(R)Evolutionary Images in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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After having been long neglected as merely a "second-rate" sensational gothic novel,[1] Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* suddenly became a hot issue in modern literary criticism in the past two decades. It is interesting that *Frankenstein* provides good, convenient, even desirable material for most literary theories today. For instance, in feminist theory, *Frankenstein* is a novel about the fear of maternity.[2] In new historicist or cultural studies, the novel is a reflection of the French Revolution.[3] In psychoanalytic theory, the novel represents the trauma of Mary Shelley herself, because there are so many resemblances between her life and the characters.[4]

This paper, then, somewhat goes back to basics. Through a close reading, I would like first to analyze images of the French Revolution in the novel. Although this subject has long been studied by many critics, I hope to add examples and study further the function of revolutionary images in the novel mainly in terms of its narrative structure. The second purpose of the paper is to point out images of the Darwinistic theory of evolution in the novel. This may sound strange, for Charles Darwin's theory was published in 1859, eight years after the death of Mary Shelley. However, another Darwin exerted great influence upon *Frankenstein*. A grandfather of Charles Darwin, Erasmus Darwin published his theory of evolution, *Zoonomia; or, The Laws of Organic Life in 1794,* and a poetic version of this theory, *The Temple of Nature; or, The Origin of Society* in 1803. I wish to show as many evolutionary images appeared in *Frankenstein* as possible. This paper also explores similarities between the French Revolution and Erasmus Darwin's theory illustrated in the novel. By studying images of "Revolution" and "Evolution," this paper goes on, finally, to present another illuminating reading of *Frankenstein* with its cultural background.

I Revolution

It has been widely accepted that the French Revolution exerted great influence upon the romantic poets, especially on Percy Bysshe Shelley. David Duff argues this as follows:

> [T]he link [between the French Revolution and English Romanticism] is now almost taken for granted as one of the central facts in the literary history of English Romanticism ... According to this account, which received its classic formulation in Harold Bloom's essay on "The Internalization of Quest of Romance" (1970), [English Romanticism] reappears in the mid-eighteenth century, acquires apocalyptic scope as a result of the expectations raised by the French Revolution, and is subsequently internalized to create the paradigmatic Romantic form: the psychological quest romance. (2)

Percy's wife, Mary Shelley was also deeply inspired by the French Revolution, not only because of her husband, but also because of her parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. As a daughter of "two of England's foremost intellectual radicals" and wife of a revolutionary poet, Mary Shelley wrote her first novel about a "monster," which was based on her own "extensive readings on the French Revolution" (Strrenburg 143).

The meaning of "monster" at that time was different from that of our time. A "monster" signified "revolution" and "ingratitude" during the French Revolution. In his *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth,*

Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-century Writing, Chris Baldick studies the history of monstrous images in connection with the social disorders in the following manner:

> In a world created by a reasonable God, the freak or lunatic must have a purpose: to reveal visibly the results of vice, folly, and unreason, as a warning (latin, monere: to warn) to erring humanity. (48)

This monstrous image of vice, folly and unreason was developed to become an image of "ingratitude to the father" during the French Revolution. By studying Edmund Burk's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Baldick continues to say that the French Revolution was "a monstrous jumble of elements, 'out of nature,' producing a 'monster of a constitution'" (55). At that time, fliers and books about the French Revolution often took up monsters not only literally, but also visually, for the purpose of symbolizing rebellious citizens (Baldick 55). In that sense, radicals like Godwin and Wollstonecraft were sometimes accused as "monsters" by their contemporaries. Godwin and Wollstonecraft "were made monstrous" and their followers "were described as 'spawn of the monster'" (Botting 142). Throughout the nation, monsters were attacked "with a vigour intensified by the patriotic feeling attendant upon war with revolutionary France" (Botting 142).

The monster in Mary Shelley's novel, therefore, can easily be read as a metaphor of the social disorder which was caused by the revolution. Even its gigantic size may explain the analogy between Mary Shelley's monster and the social disorder. According to Susan Stewart, "the miniature" can be found "at the origin of private, individual history," while "the gigantic" "at the origin of public and natural history" (71). When we focus on the monster's size, therefore, we will find that the significance of the novel should lie in its "public and natural," rather than "private and individual" nature. Admitting that Mary Shelley represents a historical fact (the French Revolution) with a fictional character (the gigantic monster), what else symbolizes

"revolution" in *Frankenstein*?

According to Godwin, "revolutions are the produce of *passion*, not of sober and tranquil reason" (Botting, *Making Monstrous* 146 emphasis added). This concept of "passion" as an uncontrollable power of leading revolution and destruction, is clearly depicted in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. It is not exaggerating to say that passion generates narrative in the novel. Let us look at the remarkable work of passion in *Frankenstein*.

Three main episodes consist the whole novel: Walton's voyage, Frankenstein's creation, and the monster's journey. It is quite remarkable that all of the episodes are dominated by "passion." The novel, for example, opens with Walton's passion. He sets out to the sea with his heart "glow[ing] with an enthusiasm" (14). His passion is "something at work in [his] soul which [he] do[es] not understand" (20). Following to Walton's episode, Frankenstein confesses that he created the monster, because he was "the slave of passion" (26). In addition, the monster hurts people and pursues Frankenstein because of his "evil passions" (143). In this way, all the three main plots of the novel start with passion of each character.

What, then, is the function of "passion" in *Frankenstein*? Inasmuch as all three characters ruin (or, are about to ruin) in the end, "passion" in the novel stands for some evil power which drives the characters to destruction. It is passion that makes the characters uncontrollable even for themselves. This may be a reflection of Mary Shelley's negative view on passion. If we remember Godwin's above words and the fact that the mobs were said to be united by passion during the French Revolution, such negative function of passion in *Frankenstein* tells us that "Mary Shelley can imagine a positive side to radical hopes for reform, yet she also sees their degeneration into carnage and disaster" (Sttrenburg 171).

Besides passion, there are other elements which link the novel with the French Revolution. Ronald Paulson points out the geographical connections between the two as follows:

> Victor Frankenstein ... goes off to college at Ingolstadt, which (as Shelley knew from the

Histoire du jacobinism) was where Adam Weisaupt, the symbolic archdemon of revolutionary thought, founded the Bavarian illuminati in that significant year 1776, and from this secret society supposedly grew the French Revolution. (240)

It is clear that Mary Shelley intentionally chose "the place in which the 'monster called Jacobin' was originally conceived" (Strrenburg 157), as the place in which Frankenstein creates his monster.

Added to the above points, a series of rebellions in the novel also reminds us of the French Revolution. There are many instances of rebellion against father, order, and past stability in *Frankenstein*. Walton, who breaks his father's "injunction" and uncle's prohibition, sets out to the sea in search of "the secret of the magnet" (14). Frankenstein, who was "a creature" (32), becomes an "author" (88) and "bold[ly]" violates "the principle of life" (49) in his creation of the monster. By the abandonment of his creator, the monster seeks revenge on his "natural lord and king" Frankenstein (96). Half a dozen of the sailors, who are on the verge of "mutiny," make Walton go back to England (207). A lady rejects the love of Walton's ship's "master" and rebels against the will of her "father"(19). Safie betrays her "father" and steals his property. This series of rebellions against the control exerted by father figures reminds us of the basic concept of the French Revolution, that is, the rebellion against the King (a father figure). As I mentioned earlier, during and after the French Revolution, monster stands for "ingratitude." So long as the characters in *Frankenstein* rebel against "fathers," they are all "monsters."

By showing the monstrosity of the characters, Mary Shelley also portrays "monster" as a matter of perspective. Frankenstein and other human beings identify the monster as "a monster." On the other hand, from the monster's point of view, Frankenstein and the other human beings are hideous monsters who betray his gratitude. In short, Mary Shelley sees "revolution" and "monstrosity" from a dual perspective. She discloses a fact that monstrosity is determined by the point of view.

Mary Shelley created her novel from multi-perspective because she knew the danger of a single and stable perspective that only arbitrarily creates monstrosity. There are three narrators in the novel; Walton, Frankenstein, and the monster. It is hard to determine whose narrative is dominant; they are crossing.[5] The narrative structure of the novel, which refuses any authoritative voice, may also reveal Mary Shelley's intention to avoid one perspective and single authority. Fred Botting's argument on this complicated narrative structure of the novel is worth quoting at length:

> As a set of broken frames, the narrative encloses the monster's story within Frankenstein's, the latter's being surrounded by Walton's letter, letters that are addressed to his sister on the edges of the text: the reader is at once moved inward to a presumed centre, the monster's account of the De Lacey family, and outwards, to the absent addressee on the margins. But the story at the centre fragments, dispersed by the rage of the monster, while the monster, neither wholly inside and contained by the structure, nor completely outside and excluded from it, appears at the end to confront Walton directly. Inside and outside, centre and margin, have their distinctions subverted by a novel in which the different speakers and writers also occupy the positions of readers and listeners. (Reflections of Revolution 35)

Compared with the contemporary novels, especially with other Gothic novels, it is a characteristic aspect of *Frankenstein* that the narrative structure refuses dominant, authoritative overview. When we fully consider the cultural background in which Mary Shelley wrote the novel, we can positively appreciate the meaning of the novel's confused perspectives: it is the French Revolution that taught her the danger of a single stable perspective that determines monstrosity.

So far I have suggested elements which relate the novel to the French revolution. These elements have negative connotations; rebellion, ingratitude, and destruction. Thus, critics define Mary Shelley as a

conservative, in spite of (or, because of) her radical parents and husband. Lee Stternburg says that "[h]er gravitation toward conservatism was more overt and explicit later in her" (143). The scene in which Frankenstein imagines the peace that would follow a definitive confrontation with the monster may support this argument:

> [A] deadly struggle would then assuredly take place, in which if he were victorious I should be at peace, and his power over me be at an end. If he were vanquished I should be a free man. Alas! what freedom? such as the peasant enjoys when his family has been massacred before his eyes, his cottage burnt, his lands laid waste, and he is turned adrift, homeless, penniless and alone, but free. (183)

Frankenstein thinks that after "the deadly struggle," victory and loss mean the same. The poor free "peasant" reminds us of "the mob" in the French Revolution, or, the Romantic poets after they became disillusioned with revolution. This scene depicts as an example of Mary Shelley's negative view of the revolution.

The word "revolution" is used once in *Frankenstein.* After Clerval's death, Frankenstein thinks about his past, feels hopeless for his future, and says, "I often sat for hours motionless and speechless, wishing for some mighty *revolution* that might bury me and my destroyer in its ruins" (177 emphasis added). Frankenstein, who is so tired of the struggle with the monster, wishes "revolution" to destroy not only himself but also the monster. Here, "revolution" is a symbol of destructive power, a power to extinguish. Such image of extinction appears not only at this moment. It is not exaggerating to say that each episode in the novel is a story that the characters extinguish someone/thing they had once. In other words, Mary Shelley writes about "existence" in the past and the process of its "extinction" throughout the novel. Now, let us look at a series of existence and extinction in the novel.

As soon as he gained a friend (Frankenstein), Walton has "lost [his] friend," as well as "hopes of

utility and glory" (209). Frankenstein, admitting that "[n]o human being could have passed a happier childhood than [him]self"(36), laments for the extinction of his family and his happiness. The monster, who has nothing but his hideous body and "burning miseries," gets "lost in darkness and distance," to make his "burning miseries be extinct" (216).

The digressive episodes in the novel are also a series of existence and extinction. The ship master loses his love and money; Caroline's father loses his fortune; Caroline loses her father; Elizabeth's parents loses their fortune; Elizabeth loses her parents; Justine loses her father; the De Lacey family loses their fortune; and finally, all of these characters are extinguished from the novel. All episodes in the novel are relating with the problem of changing existence into extinction.

The function of extinction in the novel can be explained further by the similarity among the characters in the novel. As the above examples show, the novel consists of the similar incidents and figures. The first similarity is found in "orphans." Caroline, whose father "died in her arms, leaving her an orphan and a beggar" (31), is saved by Alphones Frankenstein. Elizabeth who is "an orphan and a beggar"(33), is saved by the Frankensteins. Josephine, who loses her beloved father and then her mother (63), is also saved by the Frankensteins. Now, it is obvious that their similarities deprive them of their originality and identity. Imagine if Caroline, Elizabeth, and Josephine are at one place: they are crucially alike to the degree that their identities become blurred. And it is only through the extinction of others that they can gain their own identity. By Caroline's extinction, Elizabeth can gain her identity as a surrogated mother in Frankenstein's family. Josephine, who "imitate [Caroline's] phraseology and manners," and whose expressions "continually reminds [Elizabeth] of [her] dear [Caroline]," must also be extinguished for Elizabeth's identity (63). In short, Elizabeth's existence is secured by Caroline's and Josephine's extinction.

The second similarity relating to extinction is found in the three autodidacts in the novel. Walton confesses that he is "self-educated" by reading books (67). Frankenstein also remembers his childhood,

saying that he was "to a great degree, self taught" from "books," even when he was in the schools of Geneva (88). The monster says that he "continually studied and exercised" his mind by reading "some books" (173). The three of them gain their knowledge through "self-education" by reading past texts with great enthusiasm. Consequently, by their self-education, they bear "passion" which ultimately leads them to destruction. Walton, Frankenstein, and the monster thus share the significant similarity in terms of "education" and "passion." It is quite interesting that these three similar characters "seek [others'] extinction" (216). Frankenstein tries to kill the monster. The monster, who asks for his identity, "What was I?" (118), can only "consummate the series of [his] being" by Frankenstein's and his own extinction (215). Walton "didst seek [the monster's] extinction," until the monster will be extinct (216).

As the above examples show, extinction is indispensable in the novel in order to prove the character's existence and gain his/her identity. Here we also find parallels between the novel's narrative and the structure of the French Revolution; the lower class people could gain their identity by the extinction of the upper. When current dynamic between identity and extinction, one predominant image that profoundly governs the novel's discourse becomes visible in the end: the image of survival. This survival image of existence and extinction (that one's identity/existence claims another's extinction) also reminds us of another social and cultural issue: The theory of evolution.

II Evolution

Erasmus Darwin, an English physician, physiologist, psychologist, chemist, geographer, meteorologist, engineer, botanist, poet, and grandfather of Charles Darwin (Florescu 217), is mentioned by Mary and Percy Shelley both in the 1818 edition and the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley says:

> Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley, to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener. During one of these, various philosophical doctrines were discussed, and among others the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated. *They talked of the experiments of Dr. Darwin* (I speak not of what the doctor really did, or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken of as having been done by him), *who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case till by some extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion*. Not thus, after all, would life be given. *Perhaps a corpse would reanimated*; galvanism had given token of such things; perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth. (4 emphases added)

Percy Shelley also says in the 1818 edition that *"[t]he event of this fiction is founded has been supposed, by Dr. Darwin*, and some of the physiological writers of Germany, as not of impossible occurrence" (10 emphases added). Percy Shelley's inclination to Erasmus Darwin's theory was enormous.[6] It is thus apparent that Mary Shelley also shared an interest in Erasmus Darwin's theory with her husband.

Evolutionary theory is known as Jean de Lamarck's and Charles Darwin's production. Nevertheless, Erasmus Darwin had already written an idea very similar to his grandson. In fact, Charles Darwin confesses that when he first heard of Lamarck's theory, that is, when he decided to take up the study of evolution, he had already read the theory in his grandfather's writings (Imanishi 9). Critics say that a whole book could be written on the links between Erasmus's and Charles's theories of evolution.[7] Poetic and theoretically immature as it is, Erasmus's idea about evolution is seen as significant and persuasive enough for us to depict the discursive influence of what we presently know as "the theory of evolution" upon *Frankenstein*.

Erasmus Darwin's theory of evolution is mainly discussed in Chapter 39 of *Zoonomia*. His concept of "evolution" by changing forms and "extinction" by natural selection might attract Mary and Percy Shelley.

Erasmus Darwin treats the Biblical account of human origins with skepticism. He asks a rhetorical question: "would it be too *bold* to imagine that all warm-blooded animals arisen from one living filament?" (King-Hele 86 emphasis added).[n] At his period, it might be bold to say such concepts of evolution as that the noble and the savage derive from the same origin, that they both are still in the process of changing, that even the ancestors and the past are not objects of respect, since they are more primitive than contemporaries and the present. There is no wonder why these radical ideas contemporized with the French Revolution: the French Revolution was a proclamation for equality, a rebellion against the past, and a subversion of order, class, and social stability.

Besides the struggle of existence and extinction, there are more important elements in the novel relating to the theory of evolution. In her characterization, Mary Shelley always emphasizes the agreement between one's body and soul, one's appearance and one's real nature and inner reality. Such strong correlation between appearance and reality in the novel reminds us of the theory of evolution. In the theory of evolution, "evolution" takes the shape of "appearance." To become better in appearance (from a primitive animal to a human being) means to make "progress" in the mind. People started to abuse this aspect of evolutionary theory for racial segregation, shortly after Mary Shelley's death. However, we may find a seed of this concept of evolutionary theory in *Frankenstein*: The monster's appearance (body) is the only reason why he is segregated by people.

There are more examples of strong correlation between appearance (body) and reality (soul) in the novel. Frankenstein quite often becomes ill, faints, or loses his mind. His lack of consciousness, which is caused by physical damage, represents that the moment his mind cannot endure is the moment his body cannot endure, or vice versa. Here, we can find how deeply Mary Shelley connects one's body to one's soul. Furthermore, more examples are found in which appearance directly correlates with reality. Caroline, Elizabeth, and Justine are all emphasized for their inner beauty as well as outer one. Clerval, who has adorable

nature, is also depicted as "a handsome young man" (170). Even the two professors who taught Frankenstein are depicted as follows:

> M. Krempe was a little squat man, with a gruff voice and *a repulsive countenance* the teacher, *therefore, did not prepossess me in favour of his pursuit*. (44 emphases added)
> [M. Waldman] was very unlike his colleague ... *with an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence*; a few grey hairs covered his temples, but those at the back of his head were nearly black. His person was short, but remarkably erect; and his voice the sweetest I had ever heard. (45 emphases added)

Frankenstein's picturesque descriptions about their appearances are equal to their characters. As a man of character, M. Waldman's appearance is superior than M. Krempe's. It is also remarkable that Frankenstein sees their character at first sight. The agreement of appearance and reality functions a quite important role in the structure of the novel.

In fact, physical ugliness stands for ugliness of nature throughout the novel. The monster, who has a hideous appearance, becomes as ugly and hideous in nature as its appearance. Mary Shelley also writes the strong power of appearance which can change even identity. The monster can communicate with others, when they cannot see him. As if he became another person, people without sight can communicate with the monster. Only when his "sight" is "taken" by the monster (98), Frankenstein can sympathize with the monster's misery. The father of the De Lacey family is the only one who can communicate with the monster, because "[he is] blind, and cannot judge of [the monster's] countenance" (130). The monster cries: "the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union" (141).

The strong correlation between appearance (body) and reality (soul) also appears in the close relationship between Nature and the human mind. In the novel, it is difficult to determine whether the human mind (interior) determines Nature (exterior), or, Nature exerts

influence upon the character's mind. This is also an example of the great attachment between "appearance" and "reality" in the novel. Emily W. Sustein depicts this function of Nature in the novel as follows:

> In *Frankenstein*, mutable Nature evokes and reflects the instability of the human mind and of fate. After his "abortion" disappears, "happy inanimate nature" frees Victor from sorrow and care. Then in quick succession, night makes him prophesy evil, during a storm he is excited by "this noble war in the skies," and lightning reveals the "filthy daemon" he created. Subsequently, the Alps console and elevate him, he swells "with something like joy," only to see the monster bounding toward him. (132)

Peter Brooks also studies the function of Nature in *Frankenstein*. He defines that Nature stands for ambivalent power, both benevolent and destructive, which is connected with the problem of "vision" and "literacy" in the novel (Brooks 206). His argument treats nature as a symbol of "vision" in the novel. What Brooks names "ambivalence" is the evidence that shows the function of Nature as a link between the "outer" (appearance, body) and the "inner" (reality, soul): Nature should ambivalently goes on changing since it is the medium which holds the agreement of every character's appearance and reality. What Mary Shelley emphasizes in the novel is the strong correlation and link between the two, which shows the influence of evolutionary theory upon her.

Some writers appeared soon after Mary Shelley's death, who were deeply influenced by the theory of evolution, wrote about the role of "misfortune" and "chance" in one's life.[⁽⁾] One of the biggest theme of their novels is how such uncontrollable and unavoidable power as misfortune or chance changes the character's life. In *Frankenstein*, too, the words "misfortune" and "chance" are used repeatedly. Caroline's father falls "through numerous *mischances*" (30 emphasis added). The fall of the De Lacey family is also caused because they were *"unfortunate"* (131 emphasis added). Frankenstein's first *"misfortune"* occurs when his

mother dies (41 emphasis added). He confesses: "*Chance*-or rather the evil influence, the Angel of Destruction, which asserted *omnipotent sway over me* from the moment I turned my reluctant steps from my father's door-led me to...natural philosophy" (44 emphases added).

In this way, Mary Shelley repeatedly shows how misfortune and chance affects the characters' lives. The place where the whole story of *Frankenstein* is narrated must also be symbolic; The setting is in the middle of the sea, where one's direction and life can only be determined by environment. This may be one more element relating the novel with the theory of evolution.

The last element linking *Frankenstein* with the evolutionary theory can be found in Mary Shelley's emphases on the family ties. She repeatedly illustrates a character from his/her family background. More specifically, every episode in the novel is related with a bond of the family: Walton, his lost father and beloved sister; the lover of the ship master and her father; Frankenstein and his family; Elizabeth and her lost parents; Clerval and his father; Safie and her father. These emphases on the bond of blood are effective to point out how the monster, who has no bond of blood, is isolated, alienated from the human society: "I alone am irrevocably excluded" (97). However, when we pay more attention to Mary Shelley's use of the image of "link" in terms of the family bond, the evolutionary image in the novel becomes clearer. Admitting that illustrating family background is a convention of popular novels at Mary Shelley's time, but it is evolutionary theory which can explain Mary Shelley's use of family bonds in *Frankenstein*.

Frankenstein confesses that he "was so guided by *a silken cord* that all seemed but one train of enjoyment" (32 emphases added). Elizabeth must be Frankenstein's wife "as the *tie* of [their] domestic comfort" (147 emphasis added). When Frankenstein finally loses his father, he cries, "I lost sensation, and *chains*" (193 emphasis added). When he loses his imaginable family, the De Lacey family, the monster cries for the loss of "the only *link* that held me to the world" (134 emphasis added). All the monster wants throughout the novel is to "*become linked to the chain of existence and events,*

from which I am now excluded" (144 emphases added). In this way, not only Frankenstein's and the monster's, but also Walton's, Caroline's, Elizabeth's, Josephine's, Clerval's, and Safie's links of their families in *Frankenstein* are eventually to be flawed and cut. As I mentioned in the part of the revolutionary images in the novel, these family ties become a symbol of loss and extinction, rather than growth (bearing new generation) and connection. We may say that this obsession for the missing family link is taken from Mary Shelley's own life. However, we may also say that this obsession stands for the obsession of the age, because by killing the King (a father figure) and cutting the past link, the French Revolution gives citizens fears of losing their identity (in terms of origin/root). Although the citizens had to cut the ties with the past in order to obtain their identity, just as Frankenstein and the monster must cut their hideous "*ties* [which is] only dissoluble by the *annihilation* of one of [them]" (96 emphases added), the citizens had to find a new root of their existence after cutting the link with the father figure and the past. Darwin's theory of the "origin" of human species might reflect the obsession of the age. Through the monster's searching for identity, *Frankenstein* also portrays the trauma of the age. Just as Darwin could not connect "the missing link," Mary Shelley discloses not "the link," but "the missing link" of a family and a human being.

When we study *Frankenstein* as a novel where the discourses of the French Revolution and the theory of evolution crystallize, it becomes clear that the novel signifies the relationship between the two: they both bear the notion of extinction as well as the sense of lack of link (with the past). The influence of the French Revolution upon the novel has been widely studied, but, as I have argued in this paper, it is insufficient to analyze the novel merely in relation with the French Revolution. By comparing with the theory of evolution, we can fully appreciate the novel not only as a reflection of the social background as well as a quest for the new and valid meaning of human existence during the paradigmatic shift of that revolutionary age.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* reflects the French Revolution by dealing with the problems of passion, monstrosity, rejection of the past and extinction. We can also say that the novel represents the notion of Darwinistic theory of evolution, first because Erasmus Darwin exerted influence upon the novel, second because appearance (body) and reality (mind) always correlate with each other throughout the novel. In addition, it is quite significant that the novel problematizes family ties, for the problem of link with the past is crucial not only for the theory of evolution, but also the French Revolution. In short, we may say that the French Revolution and the theory of evolution are significantly united and represented by *Frankenstein*.

If we remember that the French Revolution was one thorough reconsideration of and radical action to the problems of human existence and identity and that the Darwinistic evolutionary theory, similarly, was another revolution of the idea of human beings, we can conclude that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* reveals one more literary perspective of the origin and nature of human species. Behind the mask of a popular gothic novel, *Frankenstein* surely reflects on the human condition in that romantic age. However, her perspective, which is based on her contemporary sense of missing link with the past, discloses quite pessimistic and despairing view of the world. This, probably, is the reason why we are attracted so mysteriously by the rather short novel hidden in the shadows of other romantic giants.

Notes

(1) Andrew Milner writes how canonical literary history have excluded *Frankenstein*. Milner, Andrew. *Literature, Culture, and Society.* New York; New York UP, 1996. p.156.

(2) Poovey, Mary. "'My Hideous Progeny' : The Lady and the Monster" *Modern Critical Interpretations: Frankenstein.* pp.81 – 106. Huet, Marie-Helene. *Monstrous Imagination.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. pp.126 – 62.

(3) George Levin's concise explanation is a good survey of this argument: "Whatever the

ambiguity of Mary Shelley's narrative, the idea of *Frankenstein* cou.. l only have emerged from a culture that had imagined the perfectibility of humanity, rationalist or apocalyptic, or both, as in the French Revolution" (28).

(4) Johnson, Barbara "My Monster / My Self" *Modern Critical Interpretations: Frankenstein.* pp.55‑66. Homans, Margaret. "Bearing Demons: Frankenstein's Circumvention of the Maternal". *Modern Critical Interpretations: Frankenstein.* pp.133‑53.

(5) Fred Botting explains this as follows: "Some critics define the narrative structure of the novel as'Chinese box' or 'frame narrative.' However, these definition ignore the interrelation of the narratives" (42 *Making Monstrous*).

(6) Percy Shelley even cites Darwin's words and phrases into his poems. See, for instance, King-Hele, Desmond. *The Essential Writings of Erasmus Darwin.* London; Trinity, 1968.

(7) See C. D. Darlington, *Darwin's place in history.* Blackwell: Oxford UP, 1959, Chapter 3 and ii; and D. King-Hele, *Erasmus Darwin.* New York: Macmillan, 1963, pp.79‑90.

(8) Frankenstein asks the same question in the novel: "Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? It was *a bold question*" (49 emphases added).

(9) By exemplifying Thomas Hardy's poem, "Ditty," in which men are depicted as "bond-servants of *Chance*," Robert Ebbaston writes how the theory of evolution affects Hardy's plot structure as follows:

> Modern biology distinguishes between genotype, the chance genetic structure, and phenotype, the visible character which is determined by selection. Nonetheless Darwin's incomplete argument was sufficiently cogent to impress a mind like Hardy's with *the image of nature dominated by chance mutations....* The coincidences, accidental encounters, mysterious ties of kinship, broken appointments and lost letters notorious with Hardy are a mode of dramatizing *the vital element of chance in the creation and survival of species and individuals*, especially in its matching and mismatching of the sexes. (15‑16 emphases added)

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