

Romanstein

A Revision of the Romantic Self in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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【摘要】

在《科學怪人》中瑪麗雪萊雖再現許多浪漫主題，對她同時代人的許多憧憬和信心卻表質疑，尤其是所謂「浪漫自我」。無論浪漫主義者對自我的認識正確與否，它無疑是浪漫精神的主軸，本論文故將探討瑪麗雪萊對這個主軸如何挑戰，並把維多等角色所呈現的自我擺放至德希達的解構框架中，一一點出其中的虛幻不實。

【關鍵詞】

自我；他者；身分認同；德希達；解構

【Abstract】

Although Mary Shelley echoes many of the Romantic concerns in *Frankenstein*, she nevertheless calls into question some of the unqualified longings and confidence of her contemporaries. Among the convictions that she challenged are those of self, imagination, and the fundamental innocence of human nature, and self in particular. Inasmuch as self, properly recognized or otherwise, is arguably a pivotal force of the whole Romantic arts, this paper attempts to suggest how in *Frankenstein* the infinitely expanded, highly emphasized self is questioned, circumscribed, and balanced. Like language, according to the post-structuralist theory, self can be intelligible only when it is contextualized, and, like history, can be meaningful only when it is positioned in a specific spatiotemporal milieu. In what follows, we thus place within the framework of the Derridean deconstruction the selves respectively expressed by Walton, Justine, Victor, and the Creature, hoping to see how the Romantic self represented by such poets as Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, and Byron is revised.

【Keywords】

self, Other, identity, Derrida, deconstruction

From its first publication early in 1818 *Frankenstein* has excited interest and curiosity, but not until recent years did the work "justly" receive serious scholarly attention "for its brilliant foreshadowings of numerous modern concerns" (Keyishian 201). *Frankenstein* has been interpreted as "a tale of excessive ambition, a social critique," warning about the dangers of technology, and "a myth of creation." Psychological and psychoanalytical interpretations have also been offered: the novel has been read as a tale of the "double," in which Victor and the Creature are seen to be different aspects of the same being; the Creature has been characterized as a projection of the raging id, "carrying out its creator's forbidden, destructive, unconscious wishes." Feminist scholars, too, have been attracted to the work "as a reflection of birth trauma and as a male appropriation of female functions and texts." In addition, other theoretical approaches such as Marxism and post-structuralism have contributed remarkably to the interpretation of the novel, the former considering it as a work that exposes and criticizes society's oppressive economic and ideological systems, and the latter, a methodology with which the present study is developing, calling attention to the fluidity and indeterminacy of its signification. *Frankenstein*'s capacity for generating and sustaining such a range of readings hence "amply demonstrates the suggestive richness of its artistic texture." In this regard Johanna Smith's essay (237-61) is of great help in offering a comprehensive and detailed bibliography.

As many of the critics have suggested, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to a large extent can be regarded as a panorama of the themes characteristic of Romanticism. Like much of the Romantic poetry, this novel affirms a powerful restorative efficacy of the sublime natural world, so powerful that it not only prompts Victor to find solace from the grandeur of the Alps, but even allows the Creature, after a severe winter of cold and bleakness, to perceive his heart leaping up as the spring approaches. Another Romantic element that informs *Frankenstein* is anti-intellectualism. In the novel the unrestrained pursuit of knowledge is manifestly admonished, though it would be quite arbitrary to say that Mary Shelley indiscriminately dismisses progress and civilization achieved predominantly by knowledge of various fields. Thus Victor's act of creation leads eventually to the destruction of everyone dear to him; Walton finds himself perilously trapped between sheets of ice, and pulls in the end back from his precarious mission,

having learned from Victor's example how destructive the thirst for knowledge can be. Instead of promoting an intemperate exploration of knowledge, therefore, *Frankenstein* essentially celebrates a life of what I may describe as uninformedness, showing that there exists anything but irremediably harmful in the state of "uneducatedness." Besides anti-intellectualism and the recuperative strength of nature, the revolutionary spirit and humanitarianism are two of the other themes that resonate in the Romantic novel, two themes often seen in poets such as William Blake and Percy Shelley. Their poems that illustrate these themes include "The Tyger," "London," "Ode to the West Wind" and many others.

Although Mary Shelley echoes many of the Romantic concerns, she nevertheless calls into question some of the unqualified longings and confidence of her contemporaries. In P. D. Fleck's words, she "adopted a critical attitude towards Romantic idealism early in life" (238) and *Frankenstein* as a result "has a distinctly Romantic motif which runs counter to the Romantic motifs" (239). Gradually emerging from the shadow of her husband, she is increasingly being recognized by critics as "a distinctly feminine voice within what seems to be a male-dominated movement" (Cantor 89). Among the convictions that she challenged are those of self, imagination, and the fundamental innocence of human nature, and self in particular. Probably because of this overrated self, Wordsworth became what Keats described as an "Egotist," and his poetry obtrusive. This same self may also have made Arnold call Percy Shelley an ineffectual angel, and made Carlyle advise us to close Byron. Inasmuch as self, properly recognized or otherwise, is arguably a pivotal force of the whole Romantic arts--literature, music, painting, and many others--this paper attempts to suggest how in *Frankenstein* the infinitely expanded, highly emphasized self is questioned, circumscribed, and balanced. Like language, according to the post-structuralist theory, self can be intelligible only when it is contextualized, and, like history, can be meaningful only when it is positioned in a specific spatiotemporal milieu. In what follows, we thus place within the framework of the Derridean deconstruction the selves respectively expressed by Walton, Justine, Victor, and the Creature, hoping to see how the Romantic self is re-examined, the self that is diversely represented by such voices as the persona in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, the "Scorner of the ground" in Percy Shelley's "To a Sky-Lark," and the seemingly misanthropic, proverbially self-indulgent protagonist

in Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

In one sense, the privileging of self by the Romantics may be historically justified. The society of Mary Shelley's day was not in perfect unity but instead "a disoriented society" (Nishiyama 625) in which, "with the shifting tide of the European historical mind, its traditional social standards and myths had virtually collapsed." In the midst of unprecedented changes that were caused mainly by the impact of the Industrial and French Revolution, the Romantics "actually felt the collapse of the traditional mode of existence that the Christian myth had supported." In order to create a new cosmos out of the chaos in society, they began to "seek new forms and modes of faith which would satisfy their spiritual needs" (626). Furthermore, the scientific progress of the day was bringing to light unexpected mysteries, hence allowing people to believe that what they perceived was only part of the secrets of the universe and that there were "many unknown, dark realms yet to be explored both within and without." Under such circumstances, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, literature as a whole, and Romantic literature especially, "inclined towards the representation of the collective unconscious," including a fascination with the human striving for the infinite, the unattainable and the "dark wishes and deeds which had long been repressed, particularly by the Christian myth." In undermining the omnipotence and omnipresence of the Christian Divinity, in exorcizing the menace and then even identifying the glamor of the biblical Satan, every individual finds himself suddenly able to re-define the universe, thereby becoming the master of himself, if not of others. Exulting in the belief that it has unscrewed the inviolable tradition, the rebellious, revolutionary self was immensely dignified and energized in this period and could not refrain from singing a song of victory and joy, a song that had seldom been heard of until this liberating moment.

In *Frankenstein*, Walton and, above all, Victor are the embodiment of this new and supposedly liberated self. An ambitious young man feeling that he deserves to "accomplish some great purpose" (Mary Shelley 8), Walton embarks on a voyage never taken before in an attempt to make unprecedented discoveries in unexplored areas to confer "the inestimable benefit" (6) upon all human kind. He wants to discover a passage to the North Pole and to learn the "secret of the magnet." Walton is fully convinced that success will "crown" his endeavors:

Wherefore not? Thus far I have gone, tracing a secure way over the pathless seas, the very stars themselves being witnesses and testimonies of my triumph. Why not still proceed over the untamed yet obedient element? What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of man? (17)

Walton's confidence in self is considerably reinforced when he meets Victor. On rescuing him, nearly exhausted after his long pursuit of the Creature, though, Walton finds that Victor is "like a celestial spirit that has a halo around him," within that circle "no grief or folly ventures" (26). Impressed by the victim's appearance, desperate for a like-minded confidant, and perhaps swayed by some wishful thinking, Walton looks on Victor as an understanding and encouraging companion, "a man who could sympathize with me, whose eyes would respond to mine" (10), a strong support on his way to the fulfillment of the resolved will that makes great efforts to overcome the "untamed yet obedient" element.

Such overrated self can also be seen in Victor, and he even moves one crucial step forward. Caught in a "mad desire" to go beyond the humanly possible and crazy about the power that "resides altogether separate and remote" from him (Fleck 246), he has every confidence not only to rule his own existence but to attain the God-like status:

A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. (Mary Shelley 61-62)

Undoubtedly, there had been earlier representations of individuals who "denied their social or religious obligations, immoralists and nihilists like Edmund in Shakespeare's *King Lear* or like Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*" (Vargish 335). But such characters were conscious of their alienation and of their war to the death with the moral world around them. Victor must be among the first characters to feel "socially justified" in his ceaseless pursuit of a totalized self. He "manages to ignore established boundaries and obligations without seeing himself as a social outcast--at least at first." It can also be argued that Victor, on the symbolic level, is much less an intellectual dissident than a

spokesman of the revolutionary epoch with whom the more radical Romantics may identify in one way or the other.

Unlike the characters she created, Walton and Victor, however, Mary Shelley herself responded totally different from the Romantic egotists. As her youth was spent among, and greatly influenced by, liberal and radical intellectuals at the time, including of course her renowned parents and Percy Shelley, it seems to be natural that her work should be placed alongside theirs and studied under the light of them. Yet her life experiences--the deaths of her children, the suicides of persons close to her, the precedent of her own brilliant mother's death after childbirth--"all made her aware (sic) the limitations and realities of human aspiration" (Keyishian 210). Mary Shelley's journal, what is more, reveals that her inclination did not "take the same turn" (Nishiyama 624-25). In other words, she "never became a true radical herself," nor did she "ever believe in the happy progress of humanity through scientific development or in an optimistic creed like the 'perfectibility' of man." What she held as true, rather, was a balanced individualism that takes into account both the development of the human potentiality and the receptivity of the world. Specifically, the full practice of an unrestrained self is not as much a question of possibility as that of what may be called feasibility and propriety. As in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley exposes the dark side of Romanticism, "the destructive potential of the egotism and narcissism that lies barely concealed beneath the new Romantic premium on the self" (Cantor 104). Through the novel we can read, as Nishiyama suggests, Mary Shelley's "subtle dramatization of her dread of the widespread social destruction of her day" that "man inflicts upon his fellow" (632). The novelist indicates that the Romantics endeavored to create their own world as distinct from the one which had oppressed humankind, but what they were in the end achieved was a distorted, defiant self that threatened to hurt and destroy.

In addition to the reflection of the Romantic tenets, Mary Shelley's cautionary tale in some respects may function as a praxis of the Derridean deconstructive strategies. For the egotist Romantics, perhaps, *Frankenstein* is not merely a story about the manufacture of a monster; it is "a monster itself" (Botting 436), a "Romanstein" (coinage mine), a troublemaker who intends to set at defiance the newly constituted, the otherwise mainstream value system. For the deconstructionist, nevertheless, the novel is a demonstration of an indeterminate, endlessly differed and

deferred self. This ongoing difference and deferral causes that self to be an unalterable signifier in which the "transcendental signified" is unavailable and a metaphor, the literal signification of which remains to be missing. It always lacks one thing, but, at exactly the same time, always has an excess of that same thing. A perfect pharmakon, the self, the novel, at once sets up and pulls down, hurts and heals, loves and hates, a Romantic anomaly, a Romantic classic.

According to Derrida, along with quite a few other post-structuralists, it is language that leads the self, and everything else, to ambivalence, instability, multiplicity, and fluidity. The need of language, consequently, proves precisely the impossibility of a unified, stable self. If not unsuccessful, language is undependable in the attainment of a truer transcendence. Just as to construct a mansion does not lie within the sphere of a computer engineer's tour de force, emphatically, to assure the stability of something is beyond the capacity of language, including the stability of language itself, paradoxically. What language knows is not the secure home but an ever-moving context, a shaky chain constitutive of signifiers and intricately intertwined metaphors. To seek stability from the illusory presence of words is no less than to ask the barely sheltered castle for protection. Rather than a valid expressing and communicating mechanism, a dynamic, unfinalized chain joined by a great variety of Other--nonself, alterity, or others--is the de facto apparatus into which the self fits, if only there be self at all. In short, it is not the self that masters language but language that masters the self; it is not we that use language but language that uses us. A more disturbing case is that it does not "use" us and itself properly, for it "simultaneously asserts and denies the authority of its own rhetorical mode" (de Man 106) and can achieve nothing but differences. But, as we shall see, Victor and several other characters in *Frankenstein* are tempted in varying degrees by the mirage of a stable self, and try in various ways to valorize it.

Probably, Victor's obsessive concern for self is serious to the point of a kind of aggressive madness. The self of this version does not notice the invariable existence of Other, or may victimize it consciously or unconsciously. A case in point is Victor's response to the Creature's final intimidation. When Victor in violation of their agreement destroys the uncompleted human designed to be the Creature's mate, the Creature tells him: "remember, I shall be with you on your wedding-night" (225). The simple and straightforward interpretation here seems "perfectly obvious" (Vargish

334) to the reader: "as you destroyed my mate I will destroy yours." Even "the makers of the crassest *Frankenstein* films can see this." But Victor "bedded in his internal negotiations, lost in his solipsistic narcissism," thinks that the threat refers to his own safety. Under the illusion of an absolutely independent self he muses:

I shuddered to think who might be the next victim sacrificed to his insatiate revenge. And then I thought again of his words--"I will be with you on your wedding-night." That then was the period fixed for the fulfillment of my destiny. In that hour I should die, and at once satisfy and extinguish his malice. The prospect did not move me to fear; yet when I thought of my beloved Elizabeth,--of her tears and endless sorrow, when she should find her lover so barbarously snatched from her,--tears, the first I had shed for many months, streamed from my eyes, and I resolved not to fall before my enemy without a bitter struggle. (Mary Shelley 226)

Indeed, rhetoric as such is altruistic and pathetic in appearance but solipsistic and ironic in reality. If it is true that Victor cries for Elizabeth, it should be equally true or even truer that Mary Shelley does cry too, crying for Victor's misconception of self. Without any significant involvement of Other, his emotion is purely self-referential, self-deceiving. Certainly this wrongly understood self will do Other, Elizabeth in this case, no good but harm. With an inability to penetrate the mischief of language, however, Victor may be convinced that he cares about a great number of others--about his parents, Elizabeth, Henry Clerval, and, to some extent, the welfare of all humanity.

In fact, there exist opportunities for Victor to have a closer recognition of the reality of self. One occasion is during the time Victor is being excessively preoccupied with the creation of new life at Ingolstadt, Alphonse Frankenstein writes him a letter, reminding him that to ignore others is as much as to ignore self:

"I know that while you are pleased with yourself you will think of us with affection, and we shall hear regularly from you. You must pardon me if I regard any interruption in your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally neglected." (63)

Obviously, it is the father rather than the son who is able to detect the marginalized voice beneath the seemingly enclosed discourse. A major neglected duty of Victor is his inattention to the disconnection of self with Other and his failure to make the self properly contextualized. According to Mary J. Corbett, Alphonse's perception of the relationship between self and Other is echoed by Mary Shelley in her journals in which "the mutual is privileged over and above the individual," in which "the self cannot be a self without the familial context that shapes identity in particular ways, not all of them necessarily either liberating or constraining" (86). But a meaningful self cannot be simply contextualized within the family structure alone; it needs to be simultaneously placed within the sociocultural, ideological, and historical contexts.

The situation of a contextless self, a self devoid of Other, may resemble what is revealed in the dream that Victor has after finding the appalling ugliness of his product:

Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured, and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavoring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain; I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (67)

Evidently, a decontextualized self is tantamount to death. It dismisses Other as much as it dismisses love. Whatever type of love under such a circumstance will be blighted, even the inherent affection of mother and child.

Victor's second opportunity to identify the indeterminacy of self comes during his trip to the Alps, where he is impressed by the varied and sublime grandeur of the mountainscape and gains an intuitive understanding of the continuously changing reality:

Alas! Why does man boast of sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows and a chance word or scene that that word may convey to us. (124)

In narrating his life story Victor, too, passes on to Walton this insight into the unavailability of a monolithic presence: "The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature" (67). Despite his knowledge that self is rather a signifier than a signified, Victor cannot after all free himself actually from the trick of language and the illusion of a stable self. When discovering on his deathbed that Walton is making notes of his history, Victor asks to see them and then himself corrects and augments them in many places, explaining that he does not want an incomplete record to "go down to posterity" (285). But there is no complete record at all to be handed on in terms of deconstruction. Besides, Victor's action indicates on the one hand that he chooses till the very end to cling to the false image of self, and on the other hand that he seems to have admitted the fact that self cannot be independent of Other, of the "posterity." Perhaps to some degree or at some moment Victor is aware of the instability of self, but that the Other is equally unstable appears to be an idea that seldom comes into his mind. Otherwise, he should not have attempted to influence the reading Other of the future by revising the self recorded in Walton's notes.

As opposed to Victor who in totalizing the self may be said to worry about the presence of Other, interestingly, the Creature is haunted by the fear of its absence. To get rid of this fear, he would rather have the companionship of the worst Other than be left completely alone. A status like Satan's can be desirable because then he has "his companions, fellow devils, to admire and encourage him," instead of being "solitary and abhorred" (171). It should be clear up to this point that anxiety of this sort is groundless and unnecessary in the consideration of deconstruction, for the deconstructionist does not become a prey to the game of binary opposition, repeat the old drama of what Derrida describes as using "pharmakeus against pharmakeus, pharmakon against pharmakon" (1981 124), and eventually fall back into the morass of interminable center-substitutions. Derrida sees no opposition between self and

Other, since in his view such opposition amounts to the use of self against self, Other against Other, presence against presence, and absence against absence. Moreover, Derrida's concept of supplement may make it clear that even a self like the Creature's is not an origin but an addition to something already there. The self is always "the supplement of a supplement" (1976 304). According to Derrida, the feature of supplementing and being supplemented at once would defy the presumably originary and absolute state of self. If the self is a genuine origin and a closed, unbroken whole, it cannot supplement anything, and nothing can be added to it, either. Yet one thing or another usually comes earlier, earlier than that self. Therefore, the Creature's real problem, like Victor's, though shown in a different fashion, is that he cannot detach himself entirely from Other. To be sure, no Other can bother him if he is alone in the real sense.

In teasing out the interwoven architectonic of self and Other, and in illuminating the idea of supplement, the Creature's experience concerning his indirect but intersubjective interaction with the De Lacey members can serve as an example par excellence. Having been abandoned by his creator and forced to flee by local villagers, the Creature conceals himself in a hovel attached to the cottage of the De Lacey family. Through a small chink in a blocked-up window, he is able to observe undetected the daily life of the cottagers. Paradoxically, the Creature's developing awareness of his identity as an outcast is a product of his immersion in the social interpenetrating process from which he is excluded. It cannot be said that the Creature "enters into communication with the family he is watching unobserved," Jonathan Jones points out (275), but it is also "inadequate" to portray him simply as an outsider. "To say he is marginal to the life of the De Lacey household may be correct in terms of his spatial location," Jones continues, but "it does not adequately reflect his psychic location." Although from the De Lacey's perspective he does not enter into communication with them, "from his own and indeed from the reader's perspective," he does enter into a form of communion with the cottagers. His emotions "become sensitive to, and reflective of, the emotional life of the cottage": when the cottagers are unhappy, he feels depressed; when they rejoice, he sympathizes in their joys. Definitely, this emotional response occurs within a self/Other context and in a pre-originary state. Initially the Creature may not understand the words that are being spoken by the De Lacey's, but he is "swept up in the emotional movement they

convey" (276). All this silent, intangible interplay between the outsider and the cottagers points to the fact that the Creature's more firmly established sense of self comes after his a priori sense of Other, after his conception that he cannot help but participate in the emotional activities of Other. But if Other is the originary and absolute state of the Creature's existence, then the De Lacey experience would be of little import to him. Here we come to the aporia, the chicken-or-egg situation, but the reality of language in Mary Shelley's narrative.

With an inability to accurately realize the unending, ubiquitous self/nonself interplay, however, the Creature keeps worrying about the absence of Other, and even, finally, goes as far as to consider Victor as his only alterity. As a result, he may not be just "satisfied" but reassured and joyful to have found that Victor determines to live in spite of series of miseries. It is also not hard to understand why he decides to die right after Victor's death: his Other is absent forever. Other is everywhere nonetheless: within himself, around him, against him, in his favor.

We would like to deal with the instances of Walton and Justine before closing the essay. In the former case, it is true that, as we mentioned at the beginning, Walton may have learned from Victor's example how dangerous the unrestrained pursuit of knowledge can be, but it is not true, not as Harry Keyishian has noted, that Walton has found in the experiences of Victor and the Creature "warnings against... self-idealization" (209). In contrast, John Reed asserts that Walton has no "genuine aim" (322), but "is driven by a vague but impulsive will to excel, to make his mark in the world, to signify." While cataloguing "the jumbled motives" for undertaking his journey--the discovery of new knowledge, the satisfaction of curiosity, the glory of being the first to tread the hidden world, the desire to benefit humanity--he unwittingly states what is perhaps the most significant reason for his incessantly setting himself in motion: "nothing contributes so much to tranquillize the mind as a steady purpose--a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye" (Mary Shelley 7). Ironically, Walton himself cannot be viewed as a person with a "steady purpose," given his constant changes of career--from a poet to a playwright, and from a playwright to a sailor. In truth, he even makes no decision to return to England but is urged on by his fearful crew: "Thus are my hopes blasted by cowardice and indecision; I come back ignorant and disappointed" (293). Yet Walton's problem does not arise from his lack of a steady purpose but from his "saddened, negative, nostalgic, guilty,

Rousseauistic" attitude (Derrida 1978, 292) towards "the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin." With an insistence on looking for a full presence of the mind, Walton dreams of founding a truth or an origin which escapes change, and therefore fails to be comfortable with his intrinsic Other and revel in flux, in impermanence, in instability.

In the case of Justine, a wish to stabilize the self is again manifested. Hers is a life knitted by various adversities: she has a father loving her dearly but, in her eyes probably, suffering a premature death, a mother treating her very ill "through a strange perversity" (78), a group of "pretended friends" unwilling to defend her against an unjust accusation, and nearly a whole household doing her a deplorable injustice regardless of her long-recognized faithfulness. Feeling that she has none to support her (109), Justine does not hesitate much to leave a world "sad and bitter" to her (110). Even so, she still cannot wholly dispense with the need for a supporting Other. She needs Elizabeth to remember her and think of her as of one unjustly condemned, not of one "capable of a crime which none but the devil himself could have perpetrated" (109). In much the same way as the deconstructionist does, Justine realizes that in every sign, the sign of self included, there is always, after the "meaning" has been "established," a trace left over, an excess of meaning, which is thereby denied any illusory self-sufficiency and definitive signified. At the same time, however, Justine, unforgetful of the charm of such sufficiency and signified, keeps hoping to put an end to the perpetual excess of meaning, hence structuring an ultimate version of self that survives her death.

As we have seen, Mary Shelley suggests through *Frankenstein* that at its worst the Romantic self striving to define its existence unawares destroys itself by its own energies for definition. This unconscious self-destruction shows an epitome of what Harold Bloom called "the typically Romantic disease of excessive consciousness, of the self unable to bear the self" (Nishiyama 633). Victor's proliferated sense of self and the Creature's restricted sense of it do not function so differently in eroding their own existence without being noticed by themselves. At its best, the Romantic self cannot be less pernicious than it may offer Walton, nor can it be more consolatory than what Justine may find.

To speak deconstructively, *Frankenstein* is more a Romantic paradigm than a Romantic monster. It stresses the multiplicity, challenges the unwarrantedly

established. Even more safely Romantic may this novel be, in the sense that it not only demonstrates the danger of privileging but sets the required limits to which the egotist is not willing to consider. Without the limits and danger in mind, some of the Romantics either hold themselves finally back to the conservative camp, or pay a deliberate, or even willful, disregard of the voice of what they regard as the traditional, the unprivileged voice at the time. Perhaps *Frankenstein* is one of a few instances that appeals to a freer, more balanced, and more maintained display of the Romantic energies.

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