and therefore making a generalization of an entire race. This, to him, justifies his disgust with his creation and allows him to relay any responsibility he has as its creator. Victor had originally imagined the creature to be beautiful. The initial concept was forming something beautiful and aesthetically pleasing to the human eye. But the creature turns out to be something that humans cannot stand to look at. Victor had been working on making the limbs proportional, and selecting features that were pleasing. He uses human bodies and bases the concept of the creature on what humans would find appealing. Yet the result is terrifying. The creature is made from human body parts, but he is not seen as a human being. Even though he is meant to look human, it is as if there is something inherently inhuman about him. Victor was so wrapped up in his endeavour that he could not see what he was doing with reasonable judgement. When Victor beholds the monstrous form of his creation, he is horror-stricken. He flees his laboratory and seeks solace in the night. When he returns to his room, the creature has disappeared. Victor intended the creature to be beautiful. However, when it awakens he is disgusted.

According to the creature, he is not a 'Demon' keen on destroying humankind. He is a helpless creature deserted and degraded by "all human kind [who] sinned against [him]". After leaving Victor Frankenstein's house, he has to endure not only the cold winds of winter, but also the frigid attitudes of people who shriek, faint, and attack him immediately after laying their eyes on him. The creature's account of his early encounters with human beings contradicts Frankenstein's assumption that the creature's existence is in itself a threat to the human race. A few chapters in the novel are told from the creature's point of view. In this way, Mary Shelley humanizes the creature: his first-person narration reveals him as a character of surprising depth and sensitivity. We become familiar with his trials and sufferings; we realize that, at the time of Frankenstein's abandonment, the creature was as innocent and defenceless as a human infant. Like an infant, he is plagued by blurry vision, confusion of the senses and an aversion to direct light: he experiences the world precisely as a young child would experience it. In all of his encounters with humanity, the creature is met with horror and disgust. Though the creature means no harm, his ugly appearance is enough to make him a wretched outcast. He is, through no fault of his own, deprived of all hope of love and companionship.

Despite being met with fear and aggression, the creature still greatly desires to form relationships with humans. He is intelligent so he understands that his body is ugly and frightening, longs for a way to make people look beyond his appearance so that he may get accepted by society. The creature becomes aware that people communicate through sounds, and decide that he must gain this ability before presenting himself to any more people. The creature discovers language while observing the cottagers. The creature realizes that people can communicate. He is able to understand that the sounds people make are a way of relaying thoughts and ideas to others. What the creature finds most interesting, however is that these sounds can cause different emotions in the person listening. He finds this power to be “godlike”. The creature has this deep longing to join the human society. He is, at first, utterly ignorant of the ways of humanity. He learned everything from the scratch. He is still a child, with all of a child’s innocence and capacity for wonder. To him, the cottagers are blessed. In comparing himself to them, the creature feels himself to be a monster: he is terrified by his own reflection, and is nearly unable to accept it as his own. At the same time, he still dreams of acceptance into the human society, and attempts to master language in order to inspire the De Lacey family’s affection and trust. Understanding his deformity as the utmost hindrance to assimilation, the creature finds shelter in the De Laceys’ shack and anonymously helps them with hard labour such as collecting wood. He even tries to learn people’s language by eavesdropping on lessons given by Felix De Lacey to Safie, a Turk. With the newly acquired linguistic skill, the creature does win the sympathy of the elder De Lacey, a blind man. Acceptance, however, is difficult to achieve. The creature’s hope to dismantle the preconceptions people have of him by talking to them fails because people with eyesight refuse to see beyond the exterior. The creature’s experience at the De Laceys explains not only the mechanism of fear and violence, but the colonizer’s denial of the rights of the colonized. In fact, he is the victim and witness of the colonizer’s hypocrisy. The creature who, although voluntarily, takes the role of the abject slave represents the colonized, while the De Lacey’s who, perhaps unintentionally, benefit from the labour of the unseen slave symbolize the colonizer. The most brutal rejection that accelerates the monsterization of the creature is Frankenstein’s refusal to create a mate for him. Aware that no friendly hand would be offered by a human being, the creature proposes that if Frankenstein grants him a female partner with whom he would form a family, he would depart from the human society permanently. Victor had agreed to create a companion for the Monster. Upon beginning the second experiment, Victor begins to doubt his decision, jumping to conclusions regarding the not-yet-existent creature.

Frankenstein’s fear of the creature’s subjectivity leads him to abort the task of creating the creature’s mate. He imagines that she would mate with men instead of her intended partner, thereby crossing the line that separates mankind from beasts, disrupting all existing order that provides peace. Frankenstein’s so-called ‘logic’ is in fact quite illogical, for he relies on his own prejudices of the ‘Other’ to ground his argument. Seeing through the irrationality for Frankenstein’s excuse that grounds itself on assumptions that derive from prejudices of the ‘Other’, the creature criticizes him for depriving him of the last resort to happiness. Victor’s termination of the female character is not just representative of the fear of female autonomy, but of the patriarchal desire to validate men’s superiority over women. The creature blames Victor for destroying his mate, and declares his superiority to Victor. The monster was construed as a machine because he was not born like a child, the relationship of the creator and the creature corresponds to that of a father-child relationship. The creature “has no mechanical characteristics, and is a fully human creature; ... not as a machine, a robot, a helot, or any other labour-saving convenience, but

as the Adam of a new race which will love and venerate its creator". Another trait that makes the creature a human being is the use of his brain and the ability to think as well as to speak. It is remarkable that within a society there were usually some laws, unwritten rules, norms and traditions that had to be followed and because of prejudices all the exceptions were not acceptable specifically regarding the stature and shape of the creature. On the one hand, the creature is a product of modern science, based on new findings and knowledge and on the other hand, the society and its mentality is very conservative, so it is impossible for the creature to be welcomed in a world where people feared unusual things. The creature accuses Victor for having neglected his duties towards him, his creation. He ought to have been happy and comfortable like Adam but Victor's neglect of him has made him a fallen angel like Satan. The monster eloquently argues that he is intrinsically good, full of love and humanity ;only the greatness of his suffering had driven him to commit acts of evil. Though he is surrounded by examples of human happiness, he finds himself excluded, through no fault of his , irrevocably excluded from such bliss. After Victor rejects to create a female companion for him. He vows to take revenge upon his creator. The creature targets Victor's friend Clerval and murders him. On the day of Victor's marriage the creature kills Victor's wife Elizabeth. He strangles Elizabeth to death depriving Victor of his bride as he had deprived him of his female companion. After Victor Frankenstein's death, the creature steals into the ship to view the body of his dead creator. He utters exclamations of grief and horror. The creature, overcome with emotion, tells Walton that Victor , too is his victim, he asks Victor to forgive him for his crimes. Despite all that has transpired between them, the creature still harbours love for his creator. The creature bids a touching farewell to Frankenstein saying that his agony was superior to that of his creator .

The creature experiences a series of personal transformation. Initially the creature seeks out human companionship and love, and turns to murder only after being abandoned by his Creator. The creature's journey reflects Shelley's thoughts on human nature . She believed that people were inherently good, but the corrupt social systems corrupt people. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the power glass through which we can have a glimpse how society alienates people because of their certain characteristics which usually do not fulfil the desired and decisive taste of the society. It uncovers the uncanny defamiliarization of the familiar role of society. The monster, a creation of Victor Frankenstein's madness is used to testify this. The creature's hideous appearance is the reason of the society's disliking it and so it is regarded with disgust and hatred . Although the creature had amiable intentions, the people around him, moulding their mind in accordance to the society's values and rules, immediately take it for granted that the creature is actually evil. He is rejected by people who do not know him, by people he loves , and even by his own creator, Victor Frankenstein. The Importance that the ordered society likes only the ordered people and totally places upon person's appearance is evidenced by the way that Frankenstein's creature is judged based on his monstrous facade.

The novel encourages the readers to understand that monsters are born under the circumstance where violence becomes the only means of communication for the 'Other'. Such explanation, however, still fails to answer the question of why people, including Frankenstein, reject the racial 'Other'. What really frightens Frankenstein is the

potential subjectivity of the creature who has a commanding presence of an individual, although he never mentions or admits it. The drastic change in Frankenstein's attitude towards his creation becomes understandable when taking into consideration that he may not be revealing the real cause of his fear: the gaze of the creature. It is after the creature opens his eyes and gazes at its creator that Frankenstein condemns the creature as monstrous. Frankenstein, however, is terrified of the creature because he believes that he has created more than what he had bargained for. A subject who is able to return the gaze of the master. If the creature signifies the racial 'Other', the creature's gazing eyes could be read as the returned look of the colonized which "reminds the colonizer that the colonized is a subject as well as an object". Before the awakening of the creature, Frankenstein had owned the commanding gaze of the creator, but now the creature has become a subject who is able to make eye contact. He fears that his creature would reduce him to the observed object and destruct the hierarchy between the observed and observer altogether.

Frankenstein criticizes the racial discourses of the empire through the voice of the creature whose narrative exposes the monster making process of himself, and of racial 'Others' in general. The creature criticizes the society that condemns the 'Other' for "permanent physical conditions that the subject can never alter". Through the use of the formed and deformed body, colour, and aspects of culture, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is an allegory on the dangers of "othering" and objectification. She brings to the surface the voice of the usually muted 'Other'.

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