

# A THREEFOLD RELENTLESS RIVALRY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASCULINITY AND NARRATIVE RELIABILITY IN MARY SHELLEY’S FRANKENSTEIN OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

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## ABSTRACT:

This paper delves into the intricacies of the multilayered narrative aspects of *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* to draw connections between reliability and the assertive power of masculinity. The narrative unfolds in accordance with the appearance of Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein and the monster in the novel respectively. Through a three-leveled narrative, Shelley represents an interconnected story that provokes readers’ sense of curiosity to untangle it by following its main male characters’ plot lines. She painstakingly makes the readers engrossed in a close observation of how these characters compete to demonstrate the trustworthiness of their stories as an attempt to construct their status as men of integrity. While the three male characters take turns in narrating the story, their efforts of being able to make their narratee(s) believe their stories remains a key task for them. The three narrators are portrayed in a fierce rivalry; each trying to add credibility to their narrative and outdo the others. That is, they strive to defy masculine subordination by presenting the most reliable version of events. This paper posits that for these characters to assert their masculine power, they rely on being believed, understood, and most importantly, accepted by other characters. Accordingly, the paper adopts narrative theory to explore certain concepts of masculinity studies. It argues that the masculinity of these characters is constructed vis-à-vis the reliability of their narrative in the novel. The consequences of the relentless competition between these men are often dire and their pursuit of male hierarchy leads to calamities.

**KEYWORDS:** Narrative Reliability, Frame Narrative, Mise-En-Abyeme Narrative Technique, Mary Shelley, Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus, Masculinity Studies.

## 1. Introduction

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, published in 1818, is a novel dominated by three main male figures, namely Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein and the monster, interlocked in a three-leveled narrative. The novel is written in an epistolary structure which is mainly a one-sided correspondence from Walton, the captain of a ship bound for the North Pole, to his sister, Mrs. Saville in England. It starts and ends with Walton’s letters, narrating his journey from London to the North Pole. Walton provides the frame story of the two other embedded stories which are entailed in his meetings with Victor Frankenstein and the monster individually. The narrative, then, shifts to Victor’s endeavors in creating his being. His gift and ambition as a scientist are shown as his main motives that aspire him to create a being in the form of a perfect specimen who, in contrary to his expectations, turns to be a dreadful creature. The ways in which the monster is rejected by Victor and other characters form the

third level of the narrative, told from the monster’s own perspective.

In addition to the novel’s multi-leveled narrative, it can also be read as an interwoven story of three men whose identities, or rather masculinities, are highly reciprocal on the existence of the other two men in terms of their contribution to the narrative. The highest of the three levels of narrative pertains Walton’s narrating of the story. For this reason, both Victor and the monster participate in the narrative, attempting to take a higher level in the hierarchical structure of it. In her book, *Narrative fiction: Contemporary poetics*, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan explains that certain characters take part in the actions of a story and engage in narrating it as it is the case with Walton, Victor and the monster. “Within” a character’s “story there may, of course, be yet another character who narrates another story, and so on in infinite regress. Such narratives within narratives create a stratification of levels whereby each inner narrative is subordinate to the narrative within which it is embedded” (Rimmon-Kenan)

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2002, p. 94). Thus, the characters' rivalry can be interpreted in narratological terms.

If subordination in the levels of narrative in *Frankenstein* to be considered in terms of temporal and special relations, Victor's level of narrative precedes the monster's and occupies a bigger space in the novel which makes the latter's narrative a subordinate one. Despite that, the monster contests in providing credibility to his narrative and winning against Victor. Both Victor and the monster strive throughout the novel to defy being a subordinate and prove themselves more powerful. They are motivated by the potential that their life and their masculinity is precarious with the possibility of the other being superior in any respect. This paper argues that the masculinity of the three male characters depends on their being understood, believed and, most importantly, accepted by other characters. Thus, it hypothesizes that there is a direct relationship between the masculinity of these men being constructed in accordance with the reliability of their narratives in the novel. References are made to Michael Kimmel's concept of masculinity throughout the paper to support certain arguments about the ways the three male characters perceive their manhood in connection to their relentless competition for power and reliability.

The existing literature about Shelly's novel showcases that it has been the subject matter for scholarly investigation due to the groundbreaking conventions of writing and visionary themes that are ahead of the novel's time. In "*Frankenstein: Creating as Catastrophe*," Paul Sherwin delineates the series of catastrophic mishaps the novel comprises and, more significantly, labels it as "a paradigmatic text of texts" (1981, p. 901). In a similar fashion, the novel is praised for its noteworthy narrative structure by Beth Newman who compares *Frankenstein* to a number of seminal works of literature, such as Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, describing them as texts "that contain a story within a story" (1986, p.141). The narrative techniques of the book have been categorized as testimonial, frame narrative, puzzling plot, and multileveled in the more recent studies (Crook 2017; Benford 2010; Berlatsky 2009; Guyer 2006). On a thematic level, the futuristic scope of the novel has also occupied academia. In a chapter titled "Science, Family, and the Monstrous Progeny," Lars Schmeink discusses how frequently *Frankenstein* is adopted in contemporary films due to its progressive subject matter and genre as a science fiction book which meets "the cultural needs specific to its contemporary audience" (2016, p.120). While Robert G. Beghetto postulates that the novel "lays out the psychological and spiritual paradigm of not only the emerging modern and secular world during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also one that lingers and continues to uncannily haunt modernity" (2022, p. 22). This point is further elaborated in other papers and is connected to the present-day disciplines of protagonism, post-humanism, and queer studies (Beghetto 2022; Clark 2014; Pasquesi 2014). This paper aspires to contribute to the prevailing literature about the novel in terms of combining the writing conventions, namely the narrative techniques, and thematic evaluations, narrowed down to the male rivalry. It attempts to identify the links between the multilayered

narrative structure of the novel and the masculine power of the three narrators.

### 2.1 *Frankenstein* as a Multilayered Narrative of Men:

Robert Walton is a homodiegetic, i.e., a participating narrator who witnesses some of the key turning points in *Frankenstein* and his role of listening to the stories of the other two characters is an essential one too. The entire story is communicated from his perspective in letters and he does his best to make it believable. During their meeting on the icy terrains of the North Pole, Victor does not only narrate his story to Walton, but even narrates the monster's story as narrated by the monster to Victor. The monster's perspective is twice filtered in the novel and his story is embedded in Victor's story which in its turn embedded in Walton's. This grants a bigger chance to Victor to be superior to the monster in narrating the story. It is only towards the end of the novel where the reader sees the monster's reflection on his story to the main narrator. This mise-en-abyme technique, defined as "an internal reduplication of a literary work or part of a work," adds a provocative aspect to the narrative and makes the reader question its reliability (Baldick 2001, p. 158).

Rather interestingly, Victor and the monster put so much effort in making Walton trust their side of the story. Starting from this point, the implied competition between them in making Walton believe in their version of truth is an indication of their urgent need of being believed as men of an integral status. After hearing the two sides of the story, Walton seemingly sides with Victor:

I was at first touched by the expressions of his misery; yet, when I called to mind what Frankenstein had said of his powers of eloquence and persuasion, and when I again cast my eyes on the lifeless form of my friend, indignation was rekindled within me. "Wretch!" I said. "It is well that you come here to whine over the desolation that you have made. You throw a torch into a pile of buildings, and when they are consumed, you sit among the ruins and lament the fall. Hypocritical fiend! If he whom you mourn still lived, still would he be the object, again would he become the prey, of your accursed vengeance. It is not pity that you feel; you lament only because the victim of your malignity is withdrawn from your power. (Shelley 2024, p. 125)

Based on this, Walton condemns the monster and his vengeful nature. Despite showing sympathy for the monster's life which has been a series of misfortunes, Walton remembers Victor's advice that the monster's brutality is covered by his exceptional skills in using language persuasively. The monster's good manners and language eloquence are not appreciated as they contradict with his deformed shape. He is, thus, dismissed as a "wretch" by Walton, indicating that Victor's version of truth is more reliable to him. Nevertheless, Walton breaks his promise to Victor in continuing his pursuit of destroying the monster which can be an indicator that he has some sympathy towards the monster or he is well aware that the monster's power surpasses his own. He knows that the monster could destroy him as he did to his friend, if he is to try to fight with him. Furthermore, it implies that Walton considers their two levels of narrative credible and it is left for the narratee to decide on the reliability of the entire narrative, including Walton's part too. Eleanor Salotto commentates on the structure of the

narrative as “a diffusion of narrative voice indicates that the narrative body is not whole, incapable of reproducing a sutured narrative about the origins of one’s life” (1994, p. 190). As Victor tells the story of the monster and then Walton writes it, the monster cannot present himself directly in his own words and his tale is told by other’s voices and narrated in other’s texts. He is stripped of agency and his claim to hierarchy is weakened in relation to the other two narrators.

Victor narrates his story to Walton starting from his early childhood to manhood and focuses primarily on his ambitions of achieving an innovative enterprise. The details of creating the monster, abandoning him and the vile nature of him are also a part of Victor’s level of narrative. The most influential periods and prominent scenes in the life of the monster are also included in Victor’s narrative. It is indicated that the monster shares these details with him during their initial meeting since the monster has been created. This similarity is all the more interesting since their creator/created relationship is certainly not that of the genetic relation of father and child. After being abandoned by his own creator and being rejected by all those he comes across, the monster decides to hide in a cottage. During his camouflage, he starts to observe the inhabitants of the cottage to build himself up by learning some essential values of life such as family ties, love and language. To contextualize Shelley’s depiction of this episode of the novel, the monster’s hiding in the cottage, acquiring human traits and building up personal skills, reflects on the concept of associationist psychology. According to Gary Hatfield (1994), a contemporary American scholar of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy – rooted in the philosophy of John Locke, the 17<sup>th</sup> century renowned Enlightenment English thinker and father of liberalism – associationism dominated the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries psychological thought in Britain. It suggests that a person’s mind processes information by associating ideas, mainly grounded in prior experiences. The monster associates the ideas he learns from the residents of the cottage to his experience of being abandoned by Victor. As a result, he develops a liking for these people and embraces his newly obtained characteristics. In his mind, he associates himself with all the newly acquired positive concepts. He takes the people of the cottage as role models and starts to construct ideals of beauty and kindness based on them. For this reason, the first time he comes to the view of his visage in a pool, he feels ultimately shocked.

I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions; but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity. (Shelley 2024, p. 64)

Along with his state of shock, the monster comes to an understanding that he is repulsive to others because of his appearance. He develops his potential of being a man of good will and virtues. In this respect, he constructs his masculinity according to his own terms. In his book, *The History of Men: Essays on the history of British and*

*American Masculinities*, Michael Kimmel uses the phrase “homo-faber”, meaning man as the maker in Latin language and a concept that human beings are able to control their fate and their environment as a result of utilizing tools, to indicate “men’s reproductive capacity, men’s ability to give birth to themselves” (2005, p. 7). The monster’s decision to configure his own masculine identity can be read in the context of the myth of Prometheus as a benefactor of mankind in terms of giving humans the ability to invent technology, tools, and other methods. By this token, the monster – the created – is granted the ability by Prometheus – Victor Frankenstein the creator – to reinvent himself in his own terms.

The monster creates his identity in isolation and decides to expose it to other characters. He believes he possesses the required tools such as those of language to convince them. He aims to present himself as a harmless and self-composed man but his deformity hinders his way. While being confronted by others, he is violently rejected. The intersection of his ugly form with his dreadful voice do not only shun other people away from him, this intersection even leads others to detest him and attempt to extinguish him, as it is the case with the people in the cottage whom he dearly cherishes and sees as his only hope of acceptance. The monster depends on his ability in appearing as reliable as possible to the old man and his son, the cottagers. This shows that the monster needs someone to confirm his sense of accomplishing himself as a decent man, and most importantly, as a gentle one. He fails to convey the truth of his good intentions and virtuous nature to the old man’s son and the owner of the cottage. His looks hinder the truth being transparently communicated to them; they are misled and blinded by his hideous form. However, it is worth mentioning that readers can see beyond the monster’s deformity and can clearly see a sense of integrity in him. The vision of masculinity he creates for himself remains an illusion inside his mind and is only valid in the dark. For this reason, the monster enhances his language competence and intellectual skills. This is closely related to the Romantic notion of the Sublime in the sense of the possibility to surpass physicality – bodily outlook – in the name of morality – internal character. The Sublime, a significant concept in the works of the Romantic authors including Mary Shelley, is theorized by Samuel Taylor Coleridge as an essential part of literary aesthetics which does not necessarily arise from fear or pain. It is rather depicted as a concept that surpasses the ordinary beautiful and paves the readers’ way to go through a process of transcending the psychical phase of the world/objects and being mentally elevated into the realms of ideas (Modiano 1978). Shelley’s portrayal of a character who attempts to surpass his deformed physicality in the name of morality directly reflects on the Sublime. She invites the reader to see beyond the horrid appearance of the monster and appreciate the beauty or rather the sublimity of his internal character. The monster’s looks might shun the people/readers away, but their feelings of fear or disgust are accompanied by a deep sense of thoughtful considerations of morality. The monster understands that his only way toward being accepted is through the validity of his words. Although no matter how convincing his words are, he is continually rejected by others as they are unable to see beyond his deformity.

There is an urge in the monster to compensate for others' abhorrence towards him. His attempts of convincing Victor to create a female companion for him: "You must create a female for me with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. This you alone can do, and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse to concede" (Shelley 2024, p. 83). It can be noticed that the monster is in an urgent need for a companion who can show sympathy towards him. This can be also understood in terms of him being a man who is supposed to share his life with a woman. He is so much influenced by the readings he does while dwelling the cottage: "*Paradise Lost*, a volume of *Plutarch's Lives*, and the *Sorrows of Werther*". He learns that his manhood and, thus, his life remains incomplete without having a companion.

I can hardly describe to you the effect of these books. They produced in me an infinity of new images and feelings, that sometimes raised me to ecstasy, but more frequently sunk me into the lowest dejection. In the *Sorrows of Werther*, besides the interest of its simple and affecting story, so many opinions are canvassed and so many lights thrown upon what had hitherto been to me obscure subjects that I found in it a never-ending source of speculation and astonishment. The gentle and domestic manners it described, combined with lofty sentiments and feelings, which had for their object something out of self, accorded well with my experience among my protectors and with the wants which were for ever alive in my own bosom. But I thought *Werther* himself a more divine being than I had ever beheld or imagined; his character contained no pretension, but it sank deep. The disquisitions upon death and suicide were calculated to fill me with wonder. (Shelley 2024, p. 73)

He learns the good manners of being a man with a set purpose in life from his readings despite not understanding everything mentioned in the books. He starts to have a more enlightened vision about life and begins to raise some very fundamental questions concerning his existence. He is convinced that he is born for a reason and that something remains missing if he is to lead on his life *per se*. He, thus, needs someone to feel complete. He contemplates on *Werther's* suicide without making much of it. This is a point that can also describe his final decision of ending his life at the very end of the novel when he loses his last hope of having a female companion. Most importantly, these readings inspire him to ask questions like: "What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?" (Shelley 2024, p. 73). On a very basic level, the monster's only wish is to feel less lonesome and more complete as a man, depending on Victor's consent in creating a life partner for him. This sense of individual incompleteness further provokes the monster to enter in fierce competition against his creator. He strives to outdo Victor in both narrative reliability and life advancement alike.

When he fails in his quest of convincing Victor, the monster is left with no options except for vengeance to calm down his anger. Abandonment, rejection and loneliness make his nature more prone to violence as his only means to salvage his shaken sense of self. He comes to the realization that he is rejected based on his different looks and his lack of any possible resources to go on with

his life. He becomes aware that he does not comply with the available images of masculinity; he is different from other men he knows. As a result of this, he is othered and regarded as someone who transgresses the known norms of masculinity. It is then, his sense of "dual recognition", in Susan Bordo's words, that leads to his outcast status as an othered man and to his dwelling of the icy mountainous terrains. Bordo uses the term "dual recognition" to theorize "the situation of men who have been historically subordinated in relation to their race, class and sexuality" (1993, p. 102). The monster's recognition of his state as being from a different race than that of humans, perpetuated by his shaken confidence due to his deformity, leads to his subordination. He recognizes himself as dually subordinated in relation to other men, as he belongs to a different race and lacks the necessary resources to lead a decent life. In other words, the intersection of his race, embodied in his deformed appearance, with his class, reflected in his lack of access to economic incentives, deprives him of potential masculine power. He understands that there is no space for him in the man's world and his last hope lies in his ability of making Walton, and consequently the readers, believe in his innocence through narrative.

## **2.2 Rivalry for Power, Privilege and Reliability in *Frankenstein*:**

Both the monster and Victor compete throughout the novel on different levels: Victor chases the monster to eliminate him and attempts to surpass him in terms of winning Walton to his side, not only in believing his narrative but also in disregarding the monster's narrative of their past incidents. This competition is also a key aspect of proving their masculinity as Kimmel argues that masculinity is a rivalry for power and privilege and to "emerge as men among men" (2005, p. 100). The monster and Victor are seen to be in an uncompromising competition to overpower each other in both physical and moral senses:

Be calm! I entreat you to hear me before you give vent to your hatred on my devoted head. Have I not suffered enough, that you seek to increase my misery? Life, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it. Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine, my joints more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous. (Shelley 2024, p. 54)

The monster gives credits to Victor as his superior and makes a clear distinction between their power relations: he is the creature and Victor is the creator. Despite this hierarchy being communicated in the monster's words, he seems to be the more powerful one. He suggests that he is willing to be led by Victor and acts benevolently if Victor

is to provide him with a companion to help him feel less lonesome. He also makes a connection between his liability to violence and his miserable and lonely life conditions. Both Victor and the monster are presented as figures who excel in persuasive power, so their rivalry is also one of rhetorical persuasion aimed at Walton's judgment. However, Victor realizes that his creation is more powerful than him and that his power is in both his physique and intellectual ability of persuasion.

As a scientist, Victor's core purpose behind creating the monster is to compete with his fellow students and his professors. He sees it as an emblem of power and high achievement. It never occurs to him that his creation may exceed the grip of his power. Bette London (1993, p. 256) postulates that Victor's motive behind creating the monster stems from his insistence to impress others by putting on a specular display of masculinity and, ultimately, "making a spectacle himself". The reason behind configuring a masculine creature is Victor's narcissistic proclivity to brag as both a scientist and man. However, the moment his autonomy over his creature and the narrative is at stake, he decides to terminate the monster. Victor, thus, decides to chase the monster and believes that one of them should defeat the other. The existence of each of the two is a threat to the masculinity of the other. Victor cannot accept the idea of being beaten by his creation, a man who is of a lower rank. The monster's only way of feeling good about himself is to destroy the one who causes him misery and is the source of wretchedness in his life. If we are to consider Victor and the monster in a metaphorical way or in a broader sense, Victor can be read as a specific political, social or even religious system that oppresses anyone who does not comply to certain norms and paradigms. The monster, in this sense, represents those men who are not accepted and othered by the dominant ideologies or systems as he is deformed and monstrous looking.

The absence of good looks, manners and a high social rank deprive any man of his masculinity and denounce him as an outsider. In order to be accepted in any social circle, one is judged based on one's way of presenting himself and the credibility of his words. However, to be a man in Europe in 1818 means to meet certain criteria. For instance, Victor seems to fall into the categorizations of the nineteenth century concept of masculinity (Kimmel 2005). He is adventurous and has endurance in hardship and suffering. He travels for the sake of acquiring education and accomplishing a respectable social status. This idea of masculinity being connected with undertaking adventures and one's power of enduring hard times is shown in Walton's words to his crewmen:

What do you mean? What do you demand of your captain? Are you, then, so easily turned from your design? Did you not call this a glorious expedition? "And wherefore was it glorious?... For this was it a glorious, for this was it an honourable undertaking. You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species, your names adored as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind. And now, behold, with the first imagination of danger, or, if you will, the first mighty and terrific trial of your courage, you shrink away and are content to be handed down as men who had not strength enough to endure cold and peril; and so, poor souls, they

were chilly and returned to their warm firesides. Why, that requires not this preparation; ye need not have come thus far and dragged your captain to the shame of a defeat merely to prove yourselves cowards. Oh! Be men, or be more than men. Be steady to your purposes and firm as a rock. This ice is not made of such stuff as your hearts may be; it is mutable and cannot withstand you if you say that it shall not. Do not return to your families with the stigma of disgrace marked on your brows. Return as heroes who have fought and conquered and who know not what it is to turn their backs on the foe. (Shelley 2024, p. 121-22)

When his crew asks him to go back to their homeland, Walton almost gives them a lecture on the moralities of what it means to be a man. His conceptions of men undertaking ventures and risky journeys in achieving glory and high esteem are ancient values men used to follow to prove their heroism throughout history (Holt & Thompson, 2004). The stories of Hercules, getting separated from his loved ones, defeating monsters bare-handed during his journeys and returning home victorious, have occupied the minds of men regardless of their time and place. Walton is inspired by the same motivation and seeks to return home with glory. He invites his crewmen to be men in the sense of being daring, patient and strong and to prove their manhood which should emerge among other men in a perilous sphere. Dying for the sake of serving other human beings is an honor that all men should seek and is preferable to him than returning home defeated and crestfallen. Nonetheless, Walton and the other two male narrators represent extreme versions of masculinity and embrace 19<sup>th</sup> century masculine stereotypes of being aggressive and seeking control. Melina Pelli Korfonta (2021, p. 4) describes them as "extremely self-destructive, toxic, and control driven".

However, Walton's last decision of returning home contradicts his earlier indicated criteria of manhood. He breaks his promise of following and murdering the monster. He realizes his limited capacity and that he is not as firm as a rock after all. Similarly to Victor and the monster, his hope of proving his manhood relies on his addressee's understanding and accepting his decision which is again directly connected to the reliability of his narrative. Walton's greatest achievement is not related to his hard and risky adventures in the North Pole which end with his retreatment to his homeland. His sense of achievement is related to his skills in narrating the extraordinary and exceptional Victor-monster tale in the most reliable way possible.

His tale is connected and told with an appearance of the simplest truth, yet I own to you that the letters of Felix and Safie, which he showed me, and the apparition of the monster seen from our ship, brought to me a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his asseverations, however earnest and connected. Such a monster has, then, really existence! I cannot doubt it, yet I am lost in surprise and admiration. (Shelley 2024, p. 119)

Walton's only hope to accomplish his task of narrating the story triumphantly is to make his sister believe in it. The reliability of his story means both achievement and a proof that he is the man he believes everyone should be. He provides concrete evidence for establishing the truthfulness of his story such as letters from characters in the novel and his own confrontation with the monster. The

implied addressee, communicated through his sister, is the real reader whose decision of regarding the narrative as a credible one matters the most to the writer of the novel.

### 3. Conclusion

Mary Shelley presents her story in a rather interesting narrative structure which connects the personality of her characters and the reliability of their parts of narrative. *Frankenstein* showcases a three-leveled narrative unraveled in a way that paves the way for the readers to move smoothly from one level to the other. The adopted mise-en-abyme technique adds a sense of provocation to the novel as the monster's story is embedded inside Victor's story, whose story itself is embedded in the frame story of the main homodiegetic narrator, Robert Walton. The readers receive the monster's story as twice filtered and it is only towards the end of the novel that they hear his side in his own words. That said, the three male characters alternate in narrating the story; their efforts of being able to make their narratee(s) believe their stories is a substantial task for them.

Victor's main objective behind creating the monster is to prove himself among his fellow scientists and his objective behind extinguishing the monster is to save the rest of humanity. The only way he can expose his good intentions behind the two aforementioned acts of creating and destroying the monster relies on his ability of making Walton trust his story. His status as a man relies heavily on his words being accepted and his intentions being understood by Walton. The monster is torn apart between very basic fundamental questions about his nature, existence and manhood. He is the one whose masculinity is the most precarious one as it is not embraced by anyone surrounding him. He is continually rejected and dismissed as a fiend. Working on his lingual competence and cognitive skills imply his hopes of making others see beyond his deformed appearance. Thus, his narrative being received as credible is his only way of reaching peace with his many severe conflicts.

Walton's decision of receding from his hard adventures leads him to focus on having his sister understand his decision. His only way to make her understand is to believe his extraordinary story of the supernatural and horrendous creature being created and chased by Victor. Shelley accomplishes an interconnected narrative that arouses readers' sense of curiosity to untangle it by following its main male characters' plot lines. Readers are engaged in a close observation of the ways these characters compete to prove the trustworthiness of their stories as an attempt to construct their status as men of integrity.

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### تنافس ثلاثي مثابر: العلاقة بين الرجولة وموثوقية السرد في رواية ماري شيلي فرانكشتاين أو بروميثيوس الحديث

#### الملخص:

يتناول هذا البحث تعقيدات الجوانب السردية متعددة الطبقات في رواية ماري شيلي "فرانكشتاين أو بروميثيوس الحديث" لرسم الروابط بين الموثوقية وقوة الرجولة الحازمة. تتكشف أحداث الرواية وفقاً لظهور روبرت والتون، وفيكتور فرانكشتاين، والوحش على التوالي. من خلال سرد ثلاثي المستويات، تُقدم شيلي قصة مترابطة تثير فضول القراء لفك تشابكها من خلال متابعة خطوط حبكة شخصياتها الذكورية الرئيسية. يتمكن القراء بدقة في رصد دقيق لكيفية تنافس هذه الشخصيات لإثبات مصداقية قصصهم، في محاولة لبناء مكانتهم كرجال نزيهين. وبينما يتناوب الرجال الثلاثة على سرد القصة، تظل جهودهم في إقناع من يروون لهم قصصهم مهمة أساسية لهم. يُصوّر الرواة الثلاثة في تنافس شرس، حيث يسعى كل منهم إلى إضفاء المصداقية على سرده والتفوق على الآخرين. أي أنهم يسعون جاهدين لتحدي التبعية الذكورية من خلال تقديم الرواية الأكثر موثوقية للأحداث. تفترض هذه الدراسة أن هذه الشخصيات، لكي تؤكد قوتها الذكورية، تعتمد على تصديقها وفهمها، والأهم من ذلك، قبولها من قبل الشخصيات الأخرى. وعليه، يجادل البحث بأن ذكورة هذه الشخصيات تُبنى على أساس موثوقية سردها في الرواية. غالباً ما تكون عواقب التنافس الشرس بين هؤلاء الرجال وخيمة، ويؤدي سعيهم وراء التسلسل الهرمي الذكوري إلى كوارث. الكلمات الدالة: موثوقية السرد، السرد الإطاري، تقنية السرد *mise-en-abyme*، ماري شيلي، فرانكشتاين أو بروميثيوس الحديث، دراسات الذكورة.

رکابه ریەکا دژوار یا سنجای: په یوه نډی د نافبهرا زه لاملینې و فهگیرانا باوهر پینکریدا د روماننا فرانکشتاين یا ماری شیلې نان پرمیوسې سردهمانه

#### پوخته:

نمف فهکولینه ب تېرو تسملې دجپته دناف فهگیرانې و جورین وئ د روماننا فرانکشتاين یا ماری شیلې دا ب مسوما دیارکړنا په یوه نډیان د نافبهرا باوهر پینکرنې و هیزا زه لاملینې دا. روبرت والتون، فیکتور فرانکشتاين و درنده چیروکا فی رومانې فهگیرن. شیلې چیروکا نکالوز و پیکفه گړیدای داریشیت داکو خویندهفان لدویف ناستین وئ بین سنجای و ژیک جودا بچیت. خویندهفان مهنده هوش دبیت بهرامبر نمر ریکن همر سې فهگیرین رومانې بکار دینن ژبو بدستفمنینانا باوهرییا کسانین دی د رومانې دا. همر سې پشکدار دین د همرکیهکا دژوار دا و ملمانې دکمن ژخمعت باوهر پینکړنا فهگیرانا وان بو رویدانین رومانې. نمف پیکوله ب ممر ما چسپاندا هیزا وانه و هک زه لاملین راستگوو و باوهر پینکری. نمف فهکولینه ریکن وان داکو بهینه باوهرکان و تیگه هشتن و قهیل لرن ژلای و ان کسین چیروک بو دهینته فهگیران نمایش دکمت. زه لاملینا وان یا درست یا گړیدایه ب راستگویا فهگیرانا نمان فه. دهر نمانمین هفرکیان فان کسانین رومانې د دلته زین و کارساتا دروست دکمن. په یقین سردهکی: باوهر پینکړنا فهگیرانې، فهگیرانا په وازه، تمکنیکا میزانه بیم یا فهگیرانې، ماری شیلې، فرانکشتاين نان پرمیوسې سردهمانه.