THE CREATURE AND VOLDEMORT: HOW FAMILY

DYSFUNCTION FORMS MONSTERS


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DYSFUNCTION FORMS MONSTERS

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For my dad

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# INTRODUCTION

Mary Shelley's strange narrative of a scientist and his monster resonates with such truthfulness that her contemporaries demanded answers about the circumstances of the conception of her novel, *Frankenstein*. She addresses their demands in the Preface to the 1831 edition: ". . . I shall thus give a general answer to the question, so very frequently asked me—'How I then a young girl, came to think of, and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?'"

Since the first publication of *Frankenstein*, there has been such a degree of interest in its conception that the myth of the stormy summer spent on Lake Geneva threatens to usurp the work itself, and part of the allure of the legend can be credited to the cast of characters: Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Doctor Polidori (the playful fool), Mary and—though conspicuously left out in Mary's account—her stepsister Claire Clairmont. In the famed Preface to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein,* the "noble author" Byron declares, "We will each write a ghost story." Mary reports that Byron and Shelley immediately begin work, but she "skulks" down to breakfast each "mortifying" morning, struggling to "think of a story." Finally, she releases her readers from their suspense, and she describes the sensational scene when she first dreamt of the "hideous phantasm."

According to Daisy Hay, "The events which led to the composition of *Frankenstein* were less cohesive and dramatically satisfactory than Mary's Preface

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suggests" (86), for the narrative of the conception of the novel is directly related to Mary's desperate financial situation.  Mary presents her story to her readers as a salesperson, because she literally needs her novel to "go forth and prosper" (408).  She needs the novel to sell.  The journal of Dr. Polidori reveals a different story, one in which there was no "skulking," no "mortifying moments."  According to Polidori, Mary set to work right away along with Byron and Shelley (Seymour 157).  She structured her narrative as fiction; by claiming that she could not think of a story, she intensified her readers' emotional interest and the story of her dream is in itself one of entertainment and horror.  She lay in bed, past "the witching hour," somewhere between sleep and wakefulness when she first saw, in her mind's eye, Victor Frankenstein crouching over his creature and, as the Creature opened his "yellow, watery, but speculative eyes" (172), so she also opened hers in terror.  She had thought of her ghost story: "O! if I could only contrive one which would frighten my reader as I myself had been frightened that night!"

Today we ask this same conception question of a contemporary author, perhaps the most important author of our time, and certainly the most culturally influential.  J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has been characterized as "simultaneously the most read fiction in history and, according to the American Library Association, the most-banned books of the twenty-first century" (Garrett 15).  In the foreword to Melissa Anelli's *Harry, A History*, J.K. Rowling appears to subscribe to Mary Shelley's formula and begins by addressing the same curious crowd that once demanded of Mary the circumstances of the conception of her novel.  Rowling writes, "Over and over again they asked me the same question, with tiny variations.  'What is it that makes *Harry Potter* so popular?'  'What's the magic formula?'" (ix).  Rowling follows with her usual charming,

unsure answer. She has been taken by surprise at the books' success "as much as anyone" (ix). She discusses the conception of the series in multiple television, web and newspaper interviews. In a 2010 television interview with Oprah Winfrey, Rowling reveals that she had the idea for Harry Potter as she traveled on a train—like the Hogwarts Express—and she was stuck riding the train for several hours, alone with her idea, without a pen to write it down. It popped into her head and the idea was like "touch paper."

Compared to Mary's Preface, Rowling's is a short conception myth, but I think the train is the hook; the Hogwarts Express is the medium that carries Harry, his friends and us, the readers, into each school year and the magical Wizarding world and for the idea to come to her while on a train seems natural, as if she is the first character, instead of the author, to be invited by magic into the Harry Potter universe. Moreover, trains are important for Rowling, she finds the idea for *Harry Potter* while travelling on a train; her parents met and got engaged while travelling through the English countryside; and her second husband proposed to her on a train (Rowling 2007). Trains seem to be important to most people as well; we all want to snuggle up in a cozy passenger car, and Rowling has capitalized on our collective wish to ride a train.

We have asked this question and we have been provided with the sensational myths surrounding their conception: a stormy summer, a nightmare, and a train ride without a pen. The fact that there is a myth surrounding the conception of these stories is meaningful enough, but I think there is a common origin of these two stories of monstrous characters that both have roots in the fractured relationships and personal histories of Shelley and Rowling.

 This thesis will explore the importance of interpersonal relationships in the construction of the sympathetic, modern monster using Mary Shelley's Creature and J.K. Rowling's Voldemort as examples.  I will argue that the fractured family is a driving force in the development of monsters.  The first chapter will begin with a discussion of the lives of Shelley and Rowling, their relationships with their fathers and spouses, and each woman's struggle with depression.  The second chapter is a discussion of the monster's conventional role as an outsider, drawing on Cyclops in *The Odyssey*, Grendel in *Beowulf,* and Caliban in *The Tempest* as examples.  The third chapter is a discussion on the failed family relationships and broken kinship systems of both the Creature and Voldemort and the various coping mechanisms they create for themselves.  Each monster can be defined by his relationships, and each monster attempts to construct an autonomous identity by gaining control of his circumstances and others around him.

## CHAPTER 1: MARY SHELLEY AND J.K. ROWLING

Many English teachers have observed the empathetic reception that monsters often receive from rooms full of students and it is not surprising that "an outcast and lovely humanoid Creature should attract so many sympathizers to pity his ill-treatment and excuse his crimes" (Lipking 320). The creation of a complicated outcast is a weighty task, and for us to really feel sorry and overlook his crimes, he must have a sympathetic back-story. For the monsters of Mary Shelley and J.K. Rowling, the Creature and Voldemort, this sympathetic back-story is framed by rejection and broken families.

Shelley and Rowling are two women experienced with broken families and depression. Shelley suffered through the deaths of four of her five children, often times alone while Percy Shelley was off running errands, or nursing his own neurosis by shutting himself away in his study. Mary had a genetic predisposition toward depression, and it is clear through her writing and circumstances that she suffered bouts of deep depression. J.K. Rowling has talked openly and publicly about her struggle with her own depression, which followed her divorce and first pregnancy. Divorce may be one of the most traumatic events that a person may go through and Rowling no longer sees her ex-husband, the father of her first daughter. Additionally, both Shelley and Rowling sought, most often fruitlessly, the approval of their fathers.

I have discussed the idea that *Frankenstein* and *Harry Potter* have conception myths in common and there is a similar sensationalism that surrounds each. We've asked the conception question of both of our English women writers, and I think the answer lies in how both these women are similar. Both are writers concerned with empathy, both have unsteady relationships with their fathers, and both are women who were young mothers at the time they composed their works, and who were dealing with depression and absent (in the case of Percy Shelley, absent-minded) spouses and co-parents.

Both Shelley and Rowling write monstrous characters that, though they do kill frequently, are not born psychopathic serial killers. They are made monsters by their circumstances. Many have noted that the Harry Potter books have a "general preference for nurture rather than nature" (Hopkins 30) and though Rowling has called Voldemort "I guess a psychopath" she has also emphasized that, throughout the progression of the series, Voldemort had a choice in his evil doing and that, even in his final moment "he did have a chance for redemption" (Vieira 2007). She also introduces a sympathetic back-story for Voldemort, and as with the Creature, we see that there is a reason for the nature of Voldemort's evil.

Another contributing factor to our ability to empathize with Voldemort is his greatest motivator, his fear of death. We can all understand why he would want to avoid it because fear of death is a universal human quality. During an interview with Rowling, Mike Hale quips that Voldemort's fear is "not a bad description of some best-selling novelists" (Hale 2005). Rowling herself empathizes with this characteristic: "I so understand why Voldemort wants to conquer death. We're all frightened of it" (Greig 2006). She has also said the thing she hates most in the world is intolerance, or lack of

empathy: "those who choose not to empathize enable real monsters" (Rowling 2008). During a commencement address to Harvard University graduates in 2008, Rowling champions imagination and describes it in what she characterizes as its highest form: "In its arguably most transformative and revelatory capacity, it is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared."

Rowling's favorite book, and a major influence on her writing, is Jessica Mitford's autobiography *Hons and Rebels* which chronicles Mitford's stuffy, desolate childhood in the damp English countryside, her elopement with Esmond Romilly, their passion for socialist ideals, and the strong political discord that existed within her own family, many of whom were ardent Nazi supporters. Through her reflections on girlhood, Mitford remembers her inability to thoughtfully resolve the problem of socio-economic inequality in her own mind: "The newspapers from time to time carried stories of hardship cases—a whole family living in one room, children who had died of cold in the winter, old people living on pensions who couldn't afford sugar in their tea. What could be done about it all?" (55). From her autobiography, we can gather that as a child, Jessica Mitford viewed the world through sensitive, empathetic eyes, and she spent her life trying to make sense of these emotions. This is the kind of behavior that Rowling champions.

When Rowling was in her early twenties, she worked as a researcher at Amnesty International in London. She has called this time "one of the greatest formative experiences of my life" (2008). There she witnessed firsthand the horrors of refugees seeking amnesty from oppressive governments. Working at Amnesty International, she might have been reminded of Mitford's account of the disgust she felt at the racism of

fascists of the 1930s and 40s, and of Mitford's reflections on first reading *The Brown Book* which depicts the Nazi treatment of the Jews (Mitford 95). The threat to the Wizarding society in the Potter books of a fascist-like dictatorship is certainly influenced by both her time at Amnesty International and Mitford's account of the attitudes and events in Europe leading up to WWII.

I would argue that Rowling's public championing of empathy, her interest in Mitford's autobiography, and her time spent at Amnesty International, indicate that she is a writer concerned with the psychology of her characters, concerned with understanding their deviant behavior, and, because of this, she provides readers with an evolution of their madness and motivation for evil. It is for this reason that Rowling gives Voldemort a sympathetic past.

Based on Mitford's influence and her own experience working at Amnesty International, we can also see that Rowling is a writer concerned with political justice. Mitford, Rowling's hero, ran away to the Spanish Civil War as a teenager. She was a woman concerned with revolutions, political oppression, and tyrannical government. Mary Shelley was also a woman concerned with political justice, and many of her contemporaries (including Lord Byron who eventually died fighting for Greece's independence) left their homes to fight in foreign wars. While living in Italy in 1821, Mary Shelley developed a flirtatious relationship with a Greek prince, Mavrocordato, for whom the freedom of Greece "was his one grand obsession" (Seymour 264) and Percy Shelley wrote *Hellas*, championing the Greek fight for independence, in this same year. Mary Shelley's circle romanticized revolutions and the Enlightenment ideals that are often identified with them.

Critics have also noticed the connection between Rowling's writing and Enlightenment thinkers, specifically William Godwin, Mary Shelley's father. Noel Chevalier writes of Rowling's connection with Godwin and the Enlightenment and the influence of the "Jacobian fiction of the 1790s and its descendants, particularly the fiction of William Godwin and Mary Shelley." Chevalier believes that "Rowling returns to the ideals of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution to reexamine issues of social and political justice, which she clearly believes have not been solved" (402). Before discussing how Godwin may have influenced Mary Shelley and J.K. Rowling, we must first put their writing into the context of the one Enlightenment thinker who certainly influenced all previously mentioned writers—Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

A basic review of Rousseau's writing, particularly of his ideas on the nature of evil, are important to a discussion of Shelley and Rowling, specifically when we consider the development of an evil character like the Creature or Lord Voldemort, who were affected by tragic circumstances. In the first chapter of *Emile*, Rousseau outlines his ideas on the nature of man, and he begins simply: "God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil." Rowling's books show a preference for this ideology, for nurture over nature; in other words, monsters are not born, they are made. Rowling emphasizes the role of choice for her characters. Voldemort is subjected to a lonely, loveless childhood without parents, and he grows into a monster. Likewise, the Creature is a perfect study of a man who comes of age without any guidance, without a father, and he too grows into a monster. Both monsters are rejected by their fathers, and this commonality is key. Rousseau writes: "[A father] has no right to be a father if he cannot fulfill a father's duties" (19). An absent father, like Tom Riddle Sr. and Victor

Frankenstein, has no right to be a father, and when there are fathers like these two in society, there are consequences: we encounter the creation of monsters. These two ideas are important for Shelley and Rowling: humans are born good and become evil; and absent, unfit fathers are destructive.

We know that Rousseau heavily influenced Mary Shelley's writing and her early education and household. In *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley,* David Marshall describes Rousseau as "more than an intellectual influence for Mary Shelley" and goes on to argue that *Frankenstein* is more informed by Mary Shelley's reading of Rousseau than by her reading of Milton. We know that when Mary, Shelley, and Clair Clairmont first traveled to Switzerland in the summer of 1814, two years before she would begin *Frankenstein*, Rousseau was on their reading list (Mellor 27, Seymour 31). The favorite book of Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, was Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise* (Seymour 18) and she wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* as an attack on *Emile* (Seymour 24). Many of William Godwin's ideas on political justice were influenced by Rousseau's basic philosophical ideal that man is born good and corrupted by society. Consider the following, written by Godwin in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*: "Our virtues and our vices may be traced to the incidents which mark our lives, and if these incidents could be divested of every improper tendency, vice would be extirpated from the world." Mary Wollstonecraft wrote in *Vindication* that a "great proportion of the misery that wanders, in hideous forms, around the world, is allowed to rise from the negligence of parents" (qtd. in Seymour 24). We can conclude that for Mary Shelley's parents, the two people that most influenced her writing, society and parents are the two most culpable

factors that go into the corruption of an individual. For them the forces behind the nature of evil can be identified as oppressive society and absent parenting.

Marshall argues that in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley uses Rousseau's writings to "conduct a philosophical investigation of the failure of sympathy" (181). Reflecting on the idea of sympathy (which is an 18th century concept now more closely related to the modern word "empathy"), Rousseau writes: "Imagination puts us more readily in the place of the miserable man than of the happy man; we feel that the one condition touches us more nearly than the other" (167). Of Rousseau's writing on sympathy Marshall claims that "only the recognition of fellow feeling can save people from monsters: save them from turning others into monsters, save them from becoming monsters" (208). Rousseau's description of empathy in terms of imagination is the same concept—what Rowling calls the "power of imagination"—as that which Rowling used to organize a commencement address to Harvard graduates in 2008. She echoes Rousseau's thoughts on monsters' developing from a lack of empathy when she says, "the willfully unimaginative see more monsters." In her construction of Voldemort we can see that Rowling believes there is a causal relationship among society, parents (specifically fathers), and the nature of evil in the individual.

Because Mary Shelley and Rowling created characters with tragic, neglected childhoods, we feel sorry for them. We empathize with them. These characters were created by these two women writers for the purpose of drawing sympathy from the reader, but not only does the reader need to empathize with the characters, both writers need to empathize with the characters as well in order to create and understand them.

I have argued that both Mary Shelley and J.K. Rowling are writers concerned with empathy, and I would argue also that Rousseau's influence informs this early concern with empathy. Mary Shelley was heavily influenced by Rousseau and by the writing of her parents, who were also influenced by Rousseau. J.K. Rowling seems to champion empathy and understanding. Her books favor a philosophy of nurture over nature and personal choice as concerns the nature of evil, and she too seems to echo Rousseau in her own personal philosophy. The next sections of this chapter will explore the source of each woman's ability to empathize, and their early experiences, which allow them to empathize with the fictional characters they create.

In a 2005 article written by Lev Grossman, Rowling says, "As I look back over the five published books, I realize that it's kind of a litany of bad fathers. That's where evil seems to flourish, in places where people didn't get good fathering." This is a repeated view in Rowling's Potter books, and it also rings true in the case of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Like the Potter books, *Frankenstein* is a "parable of the failure of sympathy," the failure of a father to empathize with his child. David Marshall characterizes Victor Frankenstein's negligence as a parent his greatest failure in the novel (189). To understand these fictional fathers and the "children" that they neglect, we must first discuss the fathers of Shelley and Rowling. *Frankenstein* is dedicated to Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin. Because Mary Shelley's mother Mary Wollstonecraft died in childbirth with Mary, she had a special relationship with her father, her only living parent. But this was a complicated relationship, one that Mary agonized over all her life.

After Mary Wollstonecraft's death, William published *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, a biography of her life. Despite his well-meaning intentions, the publication of this book solidly discredited Mary Wollstonecraft and her work and ruined any credibility she might have had. Godwin includes details of Wollstonecraft's affair with Gilbert Imlay and, along with its publication, he printed old letters exchanged between the two lovers. The defamation of her reputation as an advocate of women's rights inadvertently placed Godwin in the position of antagonist, not only of Wollstonecraft, but of his daughters as well. The fate of both Fanny Imlay (Wollstonecraft's daughter with Imlay whom Godwin adopted) and Mary Shelley in society were affected by Godwin's exposure of their mother's actions. Growing up, it must have been conflicting for Mary to read a memoir of the mother she idolized in which her father recast Wollstonecraft as a social deviant and outsider, however inadvertently (Seymour 32).

As a child, Mary had a close attachment to Godwin, one that she characterizes as "my excessive and romantic attachment to my father" (qtd. in Seymour 49). And likewise, Godwin was attached to the girls. Writing to them while away on a trip to Ireland, Godwin wrote that he had "seen no children in Ireland half so loveable as his own" (Seymour 41). Family dynamics changed in the Godwin house four years after the death of Mary Wollstonecraft when Godwin married Mrs. Mary Jane Clairmont, whom Mary would later call "that filthy woman" (Seymour 250), a woman Mary would loathe all of her life.

Because of the strife in the Godwin household caused by the animosity between Mrs. Godwin and Mary, Mary was twice sent away during her adolescence, once to

school at Ramsgate and once to distant acquaintances, the Baxters, in Scotland. While Mary was away at Ramsgate, she was alone and friendless, and she received only one letter a month from Godwin. Anne K. Mellor writes that Godwin deliberately distanced himself from Mary after his marriage to Mary Jane Clairmont. Godwin compared Mary and her gentle-natured, half-sister Fanny (14). Mellor argues that Fanny was Godwin's favorite daughter. In his baffled musings over the different dispositions of his two daughters, Godwin does give Mary credit for one positive attribute, that she was an excellent student. Seymour conjectures that "a shrewder man would have recognized this intense application as an appeal for the approval he hurtfully withheld" (62). It would seem she was searching for his approval all of her life, even in the publication and dedication of *Frankenstein*.

Throughout her childhood and adolescence, Mary was always able to blame Mrs. Godwin for her father's emotional absence, writing to Shelley, "I detest Mrs. G [Godwin] she plagues my father out of his life" (Bennett 3). She believed Mrs. Godwin was at the root of all problems with her father and that if she was eliminated, her father might be perfect. She idolized Godwin, and Mrs. Godwin proved to be a perfect scapegoat, blamed for all of Godwin's failures and wrongdoings as a father.

Possibly the greatest blow to their relationship came when Godwin cut off communication with Mary after her elopement with Shelley, though he did continue to press Shelley for financial support. Mary agonized over Godwin during this estrangement, writing to Shelley, "Why will Godwin not follow the obvious bent of his affections and be reconciled to us" (Bennett 3). Godwin only resumed contact with the

couple after their marriage, which immediately followed the suicide of Shelley's pregnant first wife, Harriet Westbrook.

When Godwin and Shelley first began correspondence, Godwin was motivated by the hope that Shelley might become his benefactor. After Godwin asked Shelley to clarify the terms of their relationship, Shelley answered, "I should regard it as my greatest glory, should I be judged worthy to solace your declining years," and from this Godwin understood that Shelley would indeed become his benefactor. Later when Mary eloped with married Shelley, this dynamic complicated his position as a betrayed father. Unfortunately, throughout their marriage, Godwin plagued Shelley with demands for financial support, and there was a point during their life together in Italy when Shelley screened all incoming letters from Godwin to Mary, in case they should mention some financial complaint or demand. The problem of Godwin's finances was linked forever to Mary's marriage, and it was an incessant source of pain and anxiety for Mary. Much of the correspondence Mary received from Godwin at significant junctures in her life—her elopement, the deaths of her children—contains fatherly concern and compassion, but also pragmatic discussions of financial difficulties and demands for assistance, which seems to undercut the sincerity of the demonstration of fatherly concern (Seymour 98).

A few years later, Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* as, Chevalier argues, a critique of "her father's groundbreaking radical work in its understanding of the place of science in politics . . . For Shelley, reading her father's work twenty-five years later allowed her to read it somewhat skeptically" (411). I believe that what Chevalier characterizes as Shelley's skepticism about her father's work is rooted in her greater capacity for understanding the depth of human emotion than Godwin did. Godwin's

work lacks an understanding of human emotion. In a discussion on pity (or the modern concept of empathy) in *Political Justice,* Godwin dismisses this capacity which he argues can be found more readily in "young persons and persons of little refinement." He explains that "longer experience and observation enable us to separate the calamities of others and our own safety" (Godwin). Godwin seems to characterize empathy as an emotional state that with practice and refinement can be overcome. This stands in contrast to the creation of Mary Shelley's Creature who demands our empathy. Throughout his life as a father, Godwin repeats the same misguided mistakes with Mary. He seems to fail, at many opportunities, to consider how his actions might make his daughter feel, or if he does consider Mary's feelings toward his actions, he thinks it better to overcome those feelings with his intellect. Whatever the reason, this much beloved yet misguided father is no doubt a major source of inspiration for Mary Shelley's writing, specifically for her creation of a sympathetic monster and her parable of the failure of empathy.

It seems that the root of Godwin's failure to display empathy, as father and philosopher, is his absolute devotion to reason. Another character informs this discussion of fathers and reason, Albus Dumbledore, whom Chevalier characterizes as "Hogwarts's most Godwinian character" (405). I have already noted that Rowling has said in retrospect that the Potter books seem to be a "litany of bad fathers." I would argue further that the books explore all types of fathers, good and bad, and usually in *Harry Potter*, the good fathers die as well as the bad, for example James Potter and Sirius Black. Rowling has said that in her original plan for the series, the beloved father of the redheaded Weasley brood, Arthur Weasley, was destined for death as well. In a 2007 television

interview Rowling discussed her decision to alter her plan with regards to his fate because of the strong attachment fans felt for him as a character: "I think part of the reason for that is there were very few good fathers in the book. In fact, you could make a very good case for Arthur Weasley being the only good father in the whole series." If Rowling believes that Arthur Weasley is the only good father in the series, what does this say for "Hogwarts's most Godwinian character," Dumbledore?

Albus Dumbledore is a complex, conflicted character precisely because he is a "Godwinian character" and for this reason he cannot be acknowledged as a "good" father. Like Godwin, he is devoted to reason. He overlooks feelings and emotions for the greater good. There is a time in *Order of the Phoenix* when he believes that it would be to Harry's benefit to cut off all personal contact with him and he ignores Harry for an entire school year. On the whole Dumbledore is an ambiguous father figure.

My goal in this brief discussion of Rowling's good and bad fathers is to illustrate the truth which she herself has articulated, that the *Harry Potter* books are focused on a series of different types of father relationships, and I believe she is working through her own thoughts on fathers in her writing.

There is no scholarly biography of Rowling on the market. The only biographical information we have is what she gives us directly, and she is private when it comes to the unsteady relationship she has had with her father in the past. In a 2010 television interview with Oprah Winfrey, Rowling stated that her greatest regret is that she did not share her idea for the *Harry Potter* series with her mother before she died of multiple sclerosis in 1990. Rowling now has no relationship with her father: "It's such a huge thing to be estranged from a parent that obviously you would—it would have to be a very

big reason for that." In a 2009 television interview with Elizabeth Vargas, Rowling

talked about her inability to please her father and her fear of him when she was younger:

> I was very frightened of my father for a very long time and . . . I also tried
>
> desperately to get his approval and make him happy I suppose and then there
>
> came a point quite shamingly late in life where I couldn't do that anymore and
>
> so I haven't had any contact with my father now for over a few years.

It would be wrong to draw many solid, specific conclusions about the similarities

between these two women writers when we have a vast amount of biographical literature

on Shelley, and nothing beyond recorded interviews with Rowling. However, it is safe to

say that Rowling is a woman with a complicated relationship with her father, and she

seems to be working through the many roles of a father in her writing. It is also safe to

infer one specific similarity between these two women: they are both motivated by a

desire to please their fathers. Mary Shelley tried hard to be a good student so that she

might win Godwin's approval and Rowling possesses enough self-awareness to tell us

herself; that she tried "desperately" to win her father's approval.

Mary Shelley and J.K. Rowling both sought their fathers' approval, and both

writers were also pregnant during the composition of their works. During her life, Mary

Shelley was pregnant five times. She lost her first child, a baby girl, a few days after a

premature birth. On the day of the death of her first child, she wrote a letter to James

Hogg lamenting: "I am no longer a mother now" (Bennett 8). She was pregnant with her

second child William the year before she began to write *Frankenstein.* William died in

Italy three years later, following the death of Mary's third child Clara, William's younger

sister. The children died within a few short weeks of each other, and, again, Mary found

herself "a mother no longer." Her fourth child, Percy, was the only one of four to survive. Mary miscarried during her fifth pregnancy and almost died but was saved by Shelley's insistence that she be placed in an ice bath. Here Shelley seemed to be more excited by the cleverness of his plan to save Mary in the ice bath than by the actual circumstances of the miscarriage, and this kind of absent-minded ambivalence toward Mary's pregnancies and their children characterized much of Shelley's behavior as a spouse and co-parent. It seems likely Mary implicated Shelley in the deaths of both William and Clara in Italy, because he selfishly gave priority to his own needs and desires concerning the family's travel and location in Italy. He put the needs of his two sensitive toddlers below his, leading to illness in each child that might have been avoidable in both cases. He even left Mary alone in her depression and grief over the death of their first child and the miscarriage of their fifth. Because of the repeated pattern of the deaths of their children, Mary and Shelley developed a routine coping mechanism: Mary would retreat into lonely solitude and isolation, unable to communicate her despair, and Shelley would retreat into avoidance, often taking comfort in the companionship of Mary's stepsister, Claire Clairmont.

Two pregnancies, then, affected Mary Shelley during the creation and composition of *Frankenstein*. A baby girl was born prematurely the year before she began work on the novel, and she carried and gave birth to her son William while she was writing it. Since the 1974 publication of Ellen Moers's landmark essay "Female Gothic: The Monster's Mother," in which she reads *Frankenstein* as a "birth myth" and a "horror story of maternity," critics have acknowledged three influences on the composition and

content of *Frankenstein*: Mary's pregnancies, her experience as a young mother, and her

upbringing as the motherless daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft.

When she was pregnant with her first child, Shelley encouraged Mary to pursue a

relationship with his friend, James Hogg, presumably so that he could pursue a

relationship with Claire Clairmont. Based on the letters between Hogg and Mary, it

seems that Mary enjoyed a flirtatious relationship with Hogg, writing: "You love me you

say . . . we have known each other for so short a time and I did not think about love . . .

there is a bright prospect before us my dear friend—lovely—and—which renders it

certain—wholly dependent on our selves" (Bennett 6) Throughout this time, however,

her feelings toward Hogg fluctuated, and she delayed a sexual relationship with him.

Hay conjectures that Mary's correspondence with Hogg was probably the result of her

loneliness in the advanced days of her pregnancy, while most days Shelley was off with

Claire organizing some new financial arrangement with creditors. She needed Hogg to

comfort her and give her attention (47). Years later, Claire Clairmont divulged that Mary

came into her bedroom one night, weeping because Shelley wanted her to sleep with

Hogg (Hay 49; Seymour 127). As a pregnant young woman, the prospect of a new

relationship with a man other than the father of her child probably seemed appalling.

After the death of her first baby, Shelley and Claire summoned Hogg for Mary, and

Shelley and Claire left the house to run errands. After this experiment in communal

living, while she was pregnant and working on *Frankenstein*, Mary spent much of her

energy mounting efforts to remove Claire from their quarters. She saw Claire as a

constant reminder of the instability of her living arrangements.

Mary's mother Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary's half-sister Fanny Imlay both suffered deep depression that manifested in suicidal tendencies in each woman and death for Fanny. Additionally, Mary Wollstonecraft suffered a bout with depression after the birth of Fanny. Suicide in all cases is the result of deep depression which we now know can be passed through family generations genetically. Like her mother and half-sister, Mary Shelley, at multiple junctures in her life, especially those related to her failed pregnancies and the deaths of her children, seems to be a profoundly depressed individual.

Postpartum depression, an extended state of sadness brought on by a combination of hormonal changes from pregnancy and fatigue, is a common experience of new mothers and the Oxford English Dictionary defines depression itself as "a severe mental condition characterized by feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy typically accompanied by a lack of energy and interest in life."

J.K. Rowling has said that the dementors of the Harry Potter world, guards of the Wizarding prison Azkaban, were inspired by her own experience with depression. The dementors corral prisoners by sucking out their happiness, putting them into emotional turmoil and leaving them, ultimately, as "empty shells" (247). Consider the above OED definition of postpartum depression relative to Rowling's description of the dementors:

> They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, they
>
> drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them . . . every good
>
> feeling every happy memory will be sucked out of you . . . you'll be left with
>
> nothing but the worst experiences of your life. (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 187)

Rowling has talked openly about dealing with her depression.  In a 2010 television interview with Oprah Winfrey, Rowling spoke about using her experience as a basis for the creation of the dementors and because of the lack of biographical data available, her thoughts on her own depression are worth quoting at length:

I had tendencies toward depression from quite young.  It became really acute when I was sort of twenty-five to twenty-eight was a dark time.  It's that absence of feeling—and it's even the absence of hope that you can feel better.  And it's so difficult to describe to someone who's never been there because it's not sadness.  Sadness is—I know sadness—sadness is not a bad thing.  You know?  To cry and to feel.  But it's that cold absence of feeling—that really hollowed-out feeling.  That's what the dementors are.  And it was because of my daughter that I went and got help.

Rowling refers to the years that she was twenty-five to twenty-eight as the "dark time" in her life.  It was during this time that she spent a few years in Portugal, married to her first husband and pregnant with daughter Jessica (named for Jessica Mitford).  In spite of all the biographical data we have available on Mary Shelley, she never articulated her feelings about depression so clearly as Rowling has, and we have to piece together the circumstances of Mary's depression.  We have Rowling's depression coinciding with her marriage, her absent spouse and co-parent, though we may not know or understand why Rowling's first husband is not in her life, or why she left Portugal so suddenly, *we know how she felt* about this time, and that is what is important.

Rowling spent two years married and teaching English in Portugal before she moved back to England in 1993 with her infant daughter (Anelli 43).  Rowling's

marriage ended abruptly; it is characterized by Rowling as "short and really quite

catastrophic" (Hale 2009), and Rowling's ex-husband is no longer a part of either her or

daughter Jessica's life (Grossman 2005).  Of this marriage Rowling has said that she

believes that she "repeated patterns from my first family as we often do in my selection

of my first husband," referring vaguely to her father, with whom she no longer

communicates (2010).  In 1995, two years after her return to England, she solicited her

agent Christopher Little about representing *Philosopher's Stone* in 1995.  Rowling has

said of this time: "My self-esteem generally at this time in my life was rock bottom.  No

one could have felt they were a failure more than I."  She describes feelings of

disorientation and disbelief as a young mother after her marriage ended: "I can't say I

walked straight out of that marriage and that experience saying, you know, I feel

enlightened in any way—I felt quite shell-shocked" (2010), and she goes on to describe

the circumstances in which she came to write *Harry Potter* in the years following her

divorce from her daughter's father, the birth of her daughter and her depression: "I had a

very, very tiny baby.  And then I went straight into poverty and depression" (2010).  J.K.

Rowling first had the idea for *Harry Potter* in 1990 but she did much of the heavy lifting

of writing the first book and plotting the story after her return from Portugal in 1993.  It

was while a young mother, and while dealing with depression, that she first composed

*Harry Potter*.  She wrote it as she walked around Edinburg with her daughter in the

stroller, "getting her to sleep—then rushing into the nearest café to write" (Anelli 44).

As she composed *Harry Potter*, J.K. Rowling faced sadness and circumstances

similar to those which plagued Mary Shelley as she wrote *Frankenstein*. Rowling became

a mother and later suffered from depression.  She was estranged from her husband, her

daughter's father, as she became a new mother, and Mary Shelley was emotionally estranged from her husband as she dealt with grief over the loss of her first child. It is safe to assume that the experience of motherhood and deep emotional loss shape the psychology and understanding of these two writers, and subsequently, the psychology of the characters that they created.

This chapter began with a discussion of what I call the conception myths of both *Frankenstein* and *Harry Potter*. There is great interest in the conception of both of these works because so many find them appealing and insightful. I attribute this to the authenticity of the characters and their experiences because, regardless of how different a character may be from us as readers, emotion reverberates, and the characters and emotions of both narratives are true and universal.

Mary Shelley and J.K. Rowling are skilled in creating authentic, complex characters, and I believe they reflect a deep understanding of human emotion, a depth of understanding that can only be rooted in personal loss and reflection. Both writers had complicated relationships with their fathers during which they repeatedly and unsuccessfully sought approval; both women dealt with depression and motherhood; both writers were disappointed by their spouses, particularly in the role of co-parent, and as a result both women are writers concerned with empathy. J.K. Rowling and Mary Shelley borrow from their own experiences to color the losses and disappointments of their characters, particularly their monstrous ones, the Creature and Lord Voldemort. If these characters feel true to us, it is because when traced back to the source, they are drawn from and anchored in close observation of the human psyche.

In the coming three chapters the themes of loneliness, rejection, single parents, and absent fathers will surface again in discussions of these monsters, and I believe these themes can be traced back to a common origin in the lives of these two women writers. In the next chapter, I will begin by defining my monsters, and I will attempt to identify what makes them so monstrous, why Rowling and Shelley felt sorry for them, and why we as readers feel sorry for them.

## CHAPTER 2: MONSTER AS OUTSIDER

The sympathetic, modern monster is an outsider, an Other. Using Mary Shelley's Creature and J.K. Rowling's Voldemort as examples of the modern monster, we can see that as an outsider, he is unable to gain access to society, he is shunned by community, he is rejected by father and family, and for these reasons, we feel sorry for him. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen defines a monster as "best understood as an embodiment of difference, a breaker of category, and a resistant Other known only through process and movement" (x). To understand his monstrous behavior, we must define the characteristics and circumstances that compose the modern monster's outsider identity by conducting a survey of monsters throughout literature and recognizing conventions surrounding the character. In his short story, *A Poetics for Bullies*, Stanley Elkin beautifully articulates the lonely psychology that drives an outsider toward deviant choices: "*I will have something. I will have terror. I will have drought. I bring the dearth*" (197). When the outsider, the monster, searches for his raison d'etre and finds meaninglessness and solitude, he creates his own terrible destiny because, in the words of Elkin, he must "have something."

The Oxford English Dictionary defines monster as first "a mythical creature, which is part animal and part human, and is frequently of great size and ferocious appearance." Various alternate definitions listed imply abnormal size or physical deformity, and the OED adds a corrupt personality in its definition: "(a person) exhibiting

such extreme cruelty or wickedness as to appear inhuman." The OED definition of

monster (a being with a physical and/or moral deformity) generally covers a wide variety

of monsters throughout literature; however, I believe status as an outsider is important in

identifying a sympathetic, modern monster. When I describe the Creature and Voldemort

as such I mean to imply that status as an outsider takes precedence over the established

tradition in literature of defining monsters in terms of a terrifying physiology or a wicked

nature (which is caused in part by a warped physical appearance). Outsider status is

rooted in loneliness, isolation and rejection, and, specifically for the Creature and

Voldemort, rejection by a broken family.

When I use the word Other to describe these monsters, I mean the Other

articulated by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*: the monster is an outsider, and

he is an Other, he is "an object and a particular object" (306). He is objectified by all of

the other characters, the subjective observers, in the narrative. The subjective observers

in these narratives can reinforce their own identities as normal and good by perceiving

the monster as an Other, and the readers can as well. Jeff Lindsay, author of the *Dexter*

series (a popular fiction series developed into a television series about a sympathetic

serial killer) wrote a recent op-ed in the *New York Times* that effectively illustrates my

point. In a discussion of why people enjoy reading about serial killers in fiction and

news, Lindsay argues that this helps people to feel secure in their own identities: "by

watching (serial killers), you know it could never be you. We can't deny that evil

exists—but it's not who we are" (Lindsay A19). Peter Ciaccio argues the opposite, that

people do not like to go deeply "into the mind of the 'monster,' as criminologists do"

because "they may discover that they share some features with the criminal mind" (42).

Both of the above seemingly conflicting ideas are true because monsters are a "breaker of category" and a "resistant Other known only through process and movement," (Cohen) and as an unclassifiable Other, we are ambivalent about ourselves by objectifying monsters. We need to watch to be sure that we are not like monsters, and we watch until we find that which differentiates us and then we fixate on that difference. Both routes allow the subjective observers in the narrative to draw conclusions about their own normalcy.

If both the normal characters in the narrative and we the readers, as subjective observers of the monster Other, can feel secure in our identities within the boundaries of the norm, what does this mean when the roles reverse and the monster becomes the subjective observer of the others in their worlds? And, more importantly, without a family, parents or home to reflect upon as objects, who will the monster objectify as an Other? Monsters have no Other on whom to reflect. They are isolated and alone and, in the case of the sympathetic monster, abandoned by their families. Without family, they come to know themselves as social aliens and this leads them to construct their monstrous identities. Under these circumstances the sympathetic, modern monster is the ultimate outsider.

This chapter will explore common characteristics of the two sympathetic, modern monsters, the Creature and Voldemort, and three famous monsters from earlier literature: Cyclops in Homer's *The Odyssey*, Grendel in *Beowulf* and Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. All three monsters share commonalities, beginning with a warped physical appearance and experiencing rejection, loneliness, and isolation all of which are early characteristics of an outsider identity. Ultimately these monstrous characters, the

Creature and Voldemort, cobble together a lonely identity for themselves after suffering

rejection, isolation, and broken families. It is an identity which demonstrates their will to

"have something" in the world. This chapter will show roots of these themes in earlier

monsters and consider the influence they may have had on the Creature and Voldemort

and on the identities that these two create for themselves.

Historically in literature, the most important marker of a monster is his deformed

physical appearance, which provides the first explanation for his isolation and solitude.

He is alone because his physical deformity represents a barrier to entrance in society.

Traditionally, the moral deformity follows the emotional turmoil caused by the physical

deformity, with the exception of Voldemort, in which case his physical deformity

becomes a part of his own construction of his identity.

All of these monsters—Cyclops, Grendel, Caliban, the Creature and Voldemort—

have associations with the sea. The early monsters literally originate in the sea; however,

as the monsters increase in complexity, so their origins increase in complexity, and a

literal origin is replaced by a symbolic origin.

The earliest monster of the five, Cyclops, or Polyphemus, is the son of the sea god

Poseidon. He is a one-eyed giant and a cannibal who lives on the island of the "Lotus

Eaters" among a "lawless" race of giants, or Cyclopes (line 114). He appears in Book 9

of *The Odyssey*, and after eating several of Odysseus's men, Odysseus outwits and blinds

Cyclops.

There are several occasions in Book 9 in which Homer describes Cyclops's

physical appearance and solitude in the same sentence. The Cyclopes are "giants, louts,

without a law to bless them" (114). Here we can see that they are larger than humans,

which makes them monstrous, and they lack the human hallmark of community, which also makes them monstrous.  They are a group without any kind of community or society, having "no consultation or old tribal ways" (121) and although they all live on the island together "each one dwells in his own mountain cave" (122).  Polyphemus himself is described as a "shaggy mountain reared in solitude" (207).  A connection is established between the appearance of the Cyclopes, specifically Polyphemus, and isolation, which establishes them as outsiders.  Polyphemus is described as both isolated and giant: "[R]emote from all companions, / knowing none but savage ways, a brute / so huge, he seemed no man at all of those / who eat good wheaten bread" (203-206).  He is unlike other men, he does not eat what other men eat, he is a giant, and he is isolated because of these qualities.  In the case of Polyphemus, his status as the son of Poseidon also solidifies him as an outsider.  He comes from an unknown underwater world, which is also monstrous and sets him apart as an outsider.  Through these examples we can see that there is a causal relationship between a deformed physical appearance and isolation.

Additionally, Polyphemus is both ridiculed and rejected.  Homer's audience would have been familiar with his back-story: Polyphemus was in love with the nymph Galatea.  When he found her with her lover, Acis, he killed Acis by crushing his skull.  The gods took Galatea far from Polyphemus and changed her into a weeping stream that ran to the sea.  Rejected and angry, Polyphemus became a "cannibal and trapped all humans that came into his territory" (Rose 296).

It should also be noted that a bored and mischievous Odysseus seeks out Polyphemus, as if he was a circus act: "I wished to see the caveman, what he had to offer— / no pretty sight, it turned out, for my friends" (249).  Throughout his

imprisonment, Odysseus addresses Polyphemus by the name "Cyclops" which is the singular of the race of giants, the "Cyclopes," to which he belongs, but it is not his name. Cyclops is a pejorative for the name Polyphemus.   The monster Other is an emotionally charged object because of what the subjects, the other characters, see of themselves in him, and because of this, they create many pejoratives for his name, in an attempt to classify him.  Cohen argues that monsters escape classification: "[T]he monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions" (6).  As this chapter progresses, we will see how the many names and pejoratives of the monsters discussed increase in complexity as the monsters increase in complexity.  Beginning with Polyphemus, we see Odysseus's need to classify the monster in some way, and as a result, Odysseus calls him Cyclops.

Grendel, called "fiend out of hell," "grim demon" and "God-cursed brute," is another monster isolated by his physical appearance.  He is monstrous both in size and strength, and J.R.R. Tolkien calls him "primarily an ogre, a physical monster, whose main function is hostility to humanity" (36).  As Homer does with Cyclops, the author(s) of *Beowulf* integrates the physical with the social describing Grendel as both "insensible to pain and human sorrow" (119).

Although Grendel is a physical monster, we know much more about his thoughts than about the specifics of his appearance.  Ruth Waterhouse calls Grendel's "mysterious dimension" crucial to his representation in *Beowulf* (33) and Richard Ringler notes the "author's concentration on Grendel's mental processes" (127).  We know that Grendel "nursed a hard grievance" (87).  He hates to hear the sounds of the Danes as they enjoy their life as they feast: "[I]t harrowed him / to hear the din of the loud banquet / every day

in the hall, the harp being struck / and the clear song of a skilled poet" (lines 87-90).

Because of the author's fixation with Grendel's psychology, one can argue that Grendel

is the first representation of the modern monster.  Instead of focusing on the details of his

appearance, the author(s) provides beautiful imagery that associates Grendel with night

and darkness, calling him "a prowler through the dark," (86) and with the gloominess of

his environment, calling him: "[T]hat dark death-shadow who lurked and swooped in the

long nights on the misty moors" (160).  We have an idea of his size and strength, not

because of physical description, but because we know the scope of the damage he causes

for the Danes.  In one raid, Grendel grabs thirty men and carries them back to his lair,

"blundering back with the butchered corpses" (125).

Grendel is also isolated and lonely: "So Grendel waged his lonely war" (164).  He

is identified as a member of "Cain's clan."  He is a descendent of Cain, who was

banished by God for the murder of his brother Abel.  Grendel is a monster because of his

lineage.  The language implies that Grendel once lived among his peers, other outcasts:

"he had dwelt for a time / in misery among the banished monsters" (105-106).  Grendel

was born a monster because of his association with the crime of another, and he is

rejected by the Danes.  Additionally, he either cannot or will not live with members of his

own kind, but lives as a rejected outsider.  Beginning with Polyphemus, continuing with

Grendel, and exhibited by both the Creature and Voldemort, we see that a solitary life is

characteristic of the outsider, and is a convention of the monster character.

The author(s) of *Beowulf* revisits the monster's connection with the sea.  Similar

to Cyclops, Grendel, like a sea creature, spends much of his time in the water.  He also

roams the "heath and the desolate fens" (104).  Before Grendel dies, he dives into the sea

and returns bleeding to his underwater lair: "[T]he bloodshot water wallowed and surged, there were loathsome upthrows and overturnings of waves and gore and wound-slurry" (846). Although Grendel is a monster that fits with the convention of being associated with the sea, we see so much of the *Beowulf* narrative through his subjective psychology that he represents a significant shift in the characterization of monster as outsider.

Caliban, the monster in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is both sea monster and outsider. Caliban lives on a deserted island, is the son of an evil witch Sycorax and, according to Prospero, a devil. Sycorax dies, and, when Prospero is later deserted on the island, Caliban is its only inhabitant. Prospero describes him as: "[A] freckled whelp, hag-born—not honored with a human shape" (1.2.331) and, less than frightening, his physical features make him seem pitiful and pathetic. When Trinculo and Stephano first encounter Caliban on the island, Trinculo describes him as "a fish, he smells like a fish: a very ancient and fishlike smell: a kind of not-of-the newest poor-John" (2.2.26). Unlike Homer or the *Beowulf* poet, Shakespeare presents a subjective description of Caliban through the eyes of the other characters in the play. Here Caliban is objectified and this may be why he seems so pathetic.

Daniel Wilson convincingly argues that, though Caliban may have "scaly or fin-like appendages" and though "the idea of a fish or sea monster, is suggested to all," Caliban is "essentially human" (128). This is supported by the text, Wilson argues, specifically when Prospero describes Caliban as a "freckled whelp" and Miranda describes him as one of two men she "e'er saw" before her new fiancé, Ferdinand. Caliban belongs to "a conceivable civilisation such as would, to a certain extent, run parallel to that of man, but could never converge to a common centre" (139). Although

we may be convinced of Caliban's identity as something close to human, the text does not give an exact description of his physical features, and consequently his appearance has been widely interpreted in stage productions of *The Tempest*.

Like Cyclops and Grendel, Caliban is also isolated, alone and rejected. When Prospero reflects on Caliban's attempted rape of Prospero's daughter Miranda, we know Caliban feels lonely because he tells us. Caliban's motivation for the rape is to create company for himself: "I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (1.2.409-410), and this motivation complicates our feelings about the evil act of an attempted rape. Caliban complains of Prospero's rejection:

> When thou cam'st first,
>
> Thou strok'st me and made much of me: wouldst give
>
> me
>
> Water with berries in't, and teach me how
>
> To name the bigger light, and how the less,
>
> That burn by day and night: and then I loved thee. (1.2.390-394)

Caliban represents a monster closer to humans than either Cyclops or Grendel, but not so close that we feel uncomfortable with him, in terms of his physical appearance.

The Uncanny Valley is a theory in the field of robotics which may shed light on the way we feel about monsters, especially those who have human-like physiques. Coined in the 1970s by roboticist Masahiro Mori, the Uncanny Valley proposes that "a robot that's too human-like can veer into unsettling territory, tripping the same psychological alarms associated with a dead or unhealthy human." These robots are "simultaneously a little too human-like and not human enough" (Sofge, screens 1-2). It

should be noted that the Uncanny Valley has not been tested in an academic environment, and, therefore it may be better characterized as a weighty observation. Hollywood producers and directors take the Uncanny Valley into consideration when creating robots or animated human representations in film, and the good and bad choices they make are reflected in blockbuster hits like *Avatar* and flops like *The Polar Express*. There is a point past which a likeness to a human-like individual, either robot or fictional monster, gives humans the creeps.

This may account for the ambiguity of emotions that characterize the subjective observer's feelings toward the monster: we do not like to watch the monster, or go deeply "into the mind of the monster," but we do need to watch to be sure that we are different from them (Ciaccio 42; Lindsay A19). Cohen argues that this conflicted bundle of dread and desire explains the monster's appeal: "This simultaneous repulsion and attraction at the core of the monster's composition accounts greatly for its continued cultural popularity" (17). Cohen goes on to argue that monsters are stuck in a liminal state by refusing to "participate in the classificatory 'order of things'" and that "they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration" (6). Monsters cannot be categorically sorted, and we have a hard time sorting out our ambivalent emotions toward them. I believe this begins at the physical level. As the monsters simultaneously edge closer to the Uncanny Valley and become more psychologically complex, our feelings for them become more conflicted. Although he is "essentially human," Caliban is an outlier of the Uncanny Valley, partly because he perceives himself as another species, as something extra human. Instead of longing for human companionship, he wishes to people "this isle with Calibans"

(1.2.410), using the word "Calibans" as if it implies a species. Shakespeare's Caliban is a pitiful, fishy creature, but he is not a human being.

Victor Frankenstein creates the first "human being" monster: "[I]t was with these feelings that I began the creation of a human being" (31). Unlike the previous monsters discussed, the Creature has no origin in the sea; he is associated with it, however. Robert Walton, the narrator, is at sea as he recounts the story. Frankenstein chases the Creature through a sea off the coast of Ireland and through the glaciers of the Arctic, and he faces Frankenstein on his deathbed aboard a boat.

The Creature is described by Frankenstein as a wretch with "yellow skin" that "scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath," "hair" that is "of a lustrous black, and flowing," teeth that are "of a pearly whiteness," and "straight black lips" (34). Victor Frankenstein's careless oversight manifests itself in the Creature's terrifying physical appearance. If Frankenstein had been more careful and thorough with his creation, he could have made different, more sympathetic choices. Because he was hasty and impatient, he created a monster: "As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of gigantic stature; that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large" (32). Harriet Hustis argues that "this failure of true sympathy mirrors the fundamental error of the monster's creation: Frankenstein's decision to work on a large scale in order to avoid becoming bogged down by (in his opinion) an unnecessary attention to detail" (849).

The poignancy of the Creature's plight is caused by the fact that, unlike Cyclops, Grendel or Caliban, the Creature believes himself to be a human being. Cyclops belonged to another world that was entirely self-contained. Even the humans in *The*

*Odyssey*—for example, Odysseus, Agamemnon and Hector—are mythical, and Cyclops himself was the son of Poseidon, a god. Grendel was a descendent of Cain and he lived with other monstrous clansmen for a time. His mother was also a monster. He was angered by the sound of the Danes' banquets, and we can make all kinds of assumptions about why it angered him—he was jealous, he was confronted by his own loneliness, he yearned for community—but regardless, this does not imply a crisis of identity. Caliban was some type of human-like cross-species, but he was not a human being. He was lonely and isolated but he knew where he came from. In a departure from these monstrous identities, the Creature perceives himself as human. Lawrence Lipking describes the Creature as: "[a]n unfallen, innocent creature, who feels love and sympathy as readily as hunger and pain. In his own eyes, at least, he develops as if nature, not man, had formed him, and only rejection by society leaves him deformed" (325). This ambiguity of self, followed by harsh confrontation with truth is key to a shift in the modern monster.

One of the hallmarks of higher intelligence is the ability to recognize one's own reflection in a mirror. Besides humans, only chimpanzees, dolphins and elephants have passed the mirror self-recognition test. When we look in a mirror, we recognize that there is a spatial end to our subjective consciousness, our body, and we know that we are separate from the world and from our surroundings. Jacques Lacan calls the event at which an infant looks in the mirror and recognizes his own reflection in the glass "the mirror-stage," and, according to Lacan, the mirror-stage establishes "a relation between the organism and its reality" (3). Consider the passage from *Frankenstein* in which the

Creature first sees himself reflected in a pool of water and compares himself to his "friends":

> 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. (76)

If we put events in *Frankenstein* in order temporally, then from this point on in the narrative we must consider the actions of the Creature's "friends" and "family" in relation to the construction of his identity. According to Lacan, at this point in the mirror-stage, the infant realizes his own finiteness of consciousness, recognizes the separation that exists between him and the first Other that he encounters, his mother, and envies his mother's superior ability to navigate the world. When the Creature looks into the pool of water, he has no mother to envy. Not only is he alone, but he is also far more separate from his "friends," from the whole world, than he believed. There is a concrete, physical barrier between the Creature and the humans in his life—Frankenstein, the cottagers, all potential human acquaintances—and he is suddenly confronted by the fact that, in the eyes of his subjective observers, he is isolated like those in the Uncanny Valley. Until this juncture, the Creature has only known the cottagers as a subjective observer. He himself was never the object. Jean-Paul Sartre argues that the Other is "the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed of myself *as I appear* to

the Other.  By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself as on an object, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other" (302). Suddenly the Creature is aware of himself and he is ashamed.  Now that he can objectify himself, he turns inward:

> The words induced me to turn towards myself.  I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow-creatures were, high and unsullied descent united with riches . . . And what was I?  Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant . . . I was, besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome. (80)

The infant described in Lacan's mirror stage has a nurturing mother, but the Creature has no family and no friends.  After he realizes the hideousness of his own reflection, he is rejected by the cottagers, rebuked as he tries to help a drowning woman, and further rejected by his "father" Victor Frankenstein.  Sartre argues that although one feels shame in the presence of the Other, one needs the Other in order to "realize fully all the structures" of one's being.  In order to create his own identity and agency for himself, the Creature needs to be confronted by the Other, and by his own shame felt in the presence of the Other.

It is worthwhile to discuss the many pejoratives Victor assigns the Creature in place of a proper name.  Consider the language used by Victor Frankenstein before the "birth" of the Creature: "A new *species* would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent *natures* would owe their being to me" and "It was with these feelings that I began the creation of a *human being*" (emphasis mine) (31).  After the "birth" of the Creature, Victor draws from a large pool of pejoratives to describe him.  Contrast the

words "species," "natures" and "human being" with the later words "miserable monster," "creature," "wretch," "fiend," "devil," "demon," "thing," "being" and "ogre." Pejoratives exist as a mechanism to avoid and control. Frankenstein names the Creature for the concept of the creature, and avoids using a word, a name, that would introduce his existence into the symbolic, and, in his avoidance, Frankenstein continues to create synonymous pejoratives. Cohen characterizes the monster as an embodiment of culture: "a construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the monstrous is etymologically 'that which reveals,' 'that which warns,' a glyph that seeks a hierophant" (4). As a revealer of undesirable cultural content, the Creature is a taboo. The Creature is abstracted by Victor as a concept instead of as a person.

In *The Dealthy Hallows*, Voldemort creates a magical Taboo surrounding his name that allows him to trace those who have spoken it aloud. Voldemort has many names throughout the series including: his given name "Tom Marvolo Riddle," "The Dark Lord," "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named," "You-Know-Who," "Voldemort," and his own name for himself, "Lord Voldemort." Kate Behr argues that Voldemort "has acted as an agent in his own narrative (by changing his name and persona from Tom Marvolo Riddle to Lord Voldemort to "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named)" (267). We can see this through almost all aspects of Voldemort's characterization: his physical appearance, his name, his powers and his self-dictated isolation later in life. Voldemort is an exception compared to earlier monsters because of the extent to which he does create agency for himself. The Creature wants to be regarded as a human being, but Voldemort does not want to be regarded as human: "He claims that he is no longer human, and he no longer appears to be human, but his fears and his ambitions seem very human indeed" (Garrett

75). Although Voldemort may want to be considered something more than human, and the Creature may want to be considered a human, ultimately they both want meaning for themselves in the world. They both create agency for themselves and for Voldemort that identity begins with controlling his appearance.

Voldemort was not born with a monstrous physical appearance. Actually Rowling describes him as good looking and handsome before his transformation. After Voldemort rebirths himself in *The Goblet of Fire,* he is described as follows: "His hands were like large, pale spiders; his long white fingers caressed his own chest, his arms, his face; the red eyes, whose pupils were slits, like a cat's, gleamed still more brightly through the darkness" (644). Voldemort's warped physical appearance is linked to his propensity for evil. We know from an exchange between Dumbledore and Harry in *The Half-Blood Prince* that Voldemort's appearance first began to change when he began killing to create Horcruxes.

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, J.K. Rowling reinforces two truths about Voldemort: "[T]hat he is terrified of death, and that he cannot understand love" (Behr 268). In a September 2011 *New York Times* article titled "The Meaningfulness of Lives," Todd May comments that in a world according to Jean-Paul Sartre, "God gives our lives the values upon which meaning rests. And if God does not exist, as Sartre claims, our lives can have only the meaning we confer upon them." If this is true, then in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter world, it is love that gives meaning to life, and if love does not exist, then there is no meaning to life. J.K. Rowling creates a world based upon this truth, and Voldemort violates this law. Voldemort is unable to make a place for himself in Rowling's world because he is a human incapable of love. J.K. Rowling, through the

voice of Dumbledore, tells us that the name Lord Voldemort is a "mask behind which he has been hidden for so long" (277), but Voldemort, Tom Riddle, was attempting to create meaning for his life in a world ordered by a law which he was destined, since childhood, to break.

Like the Creature, Voldemort is made a monster by absent parents, a loveless childhood and early isolation. Voldemort is born and grows up in a London orphanage described as "a bare courtyard that fronted a rather grim, square building surrounded by high railings" (*Half Blood Prince* 263). The caretaker, Mrs. Cole, is an alcoholic, described as "no novice when it came to gin drinking," and she seems ambivalent about young Tom Riddle, describing him as "a funny baby" and "odd" (267). Shama Rangwala argues that during this time, Voldemort develops "a hatred for nonmagical people as he was ostracized for the unusual accidents he would cause" (132). Through Mrs. Cole we learn that Tom's earliest experiences with magic occur in a seaside cave with two young peers as his victims. It seems Tom Riddle, Voldemort, like other monsters before him, discovers his proficiency for evil near the sea. He later hides one of his Horcruxes in this same cave.

Voldemort and Harry Potter are comparable characters, and it seems that Rowling, based on her interviews and on the voice of Dumbledore in the text, intended us to interpret this likeness to mean that each character, when faced with similar circumstances, has a choice for good or evil. Harry spends a lot of time worrying over his similarity to Voldemort, and the prophecy in *The Order of the Phoenix* illustrates this binary: "for neither can live while the other survives" (841) (which, coincidently, echoes a line in *Beowulf* concerning the relationship between Grendel and Beowulf: "[A]s long

as either lived, he was hateful to the other" (813)).  Donaher and Okapal argue that

Voldemort may have had an easier childhood than Harry Potter: "Voldemort placed in an

orphanage with relatively sympathetic caregivers, may in fact have had an even more

advantageous upbringing.  Yet only one of the two orphaned boys turns evil" (47).  I

disagree.  Harry Potter's upbringing at the Dursley's is cartoonish and undesirable, but he

was placed in their home because of his mother's love.  When Harry enters the Wizarding

world via Hogwarts, Dumbledore takes an interest in him, and Harry is surrounded by

people willing to accept him.  More important, he is constantly reminded by friends of his

late parents how well loved he was as a child.  This is not the case with Tom Riddle who

is retroactively rejected by both his parents.  Lovesick, Tom's mother Merope gives up

on life and dies a few hours after giving him birth.  As recounted to Dumbledore by Mrs.

Cole, before she dies Merope asks for Tom to be named for her husband, saying, "I hope

he looks like his papa" (*Half Blood Prince* 266).  Merope objectifies her new son as the

image of her husband.  Unlike Harry, Tom Riddle is unable to soothe himself by

reflecting on loving memories of his parents.

Voldemort is isolated in his early life, and, as he gets older, he creates agency for

himself by dictating the terms of his own isolation.  Margaret J. Oakes notes Voldemort's

self-determined isolation: "Voldemort truly operates alone, with only a following of

servants, without real friends or anyone for whom he cares" (153).  Voldemort is not like

Harry Potter; he is isolated, rejected and physically warped.  Voldemort attempts to

create agency for himself by constructing an identity in a world ordered by a law by

which he cannot live.  In this way, like all of the previous monsters discussed, Voldemort

is an outsider.

A few characteristics are common to all monsters: a warped physical appearance, moral corruption, isolation, loneliness and rejection. In the case of the Creature and Voldemort, isolation and rejection are rooted in a broken family. In this chapter I have discussed the modern, sympathetic monster in the context of three monsters from earlier literature: Homer's Cyclops, the *Beowulf* poet's Grendel and Shakespeare's Caliban. Each of these monsters experiences isolation and loneliness. Cyclops is isolated on the island of the Lotus Eaters, rejected by his love, Galatea. Grendel is rejected by God and tormented by man's joy and music. Caliban is alone, rejected by Prospero. The Creature and Voldemort are rejected by their fathers and families and they are both homeless. In this chapter we have already seen a driving motivation for these two monsters—a search for meaning in life. In the next chapter, I will discuss how family rejection affects that motivation. I believe that the Creature and Voldemort, desperate to find some meaning in their monstrous lives, each cobble together an identity after fruitlessly searching for their roots in family. They are outsiders, and agency and control are important for their characters because when they find meaninglessness in life they must "have something."

**CHAPTER 3: BROKEN FAMILIES**

We may say that monsters are isolated beings, but to understand them and their actions, we have to look at how they fit within the matrix of their interpersonal relationships and, more specifically, their family relationships. Stephen Mitchell, a contemporary psychoanalyst concerned with relationality, or the way humans relate to objects, argues in *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity* that in order to understand a subject's actions, interpersonal relationships should be addressed: "The best way to understand persons is not in isolation, but in the context of their relations with others, past and present, internal and external, actual and fantasized" (107).

An ongoing motif in this thesis has been "drive." In the first chapter, I discussed the personal experiences that may have driven Mary Shelley and J.K. Rowling to create their sympathetic, modern monsters. In this chapter, I will discuss the Creature and Voldemort's motivation behind their acts of aggression and hostility. Freud argues that the fundamental motivational principle of a subject's drive is pleasure-seeking, and Freud provides many reasons, all related to the repressed unconscious, that would cause a subject to commit acts of aggression and hostility as a part of that pleasure-seeking drive ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 610). In *Relationality*, Mitchell provides a reading of W.R.D. Fairbairn in which pleasure-seeking, "as drive discharge," transpires within the framework of object-seeking because "pleasure is a powerful explanatory medium for the establishment and maintenance of connections with others." We know from

contemporary research that pleasure and pain are often jumbled together because each experience releases the same chemical reaction in the brain. The Creature and Voldemort, as subjects, represent powerful examples of the failure of family, fathers and home. These two monsters cannot find any comfort and safety with their relationships. When seeking pleasure in their early experience of familial relationships, they are rejected. With pleasure out of reach, they settle for pain: "If pleasure-seeking is not available, people seek pain, because pain often provides the most direct, alternative channel to others" (109). According to this view, the Creature and Voldemort seek pain, through aggression and kin slaying, because they are searching for a connection, even a perverse connection with others. The role of others in the lives of these two monsters is fundamentally important in understanding their motivation for their monstrous actions.

Muddled kinship systems, absent fathers and unstable homes affect the drive behind the monstrous acts of the Creature and Voldemort. They are rejected and disappointed by their family relationships and are subsequently not equipped with the skills necessary for developing connections with others. Because they cannot effectively use pleasure seeking as a channel to connect with others, they substitute "pain seeking" to bind themselves emotionally to others. Mitchell argues that: "[O]bject-seeking, in its most radical form, is not the vehicle for the satisfaction of a specific need, but it is the expression of our very nature, the form through which we become specifically *human* beings" (106). Both the Creature and Voldemort begin as humans; however, because monsters are outsiders, they are unable to participate within the bounds of human society, and they instead are forced to construct their own identities. In addition to this motivator, I will also show in this chapter that, because the Creature and Voldemort are driven by a

pain-seeking motivation, they construct their own identities as warped, monstrous object-seeking humans.

Both the Creature and Voldemort are victims of fractured kinship systems and family networks. In *Structural Anthropology*, Claude Lévi-Strauss argues for an unconscious structure, an ordered system that organizes kinship relationships in society: ""'kinship systems,' like 'phonemic systems,' are built by the mind on the level of unconscious thought" (34). Lévi-Strauss identifies what he calls the "unit of kinship," or "the most elementary form of kinship that can exist," which consists of four parts: brother, sister, father, and son (46). According to Lévi-Strauss as part of the unit of kinship, the "avunculate," (46) or relationship between a man and his sister's sons, is characterized by either a hostile relationship between the son and uncle and a positive relationship between the son and father, or vice versa; they are inversely correlated (41). Lévi-Strauss argues that in order to understand the entire system of kinship, we must understand these relationships, the relationships that make up the avunculate, as itself a whole, as one unit.

With Lévi-Strauss's theory of kinship systems in mind, I will discuss the relationships surrounding Voldemort that are significant to his behavior, specifically the relationships among his mother, his father, and his uncle. In *Half-Blood Prince*, we see a dysfunctional picture of the Gaunts, Voldemort's maternal relatives, through Rowling's plot-device of the Penseive. The Gaunts appear as a nasty, self-righteous brood, obsessed with their family lineage, so obsessed that they "appear to suffer genetic defects associated with inbreeding" (Anatol 110). Voldemort's mother, Merope, is depicted as a pathetic, tormented character. We first see her as she stands in a dirty kitchen, beside a

wall of grimy pots and pans: "Her hair was lank and dull and she had a plain, pale, rather heavy face. Her eyes, like her brother's, stared in opposite directions" (*Half-Blood Prince* 205). Merope is the victim of emotional and physical abuse by both her father and her brother, Morfin. When she drops and breaks a pot, trembling in fear of her father, Morfin "lets out a mad cackle of laughter" (*Half-Blood Prince* 205).

Of particular interest in respect to Lévi-Strauss's elementary form of kinship is the character of Morfin, Voldemort's uncle. A two-way hostility exists between Morfin and Tom Riddle senior, Voldemort's father. Morfin hexes Riddle senior with a hives curse because of Merope's affection for him. In one of the few lines of dialogue that Riddle senior has, he twice mentions his dislike of Morfin: "The son's quite mad, you should hear some of the stories they tell in the village" and "I told you he's not right in the head" (*Half-Blood Prince* 209).

Morfin torments Merope because she loves Riddle senior. When the Gaunts hear Riddle senior passing by their home, on horseback with another woman, Morfin reminds Merope that she is unlovable: "'Darling,' he called her. So he wouldn't have you anyway" (*Half-Blood Prince* 210). In addition to cursing Riddle senior with a hive-inducing hex, Morfin brings Merope's forbidden affection to the attention of their father Marvalo which, if not deterred by coincidental circumstances, could have killed her. When Marvalo Gaunt learns from Morfin of his daughter's love for Riddle senior, a love that is certainly unreturned, he nearly chokes her to death. Later, when Morfin meets Voldemort, in the only encounter that Voldemort has with any of the Gaunts, Morfin refers to Merope as "that little slut," a particularly harsh insult when considering the censorship involved in a children's series, claiming that she is a thief and a liar, and that

her husband, Riddle senior, "serve(d) her right" by deserting her (*Half-Blood Prince* 365).

We first learn of the Riddles, Voldemort's paternal relatives, in Chapter 1 of *Goblet of Fire*. Rowling foreshadows Voldemort's patricide by describing a triple homicide at the Riddle House approximately fifty years before present time. The three Riddles, Voldemort's father and grandparents, were found to be in perfect condition—except for a look of terror on their faces (4) we learn later that Voldemort killed them with the Avada Kedavra curse.

We know little about Tom Riddle senior, and, from the very short scenes in which we do see him, he appears foolish, petty, and snobbish. He is quick to explain to his female companion that the "hovel," the Gaunt's cottage, located next to his home does not belong to his family: "It's not ours. Everything on the other side of the valley belongs to us, but that cottage belongs to an old tramp called Gaunt, and his children" (*Half-Blood Prince* 209). Additionally when Ogden, a ministry official, crashes into Riddle senior's horse as he runs in fear from the Gaunt's cottage, Riddle senior "roared with laughter." He shows no concern for the obviously distressed Ogden.

Later Merope places an enchantment on Riddle senior so that he will elope with her. After over a year of marriage, Merope decides to lift the enchantment because, Dumbledore conjectures, Merope was "deeply in love with her husband" and "could not bear to continue enslaving him by magical means" (*Half-Blood Prince* 214). Dumbledore believes that Merope had convinced herself that Riddle senior would have come to love her in return, and also he would see that she was pregnant with their child. When the enchantment was lifted, however, Riddle senior never "troubled to discover

what became of his son" (*Half-Blood Prince* 214).  J.K. Rowling has made a point of

establishing that Voldemort was born by force, and, in a 2007 web chat interview on

Bloomsbury.com, she says "the enchantment under which Tom Riddle [Sr.] fathered

Voldemort is important because it shows coercion, and there can't be many more

prejudicial ways to enter the world than as a result of such a union."  This fact about

Voldemort's conception is interesting because it emotionally charges 1) the union of

Voldemort's parents and 2) the implications of the feelings that Riddle senior has as a

father toward his son, Voldemort.  Not only is Voldemort's family dysfunctional, not

only does Riddle senior abandon Voldemort and Merope, but, additionally and most

importantly, never, in any one lucid moment is Riddle senior interested in him in any

paternal capacity.

The question remains, how does Voldemort feel about these relationships?

Dumbledore explains to Harry that Voldemort was "obsessed with his parentage" (362).

He describes Voldemort tirelessly searching for his parents in the records at Hogwarts: on

the shields in the trophy room, the list of prefects in the old school records, and in the

books of Wizarding history.  Finally, by tracing his matrilineal side, he identifies his

family.  Voldemort returns to Little Hangleton as a teenager, encounters Morfin, kills the

Riddles, and frames Morfin for their murders.  However, before he kills the Riddles, he

has a pivotal conversation with Morfin in which the identity of Tom Riddle senior is

revealed.  Voldemort asks Morfin, "Riddle came back?" and Morfin answers, "Ar, he left

her, and serve her right, marrying filth" (*Half-Blood Prince* 365).  This is a turning point

in the scene and in our understanding of Voldemort's feelings about his family.  Alice

Mills argues that Voldemort returns to Little Hangleton to kill his Muggle relatives in an

"effort to conceal his Mudblood origins" (252). This is what Dumbledore believes and probably what Rowling intended; however, we actually do not know the reason that Voldemort returns. We do know that, through his conversation with Morfin, Voldemort learned the identity of his father and that this same father left his mother, and subsequently, left him. I do not agree that Voldemort returned to kill his family. He returned to understand. At this point, I would also question the authority of Dumbledore's narrative opinions on Voldemort as a child. In the first chapter of this thesis, I discussed Dumbledore within the context of good and bad fathers. When Dumbledore first encounters Voldemort, Tom Riddle at that time, at the orphanage, Voldemort insists that he go school shopping at Diagon Alley alone, without Dumbledore's help. Dumbledore gives this information twice—once in the Penseive flashback, and once as a reminder to Harry: "You will remember . . . that he refused my company on a trip to Diagon Alley" (360)—and obviously we are meant to observe some revelation of character from this detail. But obviously there is nothing outstanding about a fiercely independent orphan child with poor social skills. Dumbledore believes that Voldemort returned to kill the Riddles so that he might conceal his Mudblood identity and create a few Horcruxes, but Dumbledore is unreliable. Readers actually do not know if he was already thinking about Horcruxes at this point because Rowling never put that sequence of events into temporal order. Additionally, if he had returned with the intention of killing, he would be a sociopath and this back-story would be obsolete. The familial relationships, good or bad, of a sociopath do not affect his psychosis. It is also interesting that Voldemort does not kill Morfin, though he does frame him for the Riddle killings.

Critics have mentioned Voldemort's patricide within the context of a classic Oedipus complex that Voldemort realizes when he murders "his father in bitter revenge for taking his mother from him" (Piippo 71).  Freud describes the Oedipus complex as a situation in which a boy's identification with his father "takes on a hostile coloring and changes into a wish to get rid of his father in order to take his place with his mother" ("The Ego and the Id" 640).  Voldemort, already a kin-slayer when his mother died in childbirth (Mills 252), is hostile toward his father, whom he kills.  Virginia Zimmerman characterizes this hostility toward his father as the source of "his real animosity" (199).  The one family member whom he does not physically kill (although he does frame him for homicide) is Morfin, his uncle.  This fits with Lévi-Strauss's kinship system in which there is an inversely correlated hostility between a son/nephew and his father/uncle.  Because of the relatives that he chooses not to kill, the most upsetting death he causes is that of his mother in childbirth, Merope, "the woman whom . . . he had thought could not be a witch if she had succumbed to the shameful human weakness of death" (363).  Critics have noted the effect that Merope's death has on Voldemort.  Gallardo and Smith write: "Because Riddle believes being a wizard means being able to conquer death, it is easy to see, then, that he would reject his mother's illogical end and strive to be the opposite of the weak, vulnerable, feminine principles she seems to represent" (98).  Merope died in childbirth, and Voldemort's comment on her status as a witch indicates a resentment of this reality.  Virginia Zimmerman characterizes Voldemort's hostility toward Merope as "disdainful" (199).  Zimmerman believes that Voldemort does not respect the sacrifice that Merope made in her death.  It is true that Voldemort's comment

is callous and foolish; however, he does kill everyone associated with Merope's death. His actions show that these relationships have made an impact on him.

Voldemort's early homicide is the beginning of his compulsion to repeat murderous acts. Freud defines a compulsion to repeat as a symptom of neurosis in which the subject is "obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past" ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 602). Zimmerman argues that Voldemort is apathetic about his past: "Voldemort has no interest in the past—no one from his personal past matters to him" (194). Furthermore, in a discussion on the Horcruxes that Voldemort creates as a result of committing murder, she goes on to argue that Voldemort ignores his artifacts, that he "hides them away" (198). Voldemort ritualizes these homicides by depositing a portion of his broken self into the artifacts that symbolize his family and then he "hides them away." One of the Horcruxes is hidden in a cave, a perfect metaphor for repressed unconscious.

Voldemort is haunted by his sticky early experiences. Stephen Mitchell offers a reason why "the residues of early object relations" are "so persistent and resistant to change" (44). Mitchell provides a reading of Loewald's theories of the mind's developmental organization of object relations. During the time of a subject's early experience with objects, called his "primary construction," the subject perceives self and objects as one unit. For Loewald, "the distinction between self and other, internal and external, are psychological constructions" and Loewald calls the subject's later experience of this distinction his "secondary construction" (46). This secondary construction is dependent upon the existence of the primary construction, and these

internal object relations are "bound together in time." Mitchell goes on to liken these primary and secondary constructions with the mind's temporal ordering of memories: "Our experience of time as duration—past as distinct from present as distinct from future—is a secondary construction upon a parallel organization in which these temporal categories do not exist" (46). For Voldemort, his sense of past is bundled together with his empty family relationships, and the stickiness of this past infects his present. The fact that he has trouble untangling himself from his family and his father accounts for his behavior—the reason he drops his father's name, the reason he splits his soul into seven pieces, and the reason he kills serially. He is intrinsically linked with his early memories of his parents, memories which are only his perceptions of the past, and he creates the Horcruxes because he is literally trying to divide himself from the bundle of himself and his family. In an effort to separate himself from his family, he self-destructs.

In a discussion of the relationship between Mary Shelley's Creature and his "father" Victor Frankenstein, George Levine illustrates the "bundle" of self and family within the context of *Frankenstein*: "The family is an aspect of the self and the self cannot survive bereft of its family" (213). Critics have also noted the importance kinship plays in *Frankenstein* and in the Creature's crisis as he searches for companionship. Levine writes, "Within the novel, almost all relations have the texture of blood kinship" (212). Colene Bentley further explains not only the importance of kinship in *Frankenstein*, but also the importance of the "family unit": "What is intriguing about Shelley's novel is that she stages the creature's searches for community around his interactions with that most intimate of social groups, the family unit" (327).

Clearly Victor Frankenstein fails in the role of parent in the life of the Creature. Barbara Johnson argues that "*Frankenstein* offers a critique of the institution of parenthood" and "*Frankenstein* is an even more elaborate and unsettling formulation of the relation between parenthood and monstrousness" (241). Bentley argues that Victor fails to accept parental responsibility for "the single life he creates because he regards creativity as an abstraction" (854). Levine characterizes the novel as an examination of the father/son relationship: "Frankenstein himself is a father, the creator of the monster, and the novel is in part an examination of the responsibility of the father to the son" (211).

Victor Frankenstein fails in the role of father, and critics have argued that he fails in the role of mother as well. In her essay, "Female Gothic: The Monster's Mother," Ellen Moers reframes the parental role that we assign Victor Frankenstein, when she argues that Frankenstein is "a birth myth" conceived by Mary Shelley because of her own experience of "teenage motherhood" as she wrote Frankenstein. Moers claims that the novel is an exploration of the problem of deficient infant care on the part of Victor Frankenstein, and that the novel emphasizes the "trauma of the afterbirth" (218). In Moers's reading, Victor Frankenstein assumes the role of "the monster's mother."

Moers is correct in her assessment of the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and the Creature. He does "birth" the Creature in his "workshop of filthy creation"; however, this experience does not caste him in the role of absent mother to the Creature. Susan Winnett argues that Victor Frankenstein is a "male mother" and that he is acting out a male fantasy of motherhood: "that creation would demand anything of him beyond the moment when scientific genius culminates the trajectory of its intellectual

self-stimulation seems never to have occurred to him" (294).  Circumstances present

Frankenstein with two opportunities to play each parental role, mother and father, to the

Creature.  The first opportunity comes when the Creature wakes to life in Frankenstein's

workshop.  He substitutes his "workshop of filthy creation" for the female womb and

conceives the Creature.  At this point in the narrative, when the monster wakes and, with

"one hand stretched out," reaches for Frankenstein, Victor forgoes his role as mother by

refusing to nurse his infant.  On the experience of a nursing infant and a mother, Stephen

Mitchell argues that the minds of both mother and infant are closely correlated because

the mother's need to nurse and the baby's need to nurse are inseparable, and in this

moment, "mother and infant actually *do* cocreate each other through subtle but powerful

processes of reciprocal influence" (21).  Frankenstein does not fail as a mother because

he never accepts this role, he does not create his identity by nursing his child; however,

he does fail as a father.  Circumstance presents the second opportunity for Frankenstein

to play a parental role, this time as father, when the Creature requests that Frankenstein

create a companion for him.

At this point, Victor plays the role of father to the son Creature.  In light of Lévi-

Strauss's elementary kinship systems, there are two important networks of

father/son/uncle/son relationships to consider, with two different uncle characters.

Victor's childhood friend Henry Clerval is uncle in the first network, and the ship captain

Robert Walton is uncle in the second network.  In his narration, Victor explains that

Clerval is like a brother: "[M]y brothers were considerably younger than myself; but I

had a friend in one of my schoolfellows, who compensated for this deficiency" (20).

Throughout the novel, Victor repeatedly refers to Clerval in the context of his close

relatives—his father, Elizabeth, and his brothers—and Clerval's murder is the first of the three important deaths that unhinge Frankenstein. In this first network of father/son/uncle/son relationships, the hostility within the avunculate is expressed when the Creature kills Clerval.

After the death of Clerval the role of brother to Victor and uncle to the Creature is transferred to Robert Walton, who then plays the role of uncle in the second network of father/son/uncle/son relationships. This transfer is reinforced through a conversation between Victor and Walton in which Walton expresses a desire for a "special friend" (16). Victor replies that: "[F]riendship is not only a desirable, but a possible acquisition. I once had a friend, the most noble of human creatures, and am entitled, therefore, to judge respecting friendship" (16). We can assume that the friend to whom Victor refers to is Henry Clerval, and now that Clerval is gone, Walton will play the role that Clerval played. In the final scene of the novel, the Creature claims responsibility for Victor's death: "That is also my victim!" In this second network of father/son/uncle/son relationships, the hostility within the avunculate is expressed when the Creature indirectly kills his father Victor. Because of animosity and hostility between the Creature and his father, the Creature kills Victor. The novel ends on uncertainty, because Walton, the uncle, does not kill the Creature and reports that he "was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance" (156). As with Voldemort, the warped kinship relationships between the Creature, his father Victor Frankenstein, and each of his uncles, Clerval and Walton, result in death and destruction.

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* the role the De Lacey family plays in the mind of the Creature is extremely important to the kinship theme. The Creature watches the De

Lacey's from his hovel, and he perceives them as the perfect family. Because of his attachment to them, without any real interaction or relationship, they are very much like a fantasy. In his brief paper "Family Romances," Freud outlines a theory in which, during puberty, an adolescent will replace his parents with fantasies. When the subject is a child, he idolizes his parents; however, as he grows he comes to realize their flaws, and consequently replaces them through daydreaming: "[T]he child's imagination becomes engaged in the task of getting free from the parents of whom he now has a low opinion and of replacing them by others, who, as a rule, are of higher social standing" (299). During this time, the Creature develops a routine which revolves around watching the cottagers: "During the morning I attended the motions of the cottagers; and when they were dispersed in various occupations, I slept: the remainder of the day was spent in observing my friends" (76). He idealizes their interactions over mundane, daily activities like gathering wood and preparing food. Almost all of the time that the Creature spends near the De Laceys is spent in fantasy of a communal life that could be:

> I looked upon them as superior beings, who would be the arbiters of my future
> destiny. I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself
> to them, and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted,
> until, by my gentle demeanor and conciliating words, I should first win their
> favor, and afterwards, their love. (77)

The Creature creates a complex fantasy involving potential relationships with the cottagers. He replaces Victor, his real father and "family," with them. In "Family Romances" Freud goes on to argue that often the fantasized replicas of the family have similar characteristics to the real family:

If we examine in detail the commonest of these imaginative romances, the

replacement of both parents or of the father alone by grander people, we find

that these new and aristocratic parents are equipped with attributes that are

derived entirely from real recollections of the actual and humble ones. (300)

The De Laceys are poverty-stricken cottagers who do not possess the wealth and

social status of Victor Frankenstein's family; however, the Creature does discover that

the De Laceys are descended from a "good family in France" where the patriarch of the

family lived "for many years in affluence, respected by his superiors, and beloved by his

equal" (82).  They are aristocratic, and on pain of honor they now live isolated in the

cottage.  The De Laceys also value studies.  When Safie, Felix's Turkish fiancé, studies

English, Felix instructs her lesson from *Ruins of Empires* as a textbook.  At this time, the

Creature knows that his true father was an academic.  For reading he has Victor's journal,

which chronicles Victor's studies and methods, because he found it in the pocket of his

clothes that he has worn since leaving the laboratory.

The creature replaces the fantasy of living with the De Laceys with the reality of

living alone.  He desperately tries to insert himself into their lives by clandestinely

bringing them firewood daily.  By the time he reveals himself to them, he has constructed

such a large and detailed fantasy that his delusion eclipses the reality that they have no

prior knowledge of him, and, upon seeing him, view him as a monster.  On the

relationship between fantasy and reality, David Mitchell writes: "For life to be

meaningful, vital, and robust, fantasy and reality cannot be too divorced from each other.

Fantasy cut adrift from reality becomes irrelevant and threatening.  Reality cut adrift from

fantasy becomes vapid and empty" (29).  In the life of the Creature, the two possibilities

of fantasy, or the delusion of life with the De Laceys, and reality, which is solitude and loneliness, are impossible. As with Voldemort, the Creature is unable to reconcile interpersonal relationships, or the lack thereof, with his real life. He tries to create a monstrous, murderous identity for himself which leads to "darkness and distance."

The De Lacey home, the cottage as an actual structure, is an important place because it represents family for the Creature, and home and family are often bundled together in our minds: "The concept of home is inextricably entangled with that of family—individuals who together 'create worlds of their own, with particular kinds of boundaries separating them from the larger world' (Handel qtd. in Kornfeld and Prothro 121). The fantasy of the life that the Creature lives with the De Laceys takes place within the walls of the cottage, and, from the dinginess of his own "hovel," the Creature idealizes their movements as they bustle about their home. Reflecting on his first encounter with the cottage, the Creature recalls: "In one corner, near a small fire, sat an old man, leaning his head on his hands in a disconsolate attitude," and "the young girl was occupied in arranging the cottage" (72). Mary Shelley gives a picture of the cottage, not in concrete detail, but through the filter of what the cottagers do in their home. The Creature concludes his first experience of watching the cottagers by reflecting on their playing music and singing together in the evening.

As with the Creature, Voldemort's home at Hogwarts is important for him within the context of his interpersonal relationships. When Harry Potter arrives at Hogwarts for his first year, Professor McGonagall informs him "Your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts" (qtd. in Kornfeld and Prothro 124). This identification of Hogwarts with home would apply to Voldemort's experience as a Hogwarts student as

well.  On the relationship between home and family that exists at Hogwarts, Kornfeld and

Prothro argue: "At Hogwarts, the notions of home and family are far more complex and

multidimensional than in the 'real' world.  Family connections and loyalties are bound

not by birth and genetics, but by more enduring factors" (124).  In the climactic scene of

*Goblet of Fire*, in which Voldemort confronts Harry Potter in the Little Hangleton

graveyard, Voldemort recounts to Harry what he calls "family history" (646).  Voldemort

explains that he "revenged himself upon" his father, Tom Riddle senior, for abandoning

his mother.  He goes on to speak of his "true family" the Death Eaters that appear in the

graveyard, friends from his days at Hogwarts in Slytherin House.

Voldemort considers his Death Eaters as his "*true* family"; however, Dumbledore

only characterizes them as friends for "want of a better term" (*Half-Blood Prince*, 361).

These friends were Voldemort's early peers at Hogwarts:

> This group had a kind of dark glamour within the castle.  They were a motley
>
> collection; a mixture of the weak seeking protection, the ambitious seeking the
>
> glory, and the thuggish seeking a leader who could show them more refined
>
> forms of cruelty. (362)

Throughout his life, Hogwarts is important to Voldemort.  As a student, he asked

for permission to stay at Hogwarts over the holidays, rather than return the orphanage.  A

young Voldemort admits: "I'd much rather stay at Hogwarts than go back to that—to

that—" (*Chamber of Secrets* 243).  Later in life, Voldemort returns to Hogwarts to ask

Dumbledore for a teaching position, but Dumbledore refuses him.  Dumbledore believes

the purpose of this trip was to deposit one of his Horcruxes in the castle.  Voldemort

wanted to leave a piece of his soul in Hogwarts.

The graveyard scene in *Goblet of Fire* is the point at which Voldemort recreates himself as a monster. This is the only scene in real time throughout the series in which we see Voldemort discuss his family; then he leaves these thoughts behind, in the graveyard. As with the Creature, Voldemort cannot find peace with the complicated web of his broken family relationships, and he constructs his monstrous identity through his own physical distortion, and his murders, that is, the compulsion to repeat the homicide of his kin.

To achieve personhood, a subject must be acknowledged by an object(s). For the Creature and Voldemort, this is impossible. In this chapter, one sees through the various kinship relationships of these two monsters their inability to form connections with others. The Creature and Voldemort are rejected, and they cannot achieve validation as subjects. In an effort to form some kind of connection, even a condemned connection, they resort to monstrous identities as kin-slayers and murderers. On their paths to creating these murderous identities, each monster enjoys a fantasized, idealized relationship with a home, the De Lacey cottage for the Creature and Hogwarts for Voldemort. For the Creature this home is an entirely constructed of an elaborate fantasy in which he participates in the community of an elementary kinship system. For Voldemort this home provides him with friends that he calls his "*true* family," friends who may in actuality be nothing but servants to him.

In the end, each monster is left alone and isolated. Because they have no control over that which would validate them—their family's acknowledgement—they are left to their own self-destructive devices. Each monster constructs his own murderous identity, to substitute for a real family.

## CONCLUSION: CONSTRUCTING AN IDENTITY

In 1624 John Donne famously observed in *Meditation XVII*, "no man is an island," an observation that resonates with such truthfulness that it has become a cliché. The hallmark of human society, that which separates us from all other animal species, is our dependency on, and our capacity for complex social relationships. In fact anthropologists have observed that humans devote a large percentage of weekly time to forming and maintaining social bonds, and that on an evolutionary level, we need relationships to survive. In "Evolution of the Social Brain" Robin Dunbar, evolutionary psychologist, writes: "In evolutionary terms, sociality is good for you" (1160). For this reason, solitary confinement is the cruelest form of punishment in our penal system. Denying a person access to others is like denying that person access to food, water or shelter. I have previously argued that both the Creature and Voldemort are humans: the Creature slowly realizes that his humanity will never be validated by others, and Voldemort spends his life trying to make himself into something beyond human—his fear of death is a universal human quality—so that he may exist alone, outside of the boundaries that govern our social lives. In the end both monsters suffer because they cannot satisfy their need alone, a need for relationships determined by their human characteristics. This inability to form relationships is truly what makes them monstrous.

Throughout this thesis, the topic of interpersonal relationships has been a recurring theme. Mary Shelley and J.K. Rowling created their sympathetic monsters by

drawing from their own experiences, and the shortcomings existing within their own important personal relationships. A survey of famous monsters in literary history such as Cyclops in *The Odyssey*, Grendel in *Beowulf*, and Caliban in *The Tempest* reveals that monsters are lonely, isolated outsiders, objectified by society's fear and contempt. Because of their warped physical appearances, they are shunned and turned away by others. The modern, sympathetic monster is also an outsider; however, for the modern monster this outsider status causes a crisis of identity. In the case of the Creature and Voldemort, the tragedy of their early, broken experiences with family relationships warps their worldviews and prevents them from finding meaning in their own lives. The Creature loses hope in humanity, finds meaning only in seeking revenge on his "father" Victor Frankenstein, and he is permanently isolated. Voldemort is obsessed with uncovering his family history, fragmenting his soul into pieces when he kills the kin that first abandoned him, and nursing a compulsion to repeat these murderous acts. Because they are isolated and rejected by their families, they cobble together their own lonely identities by attempting to define the terms of their solitude and control others around them. They each attempt to derive meaning for their lives by controlling those who would victimize them; however, in the words of Donne, "no man is an island." They cannot survive as functioning humans, as social animals, alone for a lifetime. These monstrous identities are short-lived because maintaining themselves is an evolutionary impossibility. This lonely lifestyle is the end of each of these monstrous humans.

The Creature defines his life by tormenting his "father," Victor Frankenstein. He spends much of his early life in instability, confounded by the mystery of his own existence. It is not until he discovers Victor's academic papers, while he is staying in the

hovel near the De Lacey cottage, that he begins to understand where he comes from and who he is. Victor denies affection and empathy for the Creature, and later denies him companionship in the form of a mate. Victor never validates the Creature's feelings by offering understanding of his narrative and when Victor dies, so does the Creature's narrative. He no longer has any family and because of Victor's death, he no longer has any possibility of the creation of family. Victor dies and the Creature is "borne away by the waves, lost in darkness and distance" (156).

The Creature begins to carve out his nomadic, lonely identity when Victor refuses to create a female mate for him. It is at this point that the Creature realizes the inescapability of his isolation and there is a power shift in his relationship with Victor: "Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master;—obey!" (116).

Throughout the remainder of Victor's life, the Creature uses his superior physical strength and agility to manipulate Victor in a game of chase. He begins to use the motions of his monstrous physiology for his gains: "I saw him in his boat, which shot across the waters with an arrowy swiftness, and was soon lost amidst the waves" (116). When he fulfills his threat and kills Victor Frankenstein's wife, Elizabeth, he hovers over the corpse, waiting for Victor so that he might rejoice in his despair: "[H]e seemed to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my wife" (136). Again he eludes Victor with his strength and his ability to maneuver through the water: "[R]unning with the swiftness of lightning, (he) plunged into the lake" (136). The Creature lures Victor through the rough countryside and exposes him to the harsh

elements, to pains that he himself cannot feel: "[Y]ou live, and my power is complete. Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will feel the misery of cold and frost, to which I am impassive" (142). This is a very different picture from the Creature's earlier narrative of his first discovery of the warmth of fire. He is capable of feeling pain and cold, but as he becomes more monstrous, these human tendencies fade. The Creature uses his monstrous physicality to destroy Victor. Because of his unhappiness and isolation, he becomes a monster. His attempt to construct an identity for himself through revenge is his end because he solidifies his isolation from others and dictates the terms of his own lonely death: "[T]he bitter sting of remorse may not cease to rankle in my wounds until death shall close them forever."

Voldemort also brings destruction upon himself through his own self-assembled identity. As with the Creature, Voldemort struggles with the mystery of his identity in his early life. He spends his free time searching for relics of family members, and he is unstable and nomadic, shuffling between Hogwarts and the orphanage where he grew up. Voldemort rejects his given name, Tom Riddle, and Dumbledore tells us that he begins to call himself Lord Voldemort during his early years at Hogwarts. Early in his life, he attempts to create autonomy for himself. The point at which Voldemort begins to construct a monstrous, murderous identity for himself is the moment of his encounter with his uncle Morfin in Little Hangleton when Morfin reveals that his father abandoned him as a baby.

Dumbledore tells us that Voldemort traveled through Romania as a young man, after his graduation from Hogwarts, experimenting with dark magic and warping his physical appearance in the process. When Voldemort returns in *Goblet of Fire*, he

rebirths himself using the cauldron as womb, a bone of his father, flesh of his servant, and blood of his enemy (641). Voldemort expresses his monstrous identity through his physical appearance. He appears to be unlike any other man. He attempts to elevate himself to a position as a dictator in the Wizarding world, so that he might control everything around him, including his own death. He isolates himself from others, using his followers as slaves and servants rather than friends. Like the Creature, Voldemort has no family, he has no identity as a member of a family unit, and he attempts to wield his monstrous characteristics to find meaning in his life by controlling people, events, and circumstances around him because he has nothing else. In so doing, he further isolates himself and brings death and destruction upon himself because there is no society for one.

Monsters seek pain as a device to connect with others. Both the Creature and Voldemort find it impossible to connect with members of their own families, and subsequently with all others. Each goes through a crisis of identity, rooted in their loneliness and isolation. As humans the people we know, love, and hate define us. Our relationships frame our perceptions of ourselves. The modern, sympathetic monster is human. He feels the biological need for human relationships and community, yet is denied by family access to society because of his monstrousness. Like the Creature and Voldemort, people are all searching for mirrors in the faces of family and strangers alike, hoping to catch some glimpse of understanding. We feel sorry for these two not because they are monsters, but because they are lonely, hopeless humans. In whom we recognize ourselves.

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