

**The Carnavalesque and the Grotesque:
A Bakhtinian Reading of Select Retellings of *Frankenstein***

Thesis submitted to the
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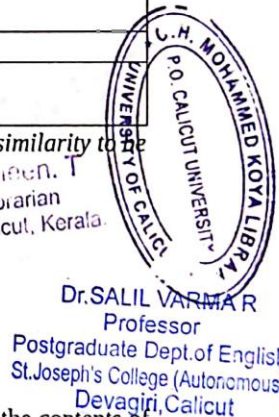
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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis "**The Carnavalesque and the Grotesque: A Bakhtinian Reading of Select Retellings of *Frankenstein***" is based on the original work done by me under the guidance of Dr Salil Varma R, and has not been included in any other thesis submitted previously for the award of any degree. The contents of the thesis have undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found is within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents, Shri Korappath Venugopala Menon and Late Smt Santha Venugopal.

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Abstract

Parody is one of the literary genres that has endured the test of time. Today it has permeated into all sorts of mediums and is still one of the most endearing forms of pleasure. In addition to merriment, the polemical aspect of the mockery in parody has been a topic of discussion for a very long time. Starting from Mikhail Bakhtin, parody has been largely looked at as a subversive voice that challenges the voices of power and authority. This thesis continues this discussion by reading the parodies of Mary Shelley's illustrious Gothic fiction, *Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus* (1821). Horror narratives are mostly written with an intention to evoke pity and fear in the readers. This thesis argues that the fear evoked in *Frankenstein* is a patriarchal anxiety about systemic disintegration. With the help of instances from the text, it tries to prove that the characters in *Frankenstein* live in a society that consecrates hierarchy and that the true horror in *Frankenstein* is the crumbling of this hierarchical system. A significant part of the research examines the workings of the society depicted in *Frankenstein* to see how it segregates people on the basis of rank as well as the aspects which make it want to exclude them as a threat. The thesis refers to Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection to see what are the characteristics that a typical patriarchal society deems as a threat to their order of things. As a continuation of this, it looks at what the Frankenstein monster signifies and how it becomes a source of horror. In addition to abjection, the thesis also employs monster theory to see how monstrosity can be an ascribed trait and how it becomes convenient for the narrative to ascribe it not only to the Creature in the novel, but also other characters due to their socially disadvantaged situations pertaining to their gender, class, religion and family.

The prime purpose of this thesis is to see how the parodies of *Frankenstein* neutralize the hegemonic narratives of the text. Bakhtin's theory of carnival, which delineates parodies

as narratives capable of questioning the imbalance and power play in the serious narratives that they parody, becomes helpful in this regard. Bakhtin's take on Rabelaisian humour is a study of parody's peculiar use of language, imagery and characterization. It provides ample pointers to see how parodies can be analyzed as a subverting discourse. The two parodies of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995) and Spike Milligan's *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan* (1997) are analyzed separately. This analysis intends to show how these parodies not only ridicule the fearmongering against the subversion of social order but also provide an alternate inclusive narrative. Two of the important aspects discussed regarding these two parodies are their self-reflexivity and their metafictional properties and how they become a more democratic way of subversion. *Patchwork Girl*, which is a work in hypertext format, also opens further doors to explore the ways in which a writer chooses to play and destabilize the narrative.

Frankenstein is one of the most widely studied texts. The previous studies on the Frankenstein monster have interpreted him as representing a myriad number of disadvantaged communities like the working class, people with disability, queer communities and so on and so forth. This thesis refuses to limit the categorization of the monster as representing just a single marginalized community but instead focusses on looking at those aspects of the Creature, as well as certain other marginalized characters, that force society to shun them as misfits. It is also a study of how to recognize and thwart such exclusionary narratives that create a misplaced fear of people. Such a study gains relevance in the light of continuing social exclusionary policies of countries around the world. It points to the need for literary studies to come up with alternative narratives that will question social exclusion. The study of parody narratives reiterates the importance of humour and laughter in a world intent on building boundaries and hatred. It highlights the power of laughter in destabilizing hierarchies as well as replacing misplaced fear with understanding.

പ്രബന്ധ സംഗ്രഹം

കാലത്തെ അതിജീവിച്ച ഒരു സാഹിത്യരൂപമാണ് പാരഡി. ഇന്ന് വിവിധങ്ങളായ മാധ്യമങ്ങളിലൂടെ ഏറ്റവും പ്രിയങ്കരമായ ഹാസ്യരീതിയായി പല രൂപത്തിൽ പാരഡി തുടർന്നു വരുന്നു .ആദ്യം മുതലേ ആഹ്ലാദദായകം എന്നതിലുപരിയായി പാരഡിയിലെ ഹാസ്യത്തിന്റെ ധർമ്മത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് ചർച്ചകൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ട് . മിഖയൽ ബക്തിനിൽ നിന്ന് ഈ ചർച്ച ആരംഭിക്കുന്നു .അധികാര ശക്തികളുടെ ശബ്ദങ്ങളെ ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒന്നാണ് പാരഡിയിലെ ഹാസ്യം .ഈ പ്രബന്ധം മേരി ഷെല്ലിയുടെ *ഫ്രാങ്കൈൻസ്റ്റൈൻ: ദി മോഡേൺ പ്രൊമിത്യൂസ്* (1821) എന്ന കൃതിയുടെ പാരഡികളെ മുൻനിർത്തി പാരഡികളിലെ ഹാസ്യധർമ്മങ്ങളെ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നു. ഭീതിജനകങ്ങളായ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങൾ വായനക്കാരിൽ ഭയ കരുണങ്ങളെ ഉണർത്തുന്നവയാണ്. *ഫ്രാങ്കൈൻസ്റ്റൈൻ* എന്ന കൃതി വായനക്കാരിൽ ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന ഭയം വ്യവസ്ഥാപിതമായ പിതൃ മേധാവിത്വ സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ ശിഥിലീകരണത്തിന്റെ ആകാംക്ഷയിൽ നിന്നുണ്ടാകുന്ന ഒന്നാണെന്ന് ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നു .ഗ്രന്ഥ പാഠത്തിൽ നിന്ന് ലഭിക്കുന്ന വിവരണങ്ങൾ ഇതിലെ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ സമൂഹത്തിലെ ശ്രേണി ബന്ധങ്ങളെ പവിത്രീകരിച്ച് കാണിക്കുവാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുന്നവരാണ് എന്ന് വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നുണ്ട് .അതുകൊണ്ടുതന്നെ *ഫ്രാങ്കൈൻസ്റ്റൈൻ* ഉത്പാദിപ്പിക്കുന്ന യഥാർത്ഥ ഭയം ഈ കണിശമായ വ്യവസ്ഥയുടെ തകർച്ചയെ കുറിച്ച് ഓർത്തുള്ള ഭയമാണ് .ഈ കൃതിയിൽ ചിത്രീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ സ്വഭാവങ്ങൾ പഠിക്കുകയും സ്ഥാനഭേദങ്ങൾക്കനുസരിച്ച് എങ്ങനെയാണ് ഒരു സമൂഹം മനുഷ്യരെ വേർതിരിക്കുകയും ഒഴിവാക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നതെന്ന് ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിലൂടെ പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു .ജൂലിയ ക്രിസ്റ്റേവയുടെ തിയറി ഓഫ് അബ്ജക്ഷൻ എന്ന സിദ്ധാന്തം

അനുസരിച്ച് ഈ കൃതിയിൽ ചിത്രീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്ന സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ അധികാരഘടനയുടെ സ്വഭാവങ്ങളും അവയുടെ പ്രവർത്തന രീതികളും വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു .തുടർന്ന് *ഫ്രാങ്കെൻസ്റ്റൈനിലെ* ജീവി എന്താണ് പ്രതിനിധാനം ചെയ്യുന്നതെന്നും എങ്ങനെയാണ് അത് ഭീതിയുടെ ഉറവിടമാകുന്നതെന്നും അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നു .ഇതിനായി മോൺസ്റ്റർ സിദ്ധാന്തമാണ് ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നത് .ആഖ്യാനത്തിലെ കഥാവസ്തുവിലും കൃതിയിൽ വിവരിക്കുന്ന സമൂഹത്തിലെ പാർശ്വവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളിലും ഭീകരത എങ്ങനെയാണ് ആരോപിക്കുന്നത് എന്നാണ് ഈ സിദ്ധാന്തത്തിലൂടെ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നത് .

ഈ പ്രബന്ധം പ്രധാനമായും പാരഡികൾ മൂല ഗ്രന്ഥത്തിന്റെ അധികാരഘടനയെ നിർവീര്യമാക്കുന്നതെങ്ങനെയാണ് എന്ന് പഠിക്കുന്നു .ബക്തിന്റെ കാർണിവൽ സിദ്ധാന്തം പാരഡി യമാർത്ഥ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളുടെ അധികാരകളെ ലീലകളെ ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യാൻ പര്യാപ്തമാണെന്ന് വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നുണ്ട് .പാരഡികളുടെ തനതായ ഭാഷാപ്രയോഗങ്ങളും കഥാപാത്ര ചിത്രീകരണങ്ങളും ഭാവനയും ഇതിനായി എങ്ങനെ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് ബക്തിൻറെ ബലിയൻ ഹാസ്യത്തിന്റെ വിശദീകരണത്തിൽ വ്യക്തമാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട് .ഇതിൻറെ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ പാരഡി ഒരു നിരാകരണ സംവാദമായി മാറുന്നത് എങ്ങനെയാണെന്ന് ഈ പ്രബന്ധം വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നത് .ഇതിനായി *ഫ്രാങ്കെൻസ്റ്റൈൻന്റെ* രണ്ട് പാരഡികളാണ് ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ പഠന വിധേയമാക്കുന്നത്. ഷെല്ലി ജാക്സൺന്റെ *പാച്ച് വർക്കു ഗേൾ* (1995), സ്പൈക്ക് മിലിഗന്റെ *ഫ്രാങ്കെൻസ്റ്റൈൻ അക്കോർഡിങ്ങ് ടു സ്പൈക്ക് മിലിഗൻ* (1997) എന്നിവയാണ് അവ .ഇവ സാമൂഹ്യക്രമങ്ങളെ പരിഹാസത്തിലൂടെ അട്ടിമറിക്കുക മാത്രമല്ല ചെയ്യുന്നത് മറിച്ച് സമൂഹത്തിലെ ഏവരെയും ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഒരു

ബദൽ ഘടന രൂപീകരിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നുണ്ട് .ഈ രണ്ട് പാരഡിഗ്മുകളും സവിശേഷമാകുന്നത് പ്രധാനമായും അവയുടെ സ്വത്വപ്രതിഫലനവും മറ്റൊരു ഫിക്ഷൻ സ്വഭാവ പ്രത്യേകതകളും കൊണ്ടാണ് .ഈ സവിശേഷതകൾ അവയുടെ തന്നെ അതിർത്തികളെ നിർണ്ണയിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു .ഇതിൽ പാച് വർക്ക് ഗേൾ ഒരു ഹൈപ്പർ ടെക്സ്റ്റ് രചനയാണ് .അതിനാൽ തന്നെ രചയിതാവിന് തന്റെ ആഖ്യാനത്തിന്റെ സ്ഥിരതയെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള പലവിധത്തിലുള്ള സാധ്യതകളും ഇതിൽ ആരോപിക്കാം .ഫ്രാങ്കെൻസ്റ്റൈനെ കുറിച്ച് ഏറെ പഠനങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ട് .ഇതിനുമുമ്പ് ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുള്ള ഈ പഠനങ്ങൾ എല്ലാം ഇതിലെ ജീവിയെ വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നത് സമൂഹത്തിലെ പലവിധത്തിൽ പ്രാന്തവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട ജനതകളുടെയെല്ലാം പ്രതീകമായാണ് .ഈ പ്രബന്ധം ഇങ്ങനെ പ്രാന്തവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട ജനതയുടെ പ്രതീകം എന്ന ഒരൊറ്റ വ്യാഖ്യാനത്തിനും അപ്പുറമുള്ള പലവിധങ്ങളായ സാധ്യതകളെ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നു .സമൂഹത്തിൽ പാകമാകാത്തതിനാൽ ഒഴിവാക്കപ്പെടാൻ നിർബന്ധിതരായവരുടെ കൂടെ പ്രതിനിധിയായി ഈ ജീവി മാറുന്നുണ്ട് .അനാവശ്യമായ ഭയത്തെ ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളുടെ സ്വഭാവത്തെ തിരിച്ചറിയുകയും അവയെ നിഷേധിക്കുകയോ നിരാകരിക്കുകയോ ചെയ്യേണ്ടതിന്റെ ആവശ്യകതയും ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നുണ്ട് . ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള ഒരു പഠനം ലോകത്തിൽ എല്ലായിടത്തും ഉള്ള സമൂഹങ്ങളിലെ നിരാകരണ രീതികളുടെ ധർമ്മികതയിലേക്ക് വെളിച്ചം വീശുന്നു .അത്തരം രീതികൾ തുടരുന്ന ഇടങ്ങളിലെല്ലാം സാഹിത്യം ആ നിരാകരണങ്ങളെ ചോദ്യം ചെയ്യുകയും അതിനു പകരമായി ഒരു ബദൽ സംവിധാനത്തെ കുറിച്ച് ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു എന്ന് ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിലൂടെ കണ്ടെത്തുന്നു .പാരഡി ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളുടെ പഠനം ഹാസ്യത്തിന്റെയും ചിരിയുടെയും

പ്രാധാന്യത്തെ ആവർത്തിച്ചു ഉറപ്പിക്കുന്നുണ്ട് .സമൂഹത്തിൽ വിദ്വേഷം ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന എല്ലാ വിധത്തിലുള്ള അതിർത്തികളെയും ഹാസ്യം അതിലംഘിക്കുന്നു .മാത്രമല്ല സമൂഹത്തിലെ ശ്രേണി ബന്ധങ്ങളെ നിർവീര്യമാക്കി സഹവർത്തിത്വത്തിന്റെ ഒരു ഭൂമിക സൃഷ്ടിക്കാൻ പര്യാപ്തമാണ് ഹാസ്യം എന്ന് പാരഡികൾ ഓർമ്മിപ്പിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് ഈ പ്രബന്ധം കണ്ടെത്തുന്നു.

Chapter One

Introduction

Parody is one of the literary genres that has endured the test of time. Today it has permeated into all sorts of mediums and is still one of the most endearing forms of pleasure. In addition to merriment, the polemical aspect of the mockery in parody has been a topic of discussion for a very long time. Starting from Mikhail Bakhtin, parody has been largely looked at as a subversive voice that challenges the voices of power and authority. This thesis continues this discussion by reading the parodies of Mary Shelley's illustrious Gothic fiction, *Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus* (1821). Horror narratives are mostly written with an intention to evoke pity and fear in the readers. This thesis argues that the fear evoked in *Frankenstein* is a patriarchal anxiety about systemic disintegration. With the help of instances from the text, it tries to prove that the characters in *Frankenstein* live in a society that consecrates hierarchy and that the true horror in *Frankenstein* is the crumbling of this hierarchical system. A significant part of the research examines the workings of the society depicted in *Frankenstein* to see how it segregates people on the basis of rank as well as the aspects which make it want to exclude them as a threat. The thesis refers to Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection to see what are the characteristics that a typical patriarchal society deems as a threat to their order of things. As a continuation of this, it looks at what the Frankenstein monster signifies and how it becomes a source of horror. In addition to abjection, the thesis also employs monster theory to see how monstrosity can be an ascribed trait and how it becomes convenient for the narrative to ascribe it not only to the Creature in the novel, but also other characters due to their socially disadvantaged situations pertaining to their gender, class, religion and family.

The prime purpose of this thesis is to see how the parodies of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* neutralize the hegemonic narratives of the text. Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, which delineates parodies as narratives capable of questioning the imbalance and power play in the serious narratives that they parody, becomes helpful in this regard. Bakhtin's take on Rabelaisian humour is a study of parody's peculiar use of language, imagery and characterization. It provides ample pointers to see how parodies can be analyzed as a subverting discourse. The two parodies of *Frankenstein*, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995) and Spike Milligan's *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan* (1997) are analyzed separately. This analysis intends to show how these parodies not only ridicule the fearmongering against the subversion of social order but also provide an alternate inclusive narrative. Two of the important aspects discussed regarding these two parodies are how they transform a character, portrayed as monstrous in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, from being a source of horror to one of gay festivity and comic vulnerabilities. The tragedy and horror of the Frankenstein monster is completely replaced by carnival laughter by both the male and female monsters of Milligan's and Jackson's parodies, respectively. Both the parodies contain elements of a Rabelaisian parody like popular festive imagery, images of the bodily grotesque, vulgar- or in Bakhtinian parlance- marketplace language, polyphonic and dialogic ambiances and protagonists who remain elusive and unfinalized to the end. A parodic narrative's ability to parody itself becomes self-evident in these two narratives through their peculiar characteristics of self-reflexivity and their metafictional properties. It also shows how they pave a more democratic way of subversion.

Patchwork Girl which is a work in hypertext format, shows the different paths explored by the writer to play with and destabilize the narrative. *Frankenstein* has had many literary derivatives. However, most of these texts either do not follow the plot and story of the original text or do not belong to the category of parodic writings. This thesis has focused and limited

its analysis to these two particular rewritings, as they are texts that parody Mary Shelley's writing and also have plots that follow directly from that of the original text.

Frankenstein is one of the widely studied texts. The previous studies on the Frankenstein monster have interpreted him as representing a variegated class of disadvantaged communities like the working class, people with disability, queer communities and so on and so forth. This thesis refuses to limit the categorization of the monster as representing just a single marginalized community but instead focusses on investigating those aspects of the Creature as well as others that drive society to shun them as misfits. It is also a study on how to recognize and thwart such exclusionary narratives that create a misplaced fear of people. Such a study gains relevance in the light of continuing social exclusionary policies of countries around the world. The many ethnic cleansings that happened and are still happening around the world as in Myanmar, China, Ukraine, Gaza, Ethiopia, Syria and Bangladesh point to the need for literary studies to come up with alternative narratives that will examine such social exclusions. The study of parody narratives reiterates the importance of humour and laughter in a world intent on building more boundaries of hatred. It highlights the power of laughter in destabilizing hierarchies as well as replacing misplaced fear with understanding.

Frankenstein and its monster have been interpreted in many different ways. A major share of the studies done on *Frankenstein* analyze the novel as a narrative of the breakdown of social order. One of the earliest of such studies, "The Social Order vs the Wretch: Mary Shelley's Contradictory-Mindedness in *Frankenstein*" (1979) by Sylvia Bowerbank infers the society presented in *Frankenstein* as a patriarchal one. It also points out the ambivalence inherent in Shelley's narrative that even though it sympathizes with the victims, it does not outright condemn the patriarchal system responsible for it. The article sheds light on how the work showcases the radical sentiments in the protests of the Creature but its portrayal of women characters remains utterly patriarchal. Also, the various "victims" in the work- "the poor, the

ugly, the criminal, the foreigner, the unmotherly woman (Justine's mother), even the intellectual wretch"- all have to conform in order to be included within society (425). Kate Fergusson Ellis' "Mary Shelley's Embattled Garden" (1989) is another such article that discusses the organic naturalization of social and gender discriminations in *Frankenstein*. This article also has been helpful in supporting the thesis' argument that Gothic narratives instil an anxiety of the breaking down of order. It interprets the gradual disintegration of communicative faculties faced by the characters in the novel as well as the discontinuities in their narratives as reflecting the slow dissolution of familial and societal order in *Frankenstein*.

In "Frankenstein and the Monster of Representation" (1980), Daniel Cottom similarly discusses the crisis to order that the birth of the Creature creates. It talks about how in addition to the traditional idea of a unified physical body, the Creature creates a catastrophe to an array of many other such concepts like "man as a species, the foundation of society in family, individual identity, and the rule of consciousness in the individual" as well as the infallibility of science (64). The article mentions how the idea of science as a neutral and objective means of knowledge is subverted. Victor rejects alchemy for modern science only to discover through the birth of the Creature that science also delivers through the medium, one's darkest desires. "What Frankenstein discovers, however, is that this new language is also a product of the human imagination. Like Victor's creation and like Walton's exploration and correspondence, modern science in general is a representation of desire and not of knowledge" (65). Cottom is also concerned about the aspect of class bias in Mary Shelley's narrative as revealed through the difference in treatments of characters based on their social class.

There are many studies of *Frankenstein* that analyze the novel based on its references to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In "Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Milton's Monstrous Myth" (1992), John B. Lamb reads *Frankenstein* as a critique of Milton's epic. The identity crisis that the Creature faces in the novel is interpreted as a direct result of his being influenced by the

tropes in the literary landscape of Milton, which he misinterprets as depicting the true history and genealogy of man. Milton's epic is understood as a hegemonic cultural force that influences the protagonists Victor, Walton and the Creature into accepting the reductive categories of identities that it ordains. Identities are designed as rigidly binary in the Miltonian literary universe. One can either be a Satan or Adam and these are preordained. This is shown as the prime conflict that all the protagonists face as all three find themselves pigeon-holed into identities they cannot escape from. The article does not discuss the female characters in the novel who are similarly trapped in a system of binaries, where she can either choose to be a proper woman or a monster.

In "Monstrosity, Suffering, Subjectivity, and Sympathetic Community in *Frankenstein* and 'The Structure of Torture'" (2009), Josh Bernatchez similarly analyzes the identity crisis faced by the Creature. He reads *Frankenstein* against the backdrop of the study conducted by Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain* and argues how human society as depicted in *Frankenstein* promotes a torture culture as depicted by the physical and psychological pain as well as the trauma suffered by the Creature. This torture endured by the Creature, argues Bernatchez, in turn affects the development of a sense of self in the Creature. This study is significant for this thesis in its argument that society as depicted in *Frankenstein*, much like other Gothic texts, is an oppressive and patriarchal one that mistreats its marginalized sections of people.

The classificatory disorder that the Creature induces and the consequent result of his becoming a misfit in the society that he was born into, is marked by the circumlocutory way in which he is called or defined by others, especially Victor, argues Bernard Duyfhuizen in "Periphrastic Naming in Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'" (1995). According to Duyfhuizen, the lack of discretion in the Creature's naming points to his deviance and the lack of acceptance thereto, that he faces from his community. It also talks about how wretchedness becomes a contagious aspect that infects the characters in the novel starting from the Creature and passing

onto Victor, Walton and almost every other important character in the novel.

There are many studies that look at the narrative structure the text embodies. In “Narrative Distance in *Frankenstein*” (1974), Richard J. Dunn compares the peculiar narrative structure in *Frankenstein* with the nature of relationships as depicted in the novel. The various verbal interchanges that occur between the narrators prove to be ineffective and poorly interpreted. This ineffective communication is reflective of the breakdown of societal kinships, argues Dunn. James R. Kincaid, in ““Words Cannot Express”: “Frankenstein's” Tripping on the Tongue”, also discusses the handicap that the characters in *Frankenstein* face, in terms of speech, at crucial points in the text. The concept of miscommunication and lack of communication as well as what it signifies are once again points of discussion here.

In ““Listen to my Tale’: Multilevel Structure, Narrative Sense Making, and the Inassimilable in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*” (2010), Criscilla Benford looks at the hypodiegetic narrative structure of the novel, calling it the “Russian nesting doll structure”, referring to the particular arrangement of the dolls, one inside the other and analyzes how it aids in portraying the social stratifications in the society depicted in the novel (324). The article reads the Creature as a representative of the working class. It looks at the relentless efforts of the Creature to engage in discourse with others so that he is integrated into their community. His attempts at initiating a discourse are seen as his desperate plea to others to ignore his countenance as well as his form, the ‘ugliness’ of which prompts his social exclusion and discrimination, and instead to ‘listen to his tale’. Benford writes:

He understands that others interpret his physical form as justification for their hatred. He uses his eloquence to shift attention from his body to his story. From Frankenstein's perspective (as from the perspective of the propertied ruling classes), the creature's literacy and eloquence are dangerous skills. From the creature's perspective (just as

from the perspective of the nineteenth-century working-class autodidact), his ability to speak with eloquence supports his claim to community. (332)

Benford also discusses the “garden- path phenomenon”, wherein, the readers are tricked into misreading a narrative (333). The Creature’s narrative located at the heart of the text deconstructs Walton’s and Victor’s hitherto positive perspective about Victor. Both Walton’s and Victor’s narrative act as garden- paths that mislead the readers into placing Victor as a loving human being and a responsible scientist and the Creature as the ‘monster’ of the story. The Creature’s story reverses this aspect.

“*Frankenstein and Dis(re)membered Identity*” (1994) by Eleanor Salotto again discusses the aspect of identity crisis. It compares the crisis in identity faced by its characters to the disturbed unity in the narrative as a whole. The subject as well as their narrative do not own a unified identity but is rather patched up of several fragments. Salotto notes that in *Frankenstein*, the identities of the three male protagonists each are formed from collating the inputs from all three. Both Victor and the Creature provide inputs about the Creature. The inputs from Victor himself, Walton and the Creature give the reader an idea about Victor. The characters and the text, which also has a hybrid form of genres within it like letters, diary and autobiography, is a story of ‘dismembered’ identity.

The monster in *Frankenstein* has been interpreted in many ways. Susan Stryker in, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage” (1994), reads the transgressive body of the Creature as a transsexual body. H. L. Malchow finds monster as a racial or ethnic victim in his essay “Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain” (1993). Joseph W. Lew’s “The Deceptive Other: Mary Shelley's Critique of Orientalism in ‘Frankenstein’” (1991) is an interesting study of the orientalist concerns in *Frankenstein*. He decodes the crude physiognomy of the Creature as

referring to the physical features of the people of Bengal during the time of British Raj, who had to suffer physical anomalies due to the colonialism induced famine. Sandra M. Gilbert reads the Creature as a parody of Milton's Eve in "Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve" (1978). There are also readings that see the Creature's rage as representing the rage of an exploited working class.

Though all these readings exist and *Frankenstein* is and continues to be one of the works that persistently invites critical reading, there is a need for more readings in comparison to its parodic rewritings. There has been no study of note on Milligan's parody of *Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan*. *Patchwork Girl*, on the other hand, has garnered much critical acclaim for its unconventional and genre-bending ways of storytelling. Its hypertextual properties and aspects of Cyberfeminism, hitherto, a less explored medium, have merited many critical observations. One of the earliest studies on the work is Carolina Sánchez-Palencia Carazo's "Gathering the Limbs of the Text in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*" (2006). It provides an interesting reading, often referred to in this thesis, on how the hypertext establishes a dialogic relationship with the original text. It reads *Patchwork Girl* as a postmodernist version of the Promethean myth, owing to the peculiar features of the text like its non-linear narrative, open-endedness, metafictional as well as intertextual properties and also the peculiar ways in which it engages the reader. Carazo studies how fragmentation and hybridity appear in the hypertext at various levels and what it signifies.

Astrid Ensslin conducts a comparative study between *Patchwork Girl* and Eliot's *The Wasteland*. In "Women in Wasteland – Gendered Deserts in T. S. Eliot and Shelley Jackson" (2005), the author argues that both the works depict a certain collectiveness among women as a result of the shared suffering and injustice. In Eliot's *Sybil* and Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* rest a repository of suppressed female voices from the margins. However, Jackson's hypertext is postmodernist in tone, as it lacks the brooding pessimism that defines *The Wasteland*. The

author talks about how in *The Wasteland*, the desert becomes a Modernist metaphor for female infertility. However, in the more postmodernist view, deserts act as an ambivalent space that lies between male-dominated cultured spaces and wilderness. A cyberspace is compared to this desert landscape where women writers can grow without male intrusion, as Jackson depicts in her hypertext.

Christopher Keep in his “Growing Intimate With Monsters: Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* and the Gothic Nature of Hypertext” (2006), talks about the nature of authorship as well as readership demanded by the text. The reading activity in *Patchwork Girl* is a physical one, says the author, one that leaves marks. He writes about how the fragmented narrative of the hypertext which simply put, constitutes the life and adventures of a woman, mocks other male bildungsroman narratives that follow a linear path and other conventional attributes. He reads hypertexts as a manifestation of Barthes’ idea of text as a ‘writerly’ text that invites the participation of reader in the making of the narrative. One of the important readings that the article makes about *Patchwork Girl* is about how it negotiates being a text in the cyberspace embodying within it, the contradicting aspects of disembodiment as well as corporeality.

In “Interrupting D: “Patchwork Girl’s” Syncopated Body” (2009), Arnaud Regnauld reads more into those aspects of the hypertext that act as a manifestation of Derrida’s theoretical aspects. In ““I Am a Double Agent”: Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* and the Persistence of Print in the Age of Hypertext” (2011), Paul Hackman argues, extending the argument of Hayles that, *Patchwork Girl* cannot be completely heralded as an example of a hypertext that absolutely rejects or challenges the print medium. Since it borrows a lot of features of the print medium, it should be considered as a hybrid entity that relies on both the mediums. Hackman argues that the text itself has proclaimed that its features come from both print and hypertextual mediums, making it a “double agent” (Jackson ‘double agent’). According to the author, the

text is to be celebrated as an interactive event between both the mediums and not as an instance of a hypertextual model cancelling out or questioning the texts that are in print.

Tove Solander's "*Creating the Senses*": *Sensation in the Work of Shelley Jackson* (2013) is an interesting and rare critical work that analyzes the entire oeuvre of Jackson. Solander's work predominantly focuses on Jackson's obsession with body in her writing as well as the senses. The author analyzes how the five senses of smell, sound, touch, sight and taste are evoked in Jackson's works through specific use of language, in order to drive in certain important concepts. For instance, the author interprets that the sense of smell as evoked in Jackson's works is a metaphor for the bodily abject and hence, mostly not expressed in aesthetic writings. Antonella Braidà is one of the latest critics to study *Patchwork Girl*. In "Frankenstein in Digital Age: Patchwork Girl and Dave Morris' Frankenstein Interactive", she conducts a close reading of the two hypertextual rewritings of *Frankenstein*, namely, *Patchwork Girl* and *Frankenstein Interactive*.

From the review of critical readings conducted so far on *Patchwork Girl*, one can see that, most of these works have already dealt with the hypertextual aspects of the work. Most of these works, discuss the aspect of intertextuality, fragmentation and hybridity, properties that define *Patchwork Girl* and project its patchworked disposition, as well as the different purposes they serve in the work. These properties have been read as a postmodernist attempt at challenging traditional aspects, predominantly, the authority of the author on the texts they write. They also discuss the challenges to homogeneity and uniformness in writing, by mixing not only texts but also genres, medium of writing as well as the yoking together of ambivalent themes, like disembodiment and corporeality, body and senses and so on and so forth. The work is also analyzed as a prime example of feminist incursion into cyberspace and its newfound ways of feminist expression and writing or in other words, Cyberfeminism.

These articles have been of immense use to the writing of this thesis. In addition to the issues discussed in these articles, this thesis proceeds to prove how *Patchwork Girl* is a manifestation of carnivalesque writing and a carnivalesque response to its Gothic predecessor. The various ways in which ‘patchworking’ is achieved in the work, namely the weaving together of different texts, genres, styles, media, voices are read as a perfect actualization of text’s dialogic and polyphonic quality. So far, these aspects have been read as mere postmodernist and not Bakhtinian. The women characters in the text definitely require more reading and analysis. The deeply carnivalesque nature of these characters’ speech, body, interactions and stories in general have not yet been explored. This thesis reads these women, coming from various social positions and classes, as bringing the necessary heteroglossia and polyphony into the work. These are the gaps in research that this thesis purports to fill.

The second chapter, “The Culture of Carnival: A Festive Space of Subversion, Laughter and Resistance”, discusses the major critical thoughts of Bakhtin, connected to his philosophy of the carnivalesque and its application in literature. This chapter maps out the theoretical framework of this thesis. Carnival was a cultural phenomenon that pervaded the social lives of the Middle Ages. Bakhtin was interested in studying what he identified as the ‘carnavalesque’ in literary works, especially the ancient serio- comical literature of the medieval times. The second chapter discusses what carnival meant and did in the ancient medieval societies and how one can identify the traces of its manifestation in parodic literature. The focus of Bakhtin’s studies on the carnival converges on the works of Rabelais. According to Bakhtin, the grotesque humour of Rabelais that challenged the religious piety and the pompousness of the state, contained the utmost essence of the carnival. Bakhtin conducts an in-depth dissection of the comic images and speech in the pentalogy of Rabelais and explains their carnivalesque character. The chapter discusses how these particular characteristics of carnival enabled a democratic and dialogic space, a dynamic space characterized by a multiplicity of voices and

meanings, in the society. Following this, it discusses the parameters that make a text dialogic and carnivalesque.

The chapter also discusses the discourses in detail. It discusses how the presence of dialogic discourses carnivalize and democratize a text. Consequently, the Bakhtinian concepts regarding discourses, polyphony and heteroglossia, are part of the chapter. A carnivalized world becomes a counterfoil to a serious, undemocratic and patriarchal world. The chapter refers to Lacan's idea of a 'symbolic order', a disciplined world order, which segregated people and things and consecrated hierarchy. It studies the text of *Frankenstein* and refers to specific portions in it, to show how it portrays and consecrates such a patriarchal world order. Literary texts that employ carnivalesque humour, mostly parodies of serious literature, destroy the seriousness, hierarchical order and everything else that is dealt with high regard in serious and canonical texts. Attention is also paid to the polemics and significance of laughter, especially carnival laughter, in this regard.

The third chapter, "*Frankenstein* as Gothic Fiction", maps out the history of development of Gothic literature, starting from Walpole's publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. It discusses the major points of convergence and divergence between the Gothic and the carnivalesque, especially in their portrayal of the grotesque. This chapter delineates some of the idiosyncrasies that have infiltrated into the works of Gothic literature over time and reads *Frankenstein* in the backdrop of the same. It looks at those aspects of Gothic narratives that try to reaffirm the ethos of patriarchy and authoritarianism. The fear and anxiety provoked in these narratives are argued to be the fear and anxiety of the fall of patriarchy and social order. The chapter lists ample instances from the text to show how the patriarchal family in the novel and the tribulations that affect its harmony, become the locus of horror in *Frankenstein*.

The fourth chapter, "'Speaking to the Mysterious Fears': The Case of the 'Monster' in

Frankenstein”, focusses on the ‘Creature’ from *Frankenstein* and looks at what he signifies. The chapter draws on Kristeva’s theory of abjection to study the various significations of the character. It reads the character of the Creature as a prime example of Kristeva’s abject, which as she explains, plays the role of a disruptor who breaks down meanings and systemic orders through its mere existence. The Creature, like all ‘monsters’, has many paradoxes inherent in its very being, starting from its transgressive body, which shatters the very foundations on which patriarchy has built its hierarchical systems. Even though the narrative sympathizes and gives voice to his lamentations, it still heralds the dehumanized character, the ‘Creature’, as a ‘monster’ itself, whose very birth is treated as a fatal accident that has led to all the tribulations which haunt Victor and everyone around him. The chapter attempts to humanize and look at the character as the marginalized other who has been demonized in order to favour its patriarchal ethos.

The fifth and sixth chapters analyze the two parodic versions of *Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan* and *Patchwork Girl*. These chapters look at how these parodies subvert the ethos of fear and anxiety as provoked in the hypotext. The chapters attempt to analyze the humorous content in these texts, expressed through the texts’ distinctive use of language, characterization and imageries as corresponding to the humour found in Rabelaisian parodies.

The fifth chapter, “Fragmentariness and Hybridity in Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl*: Reading the Patchworked Body of the Text and the Monster as Sites of Carnival”, indulges in the dual attributes of fragmented-ness and hybridity, features attributed mostly to monsters, as reflected not only in the composition of the female protagonist but also the hypertext itself. The chapter begins by explaining the structure of the work. The chapter discusses how the parody’s existence as a hypertext in itself creates a polyphonic and carnivalesque space of distortion, instability and subversion in meanings and concepts

propagated by the hypotext.

The sixth chapter, “The Case of the ‘Gay Monster’: Reading *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan* as a Rabelaisian Parody of *Frankenstein*”, analyzes Spike Milligan’s *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan*, which is a pastiche rendering of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. It may be noted that the term ‘gay’ as used in this thesis, does not have homoerotic connotations as it has in contemporary discourses; rather it refers to the quality of cheerfulness and licentiousness. It also connotes a lack of ‘official seriousness’ (*Rabelais and His World* 75). The chapter reads the parody in the backdrop of Rabelais’ own parodies and draws parallel between the imageries and speech used in both. All the characters and events in the *Frankenstein* find their comic parallel in Milligan’s parody. The chapter specifically analyzes the character of the monster who is travestied into a ‘gay monster’. The chapter argues how this mimicry creates a polyphonic and carnivalesque ambience in *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan*, much like the Rabelaisian parodies that parodied the epics. It shows how this work of parody destroys the tone of seriousness of *Frankenstein* and replaces it with subverting humour and laughter

Chapter Two

The Culture of Carnival: A Festive Space of Subversion, Laughter and Resistance

One of the pioneers in subjecting the genre of parody to critical study was the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin's interest in the culture of humour has its roots in his affinity for the Russian culture of folk which can be traced back to his days of youth. In the foreword to *Rabelais and His World*, the English translation of his thesis on Rabelais, Krystyna Pomorska writes that, in the early 1920s many Russian scholars other than Bakhtin worked hard to revive the ancient culture of folk. This was in the aftermath of the ruling Soviet government relegating the popular culture to the lowest rungs of the society, in order to promote and impose the official 'high culture' that sought to eradicate forms of expression that enabled laughter and ridicule. Historically, popular culture was referred to as the culture of the common people. It referred to the non-refined forms of art, literature, belief systems and tastes that did not belong to the official realm occupied by the elite upper class. This is to say that even before Bakhtin, there were studies that strived to talk about the importance of the tradition of folk culture, intrinsic to the cultural heritage of Russia, and a huge part of the lives of those people who were excluded from the official realms of the society.

While discussing the various aspects of folk culture, one of the points discussed repeatedly by scholars at the time was the presence of what is called the 'carnavalesque', in the ancient literature of not only Russia but many other cultures. The term carnivalesque took shape from the word 'carnival'. Carnivals were ancient agrarian festivals. Essentially, what carnivals focused on was the cyclical nature of the cosmos like the cycle of birth and death, sowing and harvesting and the cycle of seasons. Carnival celebrated the breathing points in between the

ending of one cycle and the beginning of the next. Bakhtin explains carnivals as thus:

The feast is always essentially related to time, either to the recurrence of an event in the natural (cosmic) cycle, or to biological or historic timeliness. Moreover, through all the stages of historic development feasts were linked to moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society and man. Moments of death and revival, of change and renewal always led to a festive perception of the world. These moments, expressed in concrete form, created the peculiar character of the feasts. (*Rabelais and His World* 9)

Ancient carnivals were events where one could see the rich culture of folk in full display. Carnivals were festivals for the common man. They were different from the festivities authorized by religious or government institutions, which had an unmistakable official character to them. This official character refers to the fact that these festivities reflected the hegemonic character of the authorities that conducted them, in the sense that they reflected the class and other hierarchies consecrated by the society. Opposed to this, a carnival atmosphere erased all boundaries and made space for everyone, despite their social and political categorizations, that often segregated them in a civilized and non-carnivalized official realm. During a carnival, all are considered equal. There is no mainstreaming of a single, monologic and authoritarian dictate in a carnival. Everyone is granted a voice and an opportunity to participate in the discourse, creating a dialogic atmosphere. Carnival was, therefore, a social phenomenon and the carnivalization of literature, according to Bakhtin, was simply the transferring of whatever carnival did to society into its literature as well. Bakhtin's inclination towards the culture of carnival and its principles, comes from his penchant for the spirit of equality and liberation. Bakhtin's discerning of the ideals of carnival, was a developing one, which is reflected in his works starting from his work on Dostoevsky, where he discusses the importance of dialogic discourse and its ability to topple the oppressive and dominant voices

of the powerful, to his dissertation on Rabelais. However, it is in his later work, *Rabelais and His World*, that Bakhtin explores carnivalesque in detail.

Bakhtin submitted his dissertation on the French scholar, Francois Rabelais, in 1940, at the Gorky Institute for World Literature in Moscow, for attaining his doctoral degree. However, he was able to publish his work only much later in 1965 due to the various revisions it had to undergo as well as the oppositions that he faced from the Soviet Government of the time. The initial title of the work, originally published in Russian, was *Rabelais and Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. In 1968, Helene Iswolsky translated the work into English as *Rabelais and His World*, hereafter referred to as *Rabelais*. Bakhtin's interest in the works of Rabelais and the principles they put forth, is not surprising. Michael Holquist in his prologue to *Rabelais*, suggests that both Bakhtin and Rabelais were living at a time that was "unusual" and were cognisant of it as well (xv). Bakhtin's interest in Rabelais probably comes from his acknowledgement of the same, that he lived at a time not so different from that of Rabelais himself. It can be said that Bakhtin found in these works, the answers to the chaos, cultural changes and identity crisis that the Russian Revolution had thrown up at his people, all of a sudden.

Rabelais, a French Renaissance humanist, a physician as well as a priest is mostly known as the writer of satires and the grotesque. His humour, that unapologetically ridiculed authority in the most debasing manner, was considered preposterous by both the Catholic church and the Protestants of the time like John Calvin. One of the many obsessions of Rabelais while writing humour was the human body and its various excesses, which he employed as an effective tool for ridiculing. The vulgarity that was widely attributed to his writing was mainly due to this defiant portrayal of the bodily matter. His interest in writing explicitly about the human body may be attributed to his experiences as a physician. He openly wrote about those aspects of the body that were generally considered vulgar or horrific, like the bodily excretions

and its various orifices, as well as the various indulgences of the body like sex, food and drinking. In “Bleeding Nuns: A Genealogy of the Female Gothic Grotesque”, Alison Milbank would call the body represented in Rabelaisian narratives as the “porous and degraded grotesque body” (76). It was not a perfect and aesthetically normative body that Rabelais depicted. The grotesque and unclean body has a layered existence in the Rabelaisian narrative. Bakhtin shed a new light on the peculiar character of the humour in the works of Rabelais and expressed the opinion that they have their roots in the ancient culture of folk. He considers that the laughter recreated in the world of Rabelais subscribe to the one found in the world of carnival festivities which were popular during the Middle Ages. According to Bakhtin, the humour of Rabelais is a subversive one, one that sought to prick the pompousness of the elitist and the official discourses and destabilize the dominant voices of the time.

As a monk who was interested in the Renaissance humanist discourses, Rabelais was a man of many contradictions. Roughly around the year 1521, it is believed that Rabelais entered the Franciscan Order to train himself to be a monk. However, he soon left the Franciscans because of their ban on learning Greek, owing to the Christianity’s remises for anything they saw as linked to the pagan culture. It is also a culmination of their fear of losing authority over the humanists of the time, who proposed a return to the ancient Greek texts of the Gospel and to compare them with kind of the religious dogmas that the Catholic church was propagating among the believers. Jean Plattard, in his work, *The Life of Francois Rabelais*, talks about the irony of a writer and scholar like Rabelais accepting a life of monkhood. He writes:

The fact that Rabelais entered religion, and particularly the Order of the Friars Minor, whom the literati of the period denounce as the most ignorant of monks, is a surprising fact for whoever knows, from his works, the nature of his tastes and his temperament. It may be urged that at the moment of pronouncing the monastic vows he did not yet realize to what extent his independent nature would render their observance difficult.

(16)

However, Plattard also notes how a monastic life comes with certain privileges like solitude, absence of miseries of a family life and disturbances from any outer social relations and so on, which become very conducive to an absolutely uninterrupted intellectual life, which maybe the reason why many intellectuals at the time opted for a life within a convent.

Rabelais was a rebel in every sense of the word. He was deeply into learning the ancient languages of Greek and Latin, though it was frowned upon by the church. According to Plattard's accounts, Rabelais along with his peer, Pierre Amy, learned Greek through their correspondences with the eminent French humanist Guillaume Bude, as well as, under the influence of a group of lawyers they met during their time at Fontenay-le-Comte. This was, predictably, met with severe counter actions from the side of the Sorbonne, the theological college in Paris, who confiscated their study materials in Greek. Rabelais, disillusioned, would later leave the Franciscans and join a less severe religious order, those of the Benedictines.

Bakhtin's interest in Rabelais owes to this rebellious voice, as reflected in his works, against those controlling the discourse. The reason for all of Rabelais' ridiculing springs from the immense distaste he held for the sophisticated ways in which the authority, especially the Catholic church, conducted its discourses. The official language of the scholastics was highly pompous and dogmatic and humanists like Rabelais sought to simplify and facilitate better understanding and reception of the Gospel truths, within the ordinary community, in place of the pedantic Christian dogmas that the church imposed on the people.

His writing constantly emphasized and embellished the principle of excess. The images, analogies and the events in the fictional realm of Rabelais were not at all compatible with the austerity and modesty that the monastic way of life decreed. Unsurprisingly, Rabelais soon left the convent life behind and joined medical school, whereupon he started writing. His initial

protest writings were in the form of hilarious pamphlets mocking monasticism and the systemic failures of the educational system. It was in 1532 that he published his first seminal work in French, *The Horrible and Terrifying Deeds and Words of the Very Renowned Pantagruel King of the Dipsodes, Son of the Great Giant Gargantua*, or referred to as *Pantagruel* in short. Following the success of *Pantagruel*, Rabelais followed it up with his second work, *Pantagrueline Prognostications* in the same year and later, starting from the year 1534 to circa 1564, would go on to publish four more novels, creating a pentalogy, hereafter referred to as *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, that continued the story of the adventures of both Gargantua and his son Pantagruel. The first three books were translated into English by Thomas Urquhart in 1653 and the last two books in the pentalogy by Peter Anthony Motteux in 1694. These were followed by numerous other translations into English. The story of the two giants, Gargantua and his son Pantagruel, was actually borrowed from ancient folklore. The revised forms of the folklore, like the work *Great and Inestimable Chronicles of the Great and Enormous Giant Gargantua*, were gaining popularity at the time, which had prompted Rabelais to come up with his own revised version of the lore. Bakhtin considers these texts as a repository of ancient folkloric images, humour and the grotesque. Bakhtin would later study these texts, based on which he would formulate his theory of carnivalesque and grotesque realism.

The works of Rabelais enjoyed great popularity after their publication. However, it was also met with a lot of opposition and censorships, especially by the Sorbonne for the scatological content of his works, as well as his marked debasing portrayal of the clergy, which was considered heretic. He had enjoyed the protection of various influential people like the Cardinal Jean du Bellay and later, the King of France. Nevertheless, he was once again faced with censorship, this time from the French Parlement, after the death of King Francis I in 1547. This is not surprising as Rabelais had, throughout his works, tried to ridicule and question the authority, whether in the form of the church or the crown. According to Bakhtin, this was not

something trivial, but a metaphorical way through which Rabelais fought against the pious and pretentious seriousness of the age. Holquist mentions how Bakhtin reads the humour in the works of Rabelais as a mark of protest. As an instance, Holquist revisits the episode of Master Villon and Tappecoue in the fourth book of *Gargantua*, already recounted by Bakhtin in his third chapter of *Rabelais*. The episode narrates the incident of how the prankster named Villon, punishes the sacristan Tappecoue, for not lending him any church clothes for his play. The church clothes were meant for the character who were to play the role of God. The sacristan refuses to lend him any clothes on the grounds that Villon's play was a travestied version of a passion play. The churchman could only see heresy in such an act. As a result, Villon decides to pull a prank on the sacristan. As the sacristan rides on his horse, Villon stages a rehearsal of his play, whose commotion frightens the horse and makes the churchman fall off of it and be dragged along the mud.

Here, the prankster Villon can be considered as a fictional representative of Rabelais, whose notorious humour similarly mocks and travesties the seriousness of the authority like the Sorbonne, who had condemned the works of Rabelais as heretical. Rabelais disapproved of the pious seriousness, of both the Catholic church and the Protestants of his time. Rabelais sees this seriousness as their reluctance in giving up control and power. Their failure to appreciate humour, points to their fear of the liberating power of laughter, one that can distort hierarchy. In his third chapter, "Popular Festive Forms", Bakhtin writes on this episode from *Gargantua*, of the travesty of Tappecoue, as follows:

The image of Tappecoue, reflected in one symbolic act, incarnated the spirit of the Gothic age, with its one-sided seriousness based on fear and coercion- a seriousness which conceived everything *sub specie aeternitatis*, outside real time. This point of view tended to underwrite the static, unshakable hierarchy; it conceded no exchange of roles. (*Rabelais* 268)

Bakhtin's interest in Rabelais springs from a similar desire for challenging the authority. He lived during a similar age of static, authoritarian rule, that imposed a certain kind of official seriousness. In *Rabelais*, Holquist begins by talking about the word "intelligentsia" (xiii). Borrowing the term and its explanation from the work *Ideology and Utopia* by Karl Mannheim, he explains the workings of the intelligentsia in every society, which is to help it construe the world especially at times when there occur drastic changes, such as a revolution, that turn the world upside down. He quotes from *Ideology and Utopia*: "In every society there are social groups whose special task it is to provide an interpretation of the world for that society. We call these the 'intelligentsia'" (xiii). He specifically refers to the time of Russian Revolution, when everything changed and the Russian culture faced an existential crisis. According to Holquist, what Bakhtin did as an intellectual of his times, through his treatise, was to attempt to provide a conceptual clarity to those struggling to cope with the mayhem that followed a radical change in the order of things.

Russian Revolution was a tumultuous time in the history of the world. It was a time when Soviet Union was imposing countless restrictions on publications and other forms of art. Special units were commissioned by the Soviet Union to regulate all kinds of artistic productions by the people as well as news broadcasting and print publications. There were two kinds of censorships, put in place by the Soviet Union. Glavlit or the General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press was formed to regulate the contents of print publications and broadcasting and check for any leakage of confidential material and state secrets. Another type of regulation was based on the official ideology and value system of the ruling party. This committee, Goskomizdat, targeted writers and creative artists. The main aim of the Russian authorities was to promote Socialist Realism through the literary materials produced at the time. It was in the midst of such changes by the spread of Socialist Realism that Bakhtin responds by bringing to the fore, the work of Rabelais and his principle of laughter

and ridicule.

Socialist Realism referred to an artistic style developed by the Soviet Union. It was adopted as the official style of the socialist countries from the 1930s to the 1960s. The art under Socialist Realism, depicted lofty and idealized themes, especially, the liberation of the working class. Extreme loyalty to the party was an important aspect that was never compromised in any of these artistic expressions. The art produced was hence, highly regulated and monitored. Narkompros, a special agency also known as the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment, chaired by Anatoly Lunacharsky, was commissioned to look into the matters of education and culture. Under this commission, though Lunacharsky did not impose any ideals to be followed by the artists, he however, designed this idea of the need to depict the human body as a healthy and perfect system. It was his belief that art could improve the quality of life and only healthy and pleasant depictions of the human body can do this. Negativity and tragic elements were completely removed from the art produced during this time. In other words, an imposed sanguinity, which had no place for travesties or grotesqueness, was a characteristic feature of Socialist Realism. Bakhtin's use of Rabelaisian images that emphasized the corporeality of the human body and celebrated its potential to be grotesque, can be seen as a rebellious rejoinder to the kind of artistic depictions that the Soviet government demanded.

During the time of Stalin, art was even more regulated. The image of a "New Soviet Man" was created which stood for an idealized depiction of a staple human being under Socialist Realism. Even before the Stalin era, women were depicted devoid of their femininity. The Soviet Union also considered themes like sexuality as a taboo. In art, nude portraits of either men or women, were rarely permitted. This could be read along with the Lunacharsky's mandate of depicting human body as a perfect system. The desexualized depictions of female body under the Soviet regime discussed female sexuality only as essential condition for

conceiving. Rabelais' frank depictions of the human body, especially the bodily lower stratum, are a perfect contrast to such moralistic mandates. It is also interesting to note how Rabelaisian bodily grotesque was largely ascribed on the female body.

Also, during the Soviet era, there was no room for personal expression of the artist nor for experimentation. Art was to be used entirely for educational purposes and for promulgating party consciousness. Any material that criticized or ridiculed the government was accordingly banned. In her foreword to *Rabelais*, Krystyna Pomorska, mentions the doings of Anatoly Lunacharsky who commissioned a special agency to study satiric genres. Writers who mocked the Soviet nationalism through satire, irony and comedy were met with stringent measures. In short, Socialist Realism promoted a certain seriousness and perfectionism that tried to erase laughter and mockery. Amidst such a political climate, Bakhtin's resurrection of Rabelais and his culture of laughter, becomes a poignant antidote.

Laughter wielded the power to topple hierarchies that dictatorial regimes strived to preserve. The attempts made by the authorities that governed during the time of both Rabelais and Bakhtin, the church and the Soviet Union respectively, feared and therefore, suppressed laughter and the comic genres that produced laughter, for the same reason. This is the reason it is not surprising that Bakhtin was inspired by the works of Rabelais and through it the philosophy of Renaissance humanism. He was particularly fond of the Renaissance thought, which talks about the need for the death of the old order and the birth of a new one. This is also one of the defining principles of carnival. One can find this cyclical pattern, of the beginning and the end as a continuum, in most of the theoretical treatises that Bakhtin has formulated. Nothing ever remains stagnant. Such a constant renewal flies in the face of a status quo being imposed by a dominant power. A cyclical change becomes the necessary resistance against hegemony. As Holquist remarks: "Bakhtin, like Rabelais, explores throughout his book the interface between a stasis imposed from above and a desire for change from below, between

old and new, official and unofficial” (xvi).

Bakhtin’s interest in carnival was not something that began with his work on Rabelais. He had introduced the concept quite early in his work on Dostoevsky, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, hereafter referred to as *Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, written and initially published in 1923. However, true recognition and discussion of his works were affected because of his arrest by the Soviet government, and following that, his exile from Russia. Revised editions of both his works on Dostoevsky and Rabelais were brought out much later in the 1960s, which spurred further interest and studies on his concepts. The elementary principle of a carnival that Bakhtin kept emphasizing, was its ability to bring together people from various ranks of society, together as a collective, and in the process, reveal the truth of being, beneath the pretensions of social etiquettes and norms that are imposed from above. The coming together of people as a collective enables a carnival space that provides room for people from different strata of the society to give vent to their voices. Thus, a carnival space is characterized by a multiplicity of voices. Bakhtin saw this aspect of carnival as a wonderful contrast to the official realm dominated by a single authoritarian voice. In other words, in a carnival, its unique aspect of relaxation of all sorts of social norms and etiquettes, enables a discourse that is ‘dialogic’ as opposed to the monologic authoritarian dictates of the official culture. No single voice remains stagnant in a carnival space. There is a constant clamour of voices and meanings.

As a philosopher and critic, Bakhtin’s work and influence spanned across disciplines as eclectic as linguistics, semiotics, culture studies, ethics, Marxism, anthropology and religious studies. However, his thoughts on the culture of folk, the liberating nature of the humour rooted in the ancient culture of folk as well as the principle of inclusivity, were something that occupied his works constantly. For instance, Bakhtin’s emphasis on the importance of a dialogic discourse as opposed to the monologic one, speaks of the importance

of including the utterances, or in other words, the opinions and the concerns of those who are excluded from the official culture, in the meaning-making process. According to Bakhtin, what carnivalization of literature did was to democratize language through a dialogic discourse. The atmosphere of a carnival, in which people from all walks of life and ranks come together, makes a sort of conversation possible that is dialogic in nature. When the discourse is monologic, a complete and finalized truth is imposed on the people by a higher authority, without giving any room for discussion. Through his concept of dialogism, Bakhtin proposed to democratize language. Meaning or truth in a carnival sense, is not something that is imposed from above through force, but that which is gleaned through continuous discourse. According to him, meaning can be deciphered only through the context of a particular utterance and cannot be confined to the text of any one single utterance. Meaning in terms of a dialogized discourse is, in other words, open-ended.

In the case of a discourse that is dialogic, the meaning is constantly evolving. Every utterance evokes another utterance in response. It is a living discourse. Hence, the meaning in a dialogic discourse is never finalized. Ambiguity is a defining trait that repeatedly arises in every theoretical thought of Bakhtin. It is not just confined to meaning alone. In *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, the term "unfinalizability" is used by Bakhtin for the first time to refer to the characters of Dostoevsky (61). These characters constantly rebel against any kind of external definition of their consciousness. The characters are not penetrable by an outsider by any means other than entering into a dialogue with them. Dostoevsky tries to imply that people cannot be objectified, defined or compartmentalized completely by an outsider's words. The consciousness of a person is internalized and is out of bounds to an outsider. Because of this, people are rendered as unfinalized and incomplete to the outside world, as it has no access to the inner consciousnesses of these people. Bakhtin explains: "As long as a person is alive he lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word" (59).

Bakhtin proposed that, in any language, a fixed meaning of the words uttered during an exchange, can be articulated only based on the context of its utterance. The meaning of a particular utterance comes alive only through a discourse, which is an interactive event between at least two parties. It is in these discussions that Bakhtin highlighted the aspect of the self and the other. According to Bakhtin, it is the communication that occurs between a 'self' and an 'other' or between two human consciousnesses that makes language capable of generating new meanings. Every utterance from the self, aimed at the other, initiates a response from it. This response is shaped by how the receiver has articulated the message. The initial utterance, however, is already moulded in anticipation of the response it would receive from the other. Such an interactive discourse leads to the constant generation of new meanings and articulations. Bakhtin was interested in such a dialogic quality of the discourse.

Bakhtin's concept of the continuous generation of meaning through a discourse between the two or more consciousnesses, of the self and the other, stands in contrast to the workings of a totalitarian regime where meaning is mostly fixed and predetermined. Ambiguity in meanings is not only undesirable but feared. They are monologic in nature and they sought to deny the existence of the utterances of the other, that comes in response to theirs. Their dictate is declared as the final word, like the word of the Gospel. Such discourses stand in contrast to Bakhtin's dialogic nature of utterances. According to Bakhtin, these monologic discourses are characteristic of the oppressive and dictatorial ruling systems such as a patriarchal society, autocracy, religious organisations or any such rigid forms of system. Ken Hirschkop in his introduction to *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, sees dialogism as a way of democratizing language. In a dialogic discourse, every thought, word and meaning becomes a part of a web of other such utterances and exists in a mutually connected plane. In order to completely grasp the specific meaning of a particular utterance out of the myriad meanings that it could possibly throw at a listener, it is important to understand the context of the specific

utterance. For this, one needs to look at the utterance not as a monologic dictate that exists on its own, but as a response to a previous utterance as well as one that elicits a specific response from another source. The monologic discourses, characteristic of dictatorial regimes, deny such a context of the particular utterance and the existence of other utterances in relation to it. Meaning in such discourses is not something that is continuously evolving through the line of interactions between two or more consciousnesses, but something that is already fixed or predetermined by an already imposed law. Bakhtin observes that utterance in a dialogic discourse has a dual existence. The meaning is produced in a given utterance based on the context of the interactive event, at the same time, the utterance is also a response to a chain of other utterances which contribute to the continuity and evolution of meaning or human consciousness. In other words, it has both a synchronic and diachronic existence, in contrast to the monologic discourse which denies any ties with the chain of other utterances.

The concerns regarding the nature of discourses repeatedly appear in most of the works of Bakhtin. The element of collaboration that Bakhtin emphasizes, needed to gauge the meaning of any utterance ever produced, reappears in the Bakhtinian definition of the relation between self and other. One of the earliest essays of Bakhtin that discusses this aspect, says Morris, is “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, published in the early 1920s. In this text, the relationship between the self and the other is described in terms of the communication that happens between two human consciousnesses. A sense of the self can be created only with the help of the other, says Bakhtin. It is only through the awareness of the consciousness that lies outside the boundaries of one’s own consciousness, that a sense of the self can be created. It is the other that “gifts” the complete unified sense of the subject to the self (Morris 6). The distinguishing position of the other from the self is what enables it to view the self as a complete and unified whole, separate from the world and vice versa. Hence, one’s sense of the self would always be incomplete without its interaction with the consciousness of the other.

Jacques Lacan, explains the formation of self in a completely different way, while explaining the psychosexual development. Though a child develops a fictional sense of the self while in the pre- linguistic stage, after looking at its image in the mirror, this sense of oneself or 'the ego' is an incomplete and imaginary one. The complete and unified sense of self is formed only after the child's entry into the linguistic system. The awareness of the existence of the other and of its identification as the object different from oneself are what solidifies one's sense of self, which Bakhtin terms as the consciousness. Lacan's subject tends to be more of an active entity. It is the self that separates itself from the other in order to form a separate and unified subject. The subject learns to differentiate itself from others with the help of what he calls as the 'Law of the Father', Lacan's term for denoting the patriarchal law, which perceives the world as a system of differences and clearly defined categories. The subject internalizes this rule and adapts itself into a subject position. Whereas, in Bakhtin's definition of the self, it is the 'other' that is active and gifts the complete picture of the self, parts that are invisible to itself, to the subject. Subject in Bakhtin's explanation is a passive entity. Bakhtin here, paints a picture of a society where one's sense of self is formed through a collective participation of two or more consciousnesses or in other words, the self and the other. Morris explains this concept of Bakhtin as follows:

This excess of seeing allows the other to offer me that unified bodily image of myself as a 'gift'. Similarly, only another consciousness can offer me a unified sense of my personality. This aesthetic production of a unified perception of bodily and personal being is characterized by Bakhtin as a loving gift mutually exchanged between self and other across the border-zone of their two consciousness (sic). 'The principles of giving a form to the soul are the principles of giving a form to inner life *from outside*, from *another* consciousness; the artist's work proceeds here, once again, on the *boundaries*' (p. 101). (6)

Subject is just a passive receiver of its both bodily perception as well as its personality. Morris writes: “Regardless of how it is figured, the gift of self necessitates a passive receptivity; it is only the other who is active and creative” (6). Bakhtin’s definition of the self, embraces the truth of incompleteness and unfinalizability of the self. One cannot fully perceive one’s self. There are parts of one’s self that are invisible to the self. Hence one’s picture about oneself is always incomplete. According to Bakhtin, the sense of self provided by a second consciousness too, ideally, cannot be complete. He expressed this view in relation to the open-ended consciousness of the characters depicted by Dostoevsky in his works. In these works, even though it is the author who creates the aesthetic self of the hero, the consciousnesses of the author and the hero never merge. The knowledge about another’s self comes only through discourse, a collaboration with the other. This is a negation of the ways of the Lacanian Law of the Father, which insists on the separation of the self from the others for the development of an autonomous self. It advocates a system built on categorical segregation and compartmentalization. In a Lacanian patriarchal order, everything is compartmentalized into water-tight sections. Such segregations, in turn, create hierarchies. Lacan calls such a system as the “symbolic order”. In simple terms, it refers to a typical patriarchal society governed by the Law of the Father.

If one takes the case of the Creature in *Frankenstein*, he is perceived as a monster because of his appearance. Each and every person who comes face to face with the Creature, denies him an audience, as they are already aghast at the way he looks and perceives him as a monstrous being. He is treated at every stage as an outcaste. Victor had abandoned him just after his birth, owing to his hideous form. Victor is constantly repulsed by how the Creature appeared. The Creature’s various encounters with people, like little William, the villagers, the family of De Lacey as well as the man, whose little girl he was trying to save, all meet with resistance. The Creature’s inner self, one that was kind, innocent and not yet corrupted by

society's mistreatment, fails to be understood by all those who confront him. This failure comes from their refusal to have a proper discourse with him. The Creature's constant request to Victor is to "listen to his tale" (78). He says: "Listen to my tale: when you have heard that, abandon or commiserate me, as you shall judge that I deserve. But hear me (78)." The society depicted by Mary Shelley in the novel, is a conservative community, one that does not allow discourse with beings that do not conform.

The plight faced by the Frankenstein monster is this inability to enter into the folds of the society. What makes the Creature so unwelcome to others is his ambivalent form. In a typical symbolic order, those entities that cannot be categorized, become an aberration and are seen as a threat, ones that threaten to bring the entire system down. Because they question the very logic of a system, built on segregation, by their deviant existence. They are sometimes portrayed as agents of horror or 'monsters' who are to be kept out of the social systems. In *Frankenstein*, the Creature possesses a deviant form. The appearance of the Creature is such that it resembles a corpse. The Creature's body does not conform to the accustomed standards of beauty or a perfect human body. It is a transgressive body that cannot be compartmentalized. In other words, the Creature creates what can be termed as a "category crisis" (Cohen 40).

The Creature faces an acute identity crisis throughout the novel owing to his lack of knowledge regarding his lineage and social status. His sense of self hangs on his capabilities of entering into the fabric of the society. His continuous attempts at approaching people in order to have a dialogue with them are a symptom of this. His request to Victor to create a female companion for him also points to this need, that Bakhtin talks about, for 'the other' in order to fully understand and complete his self. A similar fate is faced by Justine in the novel, another marginalized character, when she is convicted falsely for the murder of William. Both her confessor and her judges refuse to listen to her pleas of innocence and condemn her as the murderer. Both the confessor and the judges represent authorities that hold the utmost power

and influence in the society and show how a conformist society refuses to have a discourse with individuals they deem as outcasts. Hence, Bakhtin emphasizes the importance of a dialogic discourse, which is a product of social interaction and provides a platform for voices from different sections of the society to be heard in place of the monologic discourse, that denied the existence of such voices in a typical oppressive regime. Such an approach by the Bakhtinian scholars can be seen as a reaction to the policies of the Soviet Union, including the establishing of their official ideology and values as the only one to be adopted uniformly by the state, as well as the censoring of the dissenting voices against their despotic rule.

Morris introduces the readers to a collection of selected writings of Bakhtin along with those attributed to Valentin Nikolaevich Voloshinov and Pavel Nikolaevich Medvedev. Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Medvedev were part of the 'Bakhtin circle', a group of like-minded intellectuals, who were said to have met regularly in the Russian towns of Nevel and Vitebsk, during the year 1918, though they later shifted to Leningrad in 1924. The members of the circle published a number of works that discussed the social and cultural issues relevant in the context of the Stalinist era. Bakhtin has co-opted many concepts from these works into his own. For instance, Bakhtin terms the kind of communication, whether in the form of speech, thought or article, that is censored by the system in an official setting as constituting the unofficial consciousness. Bakhtin used the terms official consciousness and unofficial consciousness to denote the communication that is allowed and the one that is censored, respectively. Morris notes that Voloshinov had come up with these terms in his work on Freud, namely, *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch* published in 1927. Voloshinov places the Freudian theory of the conscious and the unconscious as well as the conflictual nature of the unconscious, owing to the pressure inflicted by the conscience to suppress unwarranted desires, on a larger social and political context. Hence, the unconscious and the conscious become metamorphosed into 'official' and 'unofficial' consciousnesses in Bakhtin's work. The official consciousness

pertains to the individual's thoughts, words and actions that conform to the moral values and laws of the society. Whereas, by unofficial consciousness, he refers to the kind of communication that is censored and policed by a typical patriarchal society based on its value system. Bakhtinian thought, encapsulated in all the major works of the Bakhtin circle, mainly establishes the importance of giving space for this unofficial consciousness.

In a typical God fearing, conservative community, giving expression to one's unofficial consciousness- those speech and acts that are normally suppressed as taboo- can attract extermination. Guilt is an interesting emotion that, along with fear, oppressive regimes try to induce in its people. Guilt, predominantly religious guilt, in such a society is connected to committing something forbidden or impious. It is a prominent emotion in *Frankenstein*. One finds that most of the characters in the novel are pervasively affected by guilt. The main focus of the novel itself is the transgressive act performed by Victor and the guilt that it triggers in him later. The load of guilt will weigh more heavily on women in a patriarchal society. Women in *Frankenstein* like Elizabeth, Caroline and Justine can be seen to be overwhelmed by guilt at specific points in the novel, implicating themselves for not acting with propriety.

Bakhtin would imply in *Rabelais* that guilt is an ascribed quality. Conservative societies ensure that they provoke guilt in individuals that they consider as a threat. Bakhtin's antidote to fear and guilt is carnival laughter. He writes:

It was the victory of laughter over fear that most impressed medieval man. It was not only a victory over mystic terror of God, but also a victory over the awe inspired by the forces of nature, and most of all over the oppression and guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden ("mana" and "taboo"). It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death, hell and all that is more terrifying than the earth itself. (90-91)

Bakhtin's application of this sociological phenomenon called carnival in literature is by imagining the text as a microcosm of the society. In literature, he introduced the aspect of dialogue to discuss how texts could be 'carnivalized' so as to perform much like a carnival space in the real world. In dialogic texts, the characters are comparatively free from authorial control and can be seen giving vent to their unofficial consciousnesses or in other words, the consciousnesses of the characters enter into a 'dialogue' with each other. Profane language, vulgarity, an excess of corporal verbiage and other grotesque aspects, elements that are normally suppressed in the name of propriety, find expression in a typical carnivalized narrative, much like in a carnival world. Bakhtin begins the conversation on dialogic discourse in his *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, to discuss the dialogic nature of the novels of Dostoevsky. According to Bakhtin, the works of Dostoevsky present themselves as a contrast to the novels which were monologic, in which the characters had no independent consciousness of their own but were slaves to the author's singular consciousness. In Dostoevsky's novels, instead, Bakhtin pointed out the existence of a plurality of consciousnesses existing in a dialogic relation with each other. In his further essays, included in the work *The Dialogic Imagination*, he discusses how the novel genre in particular, was conducive to creating a dialogic and in turn a literary carnival space. Bakhtin's keenness for the novel owes to the way the genre acclimatized with the changes that came with passage of time. His philosophy has always been to resist inertia and static conditions. Bakhtin compares novel with other genres like epic and tragedy. These were genres whose generic features fossilized due to their refusal to accommodate change, over the years. These serious genres rigidly followed their canon and never allowed changes. According to Bakhtin, this made these genres insipid. The novel on the other hand, was able to bring in many linguistic and stylistic varieties and provide space for experimentation. This is because it followed no canon. This renders it flexible and allows it to evolve with time. Therefore, Bakhtin terms novel as a developing genre, which unlike epic and

other serious genres, will always be subject to change.

In his essay, “Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel”, Bakhtin attempts to conduct a study of the novel as a genre. As his early works would show, language was an obsession with Bakhtin. Bakhtin’s ideas for democratizing language is important in order to understand his concept of carnival. His discussion of the principle of inclusion, that the carnival puts forward, has its roots in Bakhtin’s earlier treatises on democratizing language. According to Bakhtin, it was the peculiar nature of the genre of novel that allowed a dialogic ambience within its plot. His study of the peculiar nature of this genre, should also be looked at to completely understand how Bakhtin came up with concepts that sought to carnivalize literature, which is to bring down literature from the ranks of ‘higher’ standards to those of the commoners.

As a continuation to what was discussed regarding the dialogism of the novels of Dostoevsky, Bakhtin articulates that it is the peculiar nature of the genre of novel, that renders it possible to accommodate a dialogic atmosphere. This peculiar nature corresponds to the novel having no fixed literary norms of its own. Genres like epic and tragedy, Bakhtin finds, have already developed a particular framework and form for themselves, which the authors strictly adhere to while writing a new work in that genre. This practice, of strict adherence to form and norms of a particular genre while writing them, which was started from antiquity, has resulted in developing a canon for each of these genres. Hence, for those genres that adhere to a particular canon, it has become difficult to be flexible and accommodate new changes into the writing, as that would mean transgressing the canonical features.

Bakhtin notes that certain ages preferred certain genres compared to the others. Those ages that promoted a certain official seriousness, like the Classical age and the Age of Enlightenment, were times when genres like the epic poetry and tragedy reigned high. They

were considered as 'high' literature. The reason why they became mainstream literature is because it belonged to the ruling groups. Genres like the novel stayed outside the framework of high literature. It is not surprising to see that the literature of a time that insisted on strict norms, decorum, restraint of emotions and expressions and a certain seriousness would produce a similar kind of literature insisting on following strict literary norms. The pretentiousness and lofty attitude of the age is reflected in the literature of epic poetry and tragedy of the age as well.

The genre of novel, which was not part of the high culture, notes Bakhtin, has had an uneasy relationship with other genres, which were able to create a niche for themselves, forming, as Bakhtin puts it, an "organic whole" (4). The reason why the novel could not be part of this whole, is its unfinalizability. These genres that are part of the whole, a canon, has created a hierarchy amidst them. The classical and neo- classical ages are known for their elite attitude, refined nature and for the deliberate obscuring of the culture of the lower classes. Such a hierarchical segregation can be seen to be sustained in every matter of cultural importance. In literature, hence one finds the novel, that does not follow any particular literary rubric, thrust outside the mainstream literature. It is a transgressive and flexible form of literary genre. Hence, it was excluded and relegated to the lower rungs of literature. As Bakhtin elucidates in "Epic and Novel":

But it is characteristic of the novel that it never enters into this whole, it does not participate in any harmony of the genres. In these eras the novel has an unofficial existence, outside "high" literature. Only already completed genres, with fully formed and well-defined generic contours, can enter into such a literature as a hierarchically organized, organic whole. (4)

However, as Bakhtin points out, it is a genre that keeps on developing, without ever

becoming redundant. The unfinalizability that Bakhtin had attributed to the characters of Dostoyevsky is a quality that the novel genre carries as well. The unique ability to accommodate newer methods into its fold and the changing ways of storytelling like open-endedness, non-linearity in narration, metafictional approaches in storytelling and many other ways in which the novel still tries to challenge the traditional norms, allows one to call the genre 'un-finalizable'. Because of this attribute, novel was able to sustain itself through the passage of time unlike other rigid and canonical genres. Bakhtin notes that during those eras, like the Middle Ages, Renaissance and in the eighteenth century, the novel emerged as the mainstream genre. Renaissance was an age of drastic social and cultural changes which led to the questioning of older patterns and experimentations in all fields of art and science. It is no wonder that novel, which had established itself as a genre open for experimentations, emerged as one of the important genres during this time. The eighteenth century was similarly an age of social changes, like the industrial revolution, the rise of the middle classes, as well as the widening influence of the printing press which led to reading becoming a leisure, no more restricted to the ruling class. This paved the way for the popularity of novels during the eighteenth century.

The novel differed from the other genres in many other respects as well. Drawing on Bakhtin's thoughts, in *Dialogism*, Holquist draws a parallel between carnival, the novel genre and the human body as depicted in the work of Rabelais. The interlinking of human bodies is a prerequisite for conception. This is one of the corporeal truths of the human body. The novel, in the same way, has a similar existence. According to Bakhtin, novel consists of a patchwork of other texts. In other words, novel facilitates a dialogue between different texts. Holquist writes: "The body is, if you will, intercorporeal in much the same way as the novel is intertextual. [L]ike the novel, the body cannot be conceived outside a web of interrelations of which it is a living part" (87). Interdependence is a shared trait in both. Quite interestingly, in

order to explain the intertextuality within novels, Holquist takes the example of *Frankenstein*. He calls the text a “novel monster”, pointing out the parallel between the Frankenstein monster, made out of motley human parts, and the novel which he says has echoes of many previously existing texts that it alludes to throughout its narrative (88).

The novel genre’s monstrous ability to be motley is exemplified through *Frankenstein*. Holquist notes that much like the Creature, the work is also a novel of many parts. It is composed of many kinds of narratives like the letters written by Walton, memoir told by Victor of his childhood, the story of De Lacey family and the Creature, narrated by the Creature himself, in the manner of oral tales. Walton’s documentation of the events can be taken variedly as letters, diary entries or a travelogue. Even though there is a strong tendency by the author to portray her male protagonists as unique and distanced from mortal beings, much like the portrayals one sees in epics, according to Holquist she is unable to accomplish this because of the peculiarity of the novel genre. Victor and Walton are ambitious men, aspiring to be Promethean and God-like beings, much like the trope of deviant trickster figures seen in ancient epics. The title of the text itself betrays the fact that Victor is only a ‘modern Prometheus’ and hence not unique. Similarly, the comparisons of the Creature with Satan and Adam point out that he is based on an already existing template.

In “Horror’s Twin”, Gilbert talks about this ambivalent position of the Creature. The Creature has a lived experience of someone “born without a history” and in that sense is unique, yet his comparison of his plight with other canonical characters in literature like Satan, Adam, Werter establishes a kind of literary genealogy for him (63). *Frankenstein* is a work that aspires to achieve uniqueness, says Holquist, like an epic, yet the work being a novel downplays this aspect. The motley of other texts alluded to in the novel, betrays the fact that “it is stitched out of older materials” (88). Holquist writes:

The novel has two titles, whose relation to each other is a first indication of its intertextual preoccupations. The two titles accurately nominate the poles of the opposition that shapes the novel as a text: Frankenstein is a proper name, unique not only to a particular figure, Victor Frank-enstein, but to a figure who embodies (with all the irony that attends the use of this word in the novel) the principle of uniqueness: he is the quintessential Romantic artist. The novel's subtitle, *The Modern Prometheus*, on the other hand, opposes the presumption of such radical singularity by highlighting Frankenstein's indebted relation to another text. No matter how new, Frankenstein the scientist may conceive his creation, he must do so in Frankenstein the novel, which on its very title-page (sic) announces that he is anciently preceded.

A first lesson of Mary Shelley's book is, then, that while much has been made of the urge toward newness and singularity inherent in the genre's very name (in English, at any rate), it, like Victor Frankenstein's creature, is still stitched together out of older materials. (88)

Another unique characteristic of novel, according to Bakhtin, is its ability to parody not only other genres, but also itself. Any genre that resisted change and adamantly stuck to its canonical norms, became easy targets for novels to parody. The basic idea was to not allow any literary trend to become supreme and overriding, even those of the novels. The novel's creativity lies in its ability to stylize the characteristics of other genres. Bakhtin uses the term 'novelize' to explain how the novel stylized other genres in those ages, mentioned above, when its creative side was at its peak. Novelization of other genres meant adopting the discourse of other genres and fitting it into the framework of the novel and in the process travesty it. Bakhtin writes:

The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the

conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them. (5)

The novelization of the canonical genres sought to put forth more inclusive and democratized version of the original discourse. However, in order to see how novelizing a genre makes it more inclusive and flexible, one needs to look at the unique properties of the novel genre, as marked out by Bakhtin, and see how it affects and manipulates other genres while novelizing them. Novelization, for Bakhtin, constituted a mechanism that questioned the systemic ordering of literature into various hierarchical categories of genres and canons and openly subverted the rules and norms followed by other genres of literature. Novel, in other words, becomes a critique of other genres and itself. The capability of the novelistic genre to grow and change continuously is pitted against the unchanging and rigid nature of the canonical genres. Because of this very nature of the unfinalizability of the novel, Bakhtin notes that, it is very difficult to formulate a fixed definition or theory about novel, as that would mean categorizing the novel on the basis of that definition. The very act of novelization attempts to dismantle all such fixed categories, at least temporarily.

Bakhtin delineates the precise juncture of time at which the novel was born. This particular point in history was a tumultuous time for Europe, which brought in many changes culturally as well as socially. This was a time, explains Bakhtin, when Europe entered into diverse international affairs, after being culturally closed off for a long time. Such an event brought Europe in touch with various foreign cultures and linguistic varieties that affected the way its society thought and spoke. It was at such a juncture of time in history, that the novel was born. The novel was fashioned and its developing years affected by these social and cultural factors, unlike other canonical genres which were formed during a time of cultural isolation. This is reflected in the way these genres are structured as well.

Canonical genres are completed, unified and closed genres for they emerged during a period, as Bakhtin notes, of “closed and deaf monoglossia” (12). The rigidity of genres like epic can be discerned by their incapacity to be polyglot. Bakhtin says that even in societies like the Greek, where there was more than one national language existing, it did not transpire into their literary works. Epics were written in a single pure language. There was no mingling of languages. The many linguistic varieties that existed within a national language, like the dialects particular to a region or profession as well as the various jargons were not given adequate representation in genres like epic. Language was standardized and ‘purified’ when used in an epic. This corresponds to singling out and proselytizing an elite culture and at the same time rule out any sort of hybridity in matters and instead standardize language and culture. Elitist culture, by nature is founded on exclusion of what it feels is beneath its culture. In any elite culture, a mixing of elements is always considered undesirable and hence avoided.

Canonical genres were a monopoly of the aristocracy. Bakhtin lists three important characteristics of the epic genre, which bring out its patriarchal character. These features of epic make it possible to establish a hierarchy among genres and place itself among the category of high literature. The first feature that Bakhtin notes is that epic is only concerned with the happenings of a distant national past. The world depicted in epics is far removed from the real and contemporary world inhabited by their authors and the readers or the viewers. The events mentioned in the epic are not associated with the actual past, but something constructed and placed in the past. What epic evokes is an emotion of loss and nostalgia of a past no more accessible. The person who narrates the story is placed in the contemporary plane to depict how removed both the writer as well as the audience are from this apparently glorious past. This ensures that a distance is created in between the present world, where the author and the audience are placed, and the characters and events depicted in the epic. Such a distance evokes

a sense of reverence from the side of the contemporaries who are the proud descendants of this mythical past.

In “Semiotics of Biblical Abomination”, Kristeva notes that the Bible has from the beginning itself, insisted on maintaining a distance between God and man. The act of eating a fruit of the Tree of Knowledge becomes sinful because it reduces this reverent distance between man and God, as now man has acquired the exclusive knowledge of good and evil. The exiling of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden is hence, a precautionary measure to prevent them from acquiring the fruit of the Tree of Life that would equip them with immortality. This way, immortality is never passed on to man and this places him separate and subordinate to God. Kristeva’s analysis was to focus on the role played by food in constructing this distinction between man and God. It is a “dietary taboo”, the prohibition of eating fruits of the Tree of Knowledge and Tree of Life, that ensures that this reverent distance between the human and the divine is never appropriated (108-12).

This distinction between man and God can be seen to subsume many other others, Kristeva notes, leading to a set of such binary oppositions like life/ death, animal/ vegetal, flesh/ blood and so on and so forth. The basic idea behind such a distinction is to categorize people and things based on some predetermined criteria on what is ‘pure’ and hence nearer to God and what is ‘impure’ and deviates from the path of the divine system. Kristeva uses the terms “*tahor*” and “*tame*” in Hebrew, which stand for ritual purity and impurity, respectively, according to the Jewish law (107). Such divisive practices, in greater or milder forms, can be seen practiced in all undemocratic communities. “Purity or impurity are thus situated in relation to cult because the latter represents or serves a logic of distribution and behaviour on which the symbolic community is founded: a Law, a reason” (91). In every culture, this fear of impurity through mixing with the culture of the other is persistent. There is a continuous struggle to keep the hierarchical order intact, with its perfectly sorted out categories, without any mixing.

What the epic genre is trying to glorify is the same separatist and divisive ways of a patriarchal society. The epic genre which was culturally an artistic monopoly of the upper class, reflected these anxieties, as can be seen from their features. Epic has always been a poem about the past. The content of an epic constitutes the placing of certain events in the past and how these events take part in the past. It is a nostalgic longing for a world that is no more accessible to the narrator of the epic who is situated in the present. Bakhtin writes:

The epic, as the specific genre known to us today, has been from the beginning a poem about the past, and the authorial position immanent in the epic and constitutive for it (that is, the position of the one who utters the epic word) is the environment of a man speaking about a past that is to him inaccessible, the reverent point of view of a descendent. In its style, tone and manner of expression, epic discourse is infinitely far removed from discourse of a contemporary about a contemporary addressed to contemporaries.... (13)

Bakhtin notes that the world depicted in the epic is a world of “fathers” and “founders of families” (15). This world of heroes is separated from the contemporary reality of the author and the audience by an epic gap. The nostalgic longing expressed by the narrator for the past, represented in the epic, is the longing for the system of values that belonged to this epic past. This is because in a patriarchal society, Bakhtin notes, the epic past is a particularly venerated hierarchical category. Everything about the past is considered, by default, as sacred and to be respected. Bakhtin writes: “In the epic world view, “beginning,” “first,” “founder,” “ancestor,” “that which occurred earlier” and so forth are not merely temporal categories but valorized temporal categories, and valorized to an extreme degree” (15). Epic genre has memory as its source, and not knowledge or experience like the novel. And in the world of epic only those memories that which are a monopoly of the collective consciousness of a few privileged descendants are kept alive. According to Bakhtin, this is what cements what is said in the epics.

Bakhtin writes: “That is how it was, it is impossible to change it: the tradition of the past is sacred” (15).

The epic is walled off from other temporal zones, especially the present where the writer and the audience are located. The boundaries that close off the epic prevent it from having any chronological relation to any other temporal zones. Hence, the epic seems complete in itself. Nothing continues indefinitely from the time zone of the epic, unlike the novel which relates to the contemporary events and hence, can be continuous and open-ended. The boundaries that hold the epic in a time warp are influenced and designed similar to the boundaries that separate categories in a symbolic order, in tune with the Law of the Father. Bakhtin’s observations converge with those of Lacan’s when he says that in a patriarchal society, the upper class belongs to the world of fathers. Bakhtin refers to the artistic manifestations that try to give the epic form to the stories about heroes placed in the present world. This is an attempt to tie oneself to the world of the fathers and ancestors- the hierarchically valorized and sacred space.

This epic past is what manifests itself in the form of national tradition. This is because the subject of epic is never about a personal experience or a commonplace event but the heroic past of the whole nation, with its “beginnings”, “peak times”, “firsts” and “bests”. Even the temporal zones within the epic are given hierarchical ranks, as Bakhtin notes, like the “glorious beginning” and the “darkened end”. This insulates epic from any sort of interference with its narrative by any common individual. The borders of tradition that guard the epic insulate it from opposing voices, counter-narratives and any kind of personal efforts in interpreting the epic in new ways. Much like the distance maintained between man and God mentioned before, epic also tries to have a hierarchical supremacy such that it is revered. One can only consider the epic with reverence as the epic is situated beyond the realms of human interference and therefore, beyond any kind of criticism. It adapts the principle of the symbolic law that suppresses ambiguity and intermingling of voices. These characteristics are not exclusive to

the genre of epic alone, but to all those genres that are part of the so called high literature.

The novel, being born at the cusp of change within the socially and culturally patriarchal climate in Europe, is inclusive. The novel sought to revolutionize the literary scene. The novel talks about the contemporary reality unlike the epic. Hence, the language used by the novel is an unofficial language or the language of the masses. Bakhtin talks about the compatibility shared by the different genres that formed the 'high literature' like the epic, tragedy, and the lyric poetry, to name a few. The narrator of an epic talks about the people in the past who are dead. The language used to refer the dead is different from the language used to refer to the living, says Bakhtin. Every aspect about the characters in an epic, like their language, clothing and manners are presented with much grandeur and reverence, for they do not belong to a realm that one can easily relate to. Important people belonging to the past, like the aristocracy, cannot be shown as comical. They are stripped off of laughter in their depictions. Laughter in that sense, belonged to the lower social levels and is an aberration in the individuals belonging to upper class. In a serious social setup, laughter is even considered as a sign of madness.

The characters in *Frankenstein* don a certain seriousness, much like the characters one comes across in epics, such that any shade of comicality on them would appear as an aberration. For instance, in *Frankenstein*, Victor's abnormal state of mind is signalled through his laughter. Victor, excited over the arrival of Clerval yet worried that he would find out about the Creature, who was now missing, reacts by jumping over the chairs, clapping his hands and laughing aloud. Victor's laughter fills Clerval with horror, who asks him not to laugh in that manner: "My dear Victor, what for God's sake is the matter? Do not laugh in that manner. How ill you are! What is the cause of all this?" (48). Bakhtin talks about how Christianity had always condemned laughter as being devilish. Bakhtin notes: "Only permanent seriousness, remorse, and sorrow for his sins befit the Christian" (*Rabelais* 73). Victor, who is led by remorse and sorrow, could be defined as a true Christian hero.

The novel uses the ordinary language, in contrast to epic, as it is situated in a reality that one is familiar with. The novel contemporizes its language, characters and major events so that all the other senior genres start to appear, what Bakhtin would term as, “stylized” (*Dialogic Imagination* 6). A parody novel debases the narrative of the epic by bringing the characters and the events to the level of contemporary reality, wherein they lose all their loftiness and sophistication and adapt the language and style of the unofficial realm. In the genres that were considered as “low” literature, like the novel, the life represented was that of the present, contemporary life, one which is flowing for it has no beginning or end. This was also the kind of life represented in the popular culture of laughter. Hence, Bakhtin says that the origin of the novelistic language can be traced back to the ancient culture of popular laughter. It is the nature of the culture of laughter to “contemporize” the glorious past. Bakhtin writes: “The “absolute past” of gods, demigods and heroes is here, in parodies and even more so in travesties, "contemporized": it is brought low, represented on a plane equal with contemporary life, in an everyday environment, in the low language of contemporaneity” (21). However, it was not just the past that was ridiculed but the living reality as well. The ancient comical genres parodied themselves as well as the times they lived in. The novel has the same in- built characteristic of self -criticism as it is a by-product of such a popular culture.

Frankenstein tells a story set in the 18th Century, yet the novel has the literary tropes of an epic. The characters in *Frankenstein*, can be seen comparing them to characters from the epic past from time to time. Victor and Walton are ambitious men who want to play God. Both these protagonists are, for most part of the novel, estranged from their society and families. Both Victor and Walton compare their situation to that of the Mariner from Coleridge’s poem. Victor also compares himself to the “Arabian who had been buried with the dead and found a passage to life, aided only by one glimmering...light”, a reference to Sinbad the sailor from *Thousand and One Nights* (42). The Creature also compares his plight invariably to those of

Satan, Adam and Werther. Mary Shelley's respect for the canon becomes evident in these textual allusions and also these allusions show how her male protagonists want to tie themselves to the lineage of fictional patriarchal figures. The parodies *FASM* and *Patchwork Girl*, in contrast, make no such attempts. Both these works are written in a language that is contemporized and mention events and places that would seem anachronistic to the fictional world of original *Frankenstein* story.

Bakhtin has studied and written about parody in almost all of his works. In *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin introduces parody while talking about discourse in Dostoevsky's novels, specifically the presence of double-voiced discourses in Dostoyevsky's writing. Bakhtin categorizes discourses as "single-voiced" and "double-voiced" (189). The author's speech in a literary work and the characters' speech are both examples of single-voiced discourses. When the author tries to make use of or incorporate the exact words of another's speech in the text, then it becomes a double-voiced discourse. In single-voiced discourses, the discourse does not refer to anything or anyone outside what has already been referred to in the speech. Double-voiced discourses, on the contrary, have the discourses going in two different directions. One course the discourse takes is towards the meaning already referred to in the borrowed discourse, like in the normal speech, and the other course it takes is towards the meaning that the author incorporates by the his or her incorporation of the speech in his text. Parody, by nature, is a double-voiced discourse and always has a subtext of another's discourse along with the one that it is directly referring to. Two voices can be heard within a parody. One is that of the author and the other is of the person whose discourse the author makes use of for his own ends. This discourse that belonged to someone else comes already with a meaning attached to it. However, it attains a new meaning, assigned to it by the author, when he incorporates the discourse into his work. The two voices in a parody are opposing voices that clash and conflict with each other. Parodying a work involves injecting an intention by the author into the borrowed

discourse which clashes with its original intention. There is no fusion of voices as in the genre of epic, where the subject is not allowed to have a point of view independent of the matter discussed in the epic. Both are fused together to form a whole. In parody, there are two distinct discourses that are hostile to each other, with intentions of their own and pulling towards opposite directions. Parody is one of the double-voiced discourses that makes the narrative “polyphonic” (37).

Polyphony refers to the existence of more than one ideological positions or viewpoints in a text rather than a single authoritarian voice of the author. A text becomes polyphonic by the presence of the network of double-voiced discourses in it. Bakhtin describes the polyphonic texts of Dostoevsky thus:

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (6)

Besides parody, some of the other double-voiced discourses that Bakhtin identifies are stylization, skaz, internal and hidden polemic, hidden dialogue, micro-dialogues and statement with a loophole. In “Discourse in the Novel”, Bakhtin introduced the term “heteroglossia” to refer to the inclusion of various types of speech styles, social dialects and viewpoints within a single narrative. According to Bakhtin, novel is the locus of discourse where heteroglossia is most practiced and it owes its origin and development to a time when the European society was facing a flux of other linguistic varieties and cultures as opposed to the unified and codified language it had till then. According to him, each discourse represents a world view. The

canonical genres do not offer such a space for a review or discussion of their texts. They are compartmentalized, stuck in a time warp and cordoned off, both in a temporal and spatial sense, such that no external elements can influence or change its narrative about the past. The author can intend his parodic discourse to mock anything from style, characterization and language of the other discourse. The purpose of the parody can also be varied, says Bakhtin, however what it does is to oppose the false seriousness of the canonical genres. In other words, parody is an openly polemical work.

Bakhtin draws the genealogy of novel to the ancient serio- comical literature, which roughly included the mimes of Sophron, the bucolic poems, the witty chronicles of Socrates and the Menippean satire to name a few. According to Bakhtin, these were the main influence behind the origin and development of novelistic prose. The factor that connects both the novelistic prose and the medieval parody literature is that they both contemporize or place the stories of the past, considered as belonging to a glorious time, in the contemporary reality. Even in those stories where the subject matter is of the Gods or the mythical past, the epic distance is shortened, which in itself is a debasing of the elite culture of reverent distancing of readers from the heroes of such narratives. According to Bakhtin, an important aspect that helps in reducing this epic distance is laughter. Just as it is the fear of God that demands a reverent distance between man and the divine, laughter in complete contrast destroys such a hierarchical distancing. Anything that is placed far and is unfamiliar, breeds fear and cannot be comical.

Laughter, according to Bakhtin, brings things close enough for one to properly analyze and experiment it, such that the familiarity that comes with it destroys the fear and makes it comical. Bakhtin writes in "Epic and Novel": "Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it" (23). This is another way in which the heteroglot novel democratizes the discursive space. It attempts to destabilize the centralizing forces of

official culture, which include the culture of the ruling class, which tries to homogenize meaning as well as create hierarchies. They are called centralizing because they engender a culture of seriousness and piety towards authority and the hierarchy set by them. Discourse is monologic, as is evident from genres like epic, and meaning fixed and unambiguous. Bakhtin terms these as the “centripetal” forces. In a heteroglossic novel, however, along with the centripetal forces, there exists “centrifugal” forces that create a conflict. This refers to the double-voicedness of a parodic discourse that has two discourses that pull the discourse to two different directions. The centrifugal forces decentralize a novel by using parody to debase everything that the elite culture in a society has deemed to be serious or fearful like, for instance, the three pillars of the symbolic order- “Religion, Morality and Law” (Kristeva 16). Such a parodic debasing, points to the unwillingness of someone to follow the order of the system and fear those who are placed in the upper rungs of the society. Hence, as mentioned above, laughter destroys fear and parody subverts hierarchy.

It also points to the disobedience to accept the fixed meanings and categories that the high culture has set for the rest of the society, by inducing ambiguity. The discourse within a novel is polyphonic, which means there is a clash between the consciousness of the author and the characters and no single meaning or point of view is finalized by the author as the correct one. The unfinalizability of the novel, in terms of its ending and meaning, points to the refusal of novelistic discourse to dictate meanings and create fixed semantic divisions. The unfinalizability of the novels springs from the fact that the novel is situated in the present. In Bakhtinian terms, anything that is situated in the present loses its completeness. It becomes part of the inconclusive present that is moving towards the inconclusive future. “Through contact with the present, an object is attracted to the incomplete process of a world-in-the-making and is stamped with the seal of inconclusiveness” (30). Because of this, the context of discourse is in a constant flux. As the context renews itself, so does the semantic stability.

There is no single fixed or ideal meaning and also the last word is yet to be spoken.

Bakhtin talks about the tendency of certain narrative forms, which are not epics, like the ancient heroic songs, that attempt to adopt the form of the epic and give the characters and the events in the narrative a grandeur of epic dimensions. An attempt to glorify the values of the world founded by fathers or in simple words, the patriarchy. *Frankenstein* reinforces the values of a traditional patriarchal system. In terms of point of view, the author, Mary Shelley, is completely voiceless and does not express her viewpoints anywhere in the narrative. The story is narrated through three main characters namely, Walton, Victor and the Creature. In this sense, *Frankenstein* is a polyphonic novel. The novel does give the Creature, a marginalized figure, a voice to express his struggles and even manages to evoke a sense of pity towards him. However, the fact remains that the author makes a conscious effort to evoke fear through the image of the Creature which the narrative unambiguously deems monstrous. The Creature is an abjection, a crisis to the social order and an aberration in the categorical system.

Victor Frankenstein emerges as an Aristotelian tragic hero, following the models of not only Prometheus but also characters like Icarus and Goethe's Doctor Faustus. His *hamartia* or tragic flaw consists of his disobedience. Victor was discouraged by his father, Alphonse Frankenstein, from reading the volume of works of Cornelius Agrippa, an alchemist and necromancer, which he accidentally found in the inn, Victor and his family were staying while on a tour to Thonon. Alphonse Frankenstein, according to Victor, found these works as "sad trash" and a waste of time (31). However, Victor goes on to read Agrippa, disobeying his father's orders and is swayed by his newfound knowledge of the branch of natural philosophy. Inspired by Agrippa and natural philosophy, Victor moves on to other philosophers like Paracelsus and Magnus as well. Alphonse Frankenstein here, is an authoritative figure not only in terms of being the patriarchal head of the family of the Frankensteins, but also the patriarchal law. He is the authoritative figure whose responsibility is to restrain the members of his family

from going astray. Victor's flaw, then, is that he disobeyed the Law of the Father, which culminates in the apparent disastrous birth of the Creature- the one who would later instigate disorder and categorical catastrophes. Read in this way, *Frankenstein* is modelled in the form of ancient tragedies that belonged to high literature.

Mary Shelley's anxiety of authorship works its way into her writings and specifically in *Frankenstein* by inhibiting her female voice and at the same time in alluding and weaving into the fabric of her novel, the myriad other echoes of sovereign and canonically consecrated male literary voices. *Frankenstein* is a homage to the writings of Aeschylus, Milton, Goethe, Coleridge, Shelley and many such male authorial figures. *Frankenstein* embodies all the aspirations to be part of the elite canon. It concurs with what Bakhtin talked about the tendency of contemporary writers, who are nostalgic of the past, to attach their works "to the world of fathers" and "of beginnings and peak times" and thus, ensure the inclusion of their works in the official canon (13).

Parody aims to destabilize the order of hierarchy set up by the law of patriarchy. Bakhtin called this the 'carnivalization' of literature. Bakhtin drew up the concept of carnivalization of literature, after studying the medieval culture of carnival. He found that what parody did to literature, in terms of destroying pious seriousness and subverting hierarchy, is actually an imprinting of what a carnival did as a social phenomenon, to the society.

According to Bakhtin, the carnivalization of literature is best illustrated in the works of Rabelais, especially, in his pentalogy *The Five Books of the Lives and Deeds of Gargantua and Pantagruel*, or *Gargantua and Pantagruel* in short. This is a series of five novels he wrote on the characters, the giants Gargantua and his son Pantagruel, in a mock- epic fashion. In *Rabelais*, Bakhtin largely focusses on the unique character of the Rabelaisian images. He analyzes the various aspects of the images of Rabelais and theorizes how it embodies the

rebellious spirit of non-conformity to everything that the literary canon stood for. In short, Rabelaisian images are non-literary images. The humour and debasing element associated with these images were aimed at everything that embodied an official seriousness and authoritative supremacy. Moreover, Rabelais' inspiration and the source of all his humorous expressions were the folk culture of the Middle Ages and the peculiar linguistic expressions and humour that originated from certain social spaces as well as milieu of the time. Bakhtin establishes the marketplaces of the time as the main centres of popular culture and the source of all the peculiar folk expressions, language and mostly humour of Rabelais. This was revolutionary because, this culture belonged to the common people who were relegated to the lowest rungs of the society. These people and their culture were seldom represented in the mainstream literature which only talked about the elite. The culture of folk, and the popular laughter associated with it, were never considered as a respectable subject. Humour and laughter were always considered as inferior genres, from the time of Aristotle, as compared to the genres like epic and tragedy that handled more serious subjects of heroism and piety. Therefore, the work of Rabelais offered a chance to not only explore the untapped world of folk humour but also to democratize the literary space by openly challenging the literary hierarchy that placed the culture of the common people outside the official canon.

Bakhtin saw novelistic parodies as a natural percolation into literature of what the carnival culture and the various rituals associated with it did to the society. Parodic writings are where the carnivalization of literature is most visibly seen. Bakhtin traces the origin of parodies to the medieval custom of writing comic literature that parodied the sacred scriptures in Latin and other scholarly compositions. This was one of the forms in which the carnival manifested at the time of the Middle Ages. The carnival was an integral part of the culture of the Middle Ages. The existence of such a culture meant in the Middle Ages that they were tolerant towards a culture of humour and also were ready to participate in a ritual of laughing

at oneself. The rituals and festivities associated with the carnival were something that was part of the consecrated tradition.

Carnival culture sought to ridicule all aspects of serious and official culture. The parodying of writings like the scriptures which are usually considered sacred and scholarly writings, like *Grammatical Virgil Maro*, that form part of serious literature, are some examples of the ways in which the official culture was mocked. *Risus paschalis* or “Paschal laughter” and “Christmas laughter” were a part of the venerated tradition of medieval festivities which consisted of parodying the holy scriptures. Bakhtin cites a few examples like the “Cyprian’s Supper”, “The Liturgy of the Drunkards”, “The Liturgy of the Gamblers” and “The Will of the Ass” which were all grouped under the term “sacred parodies” (14).

Continuing in the similar vein, there were the parodic versions of feasts, that the church conducted during religious festivals. Bakhtin lists a few of them like the “feast of fools”, “feast of the ass” and Easter laughter. These comic feasts were conducted parallel to their formal counterparts and were considered as an equally respectable tradition. These feasts were peopled with comic characters like jesters, clowns and dwarfs who play out the roles of kings and other elite members of the society, thus debasing them. Bakhtin uses the term “uncrowning” to refer to this aspect of debasement (197). Uncrowning in simple terms, was the act of bringing down, through laughter, something that has been distanced or placed on a higher plain, than from a space of familiarity, through reverence or fear. For instance, the parodies of scriptures as well as the comic feasts, through the comic depictions of the divine and the aristocracy, succeeded in removing the fear which they usually evoked in common people. Bakhtin talks about the comic cults that abused deity through expletives. The important aspect of the medieval society was that this act of uncrowning was not considered offensive but was included as an important part of their culture. The reduction of reverent distancing brought everyone on the same familiar plane. This is an important step towards erasing the various hierarchical borders that

divide people and induce inequality.

As Bakhtin points out, the purpose of all the hierarchical divisions was to consecrate inequality. Moreover, the carnival humour whether in the form of parodies or other festive forms, is directed at everyone, including the one who is laughing. While discussing the attributes of parodic novels, it was discussed, how unlike the epic it criticized itself. Parodies mock the structural rigidity and completeness of the canonical genres but at the same time invite one's attention to the incomplete and open-ended nature of itself. This is also an inherent property of the carnival humour. The carnival laughter is ambivalent. Its mockery is aimed at everyone equally. Bakhtin here invites one's attention to the intrinsic quality of humour in democratizing art.

In most cases, such comic expressions are considered of lower taste and expelled from the official systems like the church, law, political systems and aristocracy. The aspect of laughter, places them outside the rigid boundaries of a patriarchal society bound by the serious institutions of Religion, Law and Morality. Laughter disobeys borders through debasement; it brings down things and people which are placed in a hierarchically higher position through tradition. Breaking down of hierarchy results in the intermingling of elements that were separated by ideas of purity. Hence, in serious societies that follow such ideas of purity and separation, laughter and humour are generally considered coarse and dishonourable. One has to also see that carnival humour was especially frowned upon by the later Christian societies which tried to 'civilize' many of the ancient carnival rituals. Many of the Christian feasts that one observes today can be said to be refined forms of ancient carnival rituals. Many of these rituals were culturally linked to ancient pagan culture, connected with agrarian events, and therefore a case of contention for the elite Christian communities. These comic festivities were hence watered down into more refined and elite versions by Christianity.

According to Bakhtin, the carnival created a second world that consisted of everything that the official world was not. In a society that is tolerant of carnival humour, every aspect of the official system would find a comic double. Hence, carnival culture created a second world that consisted of inversions of the things in the official world. This aspect of the medieval age was what Bakhtin and Rabelais insisted on bringing back through their works. Rabelais' work permeated with the material body principle. In Bakhtinian terms, material body principle refers to the portrayal of body with its eating, drinking, defecating and copulating aspect. A typical Rabelaisian image is an extremely exaggerated image. Such depictions are subversive for they do not appeal to the aesthetics of the elite. His images were criticized by some as being grossly biological and for his "physiologism" (*Rabelais* 224). Rabelais' images featuring feasting, drinking and copulation also conveyed a sense of richness and indulgence which were also interpreted as being too materialistic. However, Bakhtin considers these readings as narrow-minded and as suffering a lack of understanding of the aesthetics of humour contained in the culture of folk. Such images can also be found in other works of Renaissance.

Bakhtin places the images of the material bodily principle under the broad term of grotesque realism. In grotesque realism, the exaggerated images of bodily aspect, mentioned above, are not depicted as vulgar or indecent. They are deeply positive. Bakhtin calls it as "positive hyperbolism" (278). The exaggeration contained in these images is not without purpose. According to Bakhtin, they point to the universal character of these images. They become vulgar only from an individual or private point of view. But Rabelais' image of the body is the body of the people or a community as a whole. These images stand against everything that is pretentiously pious and austere. Parodic texts infuse such images within the narrative of a canonical genre and thereby brings it down to the level of bodily or earthy level from its solemn state. It conveys the very ethos of cornucopia and exudes a certain spirit of the "gay principle" of the world (22). This is the spirit of carnival that is embodied in these images.

As Bakhtin writes in his introduction to *Rabelais*: “Abundance and the all- people’s element also determine gay and festive character of all images of bodily life; they do not reflect the drabness of everyday existence” (19).

Another aspect of the Rabelaisian images is its ambivalence. Parody degrades and brings down everything that is polished and complete, but it also renews. Canonical genres place their elements on a pedestal which is the heaven, whereas parody brings them down to the earth. Earth in carnival terms, is seen as an enlarged womb or a grave that has a dual and ambiguous purpose. It exists as an organ that engulfs and digests everything but is also something that gives birth and renews things. When it comes to grotesque realism, the downward, degrading aspect of the earth is replaced by the bodily aspect, that is, the lower part of the body consisting of the reproductive organs and the digestive system. This part of the body symbolizes its dual aspect, which is the ingesting and digesting of the food as well as the birthing of a new life. Hence, like the earth, it both destroys and renews. Everything in carnival assumes such a double aspect. Such an ambiguous status of things, destroys the compulsions for a fixed and complete meaning. It gives space for multiple voices and meanings to come together and conflict with one another. Hence, the parodies, that are carnivalized novels, become an active discursive space of conflicting discourses. It does not deny the existence of a conflicting element but provides a democratized space for a discourse.

The grotesque body in terms of the Rabelaisian and the Renaissance literature, did not mean the personalized body of a single individual. It is the body of the collective people. A carnivalized image of the grotesque body celebrated the defecating, copulating, eating and drinking body. This denied the more polished description of the body, in patriarchal terms, with its unified and completed image. It was described, how during the Soviet era, the official sanctioned version of the human body was that of a complete and asexualized one. The carnivalized image of the human body travesties the concept of a ‘pure’ body sanctioned by

the symbolic order. Kristeva mentions that in religion, impurity is imposed on matters that have no direct relation to the 'Temple'. Kristeva writes:

Commentators have noted that if biblical impurity is from the outset tied to the religious cult since the impure is that which is excluded from the Temple, it deals with matter (food, menses, leprosy, gonorrhoea, etc.) having no immediate relation to the sacred place. (93)

Impurity is inscribed on things on the basis of their having no relation to religion or patriarchy. Kristeva writes: "Biblical impurity is thus always already a logicizing of what departs from the symbolic, and for that very reason it prevents it from being actualized as demonic evil. Such a logicizing inscribes the demonic in a more abstract and also more moral register as a potential for guilt and sin" (*Powers of Horror* 91). Kristeva lists a few examples considered as abject like food, menses, gonorrhoea, leprosy. All of these connote to the more broader acts coming under abjection, like ingestion, reproduction, sex and parturition. The reason why these become a cause of concern for the patriarchy, is explained by Kristeva in her work, where she discusses the patriarchal concept of the "boundaries of a clean and proper body" (101). Kristeva talks about how a body that is infected with leprosy is made into an impure body by biblical and patriarchal definition of a pure body. A patriarchal order, believes in the concept of a clean and proper body bound by strict boundaries from all sorts of external 'impurities'. Leprosy affects the skin which is the cover or the border that insulates the body from the outer environment. It also affects the concept of the bodily integrity and identity. The marks of infection on a body affected with leprosy, are laden with pus and blood. This makes it a body that creates disgust in others. In other words, it becomes a body of abjection. This is because the pus and the blood, which are supposedly elements that should reside within the body have transgressed their physical borders and are ejected out.

Kristeva says how this disgust of a body, laden with leprosy, is transferred to maternal body as well. The maternal foetus is an ambiguous entity that nourishes and yet commits the violent act of expulsion of the foetus during childbirth. The maternal insides that are bared during the childbirth, in symbolic terms, remind one of a body with leprosy. The maternal body becomes a decaying body rather than a nourishing body. Unlike in the carnival world, the symbolic order, which relies on fixed definitions and not ambiguity, cannot tolerate the dual status of the maternal body which comes forth as both a nourishing and an expelling body. Kristeva writes: "The body must bear no trace of its debt to nature: it must be clean and proper in order to be fully symbolic" (102). Hence, milk, blood, pus and other bodily fluids that are ejected out, turn the body into an impure one. "Any secretion or discharge, anything that leaks out of the feminine or masculine body defiles" (102). A masculine body that secretes, becomes a part of the nature, and therefore departs from the symbolic. It becomes an impure body like the maternal body which is inherently impure due to its maternal function.

Bakhtin's description of a body in terms of the canon, completely overlaps with that of the symbolic order. Bakhtin talks about the refined and civilized depictions of the human body that are complete and separated from other bodies. It is not a body that is in its intermediate state like the carnivalized body. There are no signs of the various orifices which signal its unfinished status. Bakhtin writes: "Corporal acts were shown only when the borderlines dividing the body from the outside world were sharply defined. The inner processes of absorbing and ejecting were not revealed" (*Rabelais* 29). However, the carnivalized body which celebrates the various orifices of the body, brings down this concept of a pure body. It celebrates the various ruptures of the body that violate their limits of their personal bodies and connects with the nature and the collective body of the people. The overt images of bodily aspect like ingestion and copulation, present in the carnivalized literature, celebrate this aspect of the body.

The grotesque image of the body appears vastly in the works of Rabelais. It was also a common subject during the festivities of Middle Ages, like the mystery plays, diableries and farces. The term grotesque, according to Bakhtin, comes from the word *grottesca*, the name given to the ornaments, Roman in origin, that were found by the end of fifteenth century. These ornaments had forms of nature like plants, animal and humans that were depicted as being intermingled and as Bakhtin notes: “These forms seemed to be interwoven as if giving birth to each other” (32). This is where the idea of grotesque imagery first emerged. The classical period frowned upon the grotesque imagery and hence, during this period, grotesque imagery was relegated to the lower sphere of art, mainly consisting of comic art forms like the masks.

Bakhtin points out how the term grotesque came to be used to mention the ancient terracotta figurines like the Kerch collection and a particular artwork found there. One of the features of such grotesque artworks was the doubling aspect. Fertility was a major theme among them. Bakhtin mentions the figurines of the pregnant hags, included in the Kerch collection as an instance. The concept of ambivalence was deeply inherent in these artworks. The hags represent senility and decay but also the birth of new flesh. Life and death were fused with one another in these grotesque images. The figurines were mostly chimerical. Chimera, which refers to forms that combine heterogenous elements, became a defining aspect of the grotesque. It again revolted against the completed, pure and homogenous art forms of the classical styles. However, the connoisseurs of classical temperament could only see gross exaggeration in these works. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the literature and art of grotesque nature were pushed down the canon and declared as ugly and monstrous. However, the grotesque art forms still managed to thrive, especially in literature, even though they were marginalized by the elite culture.

Bakhtin studies Rabelais because according to him, it is in Rabelais that the folk humour is best manifested. Bakhtin gives instances of various writers and critics who tried to define

and write about grotesque realism and failed. According to Bakhtin, Rabelais alone could absorb the true meaning and depth of folk humour. Through the history of Rabelais, Bakhtin portrays the history of laughter itself. As Bakhtin mentions: “His work is an encyclopaedia of folk culture” (58). One of the points that Bakhtin had kept emphasizing in his work on Rabelais was the way the culture of carnival in general and laughter in particular is indestructible, despite the overriding culture of seriousness that had tried to suppress it from time to time. This may justify the claim of Bakhtin that laughter is an essential principle of life.

Laughter during the time of Renaissance had a special significance. Bakhtin lists Hippocrates, Aristotle and Lucian as three important sources of laughter, that had influenced Rabelais in writing his novels. All the three writers stress the importance of laughter in the life of man. Hippocrates considers laughter to be therapeutic while Aristotle points out that it is not an abnormality, but a privilege to be able to laugh. It is in Lucian’s works like “Menippus, or the Descent into Hades” that one could encounter the images of hell and death being used in a comical sense, as something to be laughed at and not feared. In the second chapter, it was discussed how in Bible, a downward descent was considered unfavourable. It is the bodily site of abjection and also symbolizes a descent unto hell. In Christianity, hell bears a fearsome image and bears all kinds of nightmarish portents. In medieval comic literature, however, hell is the locus of festivity and all kinds of indulgences. This is an essential philosophy of carnival.

Similarly, death does not carry any horror and is not considered the culmination of anything. Life and death are intermingled phases in the world of carnival. The grotesque image of the laughing pregnant hags, mentioned before, denotes this state of both life and death, intermingled, to form an incomplete whole. Carnivalized images are always specialized to form things that are in such a transition stage, in this case between life and death. Death is seen as just a phase that will lead to a new beginning in the circle of life. The earth that swallows and forms a tomb, also becomes a womb that sprouts a new life. Hence, anything that is

carnivalized, has an inherent sense of double-ness and ambiguity about it. This destroys the concept of rigid compartmentalization and fixed meanings that the official world sets up.

In most cultures of the world, one can find the spirit of carnival in its ancient folk customs. For instance, the cockfighting sport is a ritual that was followed in most cultures of the world. In South Asian cultures like India and Indonesia, it was a religious practice, wherein the blood of the sacrificed cocks is offered to the deity. Blood that is usually considered impure in religious terms, becomes a thing of offering in this case. Similarly, the *Meenam Bharani* festival of Kerala, shares a lot of similarities with the European medieval festival of Mardi Gras. In most of the modern cultures, however, they exist in a marginalized state within a more official and serious system. The cockfighting ritual is legally banned in most of the countries. Many rituals belonging to the past are either banned or watered down in the more civilized societies of today. The rituals of bloodletting and animal sacrifice, are completely removed and replaced with more refined versions of the rituals. Most cultures only retain humbling residues of their ancient folk culture. Bakhtin revived Rabelais in response to the erosion and appropriation of Russian folk culture by the Soviet government for furthering their own political ideals. Literature has always been one of those mediums through which people could challenge all kinds of hegemonic tendencies and practices. Bakhtin theorizes the special role of humour in this regard. Fear disappears when one learns to laugh. In literature, humour is manifested through genres like parody. They create a space that is dynamic and discursive. The humorous depictions in parody, about the pretentiousness of such groups, destroy fear. If the Gothic genre tries to percolate fear, parodies try to destroy the same through laughter and ridicule.

Chapter Three

Frankenstein as Gothic Fiction

The Gothic as a literary genre originated in the late eighteenth century, from the 1760s to be precise, in Britain and Ireland. In England, the genre of Gothic fiction was inaugurated by the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764 by Horace Walpole. Walpole was an antiquarian who was interested in the study of medieval romances and ballads, which is thought to have prompted his interest in attempting Gothic fiction. He was also an ardent reader of Shakespearean grotesques whose influence is evident in his horror stories.

Walpole wrote his first ever Gothic fiction as an experiment. It was a work that brought back the use of excessively sentimental elements and dramatic details like mystery, violence, chivalry and perversity in literature, which later became the cornerstones of Gothic stories. However, the publication of this work happened in the backdrop of the neoclassical era which considered such sensational elements as crude and excessive. The neoclassical writers preferred a restrained and controlled mode of writing. Because of this reason, Walpole had initially published his debut novel in the pretext of a translation of an old Italian story, which he claimed he found in the private library of a Catholic family. He had presented the novel in the guise of an old manuscript, by writing the whole novel in ancient English script and even manufacturing the names of the author and the translator, to completely hide his part in the writing of the Gothic story, probably fearing the onslaught of the neoclassical critics. It was upon the success and favourable reception of his work by the reviewers that he finally acknowledged his authorship. It was in the second edition of this novel, that Walpole introduced the term 'Gothic' to the reading public through the now modified title, *The Castle*

of Otranto: A Gothic Story.

Ghosts, apparitions and superstitions have been a part of stories from antiquity and one can find that ghost stories make up a good part of the folk tradition in most cultures of the world. However, the term 'Gothic', in terms of literature, was applied to the literary productions that followed the publication of Walpole's horror story in 1764, in Britain, and continued into the 1800s. The fiction that was published in the name of Gothic literature had a predictable and set pattern governing its themes, setting, tone and mood, much of which was inspired from Walpole's novel. In other words, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* laid the foundation for the conventions of a typical Gothic fiction, for many of its successors especially Ann Radcliffe and Mathew Gregory Lewis.

Walpole's sentimental novel was an attempt at dismantling the tenets of the contemporary neoclassical literary tradition, which dictated emotional restraint and overt rationalism. It rose from his interest in the medieval history and nostalgia for its ancient romantic literature, which contrary to the ways of neoclassical tradition, was a culture in excess, whether in terms of literature, art or architecture. Walpole's writing set the stage for the revival of the ancient medieval romances characterized by their presence of overt sentimentalism and a general excess and ornamentation in terms of style, themes, setting and even the peculiar properties of the characters depicted. In terms of depicting excess, it might seem that Gothic fiction has characteristics that may be termed as carnivalesque. Much like the medieval carnivalesque which ridiculed any kind of seriousness, Gothic excess in Walpole and early Gothic writings wished to attack neoclassical piety. The grotesque body is as much a component of the Gothic as much as the carnivalesque. However, the purpose of the depiction of grotesque differs in both. The main purpose of excess in Gothic literature has been always to induce fear and disgust. Carnivalesque laughter and the gay principle, aspects of grotesque realism, have no place in Gothic narratives.

The purpose of this chapter is to delineate some of the features of Gothic texts and read *Frankenstein* in the backdrop of these features. It is difficult to delineate the basic conventions followed by every Gothic fiction, as it is a genre that kept evolving over time. However, unvaryingly, the main purpose of every Gothic fiction has been to provoke the emotion of fear and pity from its readers. Therefore, one could outline certain conventional elements in terms of theme, setting and character, employed by the Gothic writers in order to create an atmosphere of fear and anxiety.

The plot of the earliest Gothic writings under the genre of fiction, is modelled on the features introduced by Walpole in his *The Castle of Otranto*. The controlling patriarch and his hapless and vulnerable female captives were stock characters in these works. For instance, the works of Ann Radcliffe like *The Romance of the Forest*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Italian* as well as M. G. Lewis's *The Monk: A Romance* have used similar plot lines. The settings of these stories also had an agreed formula. They were mostly set in ancient ruined castles, gloomy and dark abbeys or mansions. These ancient settings played an important part in creating an atmosphere of gloom and misery. The ancient ruins depicted in these works symbolize degeneration, a theme prevalent in the Gothic narratives. The ruins symbolize the deterioration not only of the buildings but also of the characters individually and the family as a whole, residing in them. Though *Frankenstein* is not set in any such ancient ruins, subliminal settings are present in *Frankenstein* that mirror the psychological tribulations of the characters. In his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, Chris Baldick writes:

Even more concisely, although at the risk of losing an important series of connected meanings, we could just say that Gothic fiction is characteristically obsessed with old buildings as sites of human decay. The Gothic castle or house is not just an old and sinister building; it is a house of degeneration, even of decomposition, its living-space darkening and contracting into the dying space of mortuary and the tomb...Doubling

as both fictional setting and as dominant symbol, the house reverberates for us with associations which are simultaneously psychological and historical. (xx)

The ruins, most commonly ancient castles or mansions, depicted in the Gothic writings can themselves be read as texts embedded with deeper meanings. The nature of an ancient ruin presents before the readers various paradoxes. In *The Gothic*, David Punter and Glennis Byron note some of these paradoxes endemic to the Gothic ruins. The ancient setting in a Gothic narrative is usually depicted as housing a cursed family, mostly of some aristocratic capacity. It is, in a sense, a domestic space but at the same time, it is also portrayed variedly as a haunted, cursed or a deteriorating space. In a sense, it is a fortified building that is meant to deter any dangers from the world outside it to transgress into its borders but ironically the ruin itself is not a safe space for its inhabitants. In most cases, it is a place of detention, especially for the vulnerable female characters who suffer under the tyranny of the patriarchs of such ancestral houses. Hence, the world that a typical Gothic fiction represents is that of a turbulent domestic space that has lost its harmony.

The Gothic represents an overshadowing of the past over the present. Punter and Byron talk about the ways in which a Gothic ruin blurs the temporal zones between the past and the present. It is a building of the past as much as it is of the present. As Punter and Byron note: “It is a sign of antiquity, of a life that has preceded our own but appears never to have gone away, and as such it refers as much to a condition of the unconscious as to a historical moment of feudalism” (262). A typical Gothic building with its labyrinthine stairs, secret vaults and chambers is not only a repository of ancient memories but also a site of secrets and curses that the inhabitants of the ruin have to confront in the present. The ancient ruins depicted in Gothic literature, mostly the novels, whether in the form of castles, abbeys or graveyards, present to its inhabitants, memories and history worth many a generation. The flow of time and with it, centuries’ worth of ancient memories, curses and sins are fused into a single image of the castle.

The play of the past and present over the body of the castle, creates a sort of perceptive distortion for its inmates. The past makes its presence felt in the present, often, with the help of the supernatural. Hence, the panic that the characters in a Gothic building experience, mostly, is this inability to distinguish whether something is naturally occurring or the work of a supernatural entity. Punter and Byron write:

A common feature of many Gothic castles is that they seem to distort perception, to cause some slippage between what is natural and what is human-made; they act as unreliable lenses through which to view history and from the other side of which may emerge terrors only previously apprehended in dream. (259- 60)

The Gothic ruins symbolize not only the collapse of the physical structures alone, but also a distortion of the human understanding of what is natural and supernatural or human and non-human as well. In *Gothic*, Fred Botting contends that the mostly gloomy and mysterious atmosphere in Gothic is used as an indication of the unpleasant return of the past upon the present: “Gothic atmospheres- gloomy and mysterious- have repeatedly signalled the disturbing return of pasts upon presents and evoked emotions of terror and laughter” (1). For instance, Walpole’s aforementioned debut novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, tells the story of a Lord, Manfred, and his downfall following the death of his son Conrad. The vicissitudes of fortune ensue within the castle after the death of Conrad, as a culmination of Manfred mercilessly acting in fear, under the threat of an ancient prophecy that had hinted at the eventual eviction of Manfred from the castle. Here, the past poses not only physical harm and lack of security but also acts upon the mental faculties of the characters residing within it, prompting a slew of unpleasant events. The ruins work as a slow poison that ominously corrodes the present. The Gothic, is hence, a genre that is obsessed with the past, the aristocracy and tradition. Unlike comedy, it is a genre that is distanced, at least temporally, from the readers due to its obsession with and rootedness in the epic past.

Most of the fiction published during the early Gothic period featured the ruins of castles, mansions and abbeys as settings. Not only the castle in *Otranto*, which is said to have had its walls crumble, whereupon Theodore is left with only the remains of the castle to be master of, but Ann Radcliff's first set of novels like, *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, all feature ruined and gloomy castles and abbeys as their setting. Most of the supernatural and scary events of the novels take place in the backdrop of such ruins. When compared to a fortified and compact modern building, an ancient ruin represents a lack of security, comfort and protection. For instance, in *Romance of the Forest*, the family of La Motte who flees from their creditors, find the abandoned and dilapidated abbey. Upon inspection, it is revealed that it is inhabited by mice, owls and bats. Hence, the setting of a ruined building in early Gothic writings was mostly a locus of dangers and discomfort. Being a repository of memories, sins and curses as well, it became a convincing motif for portraying the cursed past, which stood in the line of the present, ominously imparting fear and anxiety. These ruins belong to the past as much as they belong to the present. One can say that they have a liminal existence.

Coming to *Frankenstein*, though it does not feature aristocratic dwellings or ruins, the motif of a sinful past catching up with the characters in the present, is still played out through other means. In the novel, the protagonist Victor Frankenstein is a repenting scientist who is tormented by the live presence of the 'monster' he created in the past. The Creature haunts Victor and ends up disintegrating not only his family but also the psychological faculties of the protagonist.

Gothic fiction is also a genre filled with ambiguities. The Gothic Revival happened across all over England in the early nineteenth century. It sought to revive the medieval style of Gothic architecture, superseding the existing neoclassical style. The Gothic Revival was considered as a movement that admired and appreciated the Gothic style and art. The peculiarity of the penchant for Gothic writing that started much before in England, especially

in the works of Walpole, Radcliffe, Clara Reeve and Lewis who employed the use of Gothic settings like ruined abbeys, castles and mansions, is that they were intended to provoke a certain disgust for the medieval age and its culture, that was full of violence, repression and cruelty. However, one can also see a certain nostalgia and longing for the past treasures in these works. For instance, even though the Gothic fiction of Walpole supposedly presents the Middle Ages as dark and uncouth, his writing reveals a nostalgic yearning and penchant for the chivalric past as well. Walpole's purpose in attempting a Gothic novel was to bring back the medieval romantic ethos. Walpole had started writing his work after building his villa, Strawberry Hill, in Twickenham which was a precursor to the Gothic Revival in architecture that happened all across England in the nineteenth century. Hence, even though the medieval setting of the ancient ruins in Gothic fiction, with its dark alleys, labyrinths and towers, was supposed to evoke fear and symbolize a past which was believed to be pagan and barbaric, one can also find a certain amount of infatuation for the Middle Ages in these Gothic writings. The paradox within the Gothic genre is the way in which the past can be both interpreted as a demonized entity that overshadows the present and at the same time be glorified through its various ornate descriptions.

The modern and non- aristocratic setting in *Frankenstein* is a result of the change in aesthetic tastes of the writers in tune with the historical and cultural changes. The fervour with which the ancient aristocratic buildings were depicted by the Gothic writers pertains to the renewed interest in the medieval architecture during the eighteenth century. The ancient medieval cathedrals, mansions and abbeys abound in the Gothic literary productions of the time. These became the perfect settings to convey the gloom and decay that the themes of Gothic narratives highly demanded. However, as the Gothic writing evolved over the years, the setting of these stories also shifted from the medieval trappings to more contemporary ones. This is also connected with the way the English society had changed slowly from an agrarian

society, to an industrial hub after the coming of the Industrial Revolution in the 1760s. This led to the mass migration of people from rural centres to urban ones. As Punter and Byron note, a move from the traditional rural surroundings to city spaces marked a shift in the way the social systems were structured. Establishment of new types of works conducive to the city spheres meant new social roles. This led to a breakdown of the traditional systems of family and society. It also promoted a life away from nature and a sense of disconnectedness and isolation set in within the populace. The mechanisation of labour also aggravated the situation. Scientific explorations are said to have destabilized the very notions of what it means to be human. These changes came to be reflected in the Gothic writings as well. The Gothic topography started to move away from the medieval settings to more contemporary ones. Botting writes:

In later fiction, the castle gradually gave way to the old house: as both building and family line, it became the site where fears and anxieties returned in the present. These anxieties varied according to diverse changes: political revolution, industrialisation, urbanisation, shifts in sexual and domestic organisation, and scientific discovery. (2)

For instance, William Godwin sets his Gothic novel, *The Adventures of Caleb Williams; or Things as They Are* published in 1794, not in any ancient dilapidated structures but in a wealthy estate. Similarly, *Frankenstein* published in 1818 has the backdrop of a middle class domestic setting. However, there are certain elements that are retained by Gothic narratives of the post- Industrialisation period. Although the physical setting of the later texts has changed from ancient, ruined and sprawling mansions to comparatively recent settings like simple domestic spaces which might seem less gloomy and ominous, one can see that the characters are made to experience the same psychological torments as typical of the early Gothic narratives and these physical structures, though seemingly harmless or modern, still manage to arrest its inhabitants in the archetypal ethos of the early Gothic narratives. Paranoia, guilt, identity crisis and such psychic issues plague the characters of all Gothic narratives, despite

the spatial or temporal changes in their plot.

In *Frankenstein*, the story is told through three different narratives of Walton, Victor and the Creature, that lie interconnected. The story opens with the Walton's letters, written to his sister Margaret, throughout his polar expedition. The letters consistently update Margaret of Walton's circumstances. Walton's correspondences towards his sister establish him as a man who consecrates filial appendages. In a similar vein, Victor's account of his family and its history, places him in a space of ideal domestic setup. However, the narratives of both Walton and Victor reveal how both are displaced from their secure domestic environments and is forbidden from experiencing any ideal familial bliss. It is ironical because, both Walton and Victor face exile from their homelands as a result of following their own desires and choices. The exile of both Victor and Walton from their affectionate families is self- imposed. In "Mary Shelley's Embattled Garden", Kate Ferguson Ellis talks about this irony. Ellis writes:

It is true that the novel's three interconnected narratives are each told by a man to whom domestic affection is not merely amiable but positively sacred. Yet their enthusiasm is surely undercut by the fact that each narrator speaks from the perspective of one who has been denied the experience he reveres so highly, and who therefore cannot transmit it to a future generation. (181)

The case of the Creature is also similarly interesting. The Creature, while hiding in the cottage of the De Lacey family, is a witness to the affectionate and warm atmosphere of their household. This prompts the Creature to yearn for companionship. However, Victor repeatedly refrains from taking any paternal responsibility over the Creature. He also fails the Creature as a guardian when he refuses to understand his need for companionship. Victor repeatedly recoils from completing the female creature, finally aborting the whole process, which he had initiated to create at the Creature's behest. In short, all the three male protagonists of the novel, fail to

experience the comforts of an ideal domestic life. In “Narrative Distance in *Frankenstein*”, Richard J. Dunn points out how all the three protagonists in the novel yearn for a certain kind of kinship and domestic bliss and how their yearnings remain unfulfilled unto the novel’s climax. All relationships suffer a certain lack in the novel. For instance, Dunn argues how Victor, Walton and the Creature, though touted as symbolic of male bonding, have a misplaced understanding of each other. Victor who values familial relationships and friendships not only refuses to accept the Creature as his progeny but also fails to understand the Creature’s yearning for companionship. Walton’s understanding of Victor is similarly erroneous. Walton venerates Victor and considers him as a fount of knowledge and wisdom. However, Victor proves to be a failed scientist and one can see that not only Walton learns anything considerable from his encounter with Victor that would have assisted him in his exploration, but also, he is forced to give up his mission altogether in the end. This lacuna in understanding each other, as a result of not being able to interpret or decode each other’s conversations properly, is depicted through a narrative structure that is in itself discontinuous. Walton learning nothing from Victor, the Creature’s unheeded repeated requests for company and friendship, Victor’s and the Creature’s encounter that does not happen until the novel’s climax, point to not only the absence of denouement in the stories of all three protagonists’ but also the lack of strong connections and familiarity in between these characters. Dunn writes:

Thus, while repeating one another's stories, which all focus on the need for human interrelationship, the narrators of *Frankenstein* remain half-strangers to one another. Walton admits a sympathy for both the Doctor and the Creature; the Creature Finally declares the love he bears the Doctor, but at no juncture is there the communicative interchange that could sustain friendship and provide a basis for an optimistic social commentary. (417)

Even though *Frankenstein* had moved away from the morbid settings of the early

Gothic writings, it retains the tribulations and vicissitudes that unfurl within the domestic realm, which was a staple theme of the Gothic writings, from the beginning. The basic idea of a typical Gothic narrative has been to induce a sense of insecurity and anxiety. This anxiety is rooted in the anticipation of a systemic breakdown of order. Gothic narratives intend to provoke the reader's anxieties by projecting a situation wherein there is an absolute collapse of order within a particular system. This system may range from a basic family unit to a larger societal order.

Besides the setting, there are other elements that contribute to the creation of a fearsome environment in Gothic fiction. One of the arguments that Botting makes is the difference between the concepts of horror and terror. Both horror and terror are produced by and experienced under different set of circumstances. In *Gothic*, Botting differentiates between the terms 'horror' and 'terror'. He explains horror as something that one feels in the face of an inevitable threat. The reaction to anything that produces horror is a total recoil from the thing that causes the horror, whereas terror, on the other hand, makes one feel a sheer amount of thrill along with fear. It creates in the person beholding the terror, a sense of levitation and excitement. Botting distinguishes between horror and terror by using an analogy of the dilation and contraction of the pupil. He writes: "Like the dilation of the pupil in moments of excitement and fear, terror marks the uplifting thrill where horror distinguishes a contraction at the imminence and unavoidability of the threat" (6).

Despite the fact that *Frankenstein* was written during a period when the setting of the Gothic stories was slowly moving away from ancient aristocratic ruins and dilapidated Catholic structures to more urban and industrial settings and that the predominant setting in *Frankenstein* is urban, the natural surroundings play a vital role in the novel, especially to reflect the varying psychological moods of the protagonists. For Walton and Victor, nature initially is a source of wonder and curiosity. In the beginning of the novel, when Walton reaches

Petersburgh, he is filled with an ecstatic pleasure after getting a whiff of the northern breeze that had travelled all the way from the Pole. The feelings of Walton, as he expresses to his sister in his letter, are a mixed one of ecstasy, anticipation and delight. There is an anticipation regarding the Pole being a “seat of frost and desolation”, however, it is quickly replaced by his wishful thinking that it will instead be a “region of beauty and delight” (13). His imagination elevates whenever he writes about the polar extremities. He expects the polar region to be bereft of all snow and frost and be filled with wonders and beauty, the kind not found on any other region populated by human beings. His excitement and fervour can be attested from his following exclamations to Margaret: “Its productions and features maybe without example, as the phenomena of the heavenly bodies undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes. What may not be expected in a country of eternal light?” (13).

Walton’s excitement and delight are however laced with fear that pertains to the fear of the unknown. Walton had chosen to disobey the directive of his father not to venture forth on a seafaring life. So far Walton had had a comfortable domestic life, as he mentions in his letter, “passed in solitude” and “under the gentle and feminine fosterage” of his sister (17). Other than the experiences he gained by training voluntarily under whale fishers and ordinary sailors, he was still not completely adapted to a seafaring life. This is evident from his confession to Margaret of his distaste of the usual savage treatments that are meted out to the inmates of the ship. Hence, the unknown both excites and scares Walton. As he himself writes in the letter, there is a natural fear of danger and death that Walton feels, however, it is trumped by his excitement for the glorious endeavours that he had planned for himself. After describing the prospective findings he may be a witness to in the polar region, Walton writes of his feelings:

These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death, and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native

river. (13)

Walton's exercise of recording and narrating each and every event that occurs during his voyage, to his sister, may also be considered as an admission of his unease and anxiety over the prospects of his journey, which may be quelled only by writing and sharing it with someone else. As he writes:

These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven; for nothing contributes so much to tranquilize the mind as a steady purpose- a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye. (14)

This mixed feeling of both excitement and fear that Walton experiences at the prospect of setting foot on the Pole, maybe termed as a depiction of the sublime. The sublime was an important concept in the aesthetic studies and was of much interest to the Gothic narratives of the eighteenth century. Mary Shelley has evoked the Gothic terror of the sublime in *Frankenstein* in many instances.

The aspect of sublime was first propounded by Longinus in his treatise *On the Sublime*. In the eighteenth century, Edmund Burke brought out his work on aesthetics, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. It was published in 1757 and distinguished the attributes of the sublime and how it differed from the beautiful. Burke mentions many attributes that contribute to the feeling of sublime. According to Burke, the enormity of dimension is a cause of the sublime. Vastness and infinity are both sources of sublime. He writes, "Infinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful terror, which is the most genuine effect, and truest test of sublime" (99). What Walton experiences is the subliminal terror of encountering the vast and infinite expanse of polar regions. Walton's description of the Pole as a land of wonder and beauty with the eternal light of sun radiating

from the horizon, paints a picture of sublime wonder. This feeling of sublime is an excess. It is an emotion that cannot be comprehended easily by the individuals. The agitation and anxiety that Walton experiences before commencing on his writing of the letter could be attributed to this feeling of sublime. He can contain them only through his writing. His confession to Margaret that he needs “keeping” and his desperate need for a friend who could refine him, also point to this agitated nature of his (16).

Victor is also similarly affected by the sublime terror. Botting writes in *Gothic* that natural scenery is an important source of the sublime. The vastness and infinity of natural surroundings filled human beings with a kind of joy and wonder and at the same time with a fear of extinction. This fear arose from the instinctual feeling of the individual’s self-preservation. While recounting his story, Victor talks about the sublime setting of his childhood home. “...the majestic and wondrous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home- the sublime shapes of the mountains; the change of seasons; tempest and calm; the silence of winter, and the life and turbulence of Alpine summers-...” (30). Victor was driven by a curiosity to divine the causes of natural phenomena as well as their secrets. The curiosity sometimes drove Victor to ‘violent temperaments’ and ‘vehement passions’ (30). Both Walton and Victor face agitation in the face of the sublime. Burke explains how curiosity is the “first and simplest” emotion which one can discover in human mind. Anything novel can invoke desire and pleasure (21). This curiosity for the novel, according to Burke, “has an appetite which is very sharp, but very easily satisfied; and it has always an appearance of giddiness, restlessness and anxiety” (32). Mary Shelley probably had Burke’s philosophy in mind while writing about the violent passions of both Victor and Walton. Victor while meandering through the stretch of the glacier of Montanvert, towards Mont Blanc, is struck by a melancholic charm by the ambience of the mountainous range, the snow ravines, the pines, swirls of mist and the rain. Victor is prompted to remember the lines from Shelley’s poem “Mutability”, which talks about the transient nature

of human emotions, desire and impulses. It also reflects Victor's restless mind. Victor says:

Alas! why does man boast of sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows, and a chance word or scene that that word may convey to us. (76)

Nature provides pleasure and solace to Victor at many points in the novel. Filled with the remorse over the deaths of both William and Justine, Victor finds calmness in nature when he spends his time at the lake. He finally leaves home and makes a pilgrimage to the valley of Chamounix. This mountain range is a source of subliminal terror in Shelley's poem "Mont Blanc". The magnitude and vastness of the mountain range also create an awe in Victor. The dispirited mind of Victor is suddenly elevated as he starts traversing through the mountain roads. Victor says:

The weight upon my spirit was sensibly lightened as I plunged yet deeper in the ravine of Arve. The immense mountains and precipices that overhung me on every side- the sound of the river raging among rocks, and the dashing of the waterfalls around, spoke of a power mighty as Omnipotence- and I ceased to fear, or to bend before any being less almighty than that which had created and ruled the elements, here displayed in their most terrific guise. (73)

Here Victor's mind is elevated by the immensity of the mountain range. In another instance, Victor similarly finds calm in the presence of snowy mountains and lake, while at Lausanne, when he was devastated by the news of death of William.

The Creature also finds solace in nature. While living in hiding in the hovel of the De Laceys, the Creature gets to witness the change of seasons. After the winter which had left the earth "bleak, damp and unwholesome" the earth turns green again with the coming of the spring

(89). The Creature finds the season of spring especially elevating. He exclaims: "Happy, happy, earth!" (89). The songs of the birds and the springing forth of the leaves and buds enchant the Creature and fill him with joy and hope regarding his future, who is able to finally forget his tortuous past experiences.

Mountains were considered the most supreme sources of sublime, says Botting. He writes:

Mountains, once considered as ugly blemishes, deformities disfiguring the proportions of a world that ideally should be uniform, flat and symmetrical, began to be seen with eyes pleased by their irregularity, diversity and scale. The pleasure arose from the range of intense and uplifting emotions that mountainous scenery evoked in the viewer. Wonder, awe, horror and joy were the emotions believed to expand or elevate the soul and the imagination with a sense of power and infinity. (25)

This is evident in Victor's observations while in Chamounix, when he talks about the "abrupt sides of vast mountains", "the icy wall of glacier that overhung" him, and the "solemn silence" broken only by the brawling waves or cracking of the avalanche (74). He says: "These sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving. They elevated me from all littleness of feeling;" (75). Victor talks about a "tingling long- lost sense of pleasure" that he experiences as he walks through the valley (74). The wind, the pale lightnings and the flowing of the Arve smoothen his anxious mind and calm him. Botting says that the feelings of terror, wonder and awe that one experiences in the face of the sublime, are comparable to those of a religious experience. The immensity of Gothic settings or structures and its irregularity overpower the one who gazes at it with a sense of infinity. Similar sentiments are echoed by Victor at the time he is surrounded by immense mountains and precipices as well as the sound of the river, when he says that he felt the presence of a

power intimating the Omnipotence.

Coming to the concept of horror, it differs from terror in that there is no ethos of pleasure involved in horror. Horror is something from which one recoils. The things that cause horror in Gothic narratives are usually elements that have been considered taboo socially. It is by nature something that is familiar and yet unfamiliar. It is an 'abject'. Abject is that which had been a part of the system but now exists independently, due to its breaking of a rule or crossing of a boundary. It occupies a liminal space. A corpse is a supreme example of an abject. It occupies a liminal space as it represents a presence as well as an absence. The corpse reminds one of its own body's disintegrating and corporeal nature and induces a lack of faith in the structured social and bodily systems hitherto considered as perfect and unified.

An authoritative figure to study the concept of horror theoretically is Julia Kristeva. Kristeva introduced the concept of the abject in order to explain horror. The abject was propounded by Kristeva in her work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, published in 1980. It refers to those elements that have been considered as taboo by the moralizing laws and norms of a typical patriarchal society. An abject is usually a deviant element that disobeys the rules of the society and creates a crisis. Its presence within a system signals a breakdown of social systems, order and hierarchy and hence is a cause for alarm. Accordingly, such elements that are considered as abject, are normally discarded from any system. According to Kristeva, the agent of horror in a patriarchal society is something that deviates from its hegemonic grasp and threatens its power. This is what Kristeva calls by the name of abject.

In *Frankenstein*, the topography of horror is evoked by the mention of charnel houses and morgues, both structures housing human corpses, that Victor frequents in order to conduct his studies on dead bodies. In Chapter four, Victor himself admits that he was struck by a "supernatural enthusiasm" which made him impervious to the horrors of dead human body

(41). The dead body instils horror because it distorts our conception of the healthy human body that one as is used to or as Victor remarks, as a “seat of beauty and strength” (41). Victor examining the gradual decaying of the body and “how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain” are matters that are normally perverse to human beings (41). Victor’s indulgence in such an abject vocation, becomes a transgression of social norms. The clandestine nature of his working bears testimony to this. The clandestine laboratory that Victor sets up above his apartment, hidden away by staircases and other apartments, where he is finally able to animate the Creature into life is something that is no way near normalized behaviour. He himself calls his working chamber as the “workshop of filthy creation” (43). There are also mentions of slaughter houses, morgues, crypts and dissecting rooms that Victor visits as part of his ‘unhallowed’ vocation. All this creates an ambience of horror and disgust.

Fred Botting, in his work *Gothic*, writes, “Gothic signifies a writing of excess” (1). Gothic narratives project cultural and societal anxieties. These anxieties are triggered for an imagined situation of disintegration of the faculties of a particular system, which can range from social, religious, cultural to even personal systems. It is triggered by the fear in the existence of certain elements which are typecast as negative and debilitating due to some inherent deviance in them. The deviance inherent in certain individuals, objects or events renders it possible for the laws of a typical patriarchal society to control, police, marginalize and even oust them from the community. According to Botting, Gothic narratives depict monsters, spectres, evil aristocrats, corpses, skeletons as potential threats to the social well-being. This is not a definitive catalogue and sometimes the narratives of horror added new constructed and imagined horrors to this list of deviant elements in accordance with their particular motives as a measure to expel or marginalize the same.

There is a paradox that is inherent in the Gothic fiction when it comes to the aspect of excess. The messaging in Gothic narratives has always centred around the tragedies that

accompanies excess- of desire, indulgence, emotion, consumption and the like. Gothic narratives decree restraint and control. However, the narratives themselves indulge in excessive sentimentalism, barbaric representations, overt superstitions and delusions. Gothic fiction was often set in overtly imaginative worlds peopled by uncanny figures and the horrors depicted sometimes transgress all sorts of moral and social propriety. Botting writes:

Drawing on the myths, legends and folklore of medieval romances, Gothic conjured up magical worlds and tales of knights, monsters, ghosts and extravagant adventures and terrors. Associated with wildness, Gothic signified an over-abundance of imaginative frenzy, untamed by reason and unrestrained by conventional eighteenth-century demands for simplicity, realism or probability. (2)

According to Baldick, the Gothic fiction definitely holds some obsession for the ancient Middle Ages, horror and sentimentalism, even though it wishes to present them all as blighted. Gothic texts which warned and conjured up an atmosphere of fear and cultural anxiety, signifying the presence of certain elements labelled as deviant and hence monstrous, were ironically itself a deviant form. Through its excess pouring forth of sentimentalism and unnatural passion, it toppled all sense of neoclassical piety and restraint. The kind of superstitions and pseudoscience that is sometimes displayed in these stories questioned rational thinking and logic. It also seemed to relish the violence and criminality that it sometimes portrayed. Along with disgust for the Gothic, there was also pleasure. Baldick mentions that this aspect of the anti- Gothicism of the Gothic literature could be intended as a homeopathic principle, that is, trying to purge Gothicism with Gothicism itself.

In *Frankenstein*, the ambitions of Walton and Victor are depicted as an excess. Both Walton and Victor are driven by Faustian desire for knowledge acquisition. Mary Shelley names Victor as the “modern Prometheus”, owing to the transgressive nature of his actions.

There is a hint of a desire to be an equal to the Gods in the ambitions of both Victor and Walton. When Walton writes to Margaret of the “inestimable benefit” which he “shall confer on all mankind to the last generation” by discovering a passage near the Pole to those places wherein the duration of journey was considerably long or by divining the secrets of the magnet, he is talking about an ambition that is excessive in Gothic terms (13). Divining the secrets of nature, a transgressive act, results in tragedy in *Frankenstein*. Victor’s exclamation seems like a challenge to the Creator: “a new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs” (43). The novel tries to mandate that the excessive ambition of the protagonists is what leads them to tragedy and failure. All the prominent male characters in the novel are driven by some sort of desire and ambition, which remain unfulfilled unto the end. Victor ends up creating a ‘monster’, Walton is forced to give up his expedition mid- way and Henry Clerval, who wished to travel to the Orient and join the colonial enterprise, had to meet with a tragic end in the hands of the Creature. Victor even laments: “A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquility” (44). Gothic narratives seem to subtly dictate the need to control and restrain such excessive passions and not challenge the nature, the Providence or any such patriarchal powers in general.

In a typical patriarchal society, one can always find a rigid hierarchical order being followed. A patriarchal system is also characterized by the presence of rigid categorical divisions and organisation. The intent of horror narratives is to trigger warnings in the imagined situation of the advent of anomalies within such a system. Its purpose is to alert and direct one’s anxieties towards things, people or events that it casts as deviant and hence detrimental to the system. In *Frankenstein*, family is the focal point where all misfortunes and unrest unfurl. As illustrated before, each of the stories in the intermingling web of narratives, has its inception in

the backdrop of an ideal domestic space from which the narrator had to distance himself. Both Victor and Walton had to leave their families behind in order to pursue their respective desires. The vocational ambitions of both Walton and Victor are met with oppositions from their fathers, who wish to uphold the integrity of the domestic system. Walton in his letter to Margaret, writes about his dream of voyaging towards the Pole as well as his source of inspiration:

This expedition has been the favourite dream of my early years. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages which have been made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean through the sea which surround the Pole. You may remember that a history of all the voyages made for purposes of discovery composed the whole of our good uncle Thomas's library. My education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading. (14)

However, as Walton notes in the letter, his father's mandate, while lying on his deathbed had been to restrain Walton from pursuing a marine life. As he says: "These volumes were my study day and night, and my familiarity with them increased that regret which I had felt, as a child, on learning that my father's dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life" (14).

Victor, similarly, was fuelled to explore the world of natural philosophy after chancing up on a volume of the works of the ancient alchemist Cornelius Agrippa. His purpose in life had always been to penetrate the secrets of nature. One can sense a frenzied energy which propels Victor towards his study of natural philosophy, analogous to that of Walton's passion for reading the volumes of works on voyaging in his uncle's library. Victor says: "When I returned home, my first care was to procure the whole works of this author, and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus. I read and studied the wild fancies of these writers with

delight; they appeared to me treasures known to a few beside myself” (32). However, Victor, like Walton, was asked by Alphonse Frankenstein to forsake his pursuit of the chimerical science of Agrippa, in the most depreciating terms: “Ah! Cornelius Agrippa! My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash” (31).

Henry Clerval, who was Victor’s only childhood friend, was similarly a man who had a rebellious penchant for “enterprise, hardship and even danger for its own sake” (30). Clerval’s ambition was to go to India and aid the Empire in its colonizing mission. Clerval too had faced opposition from his father with respect to choosing such a vocation. Clerval’s choice would mean his departure from his community and social class of trading. However, as Victor notes, his firm resolve not to be “chained to the miserable details of commerce” finally succeeds and he too like his friend breaks the barriers of social class and pursues his overseas ambitions (36).

Walton, Victor and Clerval harbour desires that are thought to be detrimental to the integrity of the filial system and is therefore disallowed to pursue them while staying within the system of family. Nevertheless, all three of them disobey the commands of their fathers and in Clerval’s case entices his parent and choose to transgress the borders of the domestic space and venture out in order to fulfil their desires. The narrative sort of legitimizes the prohibitions put in place by the patriarchy, that is, the paternal figures of the novel. The rebellious endeavours of all the men meet a tragic end in the novel, as a sort of cautionary reminder against such transgressive actions. In Gothic fiction, transgressive actions always bring about horror. Gothic fiction in a way is an advocatory narrative for maintaining the discipline, control and restraint of every patriarchal setup.

A typical patriarchal family is an ordered system. The horror element of *Frankenstein*, is the anticipation of and eventual breakdown of this order. Ellis talks about the strict divisions that exist within a patriarchal society. The critic says that the way in which the three narratives

are structured in the novel, is symbolic of the particular loci of civilization in which all the three protagonists are placed. The frame narrative of Walton's letters corresponds to his positioning at the boundaries dissolving into the lands beyond the civilization. This is followed by Victor's narrative indicating the movement from the borders of civilization into the civilized world of a Genevese, middle-class household. From Victor's narrative, the novel leads the readers to the Creature's rendering of his story, which forms the core of the novel. In the Creature's narrative, the readers are introduced to the De Lacey family who lives in hiding within a habitat dissolving once again into areas difficult to penetrate for the normal society. Ellis writes:

It begins and ends with Walton, writing to his English sister from the outer periphery of the civilized world, the boundary between the known and the unknown. From there, we move inward to the circle of civilization, to the rural outskirts of Geneva, birthplace of the Protestant ethic. Then, in the physical center of the novel, and accessible only if one traverses many snowy mountains, we come upon the limited Paradise Regained of the De Lacey family.

Such a positioning is a commentary on the social conventions that control a society and create an impermeable membrane around the community, thereby determining who should remain within it and who should be thrust out. Both Walton and Victor are men led by desires for personal glory. However, as the novel points out, the society which they both inhabit, does not accommodate men with desires as Walton and Victor. The desires of both Walton and Victor, of penetrating into the secret chambers of nature, are transgressive desires, in terms of societal norms.

Walton's desires are always laced with the marvellous. Walton wants to see "a part of the world never before visited" and "tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man"

(13). A penchant for the uncivilized corners of the world makes Walton leave the refined domestic space of his sister's company and acquaint himself with people belonging to the margins, like the whale- fishers and merchants. The life of a sailor as described by Walton mirrors that of a vagabond, enduring "cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep" (14). Walton also speaks of the exercise of brutality that is commonplace in ships. In short, Walton had made himself accustomed with aspects that are a far cry from the civilized world. In a sense, Walton voluntarily becomes an outcast and hence, is placed accordingly in the outskirts of the society in the novel.

Similarly, Victor is driven by the desire for acquisition of knowledge and a strange curiosity to learn the "secrets of the world" (31). Concerned with the bold question of how the principle of life ensued, Victor is stirred into investigating those aspects of science which are on the darker side of the spectrum when looked through the lens of a refined society. Victor says: "My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings" (41). In order to divine the causes of life, he had to acquaint with the dead body, the utmost kind of abject there is. Not only does he frequent the morgues and crypts, after discovering the truth of life, he is motivated to experiment on his findings. In order to perform the hideous task, Victor has to isolate himself from his family and community and confine himself within a chamber hidden from other buildings through a staircase and gallery. The abject nature of his vocation is what forces him to hide his activities from the refined eyes of his society. Victor, too, like Walton becomes a misfit in his own community. The mental tribulations that Victor experiences after the creation of the Creature also make Victor shun humanity. At a later stage, after the Creature wreaks havoc within his family, he states how there has now formed a barrier between him and his community, one that is marked with the blood of William and Justine. Finally, Victor is made to pursue the Creature like a vagrant, who is a corollary of his desire, to the extremities of an uncivilized realm. It symbolically

portrays how men who are driven by desire are forced to face banishment from the community of men.

As Ellis points out, it is not just the three narrators who flit in and out of the realm of civilization. Caroline's father, Beaufort, is forced to exile from his place following his turn of fortune and descent into the working class. Caroline comes back to her erstwhile community only after being reinstated, through her marriage to Alphonse Frankenstein, to her former upper-class status. This shows the strict social barriers and class hierarchies that exist within a patriarchal society. These barriers and class distinctions are put in place to police those elements that are stereotyped to be agents of disruption. The horror deployed in *Frankenstein* is the reaction of such a society towards an incidence of confronting a breakdown in the social and class hierarchies within the system.

Both Walton and Victor are men who venture out of their domestic spaces in search of the marvellous. As Walton points out: "My life might have been passed in ease and luxury; but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path" (14). They had both disobeyed the mandates of their patriarchal authority, to conform to the norms of the society and settle for a peaceful domestic life and instead ventured forth. According to Ellis, domesticity and exploration are mutually exclusive in the novel. Even though Walton and Victor are established as men who consider their family and domestic affairs with veneration, Ellis writes that Shelley had "kept their consciousness and their actions separate". The novel maintains a strict division of gender roles, wherein, ideal women like Elizabeth, Caroline and Agatha occupy the inner domestic space. Even Safie, who was radical enough to free herself from her Turkish father's confinement and escape to Europe, on horseback, all alone and without a male accompaniment, circumscribes herself to her European household, once she starts living with the De Lacey family.

As the women in the novel occupy the inner space of domesticity, the male members

like Walton, Victor, Clerval and the Creature are endowed with a thirst for knowledge and occupy the outer space of exploration. All the men in the novel are portrayed as men with finer sensibilities and affection. Walton's letter to Margaret establishes him as an affectionate brother. According to Walton, he was someone whom the "gentle and feminine fosterage" of Margaret had refined and moulded him into someone who recoiled at the sight of savagery (17). Similarly, Victor was also brought up in an ambience of abundant love and affection. Victor was the only child of his parents for a long while. Victor says:

My mother's tender caresses, and my father's smile of benevolent pleasure while regarding me, are my first recollections. I was their plaything and their idol, and something better- their child, the innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them by Heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery, according as they fulfilled their duties toward me. (27-28)

Victor notes how he was brought up instilling in him the lessons of "patience, of charity and of self- control" (28). Clerval is similarly, portrayed as a noble spirit as well. Victor refers to him as a being "formed in the very poetry of nature", an allusion to Leigh Hunt's *Rimini*, to convey his interest for nature (120). Clerval was also described as an affectionate friend with sensibility. However, there was within Clerval too, a wild and eager temperament, not unlike Victor and Walton, when it came to his vocational aspirations. Victor even says that in Clerval's image he could see the image of his former self, one which was inquisitive and voracious for knowledge and experience. Clerval's interest in the cultures of the East in general and the British colonies in particular, which in European terms represent a darker world and civilization, render his motives as transgressional from a Eurocentric view. Despite the affection and kinder sensibilities of these men, they are portrayed as possessing a certain madness and a fervour for the dark and the unhallowed. This is what makes them quit their affectionate homes and civilized societies. It not only justifies the tragic ending of their

aspirational journeys but also attempts to legitimize the existence of barriers pertaining to social class, economic and family status and also its various divisions and norms, put in place to police its members.

The purpose of Gothic narratives is to project the anxieties of a civilized social system. The projection involves profiling certain aspects, individuals or events as deviant and therefore detrimental to the system. Something is proclaimed as deviant when it does not follow the norms of the society. The social divisions and barriers exist in order to oust such deviant elements from the society. Societal outcasts face a certain liminal experience, being ousted from their community and finding themselves within the borders of civilization.

Such divisions in a social set up were designed to manufacture a kind of otherness towards people, things and events that did not conform to the rules of the society. In the novel, most of the male protagonists face some sort of social exclusion or embargo. The social exclusion faced by Walton, Victor and Clerval were voluntary whereas what Beaufort had to go through was imposed by societal forces, though indirectly, due to his turn of fortune. Women characters in the novel, like Caroline, Justine and Elizabeth who lead strict domestic lives are accordingly placed within the civilized society. In the novel, the only male character of prominence who gets to spend his life within the civilized social circle is Alphonse Frankenstein. The novel makes it very clear as to how the inner circle of domestic life and the external circle of public life are mutually exclusive. Walton, Clerval and Victor, all had to relinquish their domestic spaces in order to pursue their exploratory desires. When it comes to Alphonse Frankenstein, professionally he was a very preoccupied government officer who dedicated most of his youth in the matters of the public and as Victor notes, "He passed his younger days perpetually occupied by the affairs of his country; a variety of circumstance had prevented his marrying early, nor was it until the decline of life that he became a husband and the father of a family" (26). Additionally, just before two years of marriage he had completed

all his public obligations and resigned from his vocation, in order to retire into a blissful domestic life.

Both Alphonse and Caroline strictly observe the conditions and the norms of the society they live in. Caroline's exile from their upper-class society and the subsequent descent into the working-class community, where she voluntarily took up menial jobs for sustenance, like plaiting straw, show a certain religious acceptance and conformity to the norms of society. As Ellis notes in her essay, it is Caroline who works during their exile, so that her proud father does not have to. This suggests a conformity not just to the class hierarchies but also to patriarchal and moral codes of behaviour wherein women are expected to showcase a certain servitude, meekness and acceptance of fate in the face of adversity. This aspect of Caroline is hailed, however, as her show of "fortitude" in the novel (34- 35). One also sees how she adopts Elizabeth who was likewise noble-born yet made the descent into the poorest of social conditions due to her circumstances. Caroline here acts as an agent of re-establishment of the class and social hierarchies by adopting Elizabeth and reinstating her to her former class and social position, just like Alphonse Frankenstein had done with Caroline previously.

Such strict social, class, gender and other hierarchies manufacture a certain otherness with respect to people, things or event that do not fit into such singular and rigid categories. The purpose of such divisions and norms is to exclude and oust such deviant elements outside the confines of the society. Gothic narratives build scenarios wherein the existence and appearance of such deviant elements create horror and chaos within stable communities. The Creature in the novel is a consequence of Victor Frankenstein's transgressive desires. Because of this reason, the novel depicts the Creature as a form that embodies the excess, repressed desires and deviance of Victor's personality. The Creature can be considered as Victor's transgressive double. The Creature seems to create an anomaly wherever he appears. The Creature is presented as an agent of social disruption. The perfect and blissful domestic realms

of both De Lacey family and the family of the Frankensteins are wrecked and thrown into a traumatic maelstrom of tragedies. The Creature's appearance at the peaceful and serene village, lined with cottages and stately houses that represent a stable and civilized community, also leads to a complete disarray.

The crux of the anxiety that is expressed in the novel refers to the presence of elements that are deviant in nature. Deviancy can be attributed to things and people that are constructed different from what the moral fabric of the society decrees, in terms of attributes like their physical structure, emotional, psychological and sexual excesses, physical, mental and sexual orientations and so on and so forth. The societal structures prescribe a certain rigidity, completeness and unity for everything. The ruins in Gothic narratives become sites of horror because they are what a patriarchal system may deem inappropriate. They are incomplete, fragmented and disoriented structures.

Baldick writes about the obsession during the early Gothic period for not only the aesthetic of the Gothic ruins but also for what he calls as the "Gothic fragment". Gothic fragment refers to forged Gothic novels written in the form of partial documents and made to seem like documents discovered from antiquity and thus representing an incomplete and fragmented narrative. This trend of creating Gothic fragments tried to exploit the appeal of the readers similar to the one they had for Gothic ruins owing to its 'fragmented-ness'. It evokes the same thrill and horror of finding something that represents an incomplete whole and also of uncovering the disturbing truths from the past.

The very term 'Gothic' and its etymological origin has an interesting point to make on the composition of otherness. The term Gothic had been believed to be derived from the word 'Goth', which refers to an ethnic group, mostly of Germanic origin who had initially settled in the Baltic region and gradually migrated to southern Europe from the third to fifth century BC,

spreading across the Black sea to the Iberian Peninsula. They are spoken of as the barbaric tribe that brought about the ruin of the Roman Empire. Because of this reason, the term Gothic had been associated from the earliest of times with anything barbaric and fearsome. The very naming of the genre is hence, based on a certain prejudice and stereotyping of a class of people belonging to a certain ethnic community.

Above all forms of othering that take place in the novel, the Creature's position of a "social wretch", as Sylvia Bowerbank refers to the Creature in her essay, "The Social Order v/s the Wretch: Mary Shelley's Contradictory-Mindedness in *Frankenstein*", gains prominence. One of the points that she makes in the essay is about how the liminal status of other characters would dissolve in the novel, provided they leave their ways of waywardness and conform. However, the Creature's wretched status is permanent. Even though the Creature elicits one's sympathy, the novel through the point of view of Victor, attempts to convince the reader that the making of the Creature is a fatal accident. Even though the Creature defends his crimes and sins throughout, he however, repents in the end and confesses his potency to harm:

But it is true that I am a wretch. I have murdered the lovely and the helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept, and grasped to death his throat who never injured me or any other living being. I have devoted my creator, the select specimen of all that is worthy of love and admiration among men, to misery; I have pursued him even to that irremediable ruin. (169)

The Creature also justifies the hatred that everyone harboured towards him by stating his self-loatheness: "You hate me; but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself;" (169).

Frankenstein has also been largely read as an early example of the Female Gothic. The simplest of definitions of the term is given by Ellen Moers in her essay "Female Gothic". Moers

writes: “What I mean by Female Gothic is easily defined: the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic” (90). Moers discusses the works of Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* and the poem *Goblin Market* by Christina Rossetti. The critic discusses the mindless cruelty suffered by Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, the sisters in *Goblin Market* as well as the female protagonists of Radcliffe and looks at them as narratives that empathize with the sufferings of women in a cruel and patriarchal world. Stories of female victimhood and incarceration formed the crux of the Female Gothic. Even though *Frankenstein* lacked any central female characters, Moers discusses it as a work of Female Gothic by interpreting the work as a reflection of Shelley’s repressed female anxieties and insecurities. The author calls *Frankenstein* a “birth myth” because it brings “birth to fiction not as realism but as a Gothic fantasy” (92-93). Birth is portrayed as a turbulent event in *Frankenstein* and this is read by Moers as a reflection of Shelley’s fears and anxieties owing to her personal horror of not only becoming an unwed teenage mother but also losing her children one after the other. This is a reading that establishes *Frankenstein* as empathetic to the women condition and thus goes against the argument of this thesis which tries to read *Frankenstein* as a text that projects patriarchal anxieties of disorder and fall of social and class hierarchies. However, this thesis is of the view that *Frankenstein* is quintessentially a Male Gothic; one that features male overreachers, bent on flouting social norms and suffering an ignoble end. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith in their introduction to *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, argue:

In fact, in *Literary Women* Moers discusses two kinds of ‘Female Gothic’ – what she calls the ‘travelling heroinism’ of Ann Radcliffe’s novels (chapter 7), and the ‘birth myth’ of *Frankenstein* (1831) (chapter 5). It is Radcliffe’s novels with their heroines in flight from male tyrants across fantastical landscapes and in search of lost mothers entombed in womb-like dungeons beneath patriarchal castles which we now tend to

characterise as the beginnings of 'Female Gothic'. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (as Moers herself notes) is in many ways closer to the literature of the male overreacher and thus to what critics have more recently defined as 'Male Gothic'. (2)

This thesis would like to argue that Mary Shelley in her novel takes an ambivalent position of subtly sympathizing and at the same time establishing and legitimizing the abjection and othering of socially deviant, wretched and unfortunate elements. The author has tried to strategically construct the concept of abjection around the Creature and justify the existence of a rigid social structure that is patriarchal in nature and consecrates social, gender, racial and cultural discriminations.

The current chapter has tried to read *Frankenstein* as a Gothic text by referring to some of the prominent tenets of Gothic literature and trying to find its employment in *Frankenstein*. The chapter discussed the evolution of Gothic settings from ancient ruins to more modern urban settings however, contented that it retained the subliminal natural settings as well as the domestic tribulations that formed the crux of these narratives. The chapter also discussed the various themes that contributed to the formulation of terror, by the text's subliminal settings as well as the elements of horror in *Frankenstein* like transgression, excess, social disruption by taking appropriate instances from the text under study. Finally, it was also discussed how Gothic narratives construct an idea of the 'other' and the abject through its variegated mandates and how *Frankenstein* in particular consecrates the notion of other. The chapter also referred to the Creature's abject status that has been unfairly legitimized by the narrative. The purpose of this chapter had been to establish *Frankenstein* as a Gothic text that embodies all the prejudices of the genre as well as a work with an agenda of reinforcing the various social, patriarchal, gender and class distinctions. To conclude, Gothic narratives like *Frankenstein*, are biased narratives and embody authoritarian, discriminatory and repressive ideologies.

Chapter Four

“Speaking to the Mysterious Fears”:

The Case of the ‘Monster’ in *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* when she was just eighteen years old. The first edition of the novel was published in London in 1818. But it was in the second edition, published in Paris in 1821, that the name Mary Shelley first appeared as the author of the book. *Frankenstein* is widely considered as one of the pioneering works in the Gothic genre. The story of the unorthodox scientist and his experiments leading to the creation of his monstrous progeny has managed to grip the imagination of the readers across centuries. The colossal number of reworks done on the novel is a substantial proof of the influence and the significance that the work still excites till date. The ‘mad scientist’ trope that permeated and still continues to make an appearance in the contemporary science-fiction genre and pop culture, is a natural outcome of the popularity that Victor Frankenstein gained over the years.

In the second edition of her work, published in 1821, Mary Shelley writes in her introduction about the circumstances which led to the creation of her novel. It happened while the author and her husband Percy Shelley, were visiting Lord Byron at his residence Villa Diodati in Switzerland in 1816. Mrs. Shelley talks about how the unfavourable weather, the “Year Without a Summer” as the year 1816 was famously called, confined them indoors and forced them to spend the lull time reading. It was here that they chanced upon the volume called *Fantasmagoriana*, consisting of ghost stories in French, translated from German by Jean-Baptiste Benoit Eyries and published in 1812 in Paris. In England, it appeared as *Tales of the Dead*, a year later in 1813. Lord Byron had later proposed, under the influence of reading *Fantasmagoriana*, the idea of writing a ghost story each by all of them, which they all

consented to. Mary Shelley discusses the kind of ghost story that she wanted to write, in her own words, in the introduction to the novel:

I busied myself *to think of a story*- a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror- one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood and quicken the beatings of the heart. If I did not accomplish these things, my ghost story would be unworthy of its name. (3)

Hence, Mary Shelley intended *Frankenstein* to be a horror story. One that would, as she puts, ‘make the reader dread to look around’. Such horror narratives are not alien to any language or culture. From ancient times, human imagination has been fecund enough to populate stories, myths and legends with monsters, demons, giants and other supernatural creatures. The aim was to create an atmosphere of fear and anxiety. One can see that the monsters are an integral part of the narratives that aimed at inducing fear. Old legends handed down to children through grandparents in the form of bedtime stories are similarly filled with the many monsters. The presence of monsters in such stories serves an obvious purpose. The appearance of a monster induces both fear and disgust. Monsters are depicted as dehumanized creatures with exaggerated physical deformities and abnormalities. However, this is not the only reason why monsters are feared. They are depicted as violent agents that wait at the borders, ready to attack anyone who dares to transgress. Hence, in this manner monsters act as a deterrent and a tool to discipline disobedient kids. Not only in children’s stories, in any culture, one can find many beliefs and myths featuring such monstrous creatures which play the same role of deterrents.

When one looks into these myths and legends of old times, one can see that it is not just fear and disgust that monsters and horror narratives induce in the readers. It also creates a

certain curiosity and interest. In “Female Gothic”, Ellen Moers talks about the impressions that the Gothic texts evoked in the readers. These impressions were largely visceral. Moers points to Mary Shelley’s words, “curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart”, as an instance along with other examples to say that Gothic writers aimed at evoking such sensations in their readers, because the readers loved them (3). The reason behind the popularity of horror fiction and films even to this day would testify to this. Stories, myths and superstitions involving monsters and horror elements have always provoked man’s interest. Hence, monsters not only incite fear but also excitement. The reaction of the readers towards monsters is ambivalent in nature. Monsters are terrifying as well as exciting. This ambiguity that is associated with monsters is what makes them interesting.

Kristeva’s concept of abject was briefly mentioned in the second chapter. A monster is what Kristeva would call an ‘abject’. Kristeva developed this theory in her work, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, to explain that people react in horror when they encounter monsters because the arrival of monsters turns upside down their biased understanding of the world. An abject, according to Kristeva, collapses the boundaries of meaning built on hypocrisies and prejudices and as a result, creates chaos. Drawing from the theory of abjection, the monster in *Frankenstein* similarly induces horror because of its abject nature. In the second chapter, this thesis had referred to Lacan’s psychosexual theory. The chapter explains how monstrosity is mostly something assigned by the society to certain individuals or elements that are deviant and do not follow the rules of separation and categorization as deemed by patriarchy. Kristeva deconstructs the psychology of fear by basing her theory of abjection on the psychoanalytic theories of Lacan. The fears that affect a person at an individual level as well as a society at the collective level, can be explained with the help of the theory of abjection.

While expounding his theory on psychosexual development of a child, Lacan talks about the three different stages of development namely- the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the

Real. The Imaginary stage refers to the time when the child is not yet introduced to the linguistic system and has no sense of the self. The child is always in the company of the mother and hence, imagines them both to be of one single entity. The thoughts of the child in this phase are highly unregulated and beyond articulation, as the child is not yet in possession of the means with which to express its thoughts. Later, in the ‘mirror phase’ the child develops a fictional or imaginary sense of the self, which he or she identifies, is separate from that of the mother when one sees his or her appearance while looking at one’s reflection in the mirror. This helps the child in developing a unified sense of the self and also to separate oneself, the ‘subject’, from the others which become his or her ‘objects’. This phase is driven by a want to emulate and become like others around the subject, in order to be a part of their community. Lacan writes: “It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context *as an identification*, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [*assume*] an image—an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity's term, “imago” (*Ecrits* 76).

The child is granted entry into the symbolic order on the grounds that the child learns to separate itself from the mother and become a subject in its own right. The Law of the Father constitutes of Religion, Morality and Law. Entry into the symbolic order also marks the entry into the linguistic system. The linguistic system of the symbolic order is a system of signifiers that symbolically stand for meanings that work only within the system. According to Lacan, it is a phallogocentric system by whose rule, a certain signifier strictly stands for a certain signified, but again as mentioned before, only within the system. Language teaches one to differentiate things on the basis of a relational system, for instance, self/ other, father/ mother, male/ female and so on. With this learning one learns to look at the world as a system of categories based on similarities and differences.

The world is metaphorically represented as a highly ordered system, with things rigidly

compartmentalized and separated from one another with imaginary boundaries. Hence, in the symbolic order the child learns to identify things on the basis of a set of binaries imposed through usage. A unified sense of the self and the world is formed. It refers to one's conscious state of mind that is the centre of all reasoning and critical thinking. Ego is supposed as a stable and ideal unit. One also learns to coherently express one's thoughts, through the language learned in the symbolic order. However, one's admission into symbolic order is not guaranteed by the mere learning of the language but also by the ability to fit into the relational system of things within the order.

In *Frankenstein*, the Creature's initiation into the symbolic order begins while he is residing secretly in the hovel next to the cottage of the old De Lacey and his family. In the novel, Felix De Lacey is seen imparting knowledge to his lover, Safie, who is an Arabian. The creature makes use of this opportunity to learn not only the language and the "science of letters", but also history, manners, governments and religions of the world. The Creature's account is telling of the manner the mainstream discourse of knowledge is structured. The Creature's account of learning exemplifies Lacan's theory about the symbolic order which seeks to depict the world as a system of differences like virtuousness and magnificent/viciousness and base, squalid poverty/ immense wealth, the difference of sexes and duties of each parent and so on. One of the outcomes of such a categorization is the identification and separation of what the patriarchal law deems as acceptable and superior to the one that is not. For instance, the Creature repeats what he learned and the readers understand how the 'slothfulness' of the Asiatics is pitted against the 'stupendous genius and mental activity' of the Grecians, which is a Eurocentric view. Such learning is a prerequisite to build a society that tries to reinforce and continue its hierarchical system. The Creature concludes from his studies that the human society is a "strange system" governed by "immense wealth, rank, descent and noble blood" (93).

However, according to Lacan, the continuity of order in such a system is not absolute. There are elements that disturb or seek to rupture the myth of unity and control in every system. Lacan calls these disruptive forces of the mind as 'desire'. Blind following of one's desires is considered dangerous by the symbolic order. Lacan attributes desire to the various urges or drives of the mind like sex, wine, poetry and so on. They constitute elements that influence one's mind and thinking and force one to break free of the restrictions binding one to a conventional life. This can include any discourse that seeks to subvert conventional and mainstream narratives, like jokes and poetry. For they constantly disturb and play with the rules of language, thereby confusing the conscious mind, as well as, question the dictate of the Law of the Father. This destabilization is not just figurative alone but also literal and can be seen to be taking place at a social level too.

Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*, terms desire as "abject" and the one who goes after the abject as the "deject" (8). According to Kristeva, the deject is a 'stray' because he is on a chase. An abject both attracts and repels a subject. It attracts because of its rebellious ways and the freedom it professes and repels because of the dangers, that one is conditioned to believe, befalls when one breaks the moral codes and allows oneself to be driven by one's desires. Abject, according to Kristeva, is something that has been ejected out of the system and yet does not stop threatening the system from its place of banishment. Abject causes fear, for it threatens to reveal the truth about the system. For instance, the sight of a corpse fills one with disgust because it shows the truth of our existence. It shows that the human body cannot function as a perfect unified system unless it thrusts aside the many 'wastes' in the system, like sweat, menstrual blood, body fluids and pus. Hence, these wastes lie on the other side of the border, of being alive and being a subject. The waste that the body expels in order to be, is abject for it is something that has been expelled out of the system and hence something that has transgressed the borders. The waste remaining in the system would disturb the proper

functioning of the body and therefore they do not belong to the system. Also, the expulsion of these wastes out of the system, points to the various orifices present in the body. This again shatters the myth of the body as a unified and closed system, separated from the other objects. For symbolic order believes every system to be a closed and unified one. However, the presence of the various orifices of the body means that it comes in contact with the environment outside and this marks the obliterations in the boundary that separates the self from the other.

Kristeva says it is this border which separates the living from the dead, like the self and the other, that allows one to be a subject by being on the opposite side of the object. Corpse, also called the *cadaver*, which in Latin means “to fall”, erases this border between the living and the dead (Kristeva 3). As Kristeva writes: “It is death infecting life” (4). Hence, the *cadaver* or the corpse is considered as the utmost form of abjection. Nothing protects or separates the subject from death. It is the abjection of self where one finds oneself expelled beyond the borders. Corpse becomes an object because it occupies that liminal space between life and death. It denotes the absence and yet the presence of something and hence is horrifying. Hence, Kristeva writes: “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (4).

The horror one experiences while confronting an object can be attributed to the uncanny and ambiguous nature it embodies. As an instance, Kristeva gives an example of the sight of the huge, irregular pile of children’s shoes exhibited at the Auschwitz- Birkenau State Museum, belonging to the victims of the holocaust, which she says has an uncanny familiarity to the pile of presents kept under the Christmas tree. Here, Kristeva says, something that symbolizes innocence and childhood, that is, the children’s shoes, here however stand for the memories of something as dark and tragic as the Holocaust and the deaths which followed it. It is this incongruity that fills one with horror and dejection when one watches the exhibits at the

Auschwitz Holocaust museum. In her own words: “The abjection of Nazi crime reaches its apex when death, which, in any case, kills me, interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood, science, among other things” (4).

In short, an abject is something that disrupts an ordered system. Kristeva explains the abject as something that one does not recognize as a thing, for it does not play by the rules of the system. Abject reveals the truth about the weakness of a system and threatens to disrupt its order or identity. An abject due to its ambivalent nature and liminal stature refuses to be categorized. While discussing the symbolic order, it was mentioned how through the phallogocentric system of signifiers, one is conditioned to perceive one’s society as divided into categories with rigid borders, on the basis of similarities and differences. An abject, however, disturbs this order and threatens to create a ‘category crisis’.

However, the patriarchal system makes sure that it represses the acts of any such disruptive forces with the help of strict policing. This is because desires under their spell, can force people to abandon their life in a societal set up with its stringent rules and regulations, and go after their desires. This would point at the weakness of the system and the lack of control of the patriarchal law over its people. The patriarchal law that includes Religion, Morality and Law, therefore conditions one to practise restraint against being drawn towards one’s desires or the abject. This is important for the system to sustain its hierarchical order and structure as well as its smooth functioning. According to Lacan, this gradually leads to the development of a conscience or the ‘superego’. This is the faculty of the mind that inculcates a moral self within. Kristeva calls superego as the ‘master of ego’, which prevents it from being distracted by the abject. It tries to repress any thoughts that are deemed immoral or transgressive to the laws of the symbolic order. Religion and morality inject narratives that profess the dangers of insatiable wants and the chaos that follows when one blindly pursues one’s desires. It aims at cultivating a moralistic conscience and in turn a society that preserves its hierarchy and social

order at all costs.

In *Frankenstein*, the male protagonists like Victor Frankenstein, Walton and the Creature, become men on a quest, driven by their various unnatural desires. The novel begins with the confession of such an unnatural desire through a letter written by Walton from St. Petersburg to his sister, Margaret Saville, reassuring her of his safe arrival, before embarking on his journey towards Archangel. The novel is structured in a Chinese box narrative. Walton's letters to Margaret in the beginning of the novel, act as frame narrative to the succeeding narratives of Victor and the Creature. It prepares the readers to what unfolds in the novel and identify a recurring pattern of events that happens in the lives of the protagonists. In other words, the confessions of Walton's desires, foreshadow those of Victor and even the Creature.

The contents of the letter inform the reader of Walton's intentions behind travelling away from London. The letter begins with a reassurance from the side of Walton to his sister, residing in London, about his safe arrival at St. Petersburg. The letter hints at how Margaret regarded Walton's venture with evil forebodings. Margaret's forebodings once again, portend the readers of the misfortunes and accidents that are waiting to unfold in the story. Margaret's anxieties stem from the nature of Walton's expedition. It was his wish to visit and explore that part of the world that has never been set foot by a man. Walton's desire to explore a world that has not been attempted by any man before makes it an unconventional and dangerous feat. Walton's expedition marks his leaving the comforts of his home and security that the society provides. In other words, Walton transcends the boundaries of his home and society and embarks towards a territory of no rules or security.

Victor Frankenstein was similarly propelled by a unique desire. Victor wished to know the secrets of generating life. His desire, like Walton's makes him shun his society and home. During his two years at Ingolstadt, he refuses to go to Geneva, his native town, and instead

devotes his entire time to experiments in his laboratory. Similarly, his further experiments with decaying bodies which he conducts inside charnel houses, in the darkness and the secrecy of the night, distance him away from the society and his social circles. Hence, as mentioned before, Walton and Victor become the dejects who are drawn by their abject or desire towards a place where boundaries or meanings collapse. They both become strays.

Walton and Victor are depicted as ecstatic and enthused about their desires or what Kristeva calls as “jouissance” (8-9). Jouissance refers to the pleasure or ecstasy that is indulgent and transgressive. According to Kristeva, the subject rejoices in the aspect of being driven by the object of desire but violently. The deject knows, says Kristeva, of the danger and the loss that would occur if he follows the abject, yet, it is the same journey casting himself out of the system that gives the deject the jouissance and therefore, he refuses to separate himself from the abject. “I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation”, says Walton, “it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight” (13).

Walton is passionately drawn to the icy regions of the pole. According to what Walton has confessed to his sister, he has never had a formal education. His learning was restricted to his reading of books which was mostly based on expeditions. This shapes Walton’s desires from an early age and he gradually develops a taste for travel, fuelled by the testimonies he read of the many attempted voyages to the North Pole. He talks about his uncle Thomas’s library which housed a full collection of books on the history of voyages conducted for the sole purpose of discovery.

What attracts Walton to the pole is not just the opportunity to travel but also the prospect of finding something that would bring him glory. As he mentions, he is enticed by the possibilities of finding the secret behind the working of the compass, of observing the planets, discovering a new piece of land or finding a new route to certain countries by which, time spent

for travel maybe considerably reduced. The benefits that he may confer on the future generation through his endeavours and the subsequent glory that he might achieve is what dispels all his fears and indecision regarding the dangers of his expedition. The character trades a comfortable life within his home and society for personal glory. Walton is driven by the unconventional and his rebellious attitude is evident in his neglect of the conventional education system and also in his choice of vocations later. As the patriarchs of the family, one can see Walton's father and later, his uncle forbidding Walton from pursuing a career that would mean his exile from the society and home. They act as the instruments of control that regulate Walton from becoming a deject and he pursues his desire of seafaring only after the death of his father.

The absence of a patriarch's control or the Law of the Father, allows Walton to follow a course of his own. Walton is portrayed as a romantic, indulging in a world of his own making. When his wants of becoming a voyager fades, his interests turn towards poetry, after which he himself confesses to his sister, that he is in a Paradise of his own making, indulging in dreams of becoming a great poet like Shakespeare or Homer. Walton says: "I also became a poet, and for one year lived in a paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated" (14).

His incapacities of becoming a better poet, and also the absence of anyone who could prevent him from pursuing his passion for seafaring, prompt Walton to once again revert his interests towards the same. There is a certain instability and lack of self-control on the part of Walton which make him a misfit according to the codes of a patriarchal society. As Walton himself admits in his letters, even though his thoughts now are more magnificent and elevated, they lack perspective or 'keeping'. Walton confesses how he had had an unsupervised childhood, 'running wild on a common', neglecting his studies and ending up illiterate (16). The author here is subtly attributing Walton's unregulated passion, which is undoubtedly considered even by Walton as an excess and a flaw, to his lack of proper education and

supervision in his early years. In other words, Walton was never properly inducted into the symbolic order, which is why Walton is portrayed as someone who is incapable of becoming stable and controlling oneself.

Walton's desires though varied, be it his wish to become a renowned poet or his wish to set foot on an alien land and pioneer for the cause of mankind, has the common purpose of achieving personal glory. The character wishes to be consecrated as a poet and moreover, admits to Margaret how he would choose glory in place of any other luxury life was ready to offer him. The romanticism involved in championing the cause of humankind, rebelling against all norms and resisting all the comforts of life, was a preferred trait during the time, especially in the aftermath of French Revolution. There was a tendency to look back at the ancient heroes and pagan stories as models for inspiration. One of them, the Promethean myth easily became a template for Romantic writers like Percy Shelley and Lord Byron who would later write the lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* and the poem "Prometheus" respectively. Prometheus was a trickster figure in the Greek mythology. A trickster in the ancient myths was someone with an abundance of intellect and secret knowledge who uses it to transgress the conventional norms and etiquettes. According to ancient mythology, Prometheus was a Titan who stole fire from Zeus and gifted it to humanity.

The attribute that makes Prometheus the preferred model for the Romantics was his rebelliousness and his disobedience towards the authority. The story of Prometheus defying the authority in order to serve humanity became an ideal template to follow during French Revolution. There are many versions of the Promethean myth. The Romantics mainly seemed to have followed the version of Aeschylus, *Prometheia*, a trilogy consisting of plays namely *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Unbound* and *Prometheus the Fire-Bringer*, which additionally portrays Prometheus as civilizing human beings by teaching them science, mathematics, medicine and agriculture. In the versions of Sappho, Ovid and Aesop, the Titan

is said to have formed humankind out of clay. Mary Shelley seemed to have derived influence from both these versions while creating her unconventional scientist who is a Promethean creator of new life and thereby a transgressor of the sacred laws like Prometheus. Even though Shelley attributes the name 'the modern Prometheus' mainly to Victor Frankenstein alone, the trope of disobedience can be seen in other male characters as well. Walton, Victor, Creature and Clerval all disobey their fathers and choose a path of their own volition.

Many Romantics like Shelley and Byron had come up with their own versions of the Promethean myth. Shelley clearly mentions his objective behind writing his version of the Promethean myth, which was to point out the mistake of the oppressed in reconciling with their oppressor. Shelley's version slightly differed from Aeschylus's trilogy. In Aeschylus's version, Prometheus finally reconciles with Jupiter, to find a release from his torment. Prometheus, as a result of his transgressive act angers Zeus, who in turn sentences the Titan to eternal torture by binding him to a rock and sending his eagle to eat his liver, which keeps growing back. The element of torture lies in the aspect of Prometheus not finding a respite through death and being trapped in a Sisyphean cycle of pain and torment. The classicists treated this myth as a warning against overreaching and disobedience. The promethean myth was a lesson of self-control and restraint during the Classical age. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, however, being a Romantic work differs from this classical view. In Shelley's version, hence, there is no reconciliation between the oppressor and the oppressed. Shelley's Prometheus does not bow to the authority and is released when Zeus falls from power due to his actions. The Classicist approach of restraint, control and obedience to power, is patriarchal and follows the principles of Lacan's symbolic order. While referring to the Promethean myth in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley deviated from aforementioned line of Romantics.

As one can see, Mary Shelley's Promethean protagonists face defeat in the face of their overt desires. It is mainly a story that tries to reiterate the unhallowed nature of the work of the

scientist, Victor Frankenstein, and warn the readers of such an overreaching. Victor Frankenstein is moulded in the model of Faustian hero, who meets a tragic end after pursuing his desire of acquiring unbridled knowledge. Walton echoes Promethean sentiments when he talks about the “inestimable benefit” he might confer on the whole of mankind through his discoveries in Pole. Victor similarly confesses his rebellious traits to Walton upon their meeting in the ship. Victor says how he was not interested in studying the conventional discourses but the subliminal art of divining the secrets of the physical world. Victor rejects the tenets of the symbolic world that require everyone to learn language, politics and the codes of government or the law. As the novel states, Victor is not interested in them. Knowing the secrets behind physical life is equivalent to the Promethean want of becoming God. One can see the same sentiment in Victor as he exclaims after discovering the science of animating lifeless matter: “A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs” (43). Victor is declaring himself to be the Name of the Father and rejecting the authority of God. This is a blasphemous act in terms of religious tenets. The problem of equating oneself to God is considered a sin in biblical terms from the ancient times.

However, as the novel progresses, the readers get to see Victor facing a fall from grace and in place of his earlier narcissistic proclamations, one sees the lamentations of someone tortured by religious guilt induced by a sense of the abjection of the self- “Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay?” (43). Victor talking about animating the “lifeless clay”, is a mention en passant to the story of Prometheus infusing life into forms of human beings made out of clay. At this point, Mary Shelley, through Victor’s guilty admissions, intends to establish unnatural desire as a sinful act and Victor’s act of disobedience, first, against his father who advised him not to pursue the teachings of Agrippa and other pagan

alchemists and secondly, against the tenets of the symbolic order, as the dangerous and the punitive. Shelley's story betrays similar intentions followed by horror stories in general, in reinforcing the power and control of the symbolic order or patriarchy.

Mary Shelley uses a number of references from other writers in *Frankenstein*. Shelley uses them carefully, placing them in a way that they often give away to her readers her secret, a hint or a foreboding of what is to become of the story or the character. Both Victor and Walton, at different points of the novel, compare themselves to Coleridge's doomed mariner. The content of his letters to Margaret is reflective of the unstable temperament of Walton himself. Walton's narrative keeps oscillating between an impassioned, frenzied and excess outpouring of love for his sublime desire and a becalmed, cautious and restrained narration of the dangers involved in his quest and also the subsequent reassuring to Margaret that he would be safe. Walton becomes one with the sea that he is so enamoured with, at times raging with his inert passions and at times calm with reflection. As already stated, the dejected knows the dangers of his quest of the abject. Walton's reflections can be read as a result of his inner fear and guilt of having given in to his unbridled passion. It is his conscience induced by the Law of the Father and the fear of the sublime that reminds him of the ancient mariner of Coleridge while talking about the "land of mist and snow", a reference to both a setting in the poem, as well as, the place he has set sail to.

Victor's references to the poem come at a more sombre moment, after he witnesses the 'horror' of his Creature waking up from dead matter. Victor recounts the lines from the poem as he wanders aimlessly trying to ease his heart from the burden of the truth of his creation:

Like one who, on a lonely road

Doth walk in fear and dread

And, having once turned round, walks on

And turns no more his head;
 Because he knows a frightful fiend
 Doth close behind him tread. (47)

The lines referred to, reflect his fear of being followed by the Creature. Similarly, at a later point he talks about the “deadly weight yet hanging round my neck”, a reference to the albatross that hangs around the mariner as a symbol of his guilt of killing the bird for “no reason or rhyme” (116). Victor, here, recounts these lines to refer to the catastrophic existence of the Creature as well as the covenant between him and Victor in which Victor promised to create a mate for the Creature. Victor laments:

I was bound by a solemn promise, which I had not yet fulfilled, and dared not break;
 or, if I did, what manifold miseries might not impend over me and my devoted family!
 Could I enter into a festival with this deadly weight yet hanging round my neck, and
 bowing me to the ground. (116)

The choice of such a poem by Mary Shelley, is deliberate. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” tells the story of an old sailor who returns from his voyage and narrates his experiences to a man, by stopping him from hurrying on his way to attend a wedding. The thematic semblances of the poem to the text are uncanny. One can see that the mariner is an outcast. Even after coming back he is not integrated fully into the fabric of the society but wanders around narrating his story to everyone he meets, in an attempt to absolve his guilt. In this sense, he resembles the aggressiveness of the Creature who forces Victor to ‘listen to his tale’. The desperation of the mariner can be seen in the lines, “He holds him with his skinny hand/ ‘there was a ship,’ quoth he”. In a sense, all the three main characters of *Frankenstein*, Walton, Victor and the Creature, are ensnared into a web of storytelling and listening, much like the wedding guest who was entranced by the “glittering eye” of the mariner, to stop and

listen to his tale. Richard Dunn in “Narrative Distance in “Frankenstein”” draws a comparison between Coleridge’s mariner and Walton:

Earlier Walton had likened himself to Coleridge's Mariner and had dreaded returning from his adventures as “worn and woeful” as had that archetypal voyager, but here at the beginning of his narrative he sounds more like the Wedding Guest who could not choose but hear the eerie tale. Even Frankenstein's “thin hand” and “lustrous eyes” recall the “skinny hand” and “glittering eye” which spellbound the Wedding Guest. (410)

The eyes of the one who tells the tale seem to hold the listener in all these narratives. Walton perceives an intimation of madness in Victor’s eyes. Victor, in turn, is affected by the sight of the Creature’s ‘yellow’, ‘dull’ and ‘watery’ eyes. One’s eyes are considered to be a window to their soul in aesthetic studies. Mariner’s glittering eye becomes a metaphor for the snare that the old sailor is. As he tells the wedding guest, he is reduced to someone who wanders like a tormented soul, among the people looking for a suitable listener, whom he would charm into listening to his tale.

All these narratives, like that of the old mariner’s start from a point of foreboding. For example, Walton after having left his society for seafaring, is urged by the need to confess his feelings to his sister Margaret through letter writing. Walton in turn becomes a listener to Victor’s tale. And the need for narrating it to somebody, comes from a desperate need for reassurance and redemption through confession. Walton is guilty of not completing his formal education. Being outside the bounds of a civilized community, he feels the need of the company of someone who can regulate his unchecked passions. Victor meets and narrates his story to Walton at a point when he had, similarly, left all the bonds of civilization and gone in search of his work of shame, the Creature. His guilt propels him to tell his story of the unhallowed art

of making a 'monster'. Victor, Walton and the Creature become prisoners of their own past, whose confessions are an attempt to set themselves free.

Like Prometheus, Mary Shelley probably reminds the readers of the ancient mariner in order to warn the consequences of sin against nature and God. The mariner was guilty of killing an albatross which was considered as a good omen sent from the heavens: "As if it had been a Christian soul / We hailed it in God's name" (60). As a result, the mariner had to trade his 'cross' for an "albatross around his neck", as a mark of his guilt of the blasphemous act. Shelley is here, reiterating the results of overreaching once again. The sailor's condition instils the fear of excommunication from the society and the religious community, a fear of abjection of the self. These narratives can be seen as an association between an abject who is no longer a member of the community and someone who is still tied to the community. The ancient mariner is a stray, however the wedding guest, as the epithet suggests, is a member of the community. The request to listen to the tale of both the sailor and the Creature, can be seen as a plea for inclusion, back into the fabric of the community.

Mary Shelley's portrayals of the Creature are very corporal. In the introduction to *Frankenstein*, she recounts the nightmare which had stirred her imagination into contriving the story of the scientist and his 'monster'. In it she describes the sight wherein the scientist's creature had opened his eyes for the first time and risen from the dead. Shelley writes: "He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes" (4). Later, in the novel, Victor uses the same description for the Creature when he comes to life for the first time. The purpose of such a description is to underline the ugliness and horror of the Creature's appearance.

Coming to the concept of abject again, an abject due to its inherent ambivalent nature refuses to be classified into any category. This disturbs one's unified view of the world with its clearly marked categories and one experiences horror at the sudden breakdown of meanings. The sight of blood, for instance, creates horror in us because the blood transgresses its boundaries and bleeds out. This ruptures our understanding of ourselves and our bodies as a unified, imperishable self. Also, monsters who are creatures rising from the dead, similarly wreak panic because they being neither dead nor living, occupy a liminal space. Monsters refuse to be categorized into any compartment and therefore reveal the failure of the systems and a breakdown of the boundaries. The monsters stand outside the borders of our society, threatening its collapse any minute. Hence, monsters are abject.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor Frankenstein experiences horror and panic while watching the monster come to life. What instils horror and disgust in Victor, for the very first time, is the physical ghastliness of the monster that he created. Victor's horror is evident from the remarks he makes while beholding the creature for the first time:

His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and overflowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (45)

The appearance of the monster fills Victor with horror because the monster's form does not conform to that of the normal human bodies one is used to seeing. The monster's body is composed of decaying body parts that Victor had extracted from different dead bodies exhumed from underground and sewed together. Even after the monster is infused with life and starts moving, the appearance it bears is uncanny and is that of a decomposing corpse. This is an

unnatural sight. The Creature is a living being yet bears the appearance of an incompletely decomposed body, sewn together imperfectly so that the 'ugliness' or 'horror' of what is beneath the skin- "the work of arteries and muscles"- is exposed.

The Creature is portrayed as a complex character. As the novel progresses, one can see the gradual evolving of this character to a point that the readers are forced to empathize and see the sense in what the Creature says or does. However, before any of the layers of the characterization of the Creature is revealed, the very first impression that the readers form of the Creature is the fact that he is ugly. At the very first meeting itself, Victor gasps in horror at the countenance of the Creature. It is his hideousness that horrifies Victor. The Creature's hideous countenance is enough for Victor to conclude that the Creature might be inherently monstrous and hence, a threat.

In "Facing the Ugly: The Case of "Frankenstein", Denise Gigante talks about the threat that what is 'ugly', supposedly poses for a society modelled on Lacan's symbolic order. Gigante differentiates between the grotesque and the ugly. The grotesque that is usually found in the parodic narratives, is comical in nature and hence lacks any negative connotation that what is ugly is burdened with. The word 'ugly', says Gigante, etymologically is derived from the word *ugglig* from the Old Norse which referred to things causing fear or discomfort. Even though what is grotesque also earned the dislike of the aestheticians, for its hybrid nature, the Creature lacks the positive comic element of the grotesque and is portrayed entirely as ugly and demonic in a negative manner. The initial reception of the Creature by the other characters in the novel, upon seeing the hideous figure of the Creature, talks about the natural response of people towards ugliness. There is an instance in the novel when the Creature on the conviction that William, Victor's brother, is a child and therefore would be unbiased enough to judge his form, decides to take custody of William and convince him to be his friend. However, upon seeing the Creature, William immediately closes his eyes in horror and shrieks. Once again,

the Creature's ugliness is enough reason for William to term him "monster", "ugly wretch" and "ogre" (109).

The Creature faces similar treatments from elsewhere too. Once he attempts to enter a village, allured by its abundance of food and shelter it provided. However, the moment he places his foot at the door of one of the cottages, the whole village is roused by the shrieks of women and children, and within moments, the Creature is attacked by stones and other means of weapons and is made to flee the village. The village represents an ideal society. As the Creature exclaims, "the huts, the neater cottages, and stately houses" signify a community that is well ordered and peaceful (82). Every ordered system comes with its own boundaries. When the Creature who is an abject, crosses its border, and places his foot within the doors of one of the cottages, the harmony of the community is destroyed. Commotion and violence break out at the appearance of the Creature, as the cottagers attack him with stones and other weapons. Hence, the otherwise peaceful and ordered community of villagers falls into anarchy at the sign of an ugly outsider. The critic Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has been credited with founding a theoretical base to study monsters. He has contributed to many works on the subject of monsters of which, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996), *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages* (1999) and *Hybridity, Identity and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: on Difficult Middles* (2006) are some of them. According to Cohen, monsters in our culture, stand for something other than itself. Their bodies embody an ambivalence; a mixture of fear and desire. The monsters indicate a sign or warning that the social order is under threat. In a way, the Creature reveals what is hidden under the civilized veneer of the villagers. The 'monster' invokes the monstrous that lies dormant beneath the peaceful exterior. The potential of the 'ugly' to invoke the monstrous within us is what makes it fearsome.

Gigante says that the ugliness of the Creature is not only a lack of beauty but an excess. The critic defines the Creature as an "excess of existence" as exemplified by the "work of

muscles and arteries beneath, that was scarcely covered by the yellow skin” (45). The study refers to Slavoj Žižek’s *The Abyss of Freedom*, to point out that ugliness often refers to an excess of stuff that protrudes a surface, which is an unpleasant sight. For Victor, the existence of the Creature symbolizes the element of ugliness that is, as mentioned before in the episode where the Creature is attacked by the villagers, of the filthiness of what he has done. It is a reflection of his grotesque act of exhuming the graves and manhandling the corpses, the result of his unhallowed art.

The ugliness of the Creature threatens to reveal the ugliness that is hidden beneath the pleasing façade of society with its well laid etiquettes and manners. According to Gigante, the way William threatens the Creature with the name of his father, signifies William’s faith in the authority of the Name of the Father, whose laws in the first place instil in him the belief that what is ugly is monstrous. The Creature innocently believes that William will be unbiased towards him and his form. However, William shrieks at the Creature with conviction that the Creature is an ugly wretch who wishes to eat him and tear him to pieces. In contrast to the Creature’s belief, William is someone who has already been indoctrinated with the Law of the Father and taught to believe that hideousness is a threat. Gigante writes:

Thus while it is couched in admittedly boyish terms, William Frankenstein's fatal encounter with the Creature- “monster! ugly wretch! you wish to eat me, and tear me to pieces” (F, 169)-contains a fundamental insight into the nature of ugliness itself: the ugly is that which threatens to consume and disorder the subject. William cries, “Let me go, or I will tell my papa” (F, 169), and it is appropriate that his defense should be a psychological appeal to the Name of the Father, the site of symbolic authority that guarantees the young Frankenstein his ground of meaning in the face of consuming chaos. (569)

Hence, ugliness is not defined as a lack of something by the aesthetic theory, but an excess. Referring to Burke, Gigante explains that ugliness is something that the beautiful cannot be. It is evident from various instances from *Frankenstein* that Victor despite being an unconventional scientist has an eye for the aesthetics. Victor's emotion at beholding the Creature's form is that of horror. In *Frankenstein*, the physical appearance of the characters, predetermines their character. It is not just the Creature who is rejected because of his appearance. Elizabeth is adopted by Caroline, Victor's mother, because her angelic features appealed to her as compared to her other impoverished counterparts- the peasant children. Elizabeth is similarly making a case for appearances, when she talks about a certain "pretty Miss Mansfield" and her "ugly sister Manon", when she writes to Victor, filling him on the news of their other acquaintances in Geneva (52). Beauty is transparent, whereas, ugliness in *Frankenstein* like elsewhere, becomes an opaqueness that blocks people from seeing what is there beyond this exterior of ugliness. The ugliness of the Creature, predetermines his monstrosity for Victor, who does not bother to attempt to know more about the Creature.

Victor's appeal for the aesthetics is again evident when he describes the features of Elizabeth. Previously, this chapter had discussed the peculiarities of the eyes of certain characters. Along with discussing the many parallels between the characterizations of Victor and Coleridge's mariner from the "Ancient Mariner", something which Victor himself alludes to in the novel, the eyes of both the characters were compared. The eyes of the beheld were seen to have an effect on the beholder. As Coleridge writes in the poem: "He holds him with his glittering eye / The wedding guest stood still, / And listens like a three- years' child: / The Mariner hath his will" (41).

The eye has an occult function in these works. One can find similar instances in the literary works of the time, wherein, the eyes of certain characters are depicted as having subliminal and occult powers, pertaining to a certain figurative darkness within the character.

Coleridge again makes the symbolic use of eye in his other works like “Christabel”. Coleridge’s obsession with the occult powers of the eye is studied by Lane Cooper, “The Power of the Eye in Coleridge”. According to him, Coleridge was interested in ocular hypnosis and animal magnetism, which were a vogue at the time. Cooper analyzes the poems “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “The Three Graves”, “Christabel” and “Osorio” and observes the recurring notion of a magnetic trance, wherein a magnetizer with a good or evil intent, ‘fixes’ and then suddenly releases another person from his or her magnetic gaze. Any person or thing can seem to fix another person in the works of Coleridge, provided, the thing or the person has something of an ‘eye’ or a ‘face’. Cooper writes: “In Coleridge, for example in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, one may almost say that any being or thing can 'fix' any other, so long as he or it may be supposed to have or be a face or an eye” (101). He gives the instance of not only the Mariner with the “glittering eye”, but the Sun and the Moon that fix the ship, the wolf, and the owl.

The magnetic gaze, that can ‘fix’ and ‘release’, is present in *Frankenstein* as well. Victor appears on the deck of Walton’s ship initially as a wretched man. It is the eyes of Victor that show any life or character. His eyes are said to have radiated wildness, madness and kindness. It is Victor’s eyes and general countenance that win Walton’s attention and make him want to hear his story. Similarly, the “dull, yellow eye” of the Creature is the first thing that catches the attention of Victor, as he waits for him to come to life. It is the eyes of the Creature that paralyze Victor with horror and reveal to him the enormity of what he had done. It is the first sign of monstrous life that haunts and ‘fixes’ Victor. In turn, the Creature’s gaze terrifies the Creature himself when he gazes at his reflection in a transparent pool. This is an inversion of the Ovidian Greek myth of Narcissus who becomes fixated on his own reflection in the pool. Narcissus’s trance is a result of his admiration for his beauty whereas the Creature’s trance arises out of horror for the nature of his ugliness.

Another instance is when, even though it does not affect him to the level of a trance, Victor mentions about the gaze of the moon that falls on Victor while he worked within the solitary chamber and “pursued nature to her hiding- places” (43). The moon’s gaze works as a return gaze. It becomes a metaphor for the nature’s seemingly panoptic positioning which enables it to oversee Victor’s dark secrets. Conversely, Victor has no such easy and direct access to the mysteries of nature. He is a mortal to whom the acquiring of such knowledge means a transgression. This condition of Victor’s smallness and his positioning of being under the surveillance of nature change, as he ascends the mountains of the Chamounix valley towards the Mont Blanc. His journeying towards the Mont Blanc represents his departure from the world of the mortals and him inching towards a higher realm. His consequential change in the situation is from being a subject of gaze to the gazer. As Victor says, he can now look on the valley beneath and watch the mist and the rivers and the mountain tops. In the mountains, Victor goes through a subliminal experience, which is an elevating and ascending phenomenon. Here, Victor experiences peace and even momentary joy, unlike the fear and disgust he experiences while engrossed in his experiments. This upward movement is symbolic of a movement up the hierarchy and towards the Providence. In a similar vein, one can say that a movement downwards, pertains to a descent and a degradation. A downward course, in biblical terms, is an unfortunate shift. It pertains to a descent unto hell. In physiological terms, it is the site of all kinds of abject. It is where the bodily lower stratum is positioned and is the locus of desire and impurity- of copulation, ingestion, digestion and discharge. This is a common understanding of every system that maintains some kind of hierarchy. Hence, obviously, a descent, in all respects, is considered an unfavourable way to go. Victor’s upward ascent towards the mountain range, provides him an ethereal experience. Similarly, Victor’s “dabbling among the unhallowed damp of grave” or torturing of living matter is a search downwards to

the depths of earth and a metaphor for his digging his way into the very maws of hell (43). This debasing act becomes the very source of all of his miseries later.

Mary Shelley employs the trope of the eye to even more extent than for its connection with the occult. Burke has written about the contribution of the eye in the appearance of an animal. According to Burke, the beauty of the eye lies in its “clearness” and says, “but none are pleased with an eye whose water (to use that term) is dull and muddy” (172). When Victor finds the Creature’s eyes to be yellow, he immediately labels the Creature as harmful. The yellow eyes of the Creature seem to pertain to Burke’s idea of an eye with muddied water. In aesthetic terms, it is meant to reflect the Creature’s monstrous attribute. Burke also mentions how eyes are expressive of those qualities that one’s mind possesses. Hence, when Walton finds the eyes of Victor to be expressive of a variegated set of emotions, that of wildness, madness and melancholy, it seems Shelley is applying Burke’s idea of the eye as the window to one’s mind.

Along with seeing and the gaze, one also has to look at the aspect of blindness that the narrative in *Frankenstein* is intrigued with. A certain haze permeates between the literal and metaphorical landscape that divides the Creature from other characters. The other characters look at the Creature as a monstrous being. Their conviction based on the Creature’s appearance, makes them blind to the goodness and kindness within the Creature. Their blindness is associated with the kind of enigma that surrounds the Creature every time these characters, get to have a sighting of the Creature. On the night of the birth of the Creature, Victor’s first horrific encounter with him happens, first by the dull light coming from the “half- extinguished candle” and later “by the dim and yellow light of the moon”, through which he could only make out his eyes and jaws (45-46). Victor once again encounters the Creature while at the glacier of Montanvert. As the Creature moves towards Victor, he experiences a delirium that momentarily impairs his vision and makes it difficult to make out the Creature’s form. The

Creature presents himself before the De Lacey family through the old man who was blind and similarly impervious to his appearance. Finally, when it comes to Walton, he first glimpses the Creature like an apparition, that was moving away from their ship and disappearing into the mist. And once again, in the final part of the novel, the Creature's face is initially hidden behind the locks of his hair. It is also not clear to Watson where the Creature has escaped to in the end, as he says: "He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance" (170). A mysterious aura shrouds the Creature unto the end, which adds to overall horror element of the novel.

According to Burke, says Gigante, the manner of one's eyes plays an important role in aesthetic theory in deciding the manner of one's soul. Accordingly, Elizabeth's cloudless and "celestial" eye would stand for the transparency and divinity of her soul. Whereas the "yellow" and "dun white- as- sockets" eye of the Creature appears to Victor as a testimony of the Creature's apparent murkiness and diabolism within. As Victor himself admits, he had chosen the parts required for the making of the Creature as beautiful: "His limbs were in proportion and I had selected his features as beautiful" (45). However, the Creature had woken up as an 'ugly' creature. As Victor lists out, not all of his features were hideous as his flowing hair and pearly white teeth would testify. However, his yellow and watery eyes and his yellow skin with its myriad fissures revealing the filthiness within, are an excess of representation and challenge Victor's belief in the perfection of bodily structures. One can see Victor continuing to exclaim:

Beautiful! – Great God! His yellow skin barely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriences only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (45)

Hence, the eyes of the characters become an important tool in the novel to subtly stereotype them as ugly, evil or beautiful. One can find more such instances in the novel. The nature of the eye plays an important role when Caroline Beaufort makes the choice of adopting the “blue-eyed” Elizabeth as compared to the other hungry children who were “hardy little vagrants with dark eyes” (28).

The lack of a unified structure, so important to the edicts of symbolic order, is what makes his creation a nightmare to Victor. His description of the Creature’s attributes is a subversion of the Petrarchan conventions by which Victor praises the chaste and serene beauty of Elizabeth. Hybridity was considered as demonic and monstrous in Christian terms, though the ancient pagan cults embraced hybridity in their myths and legends. The incongruity of the different parts with which the Creature is built, confers monstrous attributes on him. In symbolic terms, according to the Law of the Father, this translates to a society made of uniform individuals who follow the laws and a lack of unity among them would mean catastrophe.

A hybrid body as that of the Creature, resists classification. It cannot be categorized as dead as it has been infused with the spark of life. It cannot be categorized as a living human body either as it bears no resemblance of a normal living human body. A normal living human body is thought of as a pure and rigid whole. The skin is a rigid border beneath which the internal components are held harmoniously. Exposure of the internal components is hence transgressive and unnatural. The monster’s appearance exposes the failure of Victor Frankenstein’s attempts at creating human life with a normal and unified body. Victor Frankenstein’s ‘monster’ is a liminal creature. It has a transgressive body and lies at the border dividing the living and the dead resisting its inclusion into either of the categories. It is a liminal creature and hence an abject. Hence, as Kristeva puts it, it creates horror. Cohen, in “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)”, postulates seven theses on monsters. The critic considers monsters as signs or glyphs that need to be read and interpreted. Cohen further refers the monster as an

instance of Derrida's *differance*. Monster always escapes meaning- one fails to interpret or make sense of it as one is not able to name or categorize it. Hence it creates a category crisis.

Cohen writes:

This refusal to participate in the classificatory "order of things" is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so, the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions. Because of its ontological liminality, the monster notoriously appears at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes—as that which questions binary thinking and introduces a crisis. (40)

The induction of the Creature into the symbolic order of differences, induces a sense of the self or builds an ego within him. After entering the symbolic order of things, one normally gets assigned a subject position, on the basis of the order followed by the system, and it is through this subject position that one connects with others in the community through predefined relationships. The Creature faces an identity crisis for the first time, as he struggles to find himself a subject position. The Creature exclaims, "And what was I? of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man" (93).

The reason why the Creature does not find a subject position is because he does not fit inside the categories decreed by the society. The Creature learns from Felix that, in this society, one shall be respected in the society, only if one possesses high and unsullied descent and riches or either of them: "I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow- creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches" (93). The Creature possesses no riches.

However, this does not render him as a threat to the society yet. It would only make him a 'vagabond' or a 'slave', the 'other' to the rich. What renders him as an abject and a crisis to the social order is his absence of a lineage. The nature of his birth and of his form defy the categories built on the binary system of similarities and differences. One learns from the Creature's account that the borders that line his society are rigid and inviolable. However, the Creature by birth is already a transgressive being. He was born through an unnatural scientific experiment and not through the physical union of two people of the opposite sexes. The lack of biological parents makes it impossible for him to position himself as a subject within a conventional system of relationships (father/mother/son) that is followed by everybody else around him. The decree of unsullied descent points at the society's fear of crossing borders and the mixing of ranks. However, once again, the body of the Creature, overrides this rule. The creature's body is an assortment of body parts collected by Victor Frankenstein from dead bodies whose purity of rank or descent cannot be ascertained. Hence, the Creature embodies the fear that the society keeps warning through its various prohibitions.

It is not just the ugliness of the features of the creature that fills Victor with horror. Victor was used to the mess that the parts of the dead body entailed. However, what endows the creature with horror is its ambivalent nature. Victor recollects seeing the monster for first time as thus: "Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endowed with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived" (46).

The creature is endowed with life, while looking like a corpse. This produces a certain anxiety. It creates a categorical crisis and Victor is left to make sense of him, as he is the one who created it. This produces horror. Hence, the moment the body of the creature shows signs of life, the 'monster' is born and horror ensues:

I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out the room, and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. (45)

Victor's descriptions paint him closer to an animal than a human. Victor uses words like 'wretch' and 'creature' to refer to the monster. The physical attributes of the Creature like the 'yellow eye' and the 'yellow skin' fit more the description of a wildlife brute than a human being. Victor says:

It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half- extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. (45)

This once again cements the liminal status of the Victor's monster. The Creature is neither evolved enough to be human nor is it unsophisticated enough to be an animal. Monster is a hybrid creature. Hybridity is a fundamental aspect of monsters.

The vocabulary used, from the start, by Victor to describe his creation like "wretch", "creature", "miserable monster", "demoniacal corpse", to name a few, shows that even after infusing life into the Creature, Victor refuses to acknowledge the Creature as human owing to its transgressive body. The monster becomes the 'other' as it does not conform. The terms he uses to refer to the Creature are aimed at dehumanizing the Creature. One can see that this is much before the Creature commits any act that can be termed monstrous or violent. Hence, Victor assigns monstrosity on the Creature much before he becomes one. This is an important evidence to prove how monsters could be created through narratives. Bernard Duyfhuizen argues in "Periphrastic Naming in Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein", that the fact that the

Creature is not assigned a proper and permanent name owes to his unstable position in the society. Proper names are a marker of one's ties to the family as well as other social units. The periphrastic nature of names given to the Creature, the author argues, owes to the lack of a fixed position for the Creature in the society, his lack of a proper family as well as his ambivalent form that refuses his classification with human societies. Duyfhuizen writes:

...the "Creature" is never officially named by his creator; therefore, the various periphrastic names that refer to him—"monster," "fiend," "daemon"... "destroyer," and even the more extreme "odious companion," "dreaded spectre," "the work of my own hands," and "the filthy mass that moved and talked"- all signify the Creature's lack of a defining signifier for his identity. (479)

Monstrosity is not always an inherent aspect but something that can be assigned by the society through repeated story telling. Monster is something that lies outside. It is the 'other' and since it always escapes our understanding, it is easy to ascribe any quality to the monster. Usually monstrous qualities are assigned to keep the creature outside the borders of a well-structured society. Monstrosity is assigned through the creation of narratives explaining the abnormalities as deviant and hence threatening. Monstrosity becomes a reason to not only keep certain supposed threats from outside at bay but also to control and police certain ones within the borders. Any creature could be conveniently touted as abnormal, monstrous and threatening with the help of such narratives. In the case of Creature in *Frankenstein*, its physiological deviance becomes a marker to assign it as dangerous. It is the narrative of monstrosity around the Creature and the disgust that people extended towards the Creature that prompt it to violence and not the other way. Therefore, assigning of monstrosity becomes a tool in the hands of the powerful to control the weak as well as oust the rebellious forces as abject.

It is important to see who wields this power to create and assign monstrosity. For this

one needs to go back to Lacan. As mentioned before, in the mirror stage, the child enters the symbolic order, where the child learns to identify itself as a different entity compared to others. It marks the separation of the child from his or her mother. The mother becomes the 'other', for the creation of a self supposedly depends on the identification of the objects around oneself as 'the other'. According to Lacan, the linguistic system is structured in such a way that it places the father in a superior position. Lacan's symbolic order is hence, logocentric and patriarchal. The child after entering the symbolic order has to follow the Law of the Father in order to be included within the strictly gendered system. Before entering the symbolic order, the child, identifies itself with the mother. In this phase, the child has no access to the signifiers which are a part of the Law of the Father. The child's language at this stage is uncensored and free flowing. The entry into the symbolic order shall be complete only if the child follows the system of signifiers and the rule of exclusions (either/or) and stabilize its speech. Because the uncensored speech is antithetical and hence threatening to a logocentric system of signifiers, it needs to be policed.

Similarly, a woman's speech is also highly regulated by the Law of the Father because, in a patriarchal system, a woman's speech is considered to be unstable, poetic and floating as opposed to the rational and stable speech of the logocentric system. Femininity is considered threatening, like monstrosity, because of its tendency to transgress the laws of language system. Hence, discourses are controlled and policed by the Law of the Father and women mostly silenced. Women become the abject in the symbolic order not only because of the apparent incoherence created by them in the language system, but also because it threatens to distort the distinction between self and other, as in the pre- oedipal phase the child and mother are technically one single body; something Kristeva names as the "semiotic chora" (13-16). Hence, the breaking away from the mother becomes a necessary step in order to enter the symbolic order. As Ramen Selden notes:

This hybrid realm 'anterior to naming' is 'maternally connoted', writes Kristeva (1980), while the 'symbolic' is linked with the Law of the Father which censors and represses in order that discourse may come into being. Woman is the silence or incoherence of the pre-discursive: she is the 'Other', which stands outside and threatens to disrupt the conscious (rational) order of speech. (133)

The Law of the Father also has clearly defined values and moral codes that have to be followed in order to be a part of the community. Wine, sex, song- the various pleasures that act as a safety valve for repressed desires are considered deviant. However, according to Lacan, the repressed desires are not completely destroyed but are collected in the unconscious and threaten from time to time to reveal itself through jokes or poetry, kind of like the abject which lies outside the boundaries of the society and threatens to break them. Because of this an abject induces not only fear and disgust but also the desire to be free like them and transgress the borders of the permissible. Hence, the authority of the rational entity over the unconscious is not complete. Comedy and literature, here, act as a safety valve for the repressed expressions.

Many feminists have criticized Lacan's phallogocentric view of the symbolic order which puts phallus as the most powerful symbol that determines and controls the other signifiers in the system. However, this view helps in making one understand the workings of a typical patriarchal system. In the patriarchal system of symbolic order, woman naturally becomes the other. The feminine utterances are conveniently rendered as incoherent and unstable. The supposed instability of feminine nature renders woman who does not follow the Law of the Father as a threat and hence an abject that patriarchy tries continuously to expel. One needs to look at the female characters of *Frankenstein* and their treatment in the text, to see how femininity has been treated in certain instances as a monstrous trait and therefore a threatening force that needs to be reined in and controlled by the patriarchy. *Frankenstein* is the work of a woman writer and yet ironically, there are very few woman characters of note in the novel.

Predictably enough, they are portrayed as conventional and subservient, as fitting to the mores and conventions of the time when the novel is set. Mary Shelley composed the novel during the summer of 1816. The time of writing the novel is significant while talking about the ways in which women have been portrayed by the author.

Two important works that analyze the writing style of prominent women writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century like Mary Shelley, by studying the radical changes that happened in England in the aftermath of French Revolution, as well as, the socio- political and economic changes in the conditions of women during the early nineteenth century are *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979) by Susan Gubar and Sandra M. Gilbert and Mary Poovey's *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (1984). These works look at how these women writers have been conditioned to write in a certain way that reflects and satisfies the male-centrist society. They discuss how the typical bourgeoisie society of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in England and the ideologies set by its patriarchal society influence women not only socially or politically but also psychologically by making them consciously or unconsciously internalize these ideologies as important value systems and uphold them without explicitly questioning it. For instance, in *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, Mary Poovey observes that the eighteenth-century England was a time that was typically male-centred, with laws made by men for men. Women were not allowed to participate in political or economic activities unless under the agency of a male subject. They had no financial support as the ownership of the properties always rested with eldest. The English society during the time of Shelley, is a true example of a patriarchal system and the value systems imposed during this time are without doubt subsumed and passed onto the work by the writer.

One of the important aspects to note in Poovey's work while analyzing *Frankenstein's* women characters is the concept of "proper lady" that she introduces in this work. Poovey

introduces this concept to explain the expectations of society regarding an ideal woman and how their imposed value systems affect women as well as the things they do. Proper lady was a term that became common during late eighteenth century in England. A proper lady was someone who lacked any freewill or agency and whose life choices centred around her man. A proper lady was responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of peace and harmony within the household. Also, she was expected to exercise restraint while expressing herself in terms of writing, speaking, reading and so on and any sort of excesses in behaviour like overeating, coquettishness as well as indulgences like socializing, gambling, drinking were termed not just un-ladylike but dangerous. Poovey lists out some of the sexist social practices of the early eighteenth century England, like witch hunting, which was very rampant during the time and the Matrimonial Act of 1770, which convicted women who exhibited any sort of behaviour, dressing or activity considered immodest or deviant by the conventions in practice then. Such women were conveniently portrayed as witches or monstrous and not an ideal model to follow for virtuous women. This helped men in policing and regulating women and their 'desires'.

Poovey explains how men easily succeeded in achieving this. For instance, Poovey notes how the character of Anne Elliot in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, remarks that men have always had the power to 'tell the story'. The dominant narrative was always controlled by men of the time. Poovey notes that this advantageous position enabled them to cast women as the cause for any mishaps that beset the harmony and stability of the society. As mentioned elsewhere, an ordered patriarchal system is foregrounded on strong moral principles and rigid social mores. Since men controlled the discourse, Poovey says, it became convenient for them to create narratives around women casting them as the agents of 'desire' and instability. Poovey writes: "Because sexual desire momentarily undermines self-control, women are voracious; because the future is uncertain, they are inconstant; because life is full of contradictions, women are irrational; because mortality perpetually mocks the will, women are vampires,

heralds of death and decay” (5).

Women conveniently became ‘the other’ in the stories told by men and consequently by women who wished to be proper ladies. Women were pictured as more prone to being promiscuous and having appetites that were insatiable as compared to men who were thought of as naturally rational and controlled. Poovey quotes philosophers like Rousseau, who considered women a threat to social order itself. Gilbert and Gubar write how these women internalized an image of themselves from these male-centred narratives like a mirror that formed an image of the object in front. This is quite contrary to the Lacan’s subject who recognizes itself as an autonomous self, once it learns to distinguish its self from the image seen in the mirror as the other. In the case of these women, however, they failed to perceive themselves as a subject with any agency or self. Women, perceived themselves as ‘the other’, subservient to their male counterparts. Hence, women found it their duty to contain their passions, appetites and desires and remain subservient to the supposedly more rational wills of their male counterparts in order to be a proper lady in front of the society. The narrative of a proper lady hence enabled men to contain women within the four walls of their domestic realms. This ensured that the need for increased women representation in the economic and political fields, in the aftermath of the French Revolution and upliftment of the middle classes, was never realized.

The early nineteenth century, with all its romanticism and radical spirit still struggled to retain the patriarchal mores of the past. The women writers of nineteenth century like Mary Shelley were moulded by the conventions of eighteenth century. The radical spirit of Romantic era did empower these writers to express their views, however, one can see examples of restraint in their writing, betraying their fears of being called out as characterless or dangerous. As men were the unquestioned masters of speech and writing, one can find instances of these women writers, seeking their approval. Also, one can point out that the insecurity and lack of

agency felt by these women writers are reflected in their writing, says Poovey, citing examples of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen.

It is in the midst of such social and political ambience that Mary Shelley writes her novel. In the introduction to her novel, Shelley has revealed her feelings of being the only woman writer taking part in the famous contest of writing a Gothic story each along with her male competitors, Percy Shelley and Byron. Shelley was the only writer to have successfully completed the contest, which Shelley and Byron gave up midway. However, Shelley in her introduction to the novel, calls it her “hideous progeny”, an epithet that is echoed many a time in *Frankenstein*, as a reference to the Creature (5). Shelley was reluctant to claim the authorship of *Frankenstein* when it was first published in 1818. The first edition of *Frankenstein* was published anonymously in 1818, with Percy Shelley writing the preface. It was in the revised third edition, published in 1831 that Shelley finally acknowledged her authorship of the book. There is a certain reluctance on the part of Mary Shelley to assert herself through her work and authorship. Poovey explains this as a consequence of societal conditioning.

Poovey explains that, it is the cultural demands of femininity which forced Mary Shelley and other women writers of her time like her mother Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen to conform. That said, Shelley’s anxiety regarding her work comes from the fear of transgressing the ideals of a proper lady and subverting this image through her excessive self-expression and writing. In the third edition of the novel Mary Shelley admits her authorship along with penning an introduction to the novel, not only to assert her authorship, but also to justify the purpose behind writing such a horror story. The author confesses the general opinion that it was unbelievable for a young girl like her to have come up such a ‘hideous an idea’, all by herself. Shelley writes: “I am the more willing to comply because I shall thus give a general answer to the question, so frequently asked me- How I, then a young girl, came to think of, and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?” (1).

The introduction showcases Mary Shelley's eagerness to absolve herself of any charges of impropriety for a young girl like her to be writing on such an abject theme. A woman exhibiting any sort of superfluous attitude, was considered as a threat to her modesty. *Frankenstein* is a Gothic story with many grotesque and gory details consisting of the ungodly acts of Victor Frankenstein in connection with his experiments like him exhuming the dead bodies of strangers from the cemetery, collecting and stitching of different body parts together, and finally creating a hideous monster. Conventional norms of the society considered Gothic elements like the presence of monsters, excess of passion and imagination as well as grotesque details an excess. It would surely be considered immodest for a woman like her to be writing of such passions. The recounting of the events leading to the writing of the story, hence, puts a new perspective on the readers.

The idea of writing a Gothic story happened while she was in the company of prominent male writers including her husband. The author explains how they spent their time reading ghost stories translated from German which finally prompted Byron to propose the said writing contest upon which all four of them- Byron, Dr. Polidori, Mary and Percy Shelley to embark on writing their ghost stories. By informing the readers of these events, she ensures that the readers acknowledge that this was a male endeavour to begin with. Shelley also describes the nightmare she had, where she had a vision of the Creature whom she would later cast in the story. The creature which materialized in her dreams, she explains, was in turn the work of the German stories, which she had read while vacationing, which left a deep imprint in her mind. Monsters, culturally, are considered to be manifestations of repressed desires. Mary Shelley, being a proper lady, strives to give no room for speculations for the readers of her time to interpret the Creature as symbolic of her unrestrained and suppressed desire. Instead, she tries to clearly provide the sources that prompted such a thought in her, which can all be traced back to the works of male authors. The citing of different male voices not only

provides her narrative the necessary legitimacy but also escapes from being criminalized, due to her femininity, as the source of all excesses and transgressions.

Poovey writes: “Thus women were encouraged to display no vanity, no passion, no assertive “self” at all. In keeping with this design, even genuinely talented women were urged to avoid all behaviour that would call attention to themselves” (21). Women were expected always to talk ‘with an air of diffidence’, such that it did not seem like she was trying to inform or instruct anyone. A woman is expected only to learn from others and not preach. A proper lady is also not expected to use her talents as an instrument for fame or pleasure but as a means for higher attainments. A proper woman, in short, should not be a topic of discussion, one way or the other. Mary Shelley’s confession in her introduction for “bringing herself forward in print” is a testimony to the conditioning referred to above (1). Shelley explains that her account will only serve as an extension of the previous edition and is limited to the discussing of the grounds of her authorship, and thus, she should be absolved of any ‘personal intrusion’.

The narrative structure of the novel is another telling instance of the writer hiding her voice and expressing it through male characters. The novel progresses through the narratives of three main male characters- Walton, Victor and the Creature. Poovey in, “My Hideous Progeny: Mary Shelley and the Feminization of Romanticism” writes about the lack of prominent feminine voices in *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley deftly camouflages her voice using these male voices. The writer has ensured throughout the novel that there is no instance of omniscient narrative which would betray the author’s female voice to her readers. The use of male voices of Victor, Walton and the Creature to tell the story of a ‘monster’, cleanses her of the impropriety of expressing herself.

Mary Shelley was deeply influenced by many writers of note and their works while writing *Frankenstein*. Apart from *Fantasmagoriana*, the works as well as ideas of many

prominent writers like Milton, Goethe, William Godwin, Ovid and Rousseau have also exerted a deep influence on Shelley in writing *Frankenstein*. The Creature is a perfect example of the noble savage, a brute who is uncorrupted by civilization and an epitome of innocence and goodness. This idea correlates with Rousseau's concept of 'natural man' and also John Locke's *tabula rasa*, which meant 'clean slate'. It proposes that the human beings are not born with a mind with knowledge already built in but acquires it through experience and perception. Most of the Creature's initial learning takes place through his experiences while residing in the forest and later from the De Lacey family, observing and learning to speak from them as well as from the books that he finds in the forest abandoned by the travellers. These books namely, Plutarch's *Lives*, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Werther*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are all important works that portray the Romantic sentiment and influence the thinking and character development of the Creature. The Creature sees himself in the images of melancholic Werther and wretched Satan. In short, *Frankenstein* is a conglomeration of many male voices which echo louder than Mary Shelley's own voice.

In *Frankenstein* Mary Shelley also notes the scientific basis for the process of animating a corpse through electricity, which is galvanism, named after Luigi Galvani who discovered that when an electric current is brought in contact with a muscle tissue, it gets animated. In *Frankenstein*, the Creature is brought to life by animating the corpse with electricity. Shelley remarks how she was a 'silent listener' to the conversations between Byron and Percy Shelley on these matters. Here, Shelley once again reiterates her subservient role of being a woman being schooled by men of repute and retraces the inspiration behind her 'birth myth' to the modern-day scientific discoveries by male scientists, that she sources back to the conversations that Percy Shelley and Byron had, and not as some fantasy that originated from her own artistic mind. Such attempts by the author reflect again the anxieties of being called a 'mad woman' for her writing that borders on the fantastic and horror. It reflects, ironically, the laboured

attempt of a woman writer, being unassertive and self-effacing, in a literary world controlled by men.

Gilbert and Gubar in "Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship" argue that the Western literary history was intrinsically patriarchal and that a woman writer of the time would become a 'freakish outsider' and essentially find it hard to 'fit in'. Gilbert and Gubar cite the theory of the 'anxiety of influence' proposed by Harold Bloom. Anxiety of influence is the fear that a writer experiences regarding his work which he feels echoes his predecessors' writings more than his own voice. They argue that for a woman writer who is already an outsider, the anxiety of influence experienced is different from that of her male counterparts. Firstly, these women writers have to look up to male predecessors who are different from them. Secondly, the women writers have to try and fit into the stereotypes that have already been created for them by the men. These stereotypes try to confine women within a polarity between the figures of the 'Angel' and the monstrous. Gilbert and Gubar write:

Not only do these precursors incarnate patriarchal authority (as our discussion of metaphor of literary paternity argues), they attempt to enclose her in definitions of her person and her potential which, by reducing her to extreme stereotypes (angel, monster), drastically conflict with her own sense of her self- that is, of her subjectivity, her autonomy, her creativity. (48)

The woman writer experiences a 'lack'. Because she is different from the models that are available for her to look up to, she fears that she cannot create or even if she does, she will not be able to create a literary persona for herself that would go well with the existing literary tradition. Hence, it could lead to her own destruction and offer grounds for warranting a category crisis within the male sanctioned canon. This theory coincides with the concept of symbolic system where women have no access to the linguistic system as it is phallogocentric.

And therefore, women experience a lack compared to their privileged male counterparts. Even if the women submit themselves to the law of the patriarchy, they are still considered as the unstable sex, capable of creating a disorder in the system. The women writers are hence, constantly looking for a female model in order to rebel against the established order and legitimize her own style.

But in the meantime, women writers have to face other issues like alienation from the male literary lineage, absence of female predecessors as well as audience, fear of hostility from the male audience and lack of legitimacy for what she creates, all of which create a sense of inferiority in these writers who end up subscribing to the male literary tradition without asserting themselves. Hence, what these women writers face is not entirely ‘anxiety of influence’ like their male contemporaries, as there are fewer female predecessors than male ones to be influenced but an “anxiety of authorship”.

Gilbert and Gubar, call it an “infection” or a disease that is passed on from the patriarchal forefathers to their apparent inferior female descendants which they conclude is visible like a stain in the structure and style of the works of the women writers of especially the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Like in *Frankenstein*, the works of most of the women writers of the time, talk about these diseases or ‘dis-ease’, as Gilbert and Gubar note, in an indirect way through their characters. Mainly diseases like hysteria, madness, claustrophobia or its inverse, that is, agoraphobia, hunger, amnesia and aphasia that the characters exhibit in the works of these women writers mean more than what they stand for. These are diseases that are mainly attributed to women. For instance, hysteria and madness are considered as ‘female diseases’. This is an appropriation done in favour of patriarchy to cement female sex as the more unstable and threatening gender. Similarly, Gilbert and Gubar observe that the domesticated women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are prone to be depicted as agoraphobic or claustrophobic, accordingly. This is a reflection of how these women writers

see themselves, their anxieties of being trapped between the need to express and compete with male writers as well as to be saved from ostracization for expressing themselves. This is the basis for the claustrophobia, anxiety, hysteria and many such abnormalities that are widely talked about in the works of these women writers.

As Gilbert and Gubar already mentioned in their work, what as a reader, one should look at is not what is present but what is absent in a work of art of a woman writer. It is this absence that speaks more to the readers about her repressed viewpoints and perspectives. In this sense, in *Frankenstein*, what is obvious by its absence is the voice of the female characters in the novel, much like the voice of the author herself in narrating the story. Almost all the female characters in *Frankenstein* play a very passive role in the story. Despite the novel being written by a female author, the story progresses from the viewpoints of the main three characters of Walton, Victor Frankenstein and the Creature, who are all male. Mary Shelley has modelled her female characters based on a particular version of femininity that she herself tries to adopt throughout as a woman writer. The male-centric symbolic order, decrees the existence of two polar versions of femininity as compared to the supposedly stable and rigid masculinity. The proper ladies who complied with patriarchal system, accepted their secondary role, practiced restraint and silence were considered as angels. Those who rebelled against the system were considered monstrous and in need of control. According to critics, Shelley's fear of public scrutiny might be a consequence of the witch hunting her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, faced for her unapologetic stand on women's rights. Poovey, mentions Mrs. Shelley's defence of restraint and her silence on matters of women's rights as an obedience to patriarchal rules. Shelley has portrayed her female characters in the same vein, as proper ladies, apolitical and voiceless.

The first female character introduced to the readers is Walton's sister, Margaret. All through the novel, Margaret exists as a passive recipient of Walton's letters, describing his

perceptions and experiences. The reader never gets to hear Margaret's voice. Even Margaret's feelings regarding Walton's travel are conveyed through Walton himself. Gilbert and Gubar explain how women have often been symbolized as houses. This roots from the concept of the female womb as the first home of every child providing nutrition and safety. For Walton, Margaret symbolizes home that he has left behind, the familiar and secure space as compared to the unpredictable sea that he is travelling in. Margaret stands for what constitutes a 'home', only because she is a proper lady who stays within her domestic circle, taking care of her family, while men like Walton do not. Walton's childhood spent under the care of Margaret is what, according to Walton, trained him to build a congenial atmosphere in his ship as in a family. Such an association of women with houses, says Gilbert and Gubar, is a trap set up by patriarchy to limit women to their domestic circles. Women who unlike Margaret, stray from the borders of their homes, by default, become monstrous women. Margaret is the silent and composed feminine contrast to the overzealous and fidgety demeanour of Walton. As Walton himself makes it apparent, Margaret is taught by books and well refined by her retirement from the world, she is fastidious and would have a tendency to "smile" or mock at Walton's excess display of emotion on meeting Victor. This remark by Walton makes implicit not only the disapproval of an elite society towards any exhibition of strong emotions, which they deem superfluous, but also the polite way in which a woman like Margaret would do it. A 'smile' rather than laughter is a more agreeable reaction for a woman of Margaret's stature.

A similar case of contrast is brought out while Victor narrates his story and explains the differing temperaments of Elizabeth and himself. Victor's description of himself would seem analogous to that of Walton's. As Victor says: "My temper was sometimes violent, and my passions vehement; but by some law in my temperament they were turned, not towards childish pursuits, but to an eager desire to learn, and not to learn all things indiscriminately" (30). The eagerness and vehemence that Victor displays are contrasted with the 'gentleness' of

Elizabeth.

Poovey described the position and responsibilities of women in a middle-class family during the eighteenth century. Men from a typical middle-class family were directly involved in contributing to the economy and society through his labours, while women were tasked with the duty of providing comfort and sympathy to their men, so that they could go back to their toils the next day with a refreshed mind, as well as, maintain the moral standards of the family high by imparting values. Poovey writes:

The duties a woman fulfilled in the home directly supported capitalist values. For example, the sympathetic, non-judgmental affection the ideal wife offered her husband helped offset the frustrations and strains a man suffered in his workplace and thus both contributed to the rewards associated with work and helped a man renew his energies for another day's labors. (10)

Poovey particularly cites an article that appeared in a journal called *The Ladies' Magazine* called "Female Character" in 1828, which talks about women's duty of supporting men in their adverse situations or when "the mortifications of disappointed ambition" torture them, in return for the protection that the men provide them. Victor says how he learnt to be gentle from Elizabeth even after his studies and ardour had made him aggressive and dull. The character also mentions her effect on Clerval who was corrupted with ambition and zeal. Elizabeth was able to subdue his overt passions through her kindness. This service was in return for the protection that men afforded women. In *Frankenstein*, one can see the ownership of women characters like Caroline and Elizabeth shifting from one man to another. Victor calls Alphonse Frankenstein a "protecting spirit", who takes over the responsibility of Caroline after her father's death. Caroline's fate depends on the fortune of her male guardians. Caroline's fate of becoming a 'beggar', after her father's death, changes on account of marrying Alphonse,

and she is again granted entry into the society she once had to leave, upon the downfall of her father's trade.

Women were trained to be patient listeners and silent sufferers. In *Frankenstein*, women characters are shown as restraining themselves from showing emotion. Caroline Frankenstein, Victor's mother, on her deathbed expresses her wish to be not dead and removed from her beloved, but immediately goes back on her wish, stating that they are not thoughts befitting a woman of her standards. Victor later says how Elizabeth suppresses her grief after the death of Caroline, so that she could be the 'comforter' to the family and 'assume her duties'. Not only Caroline or Elizabeth but also Margaret, Agatha and Safie are all represented as ideal versions of women or, in other words, as the 'Angel of the house'. Gilbert and Gubar say how women always choose the 'domestic' over the 'dramatic'. The women characters, in short, experience a shade of guilt in expressing their true feelings. They are, as Poovey suggests, conditioned to veil their inner selves and pretend as stable and unreactive beings. This as mentioned before comes from a place of fear. Women who do not follow the codes of behaviour for a proper lady, by default, become monsters.

Taxonomy marks the working of any organized system. While discussing abjection, it was discussed how the entry into the symbolic order, familiarized one with the linguistic system which worked as a system of differences, that is, male/female, living/dead, day/night and so on. Abject in an ordered system constitutes those that are separated from the symbolic order. It is those elements that refuse to be included into any order of classification and threaten to pull down everything into chaos. It occupies a liminal space. Religion, Morality and Law within the system of patriarchy, instruct through their discourses, how to identify an abject as well as reject it in order to maintain the social order and the class and rank based hierarchies. In her essay "Listen to my tale", Criscillia Benford writes: "The hierarchical model of ranks, orders, stations, and degree images the social order as a family and considers individualized

relationships of deference and condescension to be divinely sanctioned mechanisms of social cohesion” (329).

Kristeva explains that historically speaking, all religions have been concerned with different means of ‘purging the abject’. Religious cults operate like a system much like the symbolic order. The Law of the Temple regulates the members of the religion. The Law of the Temple seeks to establish a distance between man and God. The proximity to God is determined in terms of purity. Everything in religion is divided and categorized along the line of purity and impurity giving rise to a taxonomical system same as that of the symbolic order. Everything that has no direct relation to the divine like food, death, sex and femininity -same as that of the symbolic order-are considered impure and hence not allowed inside the holy place or the Temple. In biblical terms, it was the eating of forbidden fruit – an apple from the Tree of Knowledge- that led to the first fall of man from divine favour. The act, perpetrated by a woman, Eve, who let herself be seduced by desire, sought to diminish the distance between God and his beings and hence, Adam and Eve were expelled out of the Garden of Eden, because of meddling with the divine order. Kristeva writes:

From its very beginning, the biblical text insists on maintaining the distance between man and God by means of a dietary differentiation. Thus the Lord (Genesis3:22), after noting that "man is become as one of us, to know good and evil," decides to prevent this pretentious "scholar" from also becoming immortal. He thus prohibits certain foods by banishing him from the garden of Eden, "lest he put forth his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever. (95)

In *Frankenstein*, Victor violates this divine maxim. Victor tastes the forbidden fruit of knowledge, which is the divination of the mysteries of life and death. As he says: “Life and Death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through...” (43). It refers to his

transgression into a forbidden territory like the sin that Adam and Eve committed. Bible is essentially a tale of horror. It warns the readers of the horrors of appropriating with the divine positioning of God with respect to human. In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley seeks to establish the origin of sin of Victor to this same appropriation of divine distancing. Victor, like the fallen Prometheus, hints about his wish to become a Godlike figure of the race he would create- “A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me” (43). In biblical terms, such narcissistic tendencies of Victor are a sin. Christian thought commands humility towards God. The mystery and the sublimity associated with divinity are to be kept intact or else they disturb the divine order. Through the story of *Frankenstein*, wherein Promethean myth is compared with the story of the protagonist Victor, who finds no respite from his guilt the author promotes the version of the Promethean myth in which the pagan God finds no relief from his torments. The Titan does not go back to being God of the people. The creation of men from clay by Prometheus is a contradiction of the Creation myth of the Bible by the Trinity. Mary Shelley’s Gothic text reflects the Christian anxieties triggered by the adulation of the pagan God by the Romantics.

Abject in both symbolic order and religion, constitutes those elements that disturb the order or the identity of their respective systems. Biblical narratives seek to repeat what symbolic order had already established. Women, sex, food and wine all incite desire. Hence, they constitute the abject in both religion and the symbolic order. The maternal functions of reproduction, parturition and menstruation, where the symbolic order has no jurisdiction, are also considered as impure in many religious cults by the same logic that they are not directly related to the Law of the Temple. Religious cults strive to control and regulate women in tune with the patriarchal system. The ideas of purity and defilement are something very inherent to religious cults especially in biblical discourse. Impurity is explained as that which departs from the divine and acts as a threat. In “Semiotics of Biblical Abomination”, Kristeva notes that

what threatens the divine agency is maternal function, probably because of the reproductive capabilities of women where the symbolic order has no power, and it also takes out divinity out of the creation process. Hence, biblical order has always strived to keep the maternal function under the control of symbolic order. The maternal force if not kept retrained is accused of growing into an evil power threatening the social order. Since women were written off as the more unstable and weaker sex, incapable of warding off desires and controlling their appetites, religious groups in any culture can be seen trying to regulate and control women through their discourses. Women were conditioned to experience guilt from a very young age due to their sexuality, forcing them to be compliant to the laws dictated by the patriarchal society and religion.

One can see instances of religious organizations regulating women at the time Mary Shelley grew up in. According to Poovey, in England, Puritanism and Evangelicalism took up the mission of maintaining the order and social hierarchies within the families and the society as a whole. In the early eighteenth century, Puritanism convinced women that as proper ladies, their true position was within their domestic spheres. The women were burdened with two things mainly. Firstly, to regulate their desires, appetites and wants in such a way that they maintain the honour and integrity of the family. The Puritans advised against the intermixing and hailed the need of preservation of the family blood without any 'mixing'. It was the duty of the women to guard themselves from such tendencies which spoiled the family pride. Every elite society professes the 'purity of blood' and the 'impurity' inherent in the mixing of classes or ranks. Gothic texts as a trope, reflect the horrors of such intermixing and inviting 'impure' elements within a respectable society.

Such anxieties are reflected in the novel when readers are introduced to the character of Safie. In chapters thirteen and fourteen of *Frankenstein*, where the Creature continues to narrate his experiences of living next to the De Lacey family, he talks of the sudden arrival of

an 'Arabian', who is shortly revealed to be Felix's lover, who has come to live with them. Safie is revealed to have been born to a Turkish father and a Christian mother. The Creature recounts the perils Safie's mother had to go through because of marrying an Asian, who was beyond her rank and stood outside her social and ethnic circle. Safie's mother was born and raised as a Christian. Being a Christian, she is portrayed as an intellectual woman, who was "born in freedom". In contrast, her situation in Asia like other Turkish women, was a bondage that she wished to break.

Mary Shelley is prompt to inform the readers that Safie's mother did not marry the Turk out of her choice. Such a woman would have found it unable to deserve any sympathy from the readers during the time of Shelley. A woman disobeying the rules of propriety and marrying outside her rank would be deemed as an outcast and an abject. The readers would also find it difficult to accept Safie who was born of 'mixed blood'. Hence, Safie's mother was said to have been seized and enslaved by the Turks and forced to marry Safie's father. However, the readers learn how Safie was brought up solely by her mother on the tenets of Christianity and European ideals of liberty and individuality. Safie's mother takes the necessary precautions such that her daughter does not fall into the ways of the Arabs whose women lacked any "aspiration for higher intellect or independence of spirit". Despite her ethnicity, Safie grew up believing in Christianity.

This account brings out the Eurocentric view of the Asians who are viewed as barbaric and lacking in civility despite their wealth. The men of Safie's father are kidnappers who had seized and enslaved her mother and kept her in bondage until death. The Turkish Muslim women are remarked as intellectually inferior and lacking in spirit owing to their religion which has domesticated them. Christianity in contrast is painted as the better religion, providing their women social freedom and opportunities to prosper intellectually. The Turkish Muslims are here portrayed as the barbaric 'other' of the European Christianity. The story of Safie's parents

becomes a lesson for the apparent 'dangers' that follow when one is forced to transgress one's borders of society and mix with the 'other'. As a proof, Safie resolves to abject her Arabic past and embrace Christianity in her life ahead.

The anglicizing of Safie by the De Lacey family means two things. Firstly, as mentioned before, it helps the author to pit the greatness of the English Christendom against the uncivilized Islamic world. Secondly, learning the language of the community almost serves as a rite of passage that 'purifies' Safie who is of Islamic descent and helps her to assimilate into the community of the De Lacey family. Safie by marrying Felix and embracing Christianity sheds her past Islamic self, which makes her a subject of the Christian community. This prevents any fear of 'inbreeding' or instances of 'unsullied descent' which in the novel, the Creature mentions as one of the edicts of the society.

The second duty assigned by the Puritans was the handing over of the complete management of their respective domestic realms into the hands of women. Women were to be the 'Angel of the house' whose duty was to maintain a spiritual and calm atmosphere at their homes. Women at the time considered it a great honour to be of this service. It was considered as an ample 'compensation' for the desires and appetites that they repressed in honour of their families. It elevated the spiritual position of women at home over those of men who were equally virtuous.

In his letter to Miss Saville, Walton writes about the reason why he has come to detest the brutality. While recruiting his staff for his vessel, he is particular in choosing sailors who are kind and civilized in order to avoid any incidents of brutish nature on the vessel. Walton credits his sister's feminine care and her upbringing for his aversion to brutality and lack of civility.

Evangelicalism began after 1740s in England, says Poovey, and they strove to control

not only the voices of women, but also, other such disruptive voices like those of working classes who were becoming increasingly agitated due to lower wages and inflation in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Evangelicals succeeded in calming these voices and in ensuring that the existing social order was not threatened. They were able to infuse a passion and zeal towards religion in place of the radical thoughts amongst those sects, who were disturbed with the existing social inequalities and wanted a change in the social set up. From these instances, one can see how religion as an institution maintained and enforced patriarchy and class hierarchies during the time Mary Shelley was writing *Frankenstein*. Poovey also notes how this religious movement encouraged women to engage in their charitable works like attending to the poor, taking morality classes on Sundays, distributing religious pamphlets and so on, thus bringing women out of their homes to the neighbourhoods. Women during the time of Evangelicalism had the added responsibility of imparting moral values and support not only inside their homes, but also amongst their disadvantaged neighbours.

Mary Shelley was very much aware of this social situation while writing *Frankenstein*. In contrast to the conditions in which Walton was brought up in, the reader comes to know from Victor's rendering of his story, the nature of the Frankenstein household and his parents. Walton grew up in a fatherless household, with no one to guide him in his choices. However, Victor notes, how his parents considered him as a God-given gift and hence, took their duties towards him piously. This would mean that Victor was brought up in an environment of learning. Victor says how he imbibed the moral values of charity, patience and self-control. Victor's parents, especially Caroline, is an embodiment of religious piety. Victor had talked about her mother's passion for helping the destitute. Caroline, on her own, approaches the poor peasant family and discovers Elizabeth Lavenza, living in abject poverty with them. This is the only point in the novel where one can see a woman character leaving her home and marking her presence outside the boundaries of her domestic abode, without the aid of her male

companion. Caroline takes the responsibility of taking over the charge of Elizabeth from her foster family and brings her home.

One can see the involvement of church in these instances through the figure of the village priest, who facilitates the handover. Caroline is an example of what Poovey notes about the Evangelical version of proper lady. Despite the pretensions of being charitable, what Caroline and the church ensure is not the betterment of the lower classes, like the peasant family, whose conditions remain the same as in the story, but reinstate Elizabeth Lavenza, who was born as the daughter of a Milanese nobleman and hence, an erstwhile member of the upper-class, back to her original status. Here, Caroline fulfils the religious decree as well as the directive of the society for women regarding the prevention of 'intermixing'. The upper middle-class anxieties regarding mixing of social ranks and noble blood are revealed in Victor's descriptions of Caroline's thoughts on finding Elizabeth amidst her foster family. Elizabeth's presence among the peasant kids is described as a "fair garden rose" standing among "dark-leaved brambles". Elizabeth's physical attributes are described in angelic terms- golden hair, cloudless blue eyes, ample and clear brow, face and lips that expressed sensibility and sweetness- that apparently become a mark of not only her racial superiority, but also her purity as compared to the other members of her foster family comprising of dark-eyed, thin little vagrants. Purity and nobility are measured in terms of physical attributes. The peasant family represents everything that makes one 'the other' in an elite society- unclean, uncouth, dark skinned, lower class and low-born. Hence, Caroline's disregard of other children points at their abject status. Adopting these children instead, would mean the crossing of social ranks and borders and hence, a transgression. Another similar instance is Caroline's rescue of Justine from her mother. However, unlike Caroline and Elizabeth, Justine does not escape the life of labour. Cottom in 'Frankenstein and Monster of Representation' remarks how Caroline and Elizabeth were already "marked for rescue" owing to their social class unlike Justine's.

“...labor (sic) must remain essentially foreign to Elizabeth and Mrs. Frankenstein and yet intrinsic to someone like their servant, Justine” (67).

By taking over Elizabeth from the hands of the peasant family, Caroline ensures the preservation of noble blood, as well as, the perpetuation of hierarchy and social order in her society. Caroline, in turn, was similarly rescued from a fall down the ranks by her marriage to Alphonse Frankenstein. Caroline and her father, Beaufort, had to leave their city following their fall into poverty. The shame that Beaufort experiences comes from the status of being a misfit in his own community of upper class families. Beaufort and Caroline become the abject. They are forced to leave their community as they no longer fit within it because of their fallen financial status. However, her marriage into the distinguished family of the Frankensteins, absolves her of her abjection and she is able to reclaim her lost rank and class.

In a society, law and order are thought to act as deterrents of criminal activities, unrest and protests. It is put in place to prevent a societal system from falling into disorder. Kristeva talks about crime as an abject. The presence of crime in a society is an evidence of the lack of efficiency in its law and order situation. Crime reveals the ugliness hidden beneath the veneer of social etiquettes and harmony. Hence, crime is an abject in a society that reveals the naked truth.

In *Frankenstein*, violence starts appearing at a very particular point of time. The Creature is positioned as the agent of violence in the novel cementing his status as a monster. However, the Creature has a past that reasons out his acts of violence. Benford talks about the ways in which Walton and Victor are able to attach or detach themselves from the various socio-political categories in order to build an image that they want to project towards their respective listeners. Walton admits to Margaret about his disassociation from a formal system of education and social order and his journey of self- learning and evolution. Victor on the

other hand is able to accurately place him within the hierarchical system of class, rank and ethnicity. Victor begins his narrative by describing himself thus: "I am by birth a Genevese; and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics; and my father had filled several public situations with honour and reputation" (26).

In contrast to Walton and Victor who are well aware of their socio-political dispositions, the Creature is unable to trace back his point of origin. Initially, after coming to life, the Creature's experiences are pre-oedipal in nature. The Creature talks about his inability to remember or distinguish his sensations after waking up to life. The Creature opens his narrative thus:

It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time; and it was indeed a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. (79)

Both Victor Frankenstein and Walton were initiated into the symbolic order of language learning and social hierarchies through parental guidance. Though both Victor and Walton disobey their fathers and in turn exit the symbolic order in order to pursue their desires, they were both an integral part of the community. However, the Creature who was abandoned, due to the lack of any parental backing or guidance was left to his own devices to learn and understand the workings of his society. The Creature's settling down near the cottage of the De Lacey family enables him to learn the language. This is the Creature's rite of passage from his pre-oedipal stage of inarticulation to the world of signifiers. The Creature mentions how he was unable to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds or express his own sensations.

The Creature due to a lack of access to the signifiers in the symbolic order, is rendered

unable to communicate or express himself. However, later he gets to learn not only the language but also other discourses like structure and nature of a family, hierarchical structure of society based on economic status and lineage, social etiquettes and morality. This learning builds an identity crisis in him. It makes him aware of what he lacks and he begins to wonder about his position in the overall structure of the society which can be traced back to his lack of knowledge regarding his lineage and origin. The Creature expects to be integrated into the family of the De Laceys and hence, consequently into the society, after having mastered the human language and the knowledge regarding the working of the society. However, the Creature is met with resistance and revolt, every time he tries to set his foot within the boundaries of a community, for instance, when he tries to enter the village with neatly set cottages. These experiences that the Creature endures reveal to him the truth of his existence. The Creature understands that he is an excess of representation. The society considers him as an abject.

It can be seen that, whenever the Creature trespasses the borders of a community, it creates a situation of crisis and lawlessness. It is symbolic of the incongruity of the Creature which makes it impossible for him to assimilate into the social structure of the society. It is the territory of the wild, where the social boundaries and laws are suspended that the Creature finds a space for himself. By the laws of the symbolic order, the Creature is marginalized towards the boundaries of the civic society. The family of the De Laceys had similarly sought refuge in the outskirts of society after running away from being punished by law. Hence, the forest becomes a space for outlaws like De Laceys, away from civic law, and the Creature who is rejected by social law. However, the Creature learns that he is not at par with the family of De Laceys either. It is this realization that incites the Creature in committing his first crime.

The first instance of the Creature's violence happens when he burns down the cottage of the De Lacey family after they attack him and leave their dwelling in fear. The Creature's

rebellion reveals what is wrong and unfair with the structuring of the patriarchal society, which predetermines and inscribes monstrosity and wickedness over him, without trying to 'listen to his tale'. As a continuity to what was stated before, the Creature creates chaos and disorder wherever he appears. The coming of the Creature to Geneva, initiates a series of murders and disorder in the family of Victor Frankenstein. The Creature murders little William unwittingly. However, he does not stop with murder. The Creature after murdering, goes on to plant the jewel with the portrait of Caroline that William was wearing at the time of murder, on a sleeping Justine Moritz, in order to make it appear that Justine had murdered William, for getting hold of the jewel. More than as a crime, the Creature justifies his act as a revolt against the unfair treatment meted out to him by the society. William was murdered by the Creature because he refused to listen to him. Little William instead invokes the Law of the Father- "you wish to eat me, and tear me to pieces" (109). That is according to the laws of the society, the Creature is 'the other', who is only capable of monstrosity. It is this bias against his incongruous form that makes the laws prevent him from becoming a member or ingratiate with other members of the community, that incites him into using violence. One of the observations made by the study is to see how the very same aspects that are considered as the traits of civilization are converted into apparatuses of torture. As instances, Bernatchez notes the various settlements that the Creature seeks refuge in like the shepherd's hut, the village as well as the hovel next to De Lacey's cottage, all symbols of comfort and civilization, in Creature's case become houses of agony. Bernatchez writes:

In the Creature's narrative, representations of civilization are recoded as sources of anguish. The village attacks him, just as Scarry writes of the torture process in which "civilization is brought to the prisoner and in his presence annihilated in the very process by which it is being made to annihilate him" (44). Artifacts that embody civilization (tables, chairs, walls) are re-coded as implements of pain: things to be

beaten with or against, like “the conversion of a refrigerator into a bludgeon” (41). (206-7)

The purpose of such torture mechanisms is to extinguish the subjective self of the victim into admitting that they are the monsters that the system incriminates them to be. The Creature’s crimes can be considered as an informal confession of the same. When the Creature transfers his crime onto Justine, he in turn becomes the torturer, who tries to elicit a confession from the victim. The ornament that he implants on Justine, a token of love, becomes the “implement of pain” in this case. This is another outcome of a society that inflicts torture. The tortured becomes the torturer. The Creature unleashes a community of ‘monsters’ onto the community that will not accommodate him.

The ones the societies stamp as monsters are taken as a warning or a sign to the community. They are feared and suppressed because they reveal the ugly truth hidden beneath the surface, much like the filthy mass of arteries that Victor had tried to cover with skin, but which had managed to transgress its borders. The Creature’s crimes, similarly, expose the weakness of the law and order system of their society.

The crime takes place in Geneva. As Victor states in the beginning of his narrative, Victor’s family had residences in both Geneva and Belrive. Both Belrive and Geneva had a different type of social setup. Geneva was a town settlement. It is a populated, closed community unlike Belrive, which is an open, secluded and depopulated place. One can see Victor, who treats himself like an outlaw after he feels responsible for the multiple deaths of William and Justine, feeling relieved to leave Geneva for Belrive. In Geneva, the laws are more rigid and freedom of the people restrained like a typical law- upholding society. An instance is the closing of the gates to the town by ten in the night, after which no one is allowed to wander beyond its borders. This curfew is not applicable to Belrive. Victor feels trapped within a

society like that of Geneva. Victor says:

About this time we retired to our house at Belrive. This change was particularly agreeable to me. The shutting of the gates regularly at ten o' clock, and the impossibility of remaining on the lake after that hour, had rendered our residence within the walls of Geneva very irksome to me. I was now free. (71)

The gates that shut out the native town of Geneva are a measure of safety as well as control. It restricts people within the society from wandering beyond as well as, prevents outsiders from invading into its territory. However, such measures do not stop the Creature from entering as well as committing his crimes in the soil of Geneva. This is the first instance of the systemic failure of the law and order system of the town. Secondly, as the Creature himself accredits, the idea of not only harming William but also planting the evidence of murder on an innocent Justine, in order to impress the idea that she could be the murderer, is implanted into his mind by his association with Felix and the "laws of man" which he calls "sanguinary". He says: "Thanks to the lessons of Felix and the sanguinary laws of man, I had learned now to work mischief" (110). This once again reveals the insufficiency and inhumaneness inherent in the laws of social control made by men.

The hypocrisy and hegemony of the system of law, in itself a reflection of the society, also become evident during the two instances of trial in the text. The first instance is when the innocent Justine is tried in the court of law of Geneva for the murder of William. Benford reads the act of the Creature taking the jewellery off William's dead body and planting it on Justine's body as an anonymous narrative created by the Creature. The Creature resorts to such a narrative creation as his words failed to be heard by the society he is in. And this narrative by the Creature, tells a story of a social setup entrenched in class hierarchy and oppression. For as Elizabeth recounts, everyone was quick to believe in the guilt of Justine based on just the

circumstantial evidences. Justine had become the monster of ‘ingratitude’ (62). This is because of the burden of social class that she is born into.

Looking through the glass of class bigotry, people of Geneva and the court are quickly able to buy the narrative of the Creature, that women like Justine are capable of monstrosity. As the officer in the court tells Victor after Justine had been convicted: “That evidence was hardly required in so glaring a case, but I am glad of it; and, indeed, none of our judges like to condemn a criminal upon circumstantial evidence, be it ever so decisive” (67). Justine is not able to give a counter- narrative to that of the Creature’s. Justine is unable to give reasons for having the jewel in possession or why she went near the spot from where the body of William would be found. Hence, she gives a false confession of having murdered William. Justine’s confused state and inability to articulate the situation that she is in, resemble the nature of Creature himself when he was in his pre- oedipal stage. If the Creature’s inability to articulate his senses was because of his lack of access to the signifiers of the symbolic order, Justine’s plight shows one that she is also an object who is denied access to the faculties of justice within the system of law and order. The character had internalized the guilt that monstrous women like her are accused of being capable and hence, the only narrative that she can provide with clarity is the same as that of the Creature’s.

Justine relates the circumstances leading to her confession to Elizabeth and Victor as they come to visit her: “Ever since I was condemned, my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was” (68). One of the idiosyncrasies of such systems is that the victims facilitate their own destruction to appease the torturers. Bernatchez quotes from the work, *The Body in Pain*, which analyzes the nature of pain: “Scarry writes that during the torture process, “the torturers are producing a mime in which the one annihilated shifts to being the agent of his own annihilation” (47); Justine, falsely admitting her guilt, justifies her own execution” (214).

The treatment of Justine by her jailer reflects the class bias that the society upholds. As Justine says, the confessor had threatened with “hell fire” and “excommunication” (68). Here, one can see how religion and law join hands in manipulating the poor like Justine into believing that they are monstrous. This is another example that proves that monsters are made through narratives that the powerful create, and not born as monstrous. Even the passivity of the Frankenstein family over attempting to believe initially in the innocence of Justine and later of saving her, is result of this class bias. This can be better understood by comparing a similar situation wherein Victor finds himself in a place as that of Justine. Victor is likewise, wrongfully convicted for the murder of his friend Henry Clerval. However, despite showing fits of abnormal behaviour, he earns the sympathy of the magistrate Mr. Kirwin. The magistrate attends to him and enquires after his well -being despite him being an accused and also attends him while he was taken ill. The magistrate himself takes charge of arranging the witnesses and managing his defence. This is completely different from the kind of treatment that Justine is offered after she is pronounced as the accused. The legal system is easily convinced of Victor’s innocence unlike in the case of Justine’s. This is another instance that reveals the class bias inherent in patriarchal systems. Monstrosity is easily inscribed on a body that is feminine, along with that, Justine was born into a family with no rank or position in the society. Such bodies are abject for a society that follows the Law of the Father.

Frankenstein was dubbed as a pioneer work in the scientific fiction genre. The story of the mad scientist and the catastrophic experiments he performs resulting in the generation of a monstrous progeny quickly became a cult classic. Mary Shelley’s work has paved way for a number of spin- offs of the *Frankenstein* story and the characters of mad scientist and his monster have become indelible literary tropes. Having said that, this thesis however, has chosen to read *Frankenstein* only as a Gothic text. The reason being that even though the text is touted as work discussing science, its author, has refrained from expounding the process through

which Victor Frankenstein, the scientist, actually creates his monster. Also, the discipline that he follows in order to finally arrive at his discovery, that is a cure for death and a way to reanimate those who are lost to death, is pseudoscience and not actual science.

Another major focus of this chapter was to understand the culture of fear, how it is created and by whom. In order to study the culture of fear, it is imperative to study the narratives that inculcate fear and anxiety. Such narratives whose purpose is to instil horror in the minds of the readers come under the genre of Gothic. This thesis has already discussed the premise under which *Frankenstein* was authored by Mary Shelley and how she intended it to be horror story. Hence, this chapter has read and analyzed the novel of *Frankenstein* as a Gothic text.

This chapter has tried to argue that the making of a culture of fear has its own politics. The chapter studied and learnt how fear comes from a place of breaking down of meaning. It was seen how in a patriarchal society, with the help of discourses of religion, law and morality, the patriarchal law or the symbolic order is established. The culture of fear in our society is the work of the patriarchy that has successfully indoctrinated a cultural anxiety towards the 'other'. The other includes everything that creates a category crisis in the system of patriarchy, as it refuses to assimilate the laws of the society and in turn becomes a threat to the social order. What can be learned from the above is the working of a hegemonic system. Every system follows the same paradigm of separating the self from the other based on a set of categorical units like pure/ impure, life/death, angel/monster and so on and so forth. Those that transgress the rules of such separation become the 'monster' that normal people are trained to fear. It was seen how religion, law and moral teachings imparted from early one's childhood contribute in creating this culture of fear towards the other. Ample instances were taken from *Frankenstein* that prove the same. The Creature becomes a harbinger of crime and disorder in the societies he encroaches.

However, it is true that *Frankenstein* gives voice to its monster. Gilbert and Gubar read the Creature as a parody of Milton's Eve. Eve is the monstrous woman in the Bible, who seduces Adam into committing sin along with her. However, Eve is not given a voice to explain herself. The monster in *Frankenstein*, a similar epitome of desire and fear, however tells his story giving reasons for his fall into committing crimes. As a result, one is forced to develop a sense of empathy for the Creature.

There are also readings that depict the Creature as representing the working-class sections who are silenced by the system. Though such readings are possible, it still does not make the text a voice of the monster or the oppressed in general. Instead, one is forced to look into the various class, race and religious hierarchies that it tries to reinforce. *Frankenstein* is essentially a story of foreboding; a warning for those who rebel against the rules of nature. The text to the end, does not admit the Creature into the folds of its community. The Creature is portrayed as a purveyor of tragedy and disorder, a bane to the civilized society, and not someone who can be integrated into the society. Unto the last, the threat of the Creature still looms at large, as the text does not tell with certainty the incidence of his death. The Creature might as well be lurking in the "land of mist and snow" waiting for a rebound.

Chapter Five

Fragmentariness and Hybridity in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*: The Patchworked Body of the Text and the Monster as Sites of Carnival

Patchwork Girl; or, A Modern Monster by Mary/Shelley, and Herself or *Patchwork Girl*, is a work of electronic literature, authored by Shelley Jackson and published in the year 1995. Electronic literature refers to works that have been specially developed to be read exclusively in a digital space like computers, mobile phones or such digital devices. It differs from printed material that are digitized in that the particular features of the text belonging to electronic literature, can be read and appreciated only in that medium. One of the first critics to talk about a 'hypertext' was Theodore Holms Nelson. Nelson describes hypertexts as those texts that do not impose a reading pattern, in which the reader is presented with just a single and fixed pathway to move ahead. In other words, a hypertext presents the reader with multiple trails, out of which the reader can choose the order in which he or she wants to read the text. There might be hypertexts that provide the reader with a predetermined order of events, however, chronology is not a prerequisite in the case of these texts. In *Literary Machines*, Nelson describes a hypertext as follows: "Well, by "hypertext" I mean non-sequential writing - text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen. As popularly conceived, this is a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways" (2). The postmodern literary critic, N. Katherine Hayles, in her book on electronic literature, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, published in 2008, explains it as a "digital born" literature that is created on a computer and meant to be read on the same (3).

Patchwork Girl published by Eastgate Systems is written in Storyspace, which is a

software program created for authoring, editing and reading hypertext narratives. It was created by Michael Joyce, Jay David Bolter and John B. Smith and is now under the license of Eastgate Systems. According to Hayles, Storyspace has contributed much to the development of early hypertext genre and it was the preferred choice for publishing works of electronic literature especially during the 1980s and 1990s. Most of the early works in Storyspace, including *Patchwork Girl*, are published and distributed in the form of compact discs, though nowadays many new forms of both writing and publishing have become possible. In her work, Hayles gives a history of the evolution of the electronic literature. Hayles marks *Patchwork Girl* as belonging to the first generation of electronic literature, which she names as “classical” that lasted till 1995 (7). The classical works were mainly hypertext fictions. They are characterized by the presence of hyperlinks that help the reader to navigate and proceed through the text. The later works which she categorizes as “contemporary” and “postmodern”, no longer use hyperlinks as they have added features to traverse through the hypertextual space and also to communicate with it (7). Hayles writes:

Whereas earlier works tended to be blocks of texts (traditionally called lexia) with limited graphics, animation, colours, and sound, later works make much fuller use of the multimodal capabilities of the web; while the hypertext link is considered the distinguishing feature of the earlier works, later works use a wide variety of navigation schemes and interface metaphors that tend to deemphasize the link as such. (6-7)

In *Patchwork Girl*, Jackson brings to life, the female monster that in *Frankenstein*, Victor had destroyed prior to its completion. In *Frankenstein*, the Creature requests Victor to create a female version of himself, a female ‘monster’, who could give him company, so that he could leave the abodes of men forever and move afar to start his own family. Even though Victor almost completes creating the female companion, he discontinues the process as well as destroys her after being overwhelmed with doubts regarding the Creature’s promises and also

the repercussions that might follow the creation of another being capable of monstrosity. In Jackson's work, she reimagines a scenario where the female creature is not only allowed to live but also leads a life filled with adventures. This female creature is depicted as an embodiment of hybridity and fragmentariness. The protagonist is a patchwork of many things and therefore pertinently named by Jackson as the 'Patchwork girl'. Patchwork girl, once born, goes on to live up to 175 years and a considerable part of this work is concerned with chronicling much of her experiences during this time.

In "Epic and Novel", Bakhtin not only studies the novel as a genre, but also points out the difficulty of doing so, because of its unfinalizable quality. Its ability to stay incomplete, unstable and resist canonization meant that it is always flexible and stayed the closest to the contemporary reality. The novel's idiosyncrasy for parodying everything, including itself, is a natural reaction of something that resisted incumbency. It can be said that hypertexts are a step forward in the same direction. They share with novels the urge to overhaul the persistence of conventional forms. It challenges many a thing a conventional reader is used to. Hypertexts like *Patchwork Girl* is a huge transformation of the reading space. It revolutionizes one's reading experience in many ways. The hypertext model can be seen as an extension of the many postmodernist approaches that relentlessly try to express the incapacities with traditional use of language. Hypertexts make it possible for the author to take various liberties with the manner of storytelling. Jackson in her speech delivered at the conference, "Transformations of the Book", at MIT in 1998, described the peculiar unfinalizable nature of a hypertext as thus:

In hypertext, everything is there at once and equally weighted. It is a body whose brain is dispersed throughout the cells, fraught with potential, fragile with indecision, or rather strong in foregoing decisions, the way a vine will bend but a tree can fall down. It is always at its end and always at its beginning, the birth and the death are simultaneous and reflect each other harmoniously....

The interruptions amidst linearity, self-reflexivity and metafictional properties are typical with every hypertext. The many dialogic and multi-voiced discourses in *Patchwork Girl* as well as its intertextual elements are facilitated by this hypertextual format which makes the patchworking and interlinking of texts possible. Authors downplay their role in hypertexts like *Patchwork Girl* as there is no fixed and linear progression of the narrative imposed on the reader, who gets to choose the order. Jackson, therefore, terms a hypertext “schizophrenic”:

Hypertext is schizophrenic: you can't tell what's the original and what's the reference. Hierarchies break down into chains of likenesses, the thing is not more present than what the thing reminds you of; in this way you can slip out of one text into a footnoted text and find yourself reading another text entirely, a text to which your original text is a footnote. (“Stich Bitch” 2)

Also, the hyperlinks that make up the textual space of the hypertext, render it as a fragmented and disjointed terrain. Reading becomes a discontinuous, disrupted and laboured exercise in a hypertextual context. In “Gathering the Limbs of the Text in Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl*”, Carolina Sánchez-Palencia Carazo writes:

Hypertext foregrounds such questions of boundaries; in this non-linear environment, the author has the freedom to discard old structural conventions and traditional ideas of closure. Not only does hypertext, by its very nature, resist closure and allow play, it also partakes of a condition of mutability, as the product leaves room for changes in the format, colour, fonts, cascade, etc. (116)

Coming to the structure of the work, unlike a conventional book that mostly opens to reveal a title page, the hypertext *Patchwork Girl* opens to reveal two pages that appear side by side on the screen. One is an image titled as ‘her’ that shows the naked portrait of the female protagonist and the other showcases a flowchart which gives an ostensible sense of a direction

for the readers to move further in their reading of the hypertext. The components of the flowchart, which consist of titles, denoting the different reading sections of the hypertext, are enclosed inside boxes and are arranged in such a way that it resembles a human anatomy. In this flowchart, a box titled as 'her' forms the head which follows unto the box titled 'title page' which forms the trunk. Further, five separate sections, each containing a subsection, branch out like limbs from this title page box. These titles inside the boxes are all hyperlinks which when clicked open up a block of either a text or an image. For instance, the first box in the flowchart containing the hyperlink 'her' opens up to a naked portrait of the Patchwork girl. This can be taken as the opening page. The title page of *Patchwork Girl*, opened by clicking on the hyperlink 'title page', reveals the title of the hypertext as well as the same five broad sections that the work contains, shown as branching out from the title page box in the flowchart. Hence, the links to the texts or images of these sections can be accessed either by clicking on the hyperlinks on the title page or by going into the respective boxes in the flowchart.

The blocks of texts and images are what take the story forward or backward. The five main sections that the work is divided into, have their main headings as 'hercut', 'hercut 2', 'hercut 3', 'hercut 4' and 'phrenology'. Each of these follows further into a subsection each, with titles, 'quilt' or 'crazy quilt', 'journal', 'story', 'graveyard' and 'body of the text' or 'broken accents' respectively. Each of them deals with a different theme and aspect of the work. Each of these sections has blocks of images and texts embedded in them under various titles that take the narrative in particular directions. The hyperlinks of all the main five headings, that is, 'hercut', 'hercut 2', 'hercut 3', 'hercut 4' and 'phrenology', open up to blocks of images alone. One important and common aspect about every image, that the reader will come across from time to time grafted into the fabric of this hypertext, is that they are portraits of body parts. These body parts are depicted in such a way that they would seem disembodied, disarranged and 'patchworked'. Excluding phrenology, all the other hyperlinks, that is,

‘hercut’, ‘hercut 2’, ‘hercut 3’ and ‘hercut 4’ open into such disembodied parts. The title phrenology leads the reader to a labelled anatomical depiction of a human head. The labels on the anatomy do not pertain to the physical parts of the brain alone but consist of an assorted list of names, emotions, words, titles of the hypertext and so on. Having discussed the basic structure of the work, it is important to discuss the purpose such a hypertextual structure serves and the function it has, especially in a work that rewrites, parodically, a classical work of fiction.

The term ‘patchwork’ refers to the act of composing something out of variegated pieces put together. Hence, anything that is patchworked, has two core qualities defining its existence, which are fragmentariness and hybridity. In *Patchwork Girl*, these aspects of fragmentariness and hybridity of the narrative become more pronounced in the light of its theme and hypertextual structure. Carazo says that the reader should become a “cyborg reader”, borrowing the idea from Haraway, because of the kind of reading that the text, which is in itself fragmented and hybrid, demands from the readers (116). Carazo, as the title suggests, reads *Patchwork Girl* in the backdrop of Ezra Pound’s essay, “I Gather the Limbs of Osiris” in which Pound talks about the Modernists’ use of themes in ancient myths, metaphorically, in their works, as a way of bringing in postmodern effects in them. The narrative which exists as piecemeal in *Patchwork Girl* has to be put together by the reader. Carazo equates this activity to that of Victor putting together the various body parts to form the monster. Carazo says how in *Patchwork Girl*, Jackson brings the dual concepts of resurrection and fragmentation, to refer to not only to its themes but also the way the reading space is in itself structured in the work.

Bodies that are hybrid and incomplete or fragmented are deeply carnivalesque. Fragmentariness and hybridity pervade in *Patchwork Girl*. This fragmentariness exists not only at the structural level but also at the thematic level as well, as it repeatedly insists about the fragmentary nature of the Patchwork girl, who, like the Frankenstein monster, is created by

sewing together a motley group of things. The modular character, in *Patchwork Girl*'s case, is not just limited to its protagonist alone, but more importantly, to how the hypertext of *Patchwork Girl* is itself structured. Both the work and its eponymous character have a fragmented self. In other words, in order to tell the story of Patchwork girl, who is piecemeal, the author chooses a structure that is in itself discontinuous. The body of the work consists of texts and images seamed together by hyperlinks. The hyperlinks that vein throughout the body of the work, connect the chunks of texts and images, in order to create the body of the text. The body of the protagonist as well as the body of the text behave as typical carnivalesque bodies, in that they are fragmented, unfinished and deformed. The body of Patchwork girl does not follow what Bakhtin would term in *Rabelais* as the "aesthetics of the ready-made and the completed" (25). The text of *Patchwork Girl*, similarly, is not structured according to the aesthetics of a conventional literary text, that is complete, ordered and linear.

Dismemberment, which is an important Rabelaisian theme, characterizes both the body of the text as well as the protagonist. An anatomized or deformed body, according to Rabelais, carries with it the markers, the scum, filth, blood, pus and flesh or the "scoriae of birth and development" and is therefore a recurring aspect of Rabelaisian depictions (25). Bodily grotesque is an aspect common with both Gothic narratives as well as the carnivalesque. In Gothic texts, the grotesqueness, especially of the human body, becomes a site of disgust and fear, whereas carnivalesque depictions celebrate it on account of it being the truth of existence. The title page that shows the reader the route map, structured like a human anatomical body, needs the reader to manually choose the various hyperlinks, many of which open to disembodied parts, as part of the reading process. Moreover, most of the lexia or the subsections are named after the disembodied parts of the protagonist, like, 'a hand', 'a toe', 'lips', 'head', 'fingertips', 'ears' and so on and so forth. It also has sections titled after organs like 'heart', 'liver', 'lung' and other bodily matter like 'blood', 'organs' and 'veins'. Some of the sections

like ‘guts’, ‘blood’ and ‘earwigs’ much like the titles, depict the grotesque realism connected with the bodies. The process of going through each of these lexia, named after a body part, organ or bodily matter, would seem like the reader is performing an act of anatomical dismembering, metaphorically.

Anatomical dismembering is also an important imagery in Rabelais. The grotesque realism of the human body is depicted by Rabelais through graphic, yet comic, depiction of dislocating bones, jaws and other body parts of the “carnavalesque victims” (202). The hypertext is much like a carnivalesque victim that is dissected, analyzed and observed closely by the reader. This is also an instance of the uncrowning of the horror in *Frankenstein*. The female monster in *Patchwork Girl* is brought closer to the readers much like how Bakhtin talked about bringing something into “crude contact” so that any fear and epic distance in between is destroyed. Bakhtin uses verbs like “fingering”, “peering”, “turning upside down”, “breaking”, “dismembering”, “laying it bare” and “experimenting” to signify the crudity of actions performed on the object of horror to uncrown it (*Rabelais* 23). The readers picking and clicking through each of these sections, named and modelled after some bodily aspect of the *Patchwork Girl*, would seem to perform the same, literally on the hypertext and symbolically on the female monster.

Fragmentariness and hybridity also exist at another level in terms of the intertextual instances in the text, another aspect that contributes to the patchworked disposition of the work. Much like *Frankenstein*, *Patchwork Girl* contains references to a number of popular literary texts. In addition to the work being a reimagining of *Frankenstein*, it also has characters, instances and textual pieces borrowed from other works mainly, Frank L. Baum’s *Patchwork Girl of Oz*, Derrida’s *Disseminations*, and Donna Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto”. The story of the female Creature is itself told by piecing together, the stories of *Frankenstein* and *Patchwork Girl of Oz*. Furthermore, in a pattern that resembles a dialogue between two parties,

in the lexia 'Interrupting D', fragments taken from *Disseminations* are given, followed by, what would seem, Patchwork girl's reservations about them. The presentation of the textual material from *Disseminations* along with the protagonist's viewpoints, in this manner, is not only a manifestation of the dialogic nature of the text but also, in a self-reflexive way, shows how it is also a manifestation of Derrida's concepts.

The text's harking to Haraway's essay also points to the self-reflexive element in the work. In her essay, Haraway had advocated for a new kind of feminism that is not centred on talking just about female victimhood and suffering. Instead she urges to use technology, to playful ends, to forge new hybrid identities much like a cyborg which is a blend of human or animal and machine. *Patchwork Girl* maybe seen as a manifestation of this, a 'cyborg', where the text has a fragmented identity and the text and the protagonist have a symbiotic and ambivalent existence, much like a cyborg. Also, the hypertextual format allows the author to use technology to communicate the aspects of gender, textuality, intellectual and literary property in a new light. In the lexia 'identities', Jackson borrows the following fragments from Haraway's work: "Identities seem contradictory, partial, strategic." / "There is not even such a state as 'being' female", "being" monster, "being" angel. / "We find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras"('identities'). The aspect of 'Angel of the house' / proper woman and monstrous woman dichotomy, discussed in the second chapter, is also evoked here.

The section 'crazy quilt', which is presented as a flow map consisting of multicoloured boxes, showing its subsections, brings out the patchworked disposition of the hypertext more vividly. The subsections 'misconception', 'a single space', 'labor' and 'not strictly' have contents that talk about the various ways in which the making of a hypertext become an enterprise in mixing and interweaving of things, emotions, mediums and stories. 'Misconception' satirically attributes hybridity as a quintessential aspect of the "maternal imagination". In 'Labor', passages from both *Frankenstein* and *Patchwork Girl of Oz*, which

narrate the creation or birth events, of the Creature and Patchwork girl respectively, are given in such a way that they are intertwined with each other to form a single narrative. It becomes a metaphor for the intertwined nature in which the network of texts or voices are coalesced to create the hypertext. It talks about the many births of the protagonist:

With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into lifeless thing that lay at my feet, a personage known as “proper woman”. it was already one in the morning...the Glass Cat was lying before the mirror and the Patchwork Girl lay limp and lifeless upon the beach. (‘labor’)

Hence, patchworking happens at more than one level in the hypertext. In ‘not strictly’, Patchwork girl says: “Texts became babel”. *Patchwork Girl* is a narrative made out of a patchwork of smaller borrowed narratives. In short, *Patchwork Girl* is a text pervaded by hybridity as well as fragmentariness, both of which, interestingly, are traits commonly assigned to ‘monsters’. The monstrous creature in *Patchwork Girl* not only allude to the protagonist alone but also to the work itself. It is also a call back to Holquist’s remark in *Dialogism* about the novels like *Frankenstein* being “baggy monsters” because of its patchworked existence (88). As Holquist remarks about Victor, the protagonist in *Patchwork Girl* also has a paradoxical and ambivalent existence. Patchwork girl is both unique as well as not unique. This aspect is played out in various ways in the text. Patchwork girl, who was killed off in *Frankenstein*, is given a new lease of life in *Patchwork Girl*. In this way, she is a new character as much as she can be called an old one. Both the text as well its protagonist has a unique existence in that they are both patchworked. Patchwork girl is composed of the limbs of women who had died before. Similarly, the text has bits and pieces of material taken from other texts patchworked into it. The paradox of newness and old exists here as well in that the patchworked composition makes the text as well as the protagonist unique yet the fact remains that both are

composed of materials that are themselves neither new nor unique. *Patchwork Girl* becomes a counterfoil to *Frankenstein* because the same hybridity, fragmentariness and monstrosity that are lamented in Mary Shelley's 'hideous progeny' are celebrated in the hypertext.

The flow of the narrative in *Patchwork Girl* is neither linear nor continuous. Even though there is an original sequence of sections given by the author, the reader gets to choose the chronology and order of the five sections. The reader can start from any section by clicking on the respective hyperlink. Since each section discusses a different aspect of the story and therefore stands independent of each other, chronology of the sections need not be maintained. The reader can either choose to read the 'graveyard' section first where she talks about her different body parts and its donors or the 'journal' section, which talks about the relationship between Mary Shelley and the protagonist from the former's perspective. The route map for the reader here is not necessarily a straight path but a zigzagged, fragmented and discontinuous path. In *Patchwork Girl*, reader plays an important role in deciding the flow of the narrative. Unlike the linear narrative found in conventional works, the direction of story is dependent on the links that the reader chooses. Reader plays an active role in the way the story is told. The work indicates a certain direction that the narrative proceeds, however, the reader can arbitrarily choose any link and create a direction of his or her choice for the narrative. There is no single fixed linear progression of events that is imposed on the text by the author. The very act of reading, in this case, becomes a fragmented exercise.

Hayles talks about the later period or the second generation of electronic literature which she terms as "postmodern" or "contemporary". These works are characterized by the presence of more convoluted features like sound, animated text, graphics, spoken text and automated text generation. Hayles also lists Interactive Fiction (IF), which is an inversion of video games that are backed by a narrative that the player tries to understand in order to get the pattern of the game. Interactive fiction conversely makes the user play games in order to get

the meaning of the text. *Patchwork Girl* may belong to the first generation of electronic literature however, it already contains the seeds of this idea in it.

As per the order shown in the title page of the text, the ‘a graveyard’ section precedes all the others. This section has many further headings in which the protagonist gives an account each of all her donors whose organs were used to resurrect her. It is a repository of stories about the genealogy of her parts and their former owners. The hyperlink of the main title, ‘graveyard’, leads the reader to a block of text that reads, “I am buried here. You can resurrect me, but only piecemeal. If you want to see the whole, you will have to sew me together yourself” (‘graveyard’). In this very first block of text that begins the section, the character is attempting to enter into a ‘dialogue’ with the reader. The protagonist is seeking the participation of the reader in resurrecting her who exists in fragments. The character says, it is the reader who has to make sense of these fragments and ‘patch’ them up in order to make it a whole. Carazo calls this bond that forms between the reader and the text as “prosthetic” (116). Carazo writes: “In the case of *Patchwork Girl*, reading appeals to our demiurgic power and turns readers into a sort of Dr. Frankenstein putting together the different pieces of the textual corpus, and thus creating our own monstrous, aberrant reading” (116).

This facet of the author urging the reader into action is central to Rabelais as well. Bakhtin refers to the prologues of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, where Rabelais praises his own writing and ‘seduces’ the readers into reading his book and this urging, according to Bakhtin is written in the manner of a druggist publicizing his drugs at a marketplace aiming to lure customers into buying his merchandise. Particularly important to the text under consideration is author’s prologue to Book 1 of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Here, Rabelais talks about ‘Sileni boxes’ named after the gay and liminal character Silenus in Greek mythology. The peculiarity of these boxes is explained by Rabelais as follows:

Silenes of old were little boxes, like those we now may see in the shops of apothecaries, painted on the outside with wanton toyish figures, as harpies, satyrs, bridled geese, horned hares, saddled ducks, flying goats, thiller harts, and other such-like counterfeited pictures at discretion, to excite people unto laughter, as Silenus himself, who was the foster-father of good Bacchus, was wont to do ; but within those capricious caskets were carefully preserved and kept many rich jewels and fine drugs, such as balm, ambergris, amomon, musk, civet, with several kinds of precious stones, and other things of great price. (9)

Rabelais compares his books to Sileni boxes that might look incredulous from the outside, that is, the titles of the book that might make readers think that there is nothing in the book than “jests, mockeries, lascivious discourse, and recreative lies” (10). However, he entreats the readers to “open the book, and seriously consider of the matter treated in it”, in order to find “things of far higher value than the box did promise” (10). Bakhtin writes that these Sileni boxes, when opened, revealed an image of God (*Rabelais* 169). The boxes or each ‘lexia’ in *Patchwork Girl* are much like these Sileni boxes which reveal an image, of anatomized body parts, along with texts encoded with meanings deeper than one might infer from the outside when opened.

One can say that the reading exercise in *Patchwork Girl* is embedded somewhat with the characteristics of playing a game. There is a narrative in piecemeal, which the reader has to get in order, like in a jigsaw puzzle, by following Patchwork girl’s cues, in order to make meanings out of it. The ‘interactions’ that are necessary between the reader and the narrator, creates a certain dialogic atmosphere in *Patchwork Girl*. Also, the female monster in this way is brought closer to the readers. The familiarity that breeds, as a result, lessens any fear or horror that is usually associated with a monstrous figure. Patchwork girl, unlike Frankenstein monster, is not a repulsive monster but a pleasant, amiable and playful woman. Also, the

presentation of the female monster to the readers, right from the title page, should be read in converse to the convoluted narrative structure in *Frankenstein* that 'hides' the Creature, so that one needs to read into the heart of the novel in order to listen to the Creature. The female monster converses directly to the readers rather than through a network of other narrators. This breeds a certain closeness between the reader and the character.

Despite the direct interaction of the protagonist with the readers, where she discloses herself, one can say that there is an impenetrability about the protagonist that she remains undefinable till the end. The game-like and interactive pattern of the narrative also renders the narrator as an elusive character. Bakhtin talks about the unfinalizability of the hero in a dialogic text. The hero resists all kinds of definitions that are imposed from outside by either the author or other characters. What one encounters in a dialogic text is not a protagonist who is completely defined and finalized by the author but a representation of his or her consciousness. What the author actually depicts is how the character responds to his or her own reality like his or her appearance, characterization and position in the society. The reader makes out an image of the protagonist from such responses of the protagonist. Hence, it is an interaction with the consciousness of the hero. In *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin articulates that the protagonist of a dialogic novel is not represented as an individual who acts and speaks on the basis of already fixed and predetermined characteristics and idiosyncrasies. One cannot give a definite answer to who the character actually is. Bakhtin says that what the author depicts is a character's point of view on himself and his surrounding environment (41). It is not a person that the readers listen to but the consciousness of an individual. "What is important to Dostoevsky is not how his hero appears in the world but first and foremost how the world appears to his hero, and how the hero appears to himself" (47). It is more about the commentary that the hero formulates about himself and the world surrounding him and not the author's or any other outsider's viewpoint of the hero, for that matter. Bakhtin comments on the Dostoyevskian hero as follows:

The hero interests Dostoevsky not as some manifestation of reality that possesses fixed and specific socially typical or individually characteristic traits, nor as a specific profile assembled out of unambiguous and objective features which, taken together, answer the question "Who is he?" No, the hero interests Dostoevsky as a particular point of view on the world and on oneself, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality. (47)

The author of a dialogic novel throws light on the consciousness of the protagonist. The protagonist in a dialogic narrative is self-conscious about how he or she is viewed and defined by the outside world. What the reader gets to see is the highly reactive space of the protagonist's consciousness which rebels against and negates all kinds of authorial definitions and perceptions made of him or her by the outsiders. Such definitions are considered reductive as they have no access to the consciousness of the character. The only way one can access someone else's consciousness is through dialogue. The protagonist that the reader encounters in *Patchwork Girl*, escapes from authorial control but emphasizes her need for the reader in her resurrection. The reader forms a picture of the protagonist and in turn the work itself, by reading the blocks of text and piecing together the details. The reader and the protagonist exist through an act of interdependence. As the Patchwork girl asserts, in order for the reader to resurrect her, he or she needs to engage in a dialogue with her. However, she also says that, "You can resurrect me, but only piecemeal" ('graveyard'). What the reader attains is only a fragmented picture of the protagonist. Patchwork girl, like a Dostoyevskian hero, resists being portrayed as a finalized whole. This is utterly opposite to what the Creature goes through, as he is someone who is struggling to create an identity for himself in *Frankenstein*.

The dialogic nature of the text as well as the elusive nature of the protagonist in *Patchwork Girl* is portrayed the best in the lexia 'Interrupting D'. The title is amply suggestive of what happens in this segment. Patchwork girl of the text of *Patchwork Girl* can be seen

entering into a 'dialogue' with Derrida's text *Disseminations*. Fragments from Derrida's essay 'Plato's Pharmacy' are knitted together with those of the text materials from *Patchwork Girl*, which in turn are highlighted in red ink. The textual materials are interspersed emulating the variegated patches of a quilt. This is written in such a way that both the texts or people would seem to be in a dialogue where the protagonist/hypertext is interrupting Derrida/his text. This is symbolically depicted by placing the fragments or incomplete textual material from Derrida's followed by Patchwork girl's rambling speech as thus:

As a living thing, logos issues from a father

-I on the other hand, have adopted a nominal mother (M/S) who is more like a midwife, and spring unparented from my own past selves-

There is thus for Plato no such thing as a written thing. There is only a logos more or less alive, more or less distant from itself

-that is, I don't exist. I am a passel of parts and should be returned to their original owners ('Did you hear something? Never mind, there's nobody there, some butcher's scraps fought over by dogs')- ('Interrupting D')

The hypertextual format completely facilitates the patchworking of the textual pieces thus resulting in the dialogic relation between the said works. Here, Jackson manifests not only what Bakhtin talked about the need for texts to be dialogic but also Derrida's concepts that he outlines in "Plato's Pharmacy". Plato had drawn the relationship between author and text in a phallogocentric way, calling the author as the father and the text as the son. Jackson subverts this notion not only by establishing the hypertext's matrilineal descent but also by placing the authorship on a rocky terrain by crediting its content to more than one textual source. The authorship is attributed to a bifurcated M/S. Arnaud Regnauld, in his essay 'Interrupting D: "Patchwork Girl's" Syncopated Body', read this as 'my/selves', referring to its "undecidable

collection of fragments which conflate the mother's body" (75). Also, Plato privileges speech over writing, much like he privileges the patriarchally dominant term in all the other binaries like God over nature, father over mother and sun over moon for in writing, the author is not present to defend what is written, unlike in speech, and thus leads to multiple interpretations and ambiguity in meaning. Writing is considered as a drug (*pharmakon*) that 'kills' the author. Derrida critiques these views in his *Disseminations* where the very title purports to undermine the idea of fixity of meaning or authorial intention. Jackson quotes from Derrida who in turn quotes Plato: "Writing...is weakened speech, something not completely dead; a living dead, a reprieved corpse, a deferred life, a semblance of breath" ('Interrupting D'). One can say that Jackson's work is a symbolic representation of this. 'Patchwork girl', both the protagonist and the text are "reprieved corpses" in that they are constituted of dead limbs or older texts, in the case of the hypertext, which are given a new life. Plato considered writing as a mere repetition of speech and therefore considered written forms as unoriginal. However, Plato also defines the original or the truth as something that can endure. This is the paradox that Derrida points out in Plato. What is written endures. *Patchwork Girl* which is a parody of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which is in turn a repetition of the Promethean myth, is hence an endurance of truth.

In *Patchwork Girl*, those details regarding the protagonist that might finalize and solidify the image of the protagonist for the readers are told in a manner that is ambiguous and vacillating, so that one cannot answer, in a conclusive manner, the question of who Patchwork girl actually is. In the 'graveyard' section, Patchwork girl tells the reader that she is composed of body parts taken from the corpses of a group of women. Excluding her liver, each of her body part as well as organ belong to a different woman. Carazo writes how this establishes the lineage of the protagonist as matrilineal. Here, Patchwork girl is able to establish something that the Creature could not, which is a proper ancestry. Also, in 'a story' section, the protagonist

transpires some more details regarding her. Patchwork girl says:

I am tall, and broad-shouldered enough that many take me for a man; others think me a transsexual (another feat of cut and stitch) and examine my jaw and hands for outsized bones, my throat for the tell-tale Adam's Apple. My black hair falls down my back but does not make me girlish. Women and men alike mistake my gender and both are drawn to me.

The motley effect of patched skin had lessened with age and uniform light conditions, though I am still slightly pied. Naked, I am more visibly so. I have large eyes, though they are proportional to my other features (all my features are large, but do not appear so in this setting). My pupils are pale grey, black-ringed. ('I am')

The characteristics like "tall", "broad-shouldered", "patched skin", "large eyes" and the colour of her pupils individualize and define her, however, quite paradoxically what the protagonist is again emphasizing here is how these same features amplify her ambivalent state and how it is not possible to compartmentalize her into conventional categories. The Patchwork girl's features make her look more like a man or a transsexual person than a woman. "Many take me for a man", she says and "others think me a transsexual". Similarly, her every organ and body part which comes with their own baggage of idiosyncrasies and histories, in a way complete her as much as fractionate her into a motley of parts. Every aspect of the protagonist is, in a way, in a motley state. This patchworked quality of the protagonist which renders her as 'monstrous', is time and again emphasized by herself, in the narrative. In 'why hideous', coming under the section 'a story', she says, even if each of her part is beautiful and proportional to the overall structure, she will still be a monster, because she happens to be "multiple", "mixed", "*mestizo*", and "mongrel".

Much like the Frankenstein monster, Patchwork girl also does not possess a form that

may be called conventional. However, unlike her “famous and unfortunate brother” who is “neurotic”, she celebrates this aspect and is in turn celebrated (‘I am’). As she states, both men and women find her attractive and is not repulsed by her appearance. Patchwork girl celebrates her ambivalence as well as her incompleteness. Patchwork girl is as much a singular entity as much she represents the multitudes which are her donors. Nothing in her case can be held conclusive. She says, “I am never settled” and “I belong nowhere” (‘I am’). “The curious, the lustful, the suspicious and the merely stupid” who spy on her and tail her everywhere “scribbling notes and numerals”, is probably a sideward glance at her readers. She refuses to be analyzed by the readers or anyone who lies outside her consciousness:

Born full- grown, I have lived in this frame for 175 years. By another reckoning, I have lived many lives (Tituba’s, Jane’s and the others’) and am much older. The curious, the lustful, the suspicious and the merely stupid watch me wherever I go and some follow me, scribbling notes and numerals, as if translation into a chart or overview will make all clear and safe as houses. They may be sure I will lead them for a chase. I am never settled. (‘I am’)

What is a crisis for the Frankenstein monster becomes a blessing for the female monster. The crisis that the Creature faced was his inability to claim a social position or feel a sense of belongingness in his hostile society. However, Patchwork girl does not want to belong anywhere, for she says, for the marginalized gender, belonging has always meant ‘belonging to’ someone, that is subscribing to the patriarchal codes of the society and performing a subservient role in it. The protagonist says: “I belong nowhere. This is not bizarre for my sex, however, nor is it uncomfortable for us, to whom belonging has generally meant, belonging TO” (‘I am’). Hence, Patchwork girl resists to be defined and is not only a typical Dostoyevskian protagonist who rebels against literary conventions but also comes out as a feminist character who resists societal conventions as well.

Bakhtin states that the consciousness of the hero so depicted is “all- devouring” (49-50). That is, nothing happens outside the knowledge of this consciousness. The surrounding reality of the protagonist does not lie external to this consciousness affecting and influencing it but within it. It lies within the field of vision of the protagonist’s consciousness. What differentiates a dialogic work of fiction from a monologic one is its representation of a diverse set of points of view or ideologies. In a dialogic work, alongside the point of view of the protagonist, there will be other points of view, which the consciousness of the protagonist or the author cannot control or penetrate. The author can only take these diverse set of consciousnesses, without any articulation, and present it before the readers as they are. The author does not project a single point of view as the all- encompassing perspective of the work. Hence, in *Patchwork Girl*, alongside Patchwork girl’s narrative, the reader also encounters the character Mary Shelley’s thoughts as well.

In the section ‘journal’, as the name suggests, the author throws light on the musings of Mary, presented as journal entries. The author’s voice is completely absent in *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley’s anxiety of authorship may prevent her from “bringing herself forward in print”. Hence, in ‘journal’, the readers see that the only way Jackson can present the views of a reticent person like Mary is by directing the reader’s gaze onto a private space where the writer feels safe enough to pour out her innermost thoughts. In this account of Shelley, she gives a different version of creating Patchwork girl. In Patchwork girl’s version, she talks about her composition as consisting of an assortment of body parts taken from female corpses. It also indicates the composition of the character, one body part after another, by the reader, as he or she reads through the descriptions of each. As a writer, Mary writes about the process of writing involved in creating the character Patchwork girl. The character writes, “I had made her, writing deep into the night by candlelight, until the tiny black letters blurred into stiches and I began to feel that I was sewing a great quilt...” (‘written’). The character’s description does not deal with

the corporeal but with the verbal composition. Hence, the female monster and her creator Mary, both come up with their own versions of the composition. The author does not validate or discriminate either of the two viewpoints. Both the voices weigh equal. The hypertext thus becomes a multivocal work. This also means that the work disinclines to affirm a singular definition for Patchwork girl. It will always remain ambivalent and elusive.

One cannot give a definite answer to what Patchwork girl unambiguously signifies as there is more than one possible answer and they are all equally valid. This is unlike a text that is monologic where opinions are presented in a binary disposition as statements that are true and not true. The author does not have an impartial stance towards them. Those set of views, that the author approves, hence become the only true and valid thought. Therefore, in *Frankenstein*, ugliness becomes a finalizing attribute of the Frankenstein monster. One does not find an alternate perception. Horror on account of confronting the Creature is a definite and projected response in the narrative. Mary Shelley's position that *Frankenstein* is her "hideous progeny", owes to the presence of the Creature in it. Bakhtin writes:

A monologic artistic world does not recognize someone else's thought, someone else's idea, as an object of representation. In such a world everything ideological falls into two categories. Certain thoughts-true, signifying thoughts-gravitate toward the author's consciousness, and strive to shape themselves in the purely semantic unity of a worldview; such a thought is not represented, it is affirmed; (*Dostoevsky's Poetics* 79)

Bakhtin also talks about the representation of those thoughts that do not agree with author's ideology in a monologic work:

Other thoughts and ideas-untrue or indifferent from the author's point of view, not fitting into his worldview-are not affirmed; they are either polemically repudiated, or else they lose their power to signify directly and become simple elements of

characterization, the mental gestures of the hero or his more stable mental qualities.
(80)

The hideousness of the Creature is an affirmed thought in *Frankenstein*. However, in *Patchwork Girl*, there is ambiguity regarding not only the identity and composition of the protagonist but also the effect she has on her viewers. That is, the female monster in *Patchwork Girl* is depicted differently as attractive, hideous or sometimes both. The protagonist attracts differing responses from those who confront her.

In 'a story', the subsection 'hideous progeny' contains Mary Shelley's introduction to *Frankenstein* where she calls *Frankenstein*, the text, as her "hideous progeny". However, in the context of *Patchwork Girl*, this remark could refer to Patchwork girl as well. The character of Mary in *Patchwork Girl* writes: "Its several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone; and my companion was one who, in this world, I shall never see more" ('hideous progeny'). This is actually taken from Mary Shelley's introduction to *Frankenstein* and the "companion" referred to is generally thought of as her husband Shelley who had died by the time. However, in *Patchwork Girl*, this companion is interpreted as the protagonist herself. The confidential details that Mary, as a character in *Patchwork Girl*, puts down in her journal mention about the walk she takes with Patchwork girl during their first meeting as well as their conversations on various matters like, "blackberry preserves, sorcery, or Homeric odes" ('learn'), as Mary would put it, until they part ways. Hence, here Patchwork girl is remembered as "hideous" by Mary.

In her journal entry titled 'sight', she also notes: "I could not help but quail before the strangeness of the figure, from which I fancifully imagined, the very blades of grass seemed to shrink, but curiosity, compassion, and a kind of fellow feeling was the stronger impulse, I forced myself to continue". However, Mary, on closer inspection of the girl, also feels that her

creation is beautiful like an “Autumn foliage” with its “myriad differing hues” (‘she stood’). Similarly, Patchwork girl herself gives her assorted disposition as the explanation as to why she is hideous in ‘why hideous’. Nevertheless, in the very next section ‘seagoing’, she notes her experiences while on a voyage to America. This account reflects the details mentioned in the episode ‘I am’, where Patchwork girl talks about the way, in general, people are drawn towards her.

One of the defining features of the Creature was his ugliness and how it repulsed people away from him, whenever there was a confrontation. However, Patchwork girl’s first tryst with society, establishes her as a curious case that does not repel but attracts people towards her. This aspect once again brings to the fore the peculiarity of the character. The apprehensions of the people in the ship symbolize the curiosity of the reader who wants to theorize and articulate the idiosyncrasies of the protagonist. However, her personality, once again, comes across as an impermeable membrane to anyone external to her consciousness. The ship and its inmates can be considered as a microcosm of the society itself.

As a reinterpretation of the *Frankenstein* story, one can say that Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* initiates a dialogue towards Mary Shelley’s text. One can argue that *Patchwork Girl* is a fictional manifestation of what Bakhtin talked about the hero struggling to free oneself from the stronghold of the author. Throughout this work, one can see Patchwork girl or the female monster, who is originally a fictional creation of Shelley, attempting to rewrite and redefine everything that has been said about her by outsiders, starting from her original creator, Mary. This is more prominent in the section titled ‘a story’, which talks about the events that follow after Victor creates the female monster. In the beginning of the section ‘a story’, Patchwork girl announces about how she has parted from her author in order to tell her own story. Patchwork girl says, “But if I hope to tell a story, I must leapfrog out of the muddle of my several births to the day I parted for the last time with the author for my being, and set out to

write my own destiny” (‘birth’).

In *Frankenstein*, at the behest of the Creature, Victor goes on to create a female companion for him. However, he is overcome with dilemmas as to what his actions could entail, which finally force him to give up the enterprise and, on an impulse, destroy his creation. This episode is alluded to in the section ‘a story’ of *Patchwork Girl* under the title ‘treachery’. In *Frankenstein*, Victor mentions the countenance of the Creature who was spying him as he sat engrossed in his ‘filthy work’. Victor uses the terms “treachery” and “malice” to refer to the Creature (127). However, in *Patchwork Girl*, clearly the treachery mentioned refers to the actions of Victor. Patchwork girl repudiates the version of the story told by Victor in which he claims of having destroyed the female monster and thrown her remains into the sea. In ‘the remains’, Jackson alludes to the portion of *Frankenstein* in which he executes this. According to Mary Shelley’s version, Victor collects the remains of the female monster’s body and puts them in a basket, laid over by stones. After this he rows over to middle of the sea in a skiff along with the basket and waiting for the right time, when the moon is cast over by clouds, he throws the contents of the basket into the sea.

Patchwork girl challenges this original narrative. One can see her asking the readers, “Has it not struck you as odd that the whole of a female of stature commensurate with that of her monstrous intended (not to mention a “a great quantity of stones”) could be hoisted by one man and borne out to sea- in a *basket?*” (‘basket’). Patchwork girl refuses the death sentence granted to her by Victor or Mary. After pointing out the dubiousness behind the Victor’s account of her destruction and disposal, she goes on to call it a “scam”. Patchwork girl says, “That’s right: it was a cover up, a scam, a lie. We celebrated my death with wine and crusty bread at the little table in the garden, overlooking the lake where fictitious bubbles rose and burst, my phantasmic epigraphs” (‘scam’). Jackson reverses the wretched and gloomy scene of Victor carrying whatever remained of his female monster and throwing it off in the waters of

the sea to something gay and mirthful. Laughing and celebrating death with wine are deeply carnivalesque. Patchwork girl has here cheated death. What she and fictional character of Mary are celebrating here is her victory over death. It is a gay funeral. This is also an example, similar to a Dostoyevskian protagonist, of rebelling against her author, in order for her autonomy. Bakhtin gives the example of Dostoyevsky's character, Makar Devushkin, who reacts to Gogol's depiction of the protagonist in "The Overcoat", that he feels is an imitation of him. Devushkin feels he has been spied upon and that his privacy has been violated in order to create the said character. Bakhtin terms this as a "Copernican revolution", wherein a definition of the author regarding the hero that completes and finalizes him is brought into the path of vision of the hero, so that it becomes an object of his self-consciousness (49). Bakhtin writes:

One might offer the following, and somewhat simplified, formula for the revolution that the young Dostoevsky brought about in Gogol's world: he transferred the author and the narrator, with all their accumulated points of view and with the descriptions, characterizations, and definitions of the hero provided by them, into the field of vision of the hero himself, thus transforming the finalized and integral reality of the hero into the material of the hero's own self-consciousness. (49)

Jackson also rewrites the episode in *Frankenstein* where the Creature looks at his reflection in the river and is aghast at the hideous form that reflects back at him. Jackson incorporates the textual piece from *Patchwork Girl of Oz* where Scraps looks at the mirror and laughs in celebration: "The Patchwork girl looked herself and laughed. Noticing the mirror, she stood before it and examined her extraordinary features with amazement – her button eyes, pearl bead teeth and puffy nose" (Baum 56). In a true carnivalesque tone, when the glass cat calls her horrid, Scraps proclaims: "Horrid? Why I am thoroughly delightful. I'm an original, if you please, and therefore incomparable. Of all the comic, absurd, rare and amusing creatures the world contains, I must be the supreme freak...But I'm glad- I'm awfully glad! - that I'm

just what I'm, and nothing else" (57). This is a carnivalesque reversal of the horror in *Frankenstein* where Patchwork girl's carnival laughter destroys the seriousness of the episode and celebrates the grotesque reality of the body.

Patchwork girl fits all the requirements of a dialogic hero. The all-devouring feature of the protagonist is evident by the fact that nothing occurs in the text that is not already known to the hero. The focus is always on how each event affects this consciousness. It is not just Victor's account of her creation and 'murder' that Patchwork girl challenges but the very preconceived notions that Victor forms about her, even before she was born. In *Frankenstein*, Victor assumes that the female monster might prove to be more malicious and might relish in killing and wreaking havoc. He fears that she might abhor the Creature, might leave him or may not comply with the pact that Victor had made with the Creature, in her absence, to leave the company of men. Patchwork girl turns out to be none of those. The protagonist lives an adventurous life amidst normal people, with no intention of taking on a partner or creating monstrous progenies which was also something that Victor feared.

The act of sewing a quilt from scraps is a recurring blanket metaphor for many things in *Patchwork Girl*. It symbolizes the making of the monster or the narrative that the author, Mary, the protagonist and in a way the reader contribute to, because the narrative exists in the form of scraps which the reader has to patch up. It is an event of interaction that occurs between the reader and the protagonist. Bakhtin talks about an interactive event or a "sobytie" (6). Bakhtin uses the ambivalence in this Russian term, which stands to mean both "existence" or "being" as well as "event", to refer it to as a shared existence. It basically refers to an interactive event between two consciousnesses. The protagonist wishes to interact with the reader directly, for it is the only way that the reader can penetrate into her consciousness.

The patchworking in *Patchwork Girl* alludes to things deeper than its structural form

and theme. It is a patchwork of voices as well, to the point that it is difficult in this work to point out who the actual storyteller is. The reader hears the story of the creation of the ‘monster’, which can allude to either the Patchwork girl or the hypertext, from Mary Shelley, Jackson and the protagonist herself. Jackson brings in metafictional qualities to the work by discussing the actual process of creating the work. Jackson’s very titling of the work, *Patchwork Girl; or, A Modern Monster by Mary/Shelley, and Herself*, indicates this multi-voicedness of the work, as it presents the work as a collaborative effort of the protagonist and, from the way she has playfully presented the name Mary Shelley as Mary/Shelley, as a jesting response to Shelley’s critics. It ambiguously could be either Mary or Percy Shelley or both. Additionally, under the section titled ‘story’, the first subsidiary section that appears is also titled as ‘M/S’, the letters standing for Mary and Shelley respectively. This section contains sections from the original text of *Frankenstein* wherein Victor starts out to create the female monster. This multi-voicedness or polyphony works as an important narrative tool in bringing in the necessary thematic ambiguity and incompleteness in *Patchwork Girl*. The reality of the female monster is always in a flux. The character goes through many a birth and her genealogy is unclear. Patchwork girl says, “My birth takes place more than once. In the plea of a bygone monster, from a muddy hole by corpse- light; under the needle, and under the pen” (‘birth’). The work itself has such an existence. It is a polyphonic web of voices, each vying for their part in the ‘monstrous birth’. There is no single truth or meaning governing the narrative as a whole. In this polyphonic environment, there are only perspectives.

Each of the five sections in *Patchwork Girl*, along with Patchwork girl’s autobiographic details, recounts the many births of the monster. In ‘graveyard’ the reader constructs a portrait of Patchwork girl in “piecemeal” based on the character’s input and ‘journal’ contains Mary Shelley’s ambiguous account on the artistic process of creating her ‘progeny’. In ‘a story’, Patchwork girl takes the reader back to Victor’s filthy laboratory where, in repudiation to

Victor's account of events, her biological birth and resurrection, and not destruction, take place. The next section 'crazy quilt' reinforces the aspect of hybridity. As the name suggests, it has a peculiar narrative construction. It consists of a bizarre assemblage of textual pieces. The process of creating the monster or the 'freak' is narrated here in a convoluted and ambiguous mix of details taken from a medley of sources, much like a 'crazy' patchwork quilt that is sewed up from variegated components or the freakish monster herself. The final section 'broken accents' has the protagonist, in a metafictional sense, share a snippet of her experience of creating the hypertextual narrative, characterized by its broken or incomplete and hybrid elements. The character writes:

Assembling these patched words in an electronic space, I feel half-blind, as if the entire text is within reach, but because of some myopic condition I am only familiar with from dreams, I can see only that part most immediately before me, and have no sense of how that part relates to the rest." ('this writing')

Hence, *Patchwork Girl* is polyphonic, where a patchwork of voices recounts their own version of the birth of the 'monster'.

One could say that the characters in *Patchwork Girl* are Dostoyevskian which means they are "not voiceless slaves" of the author instead, "free people, capable of standing *alongside* their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him" (Bakhtin 6). There is a glaring inconspicuousness of Jackson's name, who is the original author, in the title page of the work where three different characters take up the role instead. This downplays the concept of a single dominant ideology or voice, typical of the author, controlling the whole work. As Bakhtin articulates about Dostoevsky's characters in *Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

...the direct and fully weighted signifying power of the characters' words destroys the monologic plane of the novel and calls forth an unmediated response-as if the character

were not an object of authorial discourse, but rather a fully valid, autonomous carrier of his own individual word. (7)

Instead, the work has a plurality of ideologies, consciousnesses and voices, all of which have an independent and equal importance as that of the author's.

The discussion of the polyphonic aspect of the text cannot be complete without identifying the type of discourses it uses in the narrative. It is truly a dialogic text. The protagonist asks the reader to enter into a dialogue, which the reader has to, in order to build up the character of Patchwork girl, piece by piece. The text can also be said to be in a dialogic relationship with all the texts it alludes to mainly *Frankenstein* and *Patchwork Girl of Oz*. *Patchwork Girl* represents a fictional landscape with women characters taking up more space than male characters. This can be considered as a response to *Frankenstein* whose narrative is solely told by male characters. In turn, Jackson presents us a repository of stories entirely told by and of women like an open polemic between the hypertext and its original.

The style of language used in *Patchwork Girl* differs depending on the narrator. Mary's narrative section, 'journal', begins with the following lines: "Yesterday I went for a walk down the lane that branches off at the holly tree from the main road. The day was gray, and a constant moisture hung in the air, agitating occasionally into a light rain" ('my walk'). The language depicted here is highly romanticized, typical of Mary Shelley's writing. This is different from the style of Patchwork girl, who writes in a more contemporary tongue. Hence, these sections of Shelley's writing can be considered as a 'stylized' speech, where Jackson imitates the style of the author. Stylization is one of the double-voiced discourses discussed by Bakhtin in *Dostoevsky's Poetics*. It refers to author's use of another person's speech as their own. Here, Jackson makes use of a romanticized speech as typical of Mary Shelley's writing to write the content of her supposed journal. It is a slightly objectified speech.

The oral speeches of the women donors of *Patchwork girl* can be considered as examples of 'skaz' that reflect their respective social positions. Skaz is another type of double-voiced discourse mentioned by Bakhtin to explain the use of regional dialects, neologisms, mispronunciations and slangs that would individuate a person's speech from others. It is different from a refined or standardized speech one usually sees in mainstream literature.

Angela's status of being a lowborn maybe guessed from her speech: "I shake my hindquarters like a dog and arch my back like a cock crowing over his chickens" ('trunk'). The image of Angela "shaking her hindquarters" and "arching her back" are not very polite gestures. *Patchwork girl* says that Angela knew that language also had its 'high and low' much like her social status. Angela's language is a reflection of her. Similarly, the oral speech of Madame Q is an example of skaz as well as stylization. Her speech is different from the normal speech. It is a persuasive and manipulative speech that is trying to draw in people into her belief system. In the lexia 'ghosts'/ 'The Spiritualiste Says Something Pertinent About Ghosts', Madame Q chants: "If your loved departed ones speak with my voice, do not/ think yourself deceived. When I go into my trance state I, /the woman now speaking, am absent; I am physically dead, as the best doctors in the Americas assure me" ('ghosts'). This speech is stylized in the typical format of a fortune-teller's chant. Fortune-telling was a big part of the carnivals during Rabelais' time, which is reflected in his work, especially in Book Three where Panurge is seen going to spiritualists asking for his future regarding marriage.

The story-scape of *Patchwork Girl*, is a carnival world. *Patchwork girl*, the protagonist, is made up of organs collected from women belonging to highly eclectic range of things, beginning from their social class, economic status, tastes, appearances and so on. *Patchwork girl* is an assorted being. The protagonist compares herself to a vase that has been compiled out of bits and pieces taken from various other broken vases. *Patchwork girl* singularly represents all the women whose organs have gone into her making. Each of her body part comes with a

memory of their past lives and sometimes acts accordingly. Patchwork girl is like an archive of memories. The same women who are otherwise segregated from each other on the basis of the impenetrable social barriers that exist in the society, like class, gender, race and ethnicity find in *Patchwork Girl*, a way to blend in with each other. Patchwork girl represents what carnival is all about- a condition where all the social barriers that otherwise separate people are suspended and brought together.

Patchwork girl gives an account of each woman who has contributed towards creating her. The women belong to widely different social classes. *Patchwork Girl* is truly a heteroglotic novel in the sense that it presents a confluence of different social dialects spoken by Patchwork girl imitating the styles of these different women. Patchwork girl's description of each women donor and their history, in the first section of the text, 'graveyard', is a cross-section of the society itself. The description of her 'right arm', for instance, is an almost parodic commentary on the class divide. The upper part of her arm belonged to Tristessa whom she describes as follows: "...a woman known in the ship-yards for her deadly aim with the bottle-at stray dog or man, for she ley fly at the one with as little or as much cause as she trounced the other" ('right arm'). Patchwork girl talks about her lower part of the arm as thus:

The lower part was Eleanor's, a lady very dexterous with the accoutrements of femininity. She fielded a fan like a weapon, unfurling and snapping it shut with militant flirtatiousness. She swung a calf's weight in whalebone, metal hoop, linen and lace around her frame with no appearance of strain, and could hold a smile like a trapeze artist who swings by the teeth. The crook of her little finger as she cut her meat would silence a table. She liked her solitude, and had won it with the techniques of a perfect sociability. ('right arm')

Both Tristessa and Eleanor are fierce women. They live under social conditions that are

glaringly different from each other as evident from the descriptions. Eleanor was a “lady” of Victorian sensibilities who carried a hand fan and wore corsets, both markers of a highborn. Tristessa was a woman from the shipyards who chased men and dogs. The wide social gap between is parodically signified by the ‘weapons’ they carried- a hand fan and a bottle.

Bakhtin talks about the clash of centripetal and centrifugal forces while talking about a heteroglossic world. Centripetal forces are centralizing forces and refer to the authoritative discourses of the elite and the upper- class. They control and regulate the language. Centrifugal forces are the decentralizing forces that destabilise this power imbalance through mimicry and travesty of the language styles of the elite. Patchwork girl talks about Angela, her trunk donor, who belonged to the lower class. Angela was a social climber and had the habit of mimicking the accents of the upper class. This is a true instance of heteroglossia in the text.

All the characteristics of the hypertext so far discussed in this chapter in one way or other point to the highly reactive, multi-voiced and polyphonic space of the work. Yet, these are not the only traits that merit the text for a Bakhtinian reading. The text is also rich in Rabelaisian imagery and other popular festive forms. This chapter shall now proceed to map out some of these images and forms.

Patchwork Girl abounds with bodily images that evoke the grotesque reality, a quintessential aspect of the carnival imagery. The section ‘falling apart’, where the protagonist runs off to the west and settles down in an apartment inside a Victorian house, contains many instances of bodily grotesque. This particular section deals with Patchwork girl’s making and breaking of self, which are manifested through the disintegration and reintegration of her body parts. These episodes contribute to typical Rabelaisian imageries like bodily grotesque, dismemberment and overt physiological depictions. In the lexia, ‘dream of the body jungle’, the protagonist indulges in a fantasy where she visualizes a forest made of internal organs. The

bones become branches on which “hearts roosts like pheasants”, legs become trees, veins become vines and ovaries become kumquats that hang from the vines. The grotesque realism is brought out in images like the one where Patchwork girl is sucking at bleeding veins and bile dribbling from stomach pouch. The character talks about the earth below the jungle which is “alive with bacteria”, acerbic from the dribbles of the bile and the “warm saliva monsoons of summer”.

The carnivalesque image of the earth as a giant mouth that swallows, destroys and regenerates is brought out in these visions of the protagonist. Patchwork girl imagines the acidic earth “digesting” her feet, her “bony stumps sinking deep”, her blood becoming one with the blood of the jungle, her skin, fingerprints, palms and teeth withering down and her organs like uterus, guts and ovaries bursting away from her body and becoming a part of the forest network. The parts of Patchwork girl’s body are no longer a unified and individualized unit but become parts of a whole, much like the hypertext, which is a confluence of textual pieces and when deconstructed can easily dissolve and become one with the canon of literature. The universal element of a carnivalized body come alive in this fantasy. Also interesting is the ambivalence inherent in this vision where the reality of the bodily grotesque or grotesque realism is portrayed through a fantasy.

There are episodic images of dismemberment throughout the section where Patchwork girl’s body parts come lose one after another: “I began to ache. Tics, twinges, charley- horses, a stich in my side. Then I began to lose things” (‘falling apart’). In ‘my foot gone’, she accidentally hits her foot against an urn and it becomes unhinged. After “twisting and tugging” at it, the foot comes loose in Patchwork girl’s hands. More dismemberment happens in ‘more partings’. Patchwork girl narrates this episode with humour, in a true Rabelaisian vein: “My hand dropped off in a supermarket, where it sounded like a heavy fruit falling... I picked it up and plopped it in my basket, between the mushrooms and the cabbage.” Similarly, her ear drops

off while in Wal-Mart, which she folds in a kerchief and keeps in her pouch. In a comic depiction, one sees her wearing a stretch gridle that covers her whole body in public in order to restrict her parts from disintegrating as well as jabbing her joints on furniture whenever her parts jut out of them. In another episode, when the protagonist's limbs come lose while lying in a bathtub full of water, Elsie, a character she briefly befriends and buys for herself an identity and personal history from, comes to her with a jug of cheap wine and both of them drink to their content ('in the bath').

There is no horror in the depictions of dismemberment in *Patchwork Girl*. Every such moment is turned to a comic or merry-making episode. In 'mutinies', she imagines the innards of body as a battlefield and in 'blood' she likens its functioning to that of a machine. In 'mixo', she compares herself to a protozoan called '*Mixotricha paradoxa*'. This organism, in the animal kingdom, is considered as an anomaly and therefore the eponymous reference to 'paradox'. It looks like a single organism but is constituted of five different ones, much like 'Patchwork girl', both the text and the person.

Traces of the Rabelaisian grotesque and carnival imagery can be found in almost all the female characters of *Patchwork Girl*. The protagonist's body and the hypertext in turn become a site of carnival in the sense that they become a space for all these marginalized women to come together and voice their stories. The body, language and speech of each of these characters have carnivalesque shades in them. One such prominent carnivalesque character is Margaret, the donor of Patchwork girl's lips. Margaret is an epitome of carnival laughter. In the lexia 'lips', Patchwork girl talks about Margaret:

Margaret laughs so freely, shoulder shaking, stomach heaving saliva bright on her lips that the townspeople frowned on her. Caring for her aging father and her idiot brother as she did, tending her neglected garden when she could to coax forth its meagre yield

of cabbages and yams, what cause did she have for laughter? When a baby came and people whispered that her brother had to do with it, they waited for her smile to fade; it didn't. The baby came out screaming with laughter and even the midwife had to smile. ('lips')

Margaret's laughter is subversive. It is directed at the false seriousness of her patriarchal society, who "frowns" and judges her. In the official consciousness of the society, laughter equals vulgarity, especially for a woman. However, Margaret is a woman who lives on her own terms as opposed to the expectations of the people around her. The character's laughter signifies her freedom from the society's shackles. People are upset at her quirky behaviour as they expect her to be solemn about her living conditions, which she refuses to do. People expect her to be upset and guilty about getting pregnant out of wedlock, but she again laughs. Margaret's laughter is what Bakhtin describes in *Rabelais* as the victory over the "oppression and guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden ("mana" and "taboo"). It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death, hell and all that is more terrifying than the earth itself" (91).

Margaret's laughter is a typical carnival laughter. It is not directed at a particular comic event and is not negative or sarcastic in nature. Margaret laughed "freely", even when she had no particular reason to laugh. As Bakhtin says in *Rabelais*, she views the "entire world in its droll aspect" (11). As Bakhtin says, laughter frees one from both the external censorship of the society as well as the censorship that one internalizes, due to our superego, through "the fear of the sacred, of prohibitions, of the past, of power" which may have built up inside over the years (94). The image of Margaret giving birth to a baby who comes out laughing is deeply carnivalesque. Also, imbibing the true carnival spirit, Margaret shows the world that laughter can never be a polite activity. When Margaret laughs, to the indignation of the people, her "shoulder shakes", "stomach heaves" and saliva dribbles on her lips. As Patchwork girl has

inherited her lips, she is also forced to laugh through muscle memory and as she admits: “damages my identity” (‘lips’). It is almost like one being in one’s “death throes” (*Rabelais* 29). Margaret reminds one of the laughing terracotta figurines of the “senile pregnant hags” that Bakhtin talks about in *Rabelais* while discussing the grotesque. “It is pregnant death, a death that gives birth” (25). Margaret’s laughter is debasing and uncrowning and therefore truly carnivalesque. Also, from the point of the grotesque realism, Margaret is a metonym for the mouth, as she is the donor of Patchwork girl’s lips. The image of the wide-open mouth, that laughs, is quintessentially carnivalesque. Through laughter as well as through pregnancy, Margaret’s body establishes that essential communion with the outside world.

The carnival imagery of “pregnant death” is evoked by the story of Bella as well, a simpleton who “ate everything” (‘stomach’). Bella’s indulgent character is again carnivalesque in nature: “Eating was her thinking, it was lovemaking, family and job” (‘stomach’). The villagers of Bella can be sort of considered as a comic cult. It was their superstition that their crops would grow better only if Bella is fed by them. The reason being: “they (crops) felt appreciated”. However, the same villagers later accuse Bella of murder when a young, good-for-nothing fellow who frequented the tavern was found “crushed by an enormous weight”. Here we see the crowning and uncrowning of Bella, by her villagers, much like a deity belonging to a comic cult.

Even such a serious issue as murder and later the execution of Bella for the crime, is mentioned in true carnivalesque means. The banquet imagery is again employed while mentioning the episode of Bella being taken to the gallows: “Awaiting execution, Bella feasted on bread, pears and sweat cheese passed in circles through the bars. Bella in the cart on the way to the gallows ate oranges and apples, spitting seeds in the air” (‘stomach’). Later, from the ground where she is buried, she germinates as garden apples, oranges, pears and figs, which grow “intertwined” from her fertile soil. This is the truest image of the “pregnant death”.

Bella's body is swallowed by the earth, the womb, out of which sprouts a new life, the orchard. It is death that regenerates as a new life. The tragedy of Bella's death is changed into a gay image through the birth of the trees. This is carnival's most genuine truth, that is, continuity of the circle of life. Bella lives again through Patchwork girl who "belches sweet smell of orchard in summer", another grotesque imagery depicting flatulence ('stomach'). This is also a perfect example of the Malbrough theme, where death becomes a 'gay monster'. Bella's death is here, comically linked to scatological images like "belching" and "corpse- gas", thus turning it into a comic event.

Patchwork girl can be heard echoing the same in the lexia 'born', at the beginning of the section 'a story'. Patchwork girl writes: "The grave becomes the cradle; from amidst the damp clods and wisps of luminous corpse- gas comes squalling the 'hideous progeny'", her words. Death is the very seat, the prop of life, its raw material, and those once impregnable ramparts that barred the living from the dead are breached. Impregnable ramparts, pregnant death; barriers breached by a breech birth" ('born'). The tone here is hagiographic. Bakhtin explains hagiography as thus:

The hagiographic word is a word without a sideward glance, calmly adequate to itself and its referential object. But in Dostoevsky this discourse is of course stylized. A monologically firm and self-confident voice for the hero never really appears in his works, but a certain tendency toward it is clearly felt in several rare instances. When a hero, in keeping with Dostoevsky's plan, comes close to the truth about himself, makes peace with the other and takes possession of his own authentic voice, his style and tone begin to change. (*Dostoevsky's Poetics* 248)

Here, the tone of Patchwork girl can be seen to be levitating towards a certain seriousness and serenity. Patchwork girl's words echoes the same principle of carnival, of the

continuity of life. “Yeah, I came out topsy- turvy, heels over head, and the whole world wobbled with me”.

Grotesque imagery is also depicted through the story of Charlotte whose breasts dribble milk. These are bodies that are incomplete, oozing, devouring, swallowing and in contact with outside nature, through their various orifices. Patchwork girl’s gut is formed through a grafting of the intestines of Miss Anne, a housekeeper and a cow. The way she explains the working of her intestines is characteristic of the Rabelaisian imagery: “They contract rhythmically in rings that travel down the length of them with serenely constant velocity” (‘guts’). The character suffers from “explosive outcomes” on account of the presence of the cow’s gut that causes sudden bowel movements to happen.

The women that *Patchwork Girl* introduces in the ‘graveyard’ section, form a carnivalesque counter to the women characters in *Frankenstein*. The women in *Frankenstein* were silent characters who subscribed to the codes of the patriarchal setup in *Frankenstein* as opposed to the strong, opinionated and feminist women characters in the hypertext. In *Frankenstein*, Walton’s sister is called Margaret. Margaret in *Patchwork Girl* can be even considered as her comic double. Margaret in *Patchwork Girl* is also said to have a brother and an ailing father. From this one can extrapolate the same. Margaret Saville is a silent and a typical ‘Angel of the house’ figure in *Frankenstein*. Additionally, one can say that, Margaret’s gay laughter becomes a counter to Victor’s hysterical one in *Frankenstein*. Laughter in *Frankenstein* is portrayed negatively. It is a sign of madness and danger. Any outburst of emotion is considered as vulgar in Mary Shelley’s narrative as is portrayed through the ‘ideal’ behaviour of abstinence shown mainly by the women in Frankenstein household like Caroline, Elizabeth and Justine who refuse to even emote during crucial moments in the text. Therefore, Jackson’s Margaret can be considered as a parodic response or a hidden polemic to Shelley’s normative characterizations.

Susannah, who donates her tongue to the protagonist is similarly a true- blue carnivalesque character. Susannah is a decadent character who “talked more than she ate and ate more than the baker and butcher combined” (‘tongue’). The character’s “mountainous figure” which her waistband apparently could not contain, is a true portrayal of a popular festive body that eats, drinks and grows. Susannah spends her nights in the pub, engaging other drinkers with her gossips in exchange for food and drink. Bakhtin talks about the tradition of “table talks” during the time of carnival feasts, where people sit around a dining table and exchange talks that are sometimes inappropriate yet philosophical. A sort of camaraderie develops amongst the people who sit around a table and have, what Bakhtin would call “prandial” talks:

He was convinced that free and frank truth can be said only in the atmosphere of the banquet, only in table talk. Outside all considerations of prudence, such an atmosphere and such a tone corresponded to the very essence of truth as Rabelais understood it: a truth inwardly free, gay, and materialistic. (285)

Susannah’s portrayal is therefore truly a carnival one. Another popular festive imagery is that of Aspasia whose breasts are described as “pendulous superfluities” that “bounced and jiggled” (‘right breast’).

The true spirit of the marketplace is expressed in Flora’s story, whose promising ears are inherited by the protagonist. Flora’s upper- class life, spent “nibbling on sugared violets and tinkling on the pianoforte” (‘ear’) is a rather uneventful one until she is drawn to the marketplace and the bakery, over a gossip she heard, in order to gain more of such stories. Marketplace is a public space teeming with gossips and free talks, glaringly different in culture and mood from the sombre and elite ambience of Flora’s home. It is a second unofficial world. Marketplace is a carnival space where one can see an upper- class woman like Flora blending

in with the villagers, breaking social barriers. A certain familiarity, not possible in the official space, also develops among people as evident by the villagers who gossiped deliberately in front of Flora as they “felt more alive knowing someone was listening” (‘ear’).

Parodic aspect of the hypertext is brought out mostly by instances that attempt to travesty the original narrative of *Frankenstein*. The creation of the Creature in *Frankenstein* is carried out by sophisticated experiments conducted inside concealed laboratories and charnel houses. Jackson travesties this sophistication by inducing the very feminine image of Mary Shelley sitting and writing the story of the ‘female monster’ which is likened to the sewing of a quilt, which is again a very feminine occupation. One can say that, Jackson has attempted to keep the presence of male characters and their idiosyncrasies to the bare minimum, in her counter- narrative. Patchwork girl alludes to the hypertext, which also functions as her autobiographical notes, embracing its hideous, grotesque and hybrid self as thus: “...I beat my books; I caressed them. Page after page, O beloved, licked, lacerated” said the Patchwork Girl” (‘write?’). This is a counter narrative to how Shelley had referred to her work as her ‘hideous progeny’.

Jackson in her narrative, brings Patchwork girl and her creator, Mary, together. A genuine bond develops between both, something that never happens in *Frankenstein* as Victor is always dismissing his creature. Mary’s love towards her creature, ricochets from a parental affection to camaraderie and even incest. The bond towards Patchwork girl happens through familiarity that was facilitated by bringing her close to Mary. In ‘I lay’, Mary talks about caressing the skin of Patchwork girl who “trembles” under the touch. Here, Mary is able to humanize her creature unlike Victor. Mary is touched by the vulnerabilities of Patchwork girl. The character says: “It surprised, then moved me that one so strong should be susceptible, should tremble and mist at a touch” (‘I lay’). Bakhtin says how familiarity, brought by reducing the distance between, removes fear. Mary Shelley is not scared but understands her creature.

Patchwork girl reflects this thought when she says: “What you pity, stands apart from you. What is close is not pitiful, only what you do not understand, what you hope to cherish from a safe distance” (‘pity’).

The presence of Madame Q, a ‘spiritualiste’ and her séance session that the protagonist attends with a motley group of people also create a carnival space. The presence of phony fortune-tellers and oracles are typical of carnivals. The variegated people who attend her session, the ‘seekers’, present one with another instance of a carnivalesque community, after the community of women donors and the ones in the ship. In the section, ‘seekers’, Patchwork girl explains the assorted group of people or “seekers” who are part of the séance session of Madame Q. It included a “Captain”, who was neither a part of the army or navy, “snaggle-toothed” Mrs. May, the man with the “natural monster” or the armadillo on a leash. Both the man and the armadillo were erstwhile part of a “freak show” (‘a tail’). In the following episode with Madame Q, one sees her engaging in a very manipulative conversation to lure her clients:

I am not much different from a frog’s leg, which an
 electric current has caused to kick. I am kicking, kicking
 with the spirits of your husbands, your brothers.
 Perhaps you are a skeptic (sic), you believe we are alone
 here. Know that the earth is thronged with vanished souls.
 They pass through one another without difficulty, and
 nestle together, sweet as kittens, mild and blameless. (‘ghosts’)

This speech reminds one of the various characters of the marketplace that populate Rabelaisian narratives, like charlatans, impostors, fortune-tellers and medicasters who sell their services and products by seducing their customers with the gift of their gab. Even so, one sees that in next section, ‘she goes on’, Madame Q’s tone changes and becomes more deep and

philosophical:

“Our sense of who we are is mostly made up of what we/ remember being. We are who we are; we are made up of/ memories. Now, in the mind there are memories...memories waiting...to be/ awoken, by the taste of cardamom, the smell of bay rum, the/ unforgettable curve of a certain neck. Similarly, / it’s possible, of course, that one day you will forget the/ sonnet you have long known by heart...”. (‘she goes on’)

Within one person, one gets to see two different styles of speech. Madame Q begins her speech stylized in the form of a charlatan trying to lure in people and moves on to sound more like a poet. Madame Q is an ambivalent and polyphonic character who can be both a trickster and a poet, much like the people who sell drugs in Rabelais’ marketplace depictions. They are both an actor and a physician. Madame Q’s act makes the entire episode look like a play. Madame Q decrees ambivalence, hybridity and even polyphony as inherent characteristics of every sentient being:

So, within each one of you there is at least one other/ entirely different you, made up of all you’ve forgotten/ (cardamom, bay rum, a neck) and nothing you remember (“My/ mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun”). More accurately, / there are many other you’s, each a different combination of/ memories. (‘she goes on’)

A parodic work according to Bakhtin is self- reflexive. No one is spared in a parody from ridicule, not even the text itself. Many instances in *Patchwork Girl*, showcase the carnivalesque self- reflexivity of the text. The ‘research’ section is a parodied take on the data collection that has been done in order to make the content of the text. The text is structured in such a way that it reflects the patched- up nature of the work: “I collected bones from charnel houses, paragraphs from Heart of Darkness, and disturbed, with profane fingers...I came across a fabric of relations, an old patchwork quilt, which my grandmother once made when she was

young” (‘research’). The sections ‘a single space’ and ‘dotted line’ similarly acknowledge the hypertextual structure of the text. ‘Dotted line’ symbolizes the ambivalence and flexibility, inherent to a hypertext through a dotted line:

The dotted line is the best line. It indicates a difference without cleaving apart for good what it distinguishes. It is a permeable membrane: some substances necessary to both can pass from one side to the other... A dotted line demonstrates: even what is discontinuous and in pieces can blaze a trail. (‘dotted line’)

This self- reflexive voice coming from outside the fictional space adds to the already existing polyphonic ambience in the text.

Patchwork Girl is considered as a fine example of Cyberfeminism and a feminist response to Mary Shelley’s text. The hypertext is a walking repository of memories of lived lives of women that society would largely deem unremarkable. It is parodying the very predisposed and unbalanced act of archiving and documenting mainstream history and culture. In this work, Jackson attempts to talk and archive women and their lives that largely go undocumented. The archiving happens in two ways here. At one instance in the text, Patchwork girl says: “I pay homage to Jennifer and I wonder if I can detect their diverse personalities in my multiple parts” (‘names’). This in itself is a subversive or even a parodic act, as history has rarely documented the stories of women, that too those belonging to the margins. It is much like the vase or the urn that Patchwork girl alludes to. It is a travestied act of documenting the mundane. Patchwork girl compares her body to an urn containing the parts of the dead: “This Urn guards a Heart, a Liver, Lungs, Stomach, Guts and veins” (‘organs’). In another instance, she compares her head to a broken vase unearthed by archaeologists: “My skull is like an ancient vase scratched from the dust with toothpicks and paintbrushes and reassembled on a desk: there are fragments enough to make a vase, but how many vases shattered to make this

one? An archaeologist made a pot, that's all we know" ('head'). However, archaeological artefacts are usually valuables and other relics that belong to erstwhile Kings and the ruling class.

The protagonist in *Patchwork Girl* is a veritable carnivalesque character who eats, laughs and disintegrates much like a clown in a carnival. Patchwork girl terrifies Mary Shelley with her 'appetite', 'hallooing', 'jumping', laughing' and 'stamping' ('appetite'). Yet, she also, on a serious note, symbolizes the polemics of documenting the bodies and memories of the mundane. The following excerpt from the text embodies every facet of the carnivalesque inherent in the protagonist- the polyphonic and the dialogic co- existence of the donor's voices well as the bodily grotesque nature of the same voices heard through the "tripes" or the guts of the Patchwork girl:

In the quiet of the desert at noon I can hear my body murmuring to me. If I held a small, powerful microphone to my wrist or thigh you'd hear like interference on a wire the tinny voices of the personalities...I mike my tripes. These voices aren't stilled, distilled, iced over, stopped in permalife. They are not recordings...They are people, thinking and talking about it. They've got a sense of history, dense and disappointing. At times, I write down what I hear". ('miked tripes')

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Bakhtin talked about humour during a time when an autocratic government like the Soviet Union was ruling his country. The second chapter, “The Culture of Carnival: A Festive Space of Subversion, Laughter and Resistance”, discussed how he and some of his contemporaries saw in their, now demoted folk culture, the potency to challenge the cultural hegemony imposed by the then Russian government. The critic finds the antidote in the peculiar atmosphere created by the ancient folk festivities. His focus was on the kind of liberal and democratic space created by the intermingling of people from different strata of society in a carnival. These carnival spaces facilitated a particular variety of humour and laughter that has no place in the official setups which consecrated a certain seriousness. This seriousness is a reflection of their hegemonic and controlling powers that breed fear. Hence, Bakhtin says, the antidote to seriousness is humour and the antidote to fear is laughter.

The theory of carnivalesque that Bakhtin propounds is the result of the attempts he made to locate the traces of carnival humour in literature. In the works of Rabelais, he finds the appropriate response to all kinds of hegemony. Bakhtin’s reading of Rabelais and the consequent formulation of his theories regarding the use of language, imagery and especially humour are important instances that highlight the social and polemical role of literature and especially humour in questioning the powers as well as the ideologies that they impose on the powerless. These carnival festivities create a separate second space different from the one created by official powers. This space allows them to unapologetically mock the pretentious seriousness of the authorities. According to Bakhtin, this mockery is deeply polemical and it contains the grains of protest. It is this carnival humour, that destabilized and questioned

hegemony, that he looked for in literature and found traces in the parodical works of Rabelais. His reading of Rabelais opens new doors for reading and interpreting humour in literature. His theorization finds a new purpose and function for humour in literature. Humour creates pathways to mark one's protest as well as communicate and engage with the conflicting parties in a constructive and non-violent way.

The concepts that Bakhtin formulated during his lifetime, whether it is dialogism, polyphony or the carnivalesque, all point to his obsession with the idea of building an egalitarian space. According to him, a carnival space created this egalitarian ambience. In literature, he found the manifestation of the same in the works of Dostoevsky and then in Rabelais. Literature, and in it, the genre of parody provides a dynamic and discursive space that can question and challenge cultural erosion and appropriation. Parodies bring new discursive angles to an existing text. It is an event where the hypotext dies and is reborn as new.

One of the important aspects of Rabelaisian humour is that the human body becomes an important locus for inscribing humour. One can draw a parallel between the religious authority of Sorbonne in France during the time of Rabelais and the political authority of the Soviet Union from the time of Bakhtin's Russia, in terms of how their views regarding the human body converge. Rabelais used the grotesque truth of the human body- the eating, drinking, defecating body- to construct his own variety of humour. This grotesque truth and humour become a tool in his hands to prick the pompous and the pretentious. Rabelais celebrates the grotesque and Rabelaisian humour forms a perfect antidote to forces that try to appropriate or refine culture. This thesis has relied on the theories of Lacan and Kristeva to show how a typical patriarchal society induced fear in the name of the grotesque. Kristeva especially talks about the fear for the bodily grotesque, like blood and pus, ingrained into our psyche as part of cultural indoctrination. This is what, in turn, manifests through the genre of

Gothic. The Gothic genre treats the grotesque differently from the way it is portrayed in the parodies. In Gothic narratives, the grotesque becomes a source of horror. The only way to neutralize this fear is through humour and laughter. Rabelais' humour depicted the grotesque truth of the bodies. For instance, the laughing and pregnant hags that depict liminal bodies, that is, bodies that lie on the border, here between pregnancy (birth) and old age (death). They depict the grotesque truth of bodies in an utmost comic or 'droll' aspect (Bakhtin). The main purpose of Rabelaisian grotesque imagery has always been to remove the fear of death, for it is the fear of death that forces the common man to be obedient before the different institutions of power like religion or law. Laughter liberates human beings from such fears and authorities.

It can be said that the philosophy concerning parodies is a manifestation of Bakhtin's idea of a dialogic space where meaning and truth are continuously made and remade in an unfinalizable plane. Parodies initiate a dialogue or an open polemic with the texts they try to parody. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in a kind of biblical fashion, is a narrative that demonizes the act of ambition and transgression. It perpetuates a sort of anxiety against abnormal and non-conformist entities and portrays them as agents of systemic disorder. The second and the third chapters focused their attention on the text of *Frankenstein*, trying to read it against the backdrop of the theories of the carnival and of the abject. It looked into how fear is constructed in the Gothic narratives.

The third chapter, "*Frankenstein* as Gothic Fiction", draws a history of the Gothic genre in English, starting from Walpole's work. The chapter tried to look at the recurring themes, structure and symbolisms in Gothic fiction that contributed to the creation of an ambience of fear and anxiety in these texts. It was seen how the fear created in most of these texts, including *Frankenstein*, can be traced to the fear of a breaking down of order. This order can refer to the harmony within a family or a society. The text portrays the Creature, a product of Victor's transgressive and 'sinful' act, as an agent of crisis within Victor's family as well as his society.

The coming of the Creature results in the murders of little William, Justine and Clerval. The Creature was also seen to create chaos wherever he goes, like the home of the De Lacey's and the village with the peaceful cottages where it goes in search of food. The chapter looks at how Gothic narratives employed instances of the sublime on the one hand and the grotesque on the other, to induce terror and horror. Nature becomes an important source of sublime terror in *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley depicts the natural surroundings in the text in a manner that showcases its vastness, enormity and in a sense, violence towards human beings. Victor and Walton, time and again, draw solace from their surrounding environs but at the same time are seen to be terrified before the threat that the nature sometimes poses, especially when men transgress it.

The chapter also looked at the fate of all the major male characters in the text like Victor, Walton, Clerval and Walton who are portrayed as Faustian heroes having transgressive passions. None of them fulfils his destiny in the text. It is a narrative that decrees obedience and propriety. In *Frankenstein*, one can see two types of characters: characters who are drawn, by their ambitions, towards the borders of society and civilization, and characters like Alphonse Frankenstein, Caroline and Elizabeth who represent the conformists who lead austere and religious lives within society. The boundaries of society act like a semi-permeable membrane. Looking at the lived experiences of characters like Beaufort, Caroline, Elizabeth and the De Lacey's, one can see that a society either admits or ejects its members depending on their social status reflecting the deep-rooted hierarchical nature in which their normal society is structured.

The fourth chapter, "Speaking to the Mysterious Fears: The Case of the 'Monster' in *Frankenstein*", draws the conclusion that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a text that consecrates hierarchies. Even when the text appears empathetic to the situation of the Creature, it still neither forgives nor accepts him entirely. The apprehensive tone in which the text portrays the Creature, is a perfect instance that shows that 'monsters' are not born but created

through narratives. It is a study that shows how othering and oppression are by-products of the social engineering done by those who control the discourse.

Patchwork Girl is a hypertext that opened many doors for the writer to experiment and explore newer ways to integrate intertextual, intergeneric and dialogic aspects in the text. The convoluted method of storytelling in *Patchwork Girl*, incorporating non-linearity and self-reflexive and metafictional elements renders the text as a difficult read for the readers. It becomes an exercise in making and breaking of sense as well as meaning. The chapter established the various aspects that creates a carnival ambience in the text as well as the various discourses like stylization, skaz, hidden polemic and open polemic and hagiography that creates a polyphonic environment in the text. *Patchwork Girl* is a befitting response to the monologic text of *Frankenstein* that is rooted in the language and ideologies of a biblical and canonical nature.

It was seen how in *FASM*, the presence of double-voiced discourses creates a polyphonic ambience in the text. This thesis identified the double-voiced discourses like stylization, skaz, interior dialogue, statement with a loophole, hidden dialogue and open polemic in the text. Each and every character and event depicted in *FASM* is a travestied and parodied account of the original so that the reader can at any point in the novel, find two voices, that of Milligan's and Mary Shelley's, clashing with each other. Milligan's parody is a perfect instance of a self-reflexive parody. The author keeps inviting the reader's attention to the fact that the text is a discursive space where the author challenges the writing of Shelley.

The objective of this thesis was to read the select parodies of *Frankenstein* as counter narratives to the polemics that Mary Shelley's text put forth. This thesis had studied and compared the said texts and come to the conclusion that the parodies have, within their narratives, tried to challenge, ridicule and replace the Gothicism of *Frankenstein* through

laughter. In order to better describe the politics and principles of laughter, this thesis had read the parodies as typical narratives that employ all the parameters of a subversive parody as proposed by Bakhtin through his various works and theories.

The final two analytical chapters on *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan* and *Patchwork Girl* conclude that they contain ample instances where they challenge, question and subvert its hypotext. *FASM* provides a typical carnivalized version of *Frankenstein* where the characters including Victor, Walton, Clerval and mainly the Creature are transformed into their travestied and parodied selves. The Creature, who is always spotted eating a fish paste sandwich with his trousers coming undone and lying around his ankles, becomes the quintessential gay monster in the narrative. The laughter is generated by the depictions that border on the grotesque reality of the body like the exposed phallus of the monster, overt physiognomies of other characters, comic and uncrowning depictions of serious events in *Frankenstein* and so on and so forth. Similarly, in *Patchwork Girl*, one sees that it is the polyphonic ambience which renders it as a perfect Bakhtinian text that counters the *Frankenstein* narrative. Polyphony, intertextuality, dialogism, hybridity and fragmentation, all aspects defined by Bakhtin as exemplifying a typical carnivalized text, permeate *Patchwork Girl*.

After analyzing the two parodies, what the thesis has come to conclude is that there are many aspects that converge and diverge in both the parodies. Both the texts provide an alternate narrative to the *Frankenstein* story. The point of convergence is in terms of the characterization of their respective monsters, who turn out to be comical, festive and gay. The gay monster in *FASM* whose trousers come loose every now and then and the patched- up female monster in *Patchwork Girl* who is picking up and hiding her body parts that come untethered transform the plot of *Frankenstein* into a droll carnival. Another aspect is the inclusive ambience that both the texts create by including marginalized linguistic styles and dialects within the

narrative. The Creature in *FASM* who talks in the crude Scottish dialect and the presence of women from different strata of the society in *Patchwork Girl* bear testimony to this. As Jackson writes, both texts attempt to “passical (sic) the classical” (‘composition’).

However, there are more divergences than these points of convergence. *FASM* is a story of a male monster, written by a male author and *Patchwork Girl* talks about a female monster penned by a female author. The gendered differences in both the texts play a crucial role in deciding the polemics of both the texts. It is without doubt clear that, the female monster is the more progressive and the more subversive of the two. Milligan’s text has elements that are highly sexist, racist and derogatory. Milligan’s reference to the nurse, who comes to attend Victor while in prison, as “an old crone” is sexist (108). The depiction of Mary Shelley, in the introduction to the novel, as “blacking up” and dressing up as a “Zulu” also borders on racism (ix). Milligan calls Safie a “wog” which is both sexist and racist: “The wog’s name was Safie but her entrance into my story and continuance is not important” (84).

Another significant difference is the obvious difference in the medium of the two texts. It can be said without doubt the peculiar features of the hypertextual medium let *Patchwork Girl* employ innovative and subversive aspects within its text like stitching together textual fragments, self- reflexive and metafictional characteristics. The hypertext itself narrates its existence as a hypertext. It is the more confessional, non- linear and convoluted text of the two. Jackson calls it “the mosaic technique of mother’s imagination” (‘misconception’). It is also a negation of the phallogocentric space of the conventional print medium. Jackson writes: “Tricks in writing resemble Anagram of a Man” (‘this bad writing’), which maybe Jackson’s way of saying that the writing space is patriarchal and any such tricks are non- existent.

The bodily aspect is more physiological than sexual in *Patchwork Girl*. Whereas in *FASM*, it’s sexual and sexist. There is male gaze in the bodily descriptions of women characters

in Milligan's narratives. *Patchwork Girl* is an autobiographical and confessional account of not only the protagonist but also the group of women who contributed their limbs to her. It shows the collective nature of women's lived experiences. Even when their stories and representations are comical, their stories contain hints of abuse. The naked body of the protagonist that appears in the front page needs to be poked and prodded by the reader in order to 'communicate' with the text. It is almost an act of abuse and is a metaphoric way of saying that for women, the very act of confessing their lived experiences involves shades of trauma.

Frankenstein is one of the widely studied texts. The previous studies on Frankenstein monster have interpreted him as representing a myriad number of disadvantaged communities like the working class, people with disability, queer communities and so on and so forth. This thesis refuses to limit the categorization of the monster as representing just a single marginalized community but instead focusses on looking at those aspects of the Creature, as well as certain other marginalized characters, that force the society to shun them as misfits. It is also a study on how to recognize and thwart such exclusionary narratives that create a misplaced fear of people. Such a study gains relevance in the light of continuing social exclusionary policies of countries around the world. It points to the need for literary studies to come up with alternative narratives that will question social exclusion. The study of parody narratives reiterates the importance of humour and laughter in a world intent on building boundaries and hatred. It highlights the power of laughter in destabilizing hierarchies as well as replacing misplaced fear with understanding.

Chapter Eight

Recommendations for Further Studies

This thesis had looked at two retellings of *Frankenstein*, namely, Spike Milligan's *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan* and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*. *Frankenstein* has inspired a colossal number of rewritings and offshoot narratives. The purpose of this thesis had been to state that the aforementioned works carried a dynamic reading space pervaded by carnivalesque humour and polemics. These selected works belong to two different media, namely the conventional print medium in the case of *FASM* and the hypertextual medium of *Patchwork Girl*. Following this, this thesis has tried to compare both the works in terms of their medium and explain how it affects the many sides of reading these texts, especially aspects like the building of a polyphonic and dialogic ambience in the texts, relationship between the text and the reader, the intertextual and metafictional properties of the text and so on and so forth. However, there are other genres and media where the Frankenstein story has established its stronghold. Films, plays and a good share of graphic novels too have their own versions of the Frankenstein myth which can be similarly studied and compared for their generic peculiarities. The progenies of the myth have also infiltrated the realm of videogames and memes which can also be brought under these studies.

Patchwork Girl is considered as an example of Cyberfeminism. The narrative voice in *Patchwork Girl* is that of a woman as opposed to Milligan's narrative. The works have been compared on the basis of this difference in gender of the narrative voice as well, as in, how it reflected in the kind of humour produced, the portrayal of the bodily grotesque and more importantly, the target of the ridicule. However, other than these, there are aspects on the basis of which retellings of *Frankenstein* could be studied. The gay monster in Milligan's narrative

unlike the original the Frankenstein monster, speaks in an Irish accent. Similarly, Jackson's Patchwork girl has the accoutrements of a modern American woman. The cultural background of the authors, that is Milligan's and Jackson's, therefore, becomes a parameter in the making of these parodied forms. There are many other Frankenstein narratives that explore, not necessarily in a parodic sense, the story from entirely different geographical, temporal, political and other experimental setups. One such work is *Frankenstein in Baghdad* that sets the story in post-war Iraq. In other words, the aspects surrounding the cultural appropriation of the Frankenstein monster and story can be explored further.

Hauntology is a concept proposed by Jacques Derrida in his work *Spectres of Marx*. The term is a portmanteau word formed by combining the words 'haunt' and 'ontology'. If ontology engaged itself with the presence of a being, 'hauntology' talked about the absent present, in other words, a spectral presence. It talks about those elements from the past and the future, that come to 'haunt' the present. The constant concern of the so called hauntological systems is that "time is out of joint" (*Spectres* 20), that is, time becomes a disjointed and discontinuous aspect. An obsession with the events of the past and anticipating its repetition in the future is the basic peculiarity of hauntology. When it comes to literature and art, one can read the various tropes and styles as well as the old classics that often get recycled and reproduced as one of the instances of hauntology in literature and art. *Patchwork Girl* is a work that repeats an old story in a medium that anticipates a certain future for reading literature. The Frankenstein monster that keeps haunting the literary tropes can be analyzed using the theme of hauntology.

The story of Victor Frankenstein and the Frankenstein monster was a by-product of the anxieties surrounding the advancements in science and technology at the time of its composition. Over the years, the name Frankenstein, which continues to be mistakenly attributed to the Creature, is frequently recalled whenever one needs to talk about a new

technological development that is not responsible or trustworthy. The label was used to refer to various new inventions in science and technology like the IVF, Genetically Modified foods* and Clone technology, to name a few. In “*Frankenstein* Reflects the Hopes and Fears of Every Scientific Era”, Philip Ball writes: “*Frankenstein* is still frequently the first point of reference for media reports of such cutting-edge developments, just as it was when human IVF became a viable technique in the early 1970s. “Franken” label is now a lazy journalistic cliché for a technology you should distrust, or at least regard as “weird”: Frankenfoods, Frankenbugs”. The novel continues to attract offshoot adaptations and narratives for its relevance even today in terms of warning its readers of the dangers of science. In contemporary times, one can see some of the advancements in artificial intelligence as having threatening accoutrements. The monstrous proliferation of AI technologies has induced various kinds of anxieties and apprehensions in people. The uncontrollable ways in which AI has managed to invade the personal spaces of the people in the form of deepfake contents and the ways in which they mirror the intelligence and capabilities of an average human being, have induced fears of dispensability of things, hitherto deemed indispensable and other insecurities yet to be understood and articulated. It is a testimony to the relevance of the fear as embodied by the Frankenstein monster and the reason why it keeps generating newer stories. The monstrous proliferation of AI technologies has induced various kinds of anxieties and apprehensions in people. The uncontrollable ways in which AI has managed to invade the personal spaces of the people in the form of deepfake contents and the ways in which they mirror the intelligence and capabilities of an average human being, have induced fears of dispensability of things, hitherto deemed indispensable and other insecurities yet to be understood and articulated. It is a testimony to the relevance of the fear as embodied by the Frankenstein monster and the reason why it keeps generating newer stories. These newer stories which will arise from newly identified emerging interfaces between man and machine, of course, the result of the latest

developments in technology which eventually will give rise to fresh and rewarding readings of the same in the decades to come.

Chapter Six

The Case of the ‘Gay Monster’: Reading Spike Milligan’s *Frankenstein*

According to Spike Milligan as a Rabelaisian Parody of Frankenstein

Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan belonged to a series of pastiche works that the eponymous writer, Spike Milligan, wrote from the year 1993 to 2002. The works in ‘*According to Spike Milligan*’ series, were basically, Milligan’s travestied versions of original works. The list included parodies of works as eclectic as the *Old Testament*, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, classics like *Wuthering Heights*, *Treasure Island* as well as the more recent works like *Black Beauty*. Milligan is a writer who had contributed prolifically to the genre of comedy. Milligan has worked in the British radio, being the key writer of its comedy series *The Goon Show* and also written many nonsense verses, especially for children. *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan*, hereafter referred to as *FASM*, is a travestied version of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

In this work, Milligan parodies the characters and the main events of the original text. In Milligan’s version of the book, the work loses its seriousness as the fictional world of *Frankenstein* is turned upside down. This chapter looks at how, in the process of mimicking Mary Shelley’s reverend text, the work creates a subversive atmosphere. It looks at how the grotesque imagery and speech used in the text by Milligan, to create comedy, become carnivalesque in turn. A parodic discourse can never be a monologic discourse. As part of mimicking the original discourse, one can identify many double-voiced discourses that have made their way into the work. These discourses that create an atmosphere of multi-voicedness, are identified and understood as building a polyphonic ambience for the text.

While talking about *Frankenstein*, it was already observed how the novel’s structure

was much like that of its monstrous protagonist, in terms of consisting of an assortment of elements. Various kinds of narrative genres like letters, diary entries, memoirs, and stories make up the narrative of *Frankenstein*. A similar patchwork of genres is present in Milligan's version of the *Frankenstein* novel as well. Apart from parodied versions of Walton's letters and the narratives of Victor and the Creature, Milligan's characters can be seen bursting into poetry, mostly nonsense and parodic poetry, in between their narratives. This aspect also contributes to creating a polyphonic ambience in the parodic novel.

The writing of Milligan betrays many metafictional aspects. Milligan's authorial voice can be heard interrupting and conflicting with those of the characters at many instances in the text. Milligan's characters can be seen turning into unreliable narrators at many points. These aspects of the text, help to not only understand the flexibility of the novel genre in employing features that break the normal conventions of storytelling, but also show how a true Bakhtinian reading of the work would reveal, in what ways the text by being a parodic retelling, creates a space that is both carnivalesque and polyphonic. The grotesque imagery and debasing language used in the narrative as well as the presence of voices that conflict and coexist in the narrative attempt to subvert what is normal and reverend in literature. *FASM* is a work that parodies Mary Shelley's text throughout. The fictional world of *Frankenstein* is completely turned upside down, through comical intrigues, in Milligan's text. This chapter looks at how this creates an ambience in the work that could be called carnivalesque. A carnival world is a world that has turned its head over its heels. It is not only a world of nonsense and mirth but also a space devoid of any kind of official seriousness, tragedy and fear.

Milligan's text opens with an epigraph, in the form of a poem written in the voice of Victor. The poem begins with the lines as follows: "From acid and brine/ Mixed with horses' urine/ I fashioned the Frankenstein/ He craves for a cigarette/ So far they haven't caught him yet." (v). These lines talk about the creation of the Frankenstein monster. The depiction of

Victor concocting a magical potion to create life is a quasi-scientific image. Here, one can say that Milligan's Victor presents himself like an alchemist or a medicaster performing a sorcery. The lines "From acid and brine/ Mixed with horses' urine/ I fashioned the Frankenstein" resembles the style of incantations and magic spells that usually accompany such a performance. This image of Victor creating the monster through sorcery is a medieval one. However, in the next lines, one can see that this image appears incongruous to the image of the monster thus created. Milligan's monster is someone who "craves for a cigarette". One can say that this is a very contemporized and travestied image of the Creature, far different from how Mary Shelley depicted him in the original text. The epigraphic poem, thus, introduces both Victor and the Creature to the readers in a totally travestied manner in Milligan's text, lacking all the sophistications of their original versions. In a way, this epigraphic poem marks the births of a new Victor who is a medicaster and a new Creature, an anachronistic figure looking for a cigarette, replacing the old. Here, one can witness the uncrowning of the seriousness and fear, that were infused with the older versions, transforming them in the process into comic characters.

As typical of a parody, Milligan has portrayed most of his characters, based on the original characters in *Frankenstein*, in this same contemporized and comic manner. In a carnival, all characters lose their serious and official facades and become festive and comical. In *Frankenstein*, most of the characters including the minor ones, are depicted carefully with attributes and idiosyncrasies of their own. Victor, the Creature and Walton, the three narrators of the novel, are also well defined. However, one can argue that there is a distance created between the reader and the protagonists, through the peculiar kind of narrative present in *Frankenstein*. What is distanced, becomes unfamiliar and in turn fearsome. It is this distance that parodies try to destroy.

One of the narrative distancing that happens in *Frankenstein* is the way in which the

protagonists are portrayed as unique and alienated from ordinary mortals. As Holquist remarks on Victor and the Creature in *Dialogism*, there is a “uniqueness” about them that is “over-determined” (88). The three protagonists, on account of their own ambitious pursuits, are most of the time placed in spaces away from the civilizations of the mortals. Their uniqueness, though cliched, creates a distance between the reader and the characters much like in epics. In *Frankenstein*, the reader might experience a difficulty in closely examining the characters owing to this distance. Eleanor Salotto, in ““Frankenstein” and Dis(re)membered Identity”, talks about how identity creation is a wrecked pursuit in *Frankenstein*. Salotto reads Victor’s creation of the Creature as well as his narration of his past to Walton, as attempts at creating a self for himself. Salotto calls these attempts as “re-membling” (190). However, the reader comes to know of Victor through Walton’s letters to Margaret and not directly from Victor. Similarly, the Creature is also involved in an attempt to articulate and express his sense of self, which however reaches the reader through Victor’s and Walton’s narratives. Salotto writes that all three characters are involved in an exercise of making an autobiographical narrative, which is however interrupted in between by other external voices. The author sees this as an act of dismembering of identities of the protagonists. Salotto writes:

Narrative moves from one subject to another: Frankenstein tells the story of the creature, and Walton writes down Frankenstein's tale. The subject cannot present itself directly: it does so through the screen of another voice, so to speak. Other voices and texts take over and rewrite the narrative one posits of one’s life. The frame narrative thus disturbs the notion of unitary identity, on which the notion of autobiography has rested. (190)

What this also shows is that the picture the reader gets of the character is twice removed from the source. The reader is farthest removed from the Creature’s narrative. Both in terms of the theme and structure of the novel, the Creature’s story is placed the remotest from the reader.

The Creature is pushed deep inside the woods to inhabit the hovel of the De Lacey's and as Ellis remarks, "accessible only if one traverses many snowy mountains". The society is structured in such a way that the Creature has to hide in a hovel within the woods. In a similar fashion, in the Chinese box narrative structure of the novel, the Creature's story is placed at the heart of the novel. Gilbert pictures the novel as a womb that holds a dark secret, which is the Creature's story (60- 61). It can be also considered as a grave, trying to bury the 'filthy' secret over and keep it farthest away from the reader with other narratives, stories within a story, letters and journals because this womb/ grave dichotomy in the Creature's story, a celebrated Rabelaisian image, in *Frankenstein* comes to symbolize an epicentre of shame, disgust and horror. The point of all this is to say that the author creates a deliberate distance between the characters, especially the Creature, and the reader, one that of fear. This chapter shall now proceed to see how this distance is shortened in Milligan's narrative through laughter.

Bakhtin remarks that 'uncrowning' of serious characters, as done in parodies, lessens this distance. Uncrowning betrays a familiarity in these characters, thus destroying their uniqueness. Bakhtin explains uncrowning, for the first time, in *Dialogic Imagination* while mapping the lineage of novels from the ancient serio- comic genres. One thing that percolated into novels from these ancient genres is the depiction of characters and events with a certain contemporariness. This contemporaneity becomes even more rudimentary in the case of comic representations where laughter plays an important part, because laughter is a destabilizing force. Bakhtin writes:

For the first time, the subject of serious literary representation (although, it is true, at the same time comical) is portrayed without any distance, on the level of contemporary reality, in a zone of direct and even crude contact. Even where the past or myth serves as the subject of representation in these genres there is no epic distance, and contemporary reality provides the point of view. (22-23)

In parodies, comic representations of characters are acts that bring them closer to the readers so that one can grow familiar with it. Bakhtin talks about the function of laughter in comic genres:

Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. (23)

This can be better understood by looking at the comic portrayal of the Creature in *FASM*. The monster in *FASM* is a 'gay monster'. Gay monsters inhabit the plane of Rabelaisian narratives as representatives of grotesque realism. The term 'gay monster' is oxymoronic. Monsters are supposed to instil fear but gay monsters are a perversion of the monstrous image. It is an ambivalent figure wherein the image of something frightening is combined with certain degrading aspects in order to destroy the terror that is associated with it. The Creature in *Frankenstein*, an epitome of disgust and horror, stands for all kinds of abject. The composition of the Creature using the parts of dead bodies, in a way, implies that he is the personification of the degrading death itself, given a new lease of life by Victor. The whole process of creating the monster involving Victor scrounging the graveyards for dead bodies and assembling them in his laboratory, has been described as filthy and sinful. Therefore, thematically a figurative distance between the Creature and the reader is created, one that is full of repulsion. Victor's meddling with ways of nature and God by his profanation of death, is the beginning of all horror in *Frankenstein*. Fear of death is an eschatological concept, propagated by religious dogmas. Rabelaisian humour is all about destroying this religious fear, especially the fear of death, through travesty (*Rabelais* 50).

Travestying can take many forms. In Rabelaisian depictions, one can see death portrayed as a comic event. The event of death is travestied in the ancient serio-comical genres by fusing the image of death with some scatological content and thus profaning it. This is a popular festive form of degradation. In *FASM*, the birth of the monster is portrayed in a gay and carnivalesque manner. The creation of monster in the epigraph borders on diablerie. The monster is created by fusing acid and brine with “horses’ urine”. Urine and defecation are important scatological images of travestying in popular festive images. Bakhtin talks about their peculiar connection to ancient carnivals like the ‘feast of fools’ where excrement was thrown at the crowds as part of festivities. As popular literature was a reflection of popular culture, these were also common in ancient comic literature, which in turn influenced the writings of Rabelais as well. Dung throwing and floods created with urine are common imageries in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. What is important here is the essential link of urine and defecation to birth and death. According to Bakhtin, such scatological images are ambivalent in nature. They definitely debase something from their exalted positions, but at the same they also renew, as they are symbolic of the material lower stratum. In the first chapter, the dual principle of regenerating and degenerating aspect of the lower stratum was discussed. The lower stratum or the genital organs is at the same time a “bodily grave” (*Rabelais* 148), for food digested, as well as a womb. Bakhtin writes:

...the slinging of excrement and drenching in urine are traditional debasing gestures, familiar not only to grotesque realism but to antiquity as well... This signifies destruction, a grave for the one who is debased. But such debasing gestures and expressions are ambivalent, since the lower stratum is not only a bodily grave but also the area of the genital organs, the fertilizing and generating stratum. Therefore, in the images of urine and excrement is preserved the essential link with birth, fertility, renewal, welfare. (148)

It is because of this reason that images of urine and defecation become interesting references to birth and death in popular literature. In *FASM*, horses' urine becomes a medicinal regenerating agent. Bakhtin provides examples of such linkages in *Rabelais*, while talking about popular festive images. In chapter two of *Rabelais*, Bakhtin refers to the burlesque poem *Baldus*, in which the character Zingar resurrects a young man using urine, much like Milligan's monster. Bakhtin also refers to the role of urine in the birth of Orion, river Rhone, and the medicinal springs of Italy and France as mentioned in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (150). Another important reference, is in chapter VI, Book 4 of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, where a sheep trader called Ding Dong talks about the medicinal and regenerative power of his sheep's urine and dung:

Now I think of it, over all the fields, where they piss, corn grows as fast as if the Lord had pissed there; they need neither be tilled nor dunged. Besides, man, your chemists extract the best saltpetre in the world out of their urine. Nay, with their very dung (with reverence be it spoken) the doctors in our country make pills that cure seventy-eight kinds of diseases, the least of which is the evil of St. Eutropius of Xaintes, from which, good Lord deliver us! (246- 47)

The mixing of acid, brine and urine also has carnivalesque associations. The Rabelaisian protagonist Pantagruel, historically, was a devil who appeared in popular diableries and was associated with the universal element of sea. Rabelais adopted this character travestyng him into an embodiment of the bodily element of urine. Pantagruel unleashes a war on King Anarchus and his people by burning their ammunitions, putting salt in the sleeping enemies' gaping mouth and drowning them in his urine. The combination of flood (of urine, which along with salt appeared as sea water to the enemies) and fire, creates a picture of an eschatological apocalypse but in a travestied manner (*Rabelais* 333-35). The resurrection of the monster from the dead in *FASM*, by the combination of acid, which burns, brine and urine,

can be similarly considered as a travestied apocalyptic event. The creation of monster using horses' urine, is a carnivalesque and gay image, one that destroys the terror and disgust associated with Mary Shelley's monster. Bakhtin writes in *Rabelais*:

Dung and urine lend a bodily character to matter, to the world, to the cosmic elements, which become closer, more intimate, more easily grasped, for this is the matter, the elemental force, born from the body itself. It transforms cosmic terror into a gay carnival monster. (335)

A gay monster in Rabelais' works, is mostly, death personified in a comical fashion. Bakhtin cites some examples, from the works of Rabelais, where death becomes a humorous event as follows:

...the inhabitants of the "Isle of Winds" die while emitting gases, and their souls leave the body via the rectum. In another passage Rabelais cites the example of the Roman who died because of emitting a certain sound in the presence of the emperor. These images not only degrade the dying but lend a body to death, transforming it into a gay monster. (151)

Bakhtin talks about the "Malbrough theme" common in folk literature and adopted by Rabelais wherein travesty of fear, especially of death, is done by entangling it with the acts of bodily egestion:

In world literature and especially in anonymous oral tradition we find many examples of the interweaving of death throes and the act of defecation, or the closeness of defecation to the moment of death. This is one of the widespread forms of degrading death and dying. This type of degradation could be called the "Malbrough theme". (151)

Though not related to the fear of death, one can find scatological images being used in

FASM as an attempt to degrade. In *Frankenstein*, in his letter to Margaret, Walton talks about St. Petersburg, in a subliminal tone, as the place whose cold winds brought the tidings of the Pole: “I am already far north of London; and as I walk in the streets of Petersburg, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks...” (*Frankenstein* 13). In *FASM*, one gets to read a travestied version of this, as Milligan’s Walton remarks about the “crap- ridden streets of St. Petersburg”: “I am already far north of London and as I walk in the crap- ridden streets of St. Petersburg I feel a cold northern breeze play on my cheeks... (3).” In a second instance in *Frankenstein*, Victor and Elizabeth journey to the shores of Como after their wedding. Victor’s romanticized and serene description of the “lovely scene of waters, woods, and mountains” (148) at the shore is ridiculed by Milligan’s Victor observing the “dogs crapping on the beach (115)”. Additionally, ‘shit’ is one of the words that the monster picks up, while eavesdropping on the conversations of De Laceys: “I distinguished several other words without being able yet to understand, though I repeated them; such as “fire”, “milk”, “bread”, “wood”, “shit” (82). Here, the scatological image not only destroys the exaltedness of the original sublime, artistic and refined descriptions but they also portray a certain truth, rawness and hilarity of life, one that is grotesque yet realistic.

Scatological imagery is not the only form of grotesque realism. The grotesque aspect of the living body, predominantly its material lower stratum, is an important part of Rabelaisian travesties. One can find such examples in *FASM* as well. In his chapter, “The Grotesque Image of the Body”, Bakhtin talks about the peculiar representation of the human body in grotesque realism. The grotesque imagery is centred on breaking the boundary between the body and its external environment. As Bakhtin writes, “It is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body’s confines” (316). A grotesque body is a transgressive body. The reproductive part of the body which consists of the bowels and genital organs are the quintessential organs representing the grotesque truth of the body. Typically, any orifice

that connects the body to the outside world is part of the grotesque, like the mouth, anus and the nose. The significance of the bowels and the phallus lies in the fact that the crucial events of life that aid in birth and death of life, like sex, pregnancy, ingestion of food and its egestion, occur in the interface between these organs and the outer world. This grotesque truth talks about the body that is imperfect and incomplete but in the process of becoming something new.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor describes the physiology of the Creature such that it fills one with terror. The Creature's yellow eyes, black lips and the network of arteries and veins that jutted out of his yellow skin are all designed to instil horror in the reader. In *FASM*, there is a carnivalesque reversal of focus from the Creature's torso to his lower body. A reference to the material lower stratum, destroys the terror associated with the grotesqueness of the Creature in Milligan's text. Victor in *FASM*, comments on the nakedness of the Creature, something totally ignored in *Frankenstein*, and clothes him in a pair of trousers and a flannel shirt. The comic effect is produced by the mis-fitting baggy trousers that keep falling down, thus revealing the Creature's nakedness. The Creature's lower body is comically transgressive, in that it 'protrudes' and is not contained. The Creature's inability to keep his trousers on, reveal a certain vulnerability and weakness. It uncrowns the fear of the original monster.

Parodying the inter-generic hybridity of *Frankenstein*, where the prose narrative is interrupted in between by poems, letters and other types of narrative genres, Milligan also has incorporated poetic interludes, most of them bordering on the nonsense, in between the chapters of the text. In one such comic verse, this transgressive aspect of the Creature's body can be evinced: "The monster's trousers fell to the floor/ Some of it out the front/ Round the back there was more/ Underpants must be found/ Before it spreads around (43)". Also, in *FASM*, the Creature is brought to life by Victor by inserting electrodes into the Creature's rectum, an act bordering on penetration. This act as well as the imagery of the lower stratum, depict the Creature's body as unfinished, open and part of the grotesque realism. It is not the countenance

of the Creature that catches Victor's attention in *FASM*, but his exposed phallus. Victor exclaims: "But, alas, we had forgotten one thing: he had no support for his trousers which fell to the floor revealing his manhood in all its glory. If any women saw this they would be leaving their husbands in thousands" (4). This is again a carnivalesque portrayal of the Creature.

Mary Shelley's intention that she declares in the introduction to *Frankenstein*, one about wanting to "make the reader dread to look around, to curdle the blood and quicken the beatings of the heart" is similarly travestied by Milligan by using the grotesque imagery of the lower stratum. Milligan writes in the voice of Shelley: "I busied myself *to think of a story*, a story that would curdle the blood of the reader and loosen the sphincter" (xi). Here the imagery of 'loosening of the sphincter', is a comic image, one that destroys the fear that Shelley intended the readers to feel while reading the novel. It is also an instance of the Malbrough theme, for the loosening of sphincter out of fear reminds one of the inhabitants of the 'Isle of Winds' as well as the Roman, cited by Bakhtin in *Rabelais*, who emanated gas out of fear while dying. Bakhtin talks about the Rabelaisian imagery of "defecation from fear" as a variant of the Malbrough theme. Bakhtin explains it as a travesty of not only the person doing it but the fear itself (*Rabelais* 173).

This gay image of the monster by associating him with the material lower stratum is not peculiar to him alone. The rest of the characters are also similarly travestied in the work. Walton talks about the chilly northern winds that heats up his "swannicles", a term made up by Milligan to refer to the lower stratum, while in St. Petersburg: "I am already far north of London and... I feel a cold northern breeze play on my cheeks, which braces my nerves and warms my swannicles" (3). The subliminal tone of the original passage in *Frankenstein*, is here, brought down through a comic depiction of the 'warming up of the swannicles'. Similarly, Victor's physiology is also given a grotesque and comic tint by Milligan's Walton, in his letter to Margaret, while describing the withered condition of Victor, after rescuing him from the

cold. In the description of Victor, the grotesque reality of the human body is not forgotten. Walton talks about Victor's 'penis' that had "snapped off": "Good God! Margaret, if you had seen the man who thus capitulated for his safety...His limbs were frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by cold and fatigue; his penis had snapped off" (16). Whatever seriousness and dread that Mary Shelley's narrative wished to impart through Victor's condition, is here, brought down through a comic mention of the material lower stratum.

Also, the questions put up by the sailors in Walton's crew are not only nonsensical but also carry references to the bodily grotesque:

Then when my guest was a little recovered, I had trouble keeping off the men who wished to ask him a thousand questions- What's the Pope's inside leg measurement (sic)? What's your blood group? Have you ever had prostrate trouble? Do you like beans on toast and Horlicks? (16)

The derision of the church and religion, in the uncrowned image of the Pope amounting to blasphemy, is common in Rabelais as well. Another such instance in the text is when Victor contracts typhoid after drinking the Holy Water sent by Pope. However, what is more important is the references to the bodily fluids and diseases. Description of diseases has a unique place in parody literature in general and Rabelaisian narratives in particular. At the time of Rabelais, there were "fashionable diseases" like pox and "gay diseases" (161), typically referring to those sexually transmitted diseases or anything that affected the lower stratum. The 'gay diseases' afflicted people as a result of their decadent lifestyles involving feasting and overt sexual indulgences. It was the latter that found mention in ancient parodies, for these diseases revealed the grotesque reality of human bodies. The queries of the sailor men, like, asking for blood group and the health of the prostrate also have the characteristic carnivalesque aspect of references to the human physiology. The prostrate, here, is symbolic of the material lower

stratum and the regenerative principle of the body as it is the gland that facilitates sperm function. One can find many such references that bring out the grotesque aspect of physiology and diseases in *FASM*.

In his letter to Victor, informing the death of little William, Alphonse Frankenstein begins the conversation by mentioning the disease of haemorrhoids afflicting Victor: “My dear son

You expect a happy and glad welcome and a box of gift- wrapped suppositories for your haemorrhoids (53)”. The seriousness and the gloom surrounding the death of the child are destroyed by the mention of the illness. Haemorrhoids is again a debasing illness that affects the lower stratum. William’s corpse being carried away in a wheelbarrow is a comic image, which transforms the death of William also into a gay monster. Victor’s haemorrhoids again find mention in the episode where Victor is seized by fear and hysteria after witnessing the Creature come alive. In a poetic interlude, Victor attributes his illness to have come from the pain “coming from his behind”:

I was very ill and what was wrong
with me was affecting my mind
But the pain was coming from my
behind
Perhaps the illness is in my bum
It’s amazing where illness can
come from. (47)

The fear that Victor experiences as well the hysteria is here travestied when he attributes them to be caused by something as debasing as haemorrhoids. Fear is brought down to the level of the lower stratum or in other words, fear is uncrowned in this instance of the text. Most of

the characters in the text are similarly degraded by the mention of such debasing diseases that affect them. Walton mentions the names of many illnesses that he suffers from, in his letters. His illnesses are characterized to provide a comic hue to the narrative. Diseases like hernia, vascular leak and halitosis find mention in Walton's letters. Walton's loneliness within the ship is attributed to his bad breath: "I have no friend, Margaret; I think this is because I have got halitosis" (9).

Women characters are also not excused from being portrayed in a debasing way. The pious and dutiful wife, Caroline, is transformed into a lustful nymphomaniac. Similarly, in *Frankenstein*, the loveliness of Elizabeth is described in romanticized and lofty means, comparing her features to those of a cherub and flowers like rose and chamois. However, Milligan travesties Elizabeth's angelic beauty by describing them and simultaneously drawing attention to the grotesque aspect of her bodily discharges. Victor describes the physical features of Elizabeth in *FASM* as follows:

When my father returned from Milan he found in the hall of our villa a child fairer than a pictured cherub- a creature who seemed to shed radiance from her looks and whose form and motions were lighter than the chamois of the hills. And, above all, she had good drainage. (24)

Another popular festive form that pervades in Rabelaisian narratives is the banquet imagery embodying the idea of cornucopia or abundance. Though images pertaining to typical banquets and feasts are absent in *FASM*, comic images associated with the bodily acts of eating, drinking and swallowing are present in the narrative. In *Frankenstein*, hunger, especially that of the Creature, is portrayed in serious and tragic overtones. One sees the Creature surviving on whatever little he can find in the woods, like fruits, nuts, roots or the meagre food left behind by the vagrants. Hunger is what propels him to wander into the more civilized parts of the

society and in turn this begins the cycle of destruction. It is the Creature's hunger for food, companionship and love that forces him into launching the saga of revenge on his creator. Hunger and desire become Lacanian forces that bring chaos and disorder in *Frankenstein*.

In *FASM*, Milligan's gay monster is a being drawn to all kinds of pleasures. The Creature's first reaction after coming alive is to look around for a cigarette: "The first words the monster spoke/ 'Has anyone got a smoke? / I'd give anything for a drag/ On a fag'" (43). Victor calls his monster a "nicotine junky" (45). Throughout the narrative, one will find the Creature wandering around, pleading for cigarettes. Even Walton, when he first sights the Creature from his ship, describes him as "...shape of a man, apparently of gigantic stature. He was smoking a cigarette (15)". Also, even when Victor meets him after murdering William, the monster asks Victor for a "fag" as well as a cheese sandwich (57). While Justine is arrested for the murder, the monster is seen traveling around, unbothered, eating a fish paste sandwich:

The real murderer was eating a
 sandwich of fish paste
 To finish it he would have to make haste
 His trousers were laying in haste
 on the floor
 Could he ask anything for more? (58)

In *Rabelais*, Bakhtin talks about the significance of the image of "gaping mouth" (325). The open mouth that eats, swallows, drinks and belches symbolize not only the bodily grotesque but also the indulgent and feasting aspect of the body. It is also a euphemism for other organs that feature an opening to the outside world, but especially, the womb and the belly. Bakhtin writes: "All the main organs and areas, as well as all the basic acts of the grotesque body, are pictured and developed around the central image of the gaping jaws. This

is the most vivid expression of the body as not impenetrable but open” (339). Swallowing, gulping, drinking, belching and such other events that feature an open mouth recur in *FASM*. Consumption of food mostly acquires exaggerated and comical tones in the work. Walton gives a picture of a gluttonous Victor in his description of welcoming and hosting Victor inside the ship:

We accordingly brought him back to the deck, and restored him to animation by rubbing him with brandy and forcing him to swallow a small quantity. He forced himself to swallow quite a large quantity... By slow degrees he recovered and ate at great speed some of the beans on toast. We had to stand clear of him. (16)

In this description, except the exaggerated and comical portrayal of Victor gulping down brandy and hogging on the beans and toast, the rest of the details are taken verbatim from Mary Shelley’s description of the same event in *Frankenstein*. This additional detail of Victor’s gluttony involving depictions of him drinking, swallowing as well as of passing wind, either a reference to flatulence or burping, is a very popular festive image of a “satisfied man”, according to Bakhtin (292). The images of the bodily grotesque related to banquet and feasting involve the “fat belly”, “gaping mouth” and the “giant phallus”, which all come together in the aforementioned Milligan’s carnivalized description of Shelley’s text (292). Bakhtin writes about the prevalence of these images in everyday familiar speech:

Wherever men laugh and curse, particularly in a familiar environment their speech is filled with bodily images. The body copulates, defecates, overeats, and men's speech is flooded with genitals, bellies, defecations, urine, disease, noses, mouths, and dismembered parts. Even when the flood is contained by norms of speech, there is still an eruption of these images into literature, especially if the literature is gay or abusive in character. (319)

Thrashing, beating and such abuses also figure in Rabelais' popular festive imagery. This abuse is said to be directed at something elite, in order to bring them down or uncrown them. Bakhtin lists the example of the Catchpoles in Rabelais' book who is hired for getting thrashed. Bakhtin explains these abusive episodes in Rabelaisian narratives as an instance of a rite of passage for the person getting beaten. These abuses are celebratory and do not aim at inciting or perpetuating violence. These people who get abused are, in popular festive imagery, fools dressed as kings or such other privileged figures. The beating is what uncrowns the dissembling king and brings out his gay truth. Bakhtin writes: "Here is a dimension in which thrashing and abuse are not a personal chastisement but are symbolic actions directed at something on a higher level, at the king" (197). Bakhtin explains the symbolic significance of abusing the masquerading figure as thus:

They are "gay monsters." The clown was first disguised as a king, but once his reign had come to an end his costume was changed, "travestied," to turn him once more into a clown. The abuse and thrashing are equivalent to a change of costume, to a metamorphosis. Abuse reveals the other, true face of the abused, it tears off his disguise and mask. It is the king's uncrowning. (197)

In *FASM*, an episode similar to the beating of Catchpoles is mentioned in one of the poetic interludes. This particular poem talks about an eccentric millionaire who was travelling as a stow away. The crew of the ship would throw him out every night into the sea and throw him back in whenever there is a tide outside. The double life of this eccentric traveller, one that of a millionaire who gets to travel in the ship and that of the stow away who gets thrown out every night for travelling without fare, has the same ambivalence that one gets to see in the fool who gets elected to be the king. The millionaire getting thrown out as a stow away is an act of uncrowning and metamorphosis. There are references to similar events in the text like dwarf hurling, drowning and mudslinging in the text. The abuse is said to kill the old self and

birth a new one. A reverse uncrowning happens in *FASM*, where an unconscious Victor is prodded into sense, through abuse, in two separate instances. The first instance is when Victor faints while attending his trial for the murder of Clerval and the judge, Mr. Kirwin, props him up with his walking stick. In the second instance, Alphonse Frankenstein shocks a sleeping Victor using a cattle prod. Victor faces many an accident in the novel. He falls into the lake and down a cliff and a well and is run over by a train. The Creature pulling down the trousers of Victor is also a comic and uncrowning image.

Milligan has repurposed most of the *Frankenstein* characters into comic figures. Victor, especially, is the most travestied character in the work. There are a many an accident, abuse and fall that he is subjected to, all of which transform the tragic character in *Frankenstein* into a clownish figure. One such recurring travestied image of Victor is that of him being put in a straitjacket. Whenever Victor exhibits bouts of madness, he is put in a straitjacket, a garment used to cloth criminals or mental patients to restrict their movement. The garment gives Victor the disposition of a clown wearing his costume. One can see other characters in *FASM* also dressing up in costumes that border on the clownish. At the funeral of Victor's mother, Victor describes Elizabeth as "veiling her grief" by putting a blanket over head and looking through a hole (34). In *Frankenstein*, Elizabeth is seen controlling her emotions and grief in order to console others. This pious image of Elizabeth is ridiculed by Milligan's comic portrayal of Elizabeth walking around, covered in a blanket and peeping through its hole. The seriousness of the funeral scene in the *Frankenstein* is destroyed in this depiction.

Little William's description by Elizabeth in one of her letters to Victor is also similarly comical. Elizabeth describes to Victor, William's hobbies as "slapping his thighs and yodelling" in the open air, a very grotesque yet gay act (49). Also, Henry Clerval is similarly parodied, especially, on account of his colonial dreams. Victor talks about Clerval in this manner: "Clerval was desperate to be a horse in the charge of Light Brigade. To this effect he

went around wearing a saddle on his back and charging imaginary Russian guns” (28). In one of the instances, Clerval transforms into a typical clown to “amuse” Victor (51). The character is seen dancing, playing banjo, yodelling, juggling flour bags and finally the very carnivalesque act of standing on one’s own head.

Similarly, Mary Shelley is ridiculed in Milligan’s introduction to the novel. In this section, Milligan’s Shelley is said to have won the “Haggis Hurling Competition” (viii). Haggis hurling is a carnivalesque sport, popular in Scotland, in which ‘haggis’ is a savoury consisting of sheep’s innards cooked with other ingredients inside an animal’s belly. The grotesque nature of the preparation of the meal as well as the carnivalesque sport of hurling it, remind one of the old charivari rituals where dung is hurled at the crowds. A demure Mary Shelley is transformed into a carnivalized figure who is placed in a carnival ambience with gaiety. Another instance mentioned in the introduction is when Milligan’s Mary talks about dressing up as a “Zulu”: “I used to black up myself, beat a tom- tom and pretend to be a Zulu” (ix).

One can also not forget Krempe and the haughty nurse who tends to Victor while in prison. Victor introduces Krempe as an uncouth who had “huge ears which looked like people looking over his shoulders” (34). The hyperbolic description of bodily features is an important feature of grotesque and comic depictions. The physiognomy of Krempe is described in utmost grotesque manner: “Krempe had a great deal of sound sense but he had a repulsive physiognomy. He had a face like a dog’s bum and the dirty devil let off in confined spaces” (39). The Malbrough theme, characteristic in this image, uncrowns the image of Professor Krempe, a terrifying figure in *Frankenstein*, into a comic gay monster. Victor calls the nurse “an old crone” and describes her face in the same fashion as that of Krempe by comparing it to lower stratum. People with grotesque bodily features are common in Rabelaisian narratives. Krempe and the old nurse are typical Rabelaisian gay monsters in this regard.

Drowning is another popular festive image that recurs in *FASM*. In Rabelais' writing there are descriptions of drowning in urine or in wine. Bakhtin talks about Gargantua's drowning of pilgrims in his urine, his mare drowning the army in its urine and also the drowning of giant Widenostrils in a barrel of wine of Malvasia grape. This is described as a happy death. In *FASM*, the drowning is caused by tears. Every death is followed by such a flooding caused by tears. After the death of Beaufort, Caroline floods the room with tears. Similarly, Victor's tears flood the funeral of William as well as his trial room. Similarly, Justine floods the prison chamber just before her hanging.

The image of the steeple in which Victor stores the dismembered parts of "homeless people" in order to stitch them up into his Creature also has popular festive connotations:

When I was very young I started to
 collect bits of people
 I stored them in old deserted steeples
 The bits were all homeless people and
 nowhere to go
 To preserve them I packed them in snow. (v)

These lines belong to the epigraphic poem. The steeple in Rabelais' work is a phallic symbol endowed with regenerative properties. This imagery is a sarcastic jibe at the moral corruption and decadence that the church had fallen into. Bakhtin writes: "Friar John asserts that even the shadow of a monastery belfry bears fruit; the monastic habit restores to the dog the reproductive force it has lost;" (304). In another instance, he cites Friar John saying that even if the shade of a steeple were to fall on a woman, she would be impregnated (310). The belfry which is a religious symbol is here uncrowned by comparing it to a phallus and endowing it with reproductive properties. Victor storing the parts of men inside the steeple in snow to

preserve them and to create new life out of them, transforms the steeple, endowing it with a new purpose. The religious symbolism of the steeple is here destroyed. It now acts like a burial urn, preserving the parts of people's body. These preserved body parts will be used by Victor to create his monster. This attributes certain regenerative properties to the steeple, in which they were stored. The repurposing of objects in this way is a kind of uncrowning.

This event reminds one of the swab episode in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, where Gargantua checks the efficacy of random objects as swabs. According to Bakhtin, some of these objects like cap, hood, earpiece, neckerchief and scarf are worn on the upper part of the body and their transformation into a swab is actually a debasement to the lower stratum (372-73). In a similar manner, the steeple which adorns roof of the churches, is brought down to the bottom level in two ways. In the first instance, it is used for preserving parts, almost like an urn used for preserving the ashes of the dead. The urn containing such ashes is buried under the earth. Therefore, the steeple, by transforming into an urn is debased and brought down from upper level to the earth. The second instance is the regenerative aspect of the steeple. The steeple, in this case is once again brought down by its comparison to the material lower stratum.

Also preserving body parts in a steeple would seem like a travesty of the ancient custom of maintaining relics in the church. Bakhtin writes about this custom as well as its mockery in the Rabelaisian narratives. Bakhtin says how these relics, mostly dismembered parts of saints, Gods and such other religious figure, were a common theme of the oaths in which they were parodied. This was common in Rabelais' time and permeates in his text as well. Bakhtin writes about the theme of relics in oaths:

What is the thematic content of the oaths? It is mainly the rending of the human body. Swearing was mostly done in the name of the members and the organs of the divine body: the Lord's body, his head, blood, wounds, bowels; or in the name of the relics of

saints and martyrs—feet, hands, fingers—which were preserved in churches. (192)

The practice of maintaining relics became a target of Rabelaisian ridicule mainly because of the bodily aspect inherent to it as well as because of the peculiarity of the supposed relics that was common during the time. Bakhtin writes:

There was no small church or monastery that did not preserve a relic, at times a quite unusual one (a drop of milk from the Blessed Virgin's breast or the sweat of a saint, as mentioned by Rabelais). Arms, legs, heads, teeth, hair, and fingers were venerated. It would be possible to give a long grotesque enumeration of all these parts of a dismembered body. At the time of Rabelais the ridiculing of relics was common, especially in Protestant satire. (350)

In Milligan's text as well, it is this same practice of preserving relics inside churches that is ridiculed. The church usually preserves the parts of only Christ, Mary, saints and other such hallowed figures. Milligan travesties this by choosing to preserve the parts of "homeless people" inside the steeple.

So far, this chapter has been discussing the various popular festive themes, images and events that are present in *FASM*. It is also a text that can be subjected to a discourse analysis. Being a parodic retelling of a serious work, *FASM* inevitably is a text that contains many double-voiced discourses. Parody is a double-voiced discourse. Hence being a parody of *Frankenstein*, the reader can identify in the discourse of *FASM*, two voices, one of Mary Shelley's, the author of the original text as well as Milligan's. In a parodic discourse, the two voices present would be aligned in such a way that it pulls the discourse towards two opposing directions. The author of the parodic text would use the discourse of the original author to serve an exactly opposite or conflicting semantic purpose of his own. It is a vari-directional double-voiced discourse.

In *FASM*, one can see that the text essentially takes the serious discourse of *Frankenstein* and inserts a parodic intention into it so that the discourse ends up conveying something entirely conflicting to the original discourse. In *Frankenstein*, the book begins with Walton's letter to Margaret talking about his safe arrival in St. Petersburg. Walton writes: "You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here yesterday; and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare, and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking" (13). Milligan's text also opens with Walton's letter, which expresses similar concerns, however, with a parodic twist: "You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I did not catch fire nor was I sucked down in a whirlpool or eaten by a polar bear. Perhaps these are the things you had in mind for me" (3).

Here, the reader can hear two voices. The voice of Mary Shelley in the borrowed first sentence and the mocking voice of Milligan in the second sentence. As is clear, the two voices are conflicting and they pull the discourse towards two different semantic courses. The discourse in *Frankenstein* reveals the loving bond between Walton and Margaret. However, in *FASM*, Walton's remark to his sister, "Perhaps these are the things you had in mind for me", is an ambivalent statement. It could either mean that Margaret was worried about her brother and harboured the kind of fears that Walton mentions or it could also, in an entirely contradicting manner, mean that Margaret wished for such things to happen to Walton. The entire text of Milligan's parody is structured in such an ambivalent, double-voiced discourse.

Milligan's voice is heard the loudest when in the midst of Mary Shelley's borrowed narrative, one spots details anachronistic to the time and cultural background of Shelley. This anachronism works as an effective tool in generating a comic effect in the text. There are many contemporary words, phrases and pop cultural references used by Milligan in the text, that is

ill-fitting to the context of the original Frankenstein story. This incongruity generates a certain humour in the text. Words like “blimey” “kinky”, “chicken Madras”, “postal orders”, “takeaway curry” and references to cultural hotspots like “Mc Donald’s” and “KFC” are common in Milligan’s narrative. Hence, there is a voice from the past as well as that from the present which clash in this narrative. This clash of voices creates a polyphonic ambience in *FASM*. Milligan also uses words in compressed forms like “tho” for ‘though’, which is a relatively modern practice of shortening words while sending messages or emails. One can say that, parody brings the characters nearer to the readers, from a temporal aspect. It contemporizes the narrative. The characters do not maintain an epic distance from the readers anymore. Anachronism creates humour in two ways here. It creates a hilarious incongruity as characters from Mary Shelley’s time talk in an informal and contemporary tongue. Also, a certain familiarity breeds between the reader and the characters as they adopt the informal speech. This also creates a certain hilarity. The laughter thus created dispels horror.

A polyphonic ambience is also created by the presence of foreign dialects in the text. Milligan’s monster speaks in an Irish accent, from the moment he is born. A parodied account of the nightmarish dream of Mary Shelley, where she has a vision of the Creature coming to life is given in Milligan’s text in which the Creature wakes up to ask in crude Irish dialect, “Hello dar, what’s de time?” (xi). ‘Dar’ in Irish is a shortened colloquial term of endearment, meaning brother, used much like the contemporized and redacted form, ‘bro’, for brother in English. Milligan’s monster addressing Victor as ‘bro’ projects a certain comic sense of camaraderie and familiarity between the characters. Both the monster and his relationship with his creator is shown in a droll aspect. At no point in the text does Milligan’s gay monster show evidence of any philosophical enlightenment, maturity or intellect as the Creature in *Frankenstein*.

A mix of stylization and parody can be seen in the poem written as a prologue to the

work. *Frankenstein* had lines from *Paradise Lost* as its prologue. Bakhtin explains stylization as an author borrowing another's style of writing and using it for his own purposes with the same intention yet at the same time slightly objectifying it (*Dialogic Imagination* 262). Milligan's prologue parodies the idea of writing a prologue which usually consists of lines taken from a well-known work. Milligan's prologue is not borrowed from any previous source of work but crafted by himself. The content of the lines parodies the idea of Genesis, which the lines from *Paradise Lost* are based on. The prologue to *Frankenstein* reads thus: "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee / From darkness to promote me?" (11). Milligan's prologue tells a very debased version of the creation of the monster. Also, the first stanza of the poem is stylized in the form of a chant or a spell that an alchemist or a charlatan would use:

From acid and brine
Mixed with horse's urine
I fashioned the Frankenstein
He craves for a cigarette
So far they haven't caught him yet. (v)

The chapters in *FASM* are interrupted in between by poetic interludes. The poems that appear in between the initial sections involving Walton's letters contain many stylized forms of sea shanties like, "I am now a fisherman", "We had a stowaway in the hold" and the one Safie sings, "All nice girls like a sailor". Most other poems are nonsense poems. This intergeneric narrative style of mixing prose and verse is present in Mary Shelley's text as well. However, poems used by her are carefully chosen elite Romantic pieces unlike the nonsense verses or the sea shanties used by Milligan. One can say that Milligan kind of tones down the elitism of the hypotext by incorporating marginalized dialects and voices that are not heard much in the original narrative. They imitate the Rabelaisian method of incorporating

marketplace language and colloquialisms within mainstream literature. They completely change the mood and tone of the original text and throws a comic shade on the characters and the events associated with it.

These various instances of discourses and speech styles like anachronism, foreign dialects, stylized speech of marginalized communities like the fishermen and country folk used by Milligan sits uncomfortably with the borrowed plot of *Frankenstein* in Milligan's parody. One can say that this conflict of voices and speech genres, in turn, create a heteroglottal space within the text.

One can find many metafictional instances in this parodic text that purports to ridicule the text itself. In between the character's narrative, one can find the author interrupting and expressing his opinion. For instance, Walton tells Margaret: "I shall find the secret of the magnet and I will become admired far and wide [he speaks well of himself]" (4). The words in parenthesis, could be taken as the words of the author, Milligan. It can also be taken as an internal dialogue, that occurs in the mind of Walton. This internal dialogue kind of reveals a tension between the character who can no longer agree with the author. It can also be taken as the interior thoughts of Milligan while writing the parody. It is a double-voiced discourse. The comment that Milligan makes of Walton- "he speaks well of himself"- could be taken as a statement with a "loophole". Bakhtin explains this as a statement that even though is structured as a compliment, has a shadow of sarcasm in that the author wants the readers to refute what he or she is saying. It is another instance of a double-voiced discourse.

There is more than one instance in the narrative, wherein the author interferes with the discourse of the text. Milligan interrupts the speech of Walton thus: "Six years have passed since I resolved on my present undertaking. (He was an undertaker as well as a sailor)" (5). This interruption, is again a statement with a loophole where the author is making a sarcastic

comment on Walton that is easily refutable. It is a play on the word “undertaking”. Through these interruptions, Milligan is aiming to poke fun at the pompousness of Shelley’s narrative. Some other instances from the text are as listed below:

“Sir Isaac Newton said he felt like a child picking up shells beside the ocean but never finding one. So? I had gazed upon the fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human beings from entering the citadel of nature, and rashly and ignorantly I had repined. [This is a lot of bollocks. Ed.]” (29).

“When I look back it seems to me that this remarkable change of inclination and will was a suggestion of the guardian angel of my life- Dick Tonk. [What in God’s name is he talking about? Ed.]” (31).

“I clasped my hands and exclaimed aloud: ‘William, dear angel! this is thy funeral dirge.’ [I don’t think William heard it but it was well meant. Ed.]” (56)

These statements are completely metafictional. They are structured as to look like a draft version of Milligan’s narrative. The comments in parenthesis each of which ends with the abbreviation “Ed.”, for editing, make it seem like an unedited draft model of Milligan’s parody. This makes it possible for Milligan to no longer hide behind his parodistic discourse and instead, directly express his opposition for Shelley’s discourse. Milligan is here having a dialogue or an open polemic with Shelley’s text. The open polemic between the two texts is more evident in the following lines spoken by Victor which are interrupted by Milligan: “And where does he now exist? [He doesn’t, he snuffed it. Ed.] Is this gentle and lovely being lost forever? [Yes. Ed.] Has his mind perished [Yes. Ed.] does it only exist in our memory? [Yes, if you want it to. Ed.]” (97). Milligan also says at one point, “[There is not a shred of evidence against this poor monster. Ed.]”, when Victor calls the Creature a murderer (56). It is an open polemic that challenges the original text of *Frankenstein*. The reader can hear along with the

character's unidirectional and monologic discourse, Milligan's conflicting voice as well. Either way, one can say that it results in a clamour of voices or polyphony.

There are many instances in the text wherein the narrators render themselves as unreliable. In the introduction to *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley had written: "I have changed no portion of the story; nor introduced any new ideas or circumstances" (5). Milligan emulates the same in the parodied introduction to his version: "I have changed no portion of the story" (xii). This statement is a double-voiced discourse where one can identify Shelley's original voice as well as the mocking voice of Milligan who is imitating her. When one reads the statement in Milligan's parodying voice, it becomes a 'statement with a loophole'. *FASM* is a travestied account of the original text. Hence, the statement "I have changed no portion of the story" does not hold true. Hence it is an ambivalent statement that can be true or false, at the same time, depending on whose discourse it is. A word or a statement with a loophole is employed by an author to express something that is elusive or non-finalizing. Milligan on account of being an unreliable author has employed many instances of this double-voiced discourse. The purpose of double-voiced discourses is to destroy the monologic voice of the author and create a polyphonic ambience where multiple voices clash and co-exist in a typical carnivalesque and discursive setup. The ultimate purpose of parody and laughter is this, to destroy the authoritarian voice of fear and seriousness and create a cacophony of voices, laughter and point of views.

The purpose of this chapter had been to study and analyze the parody of *Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein According to Spike Milligan* as a Rabelaisian parody. For this purpose, this chapter had analyzed the various popular festive imagery, carnivalesque depictions, instances of parody, double-voiced discourses and polyphony in the text. Though Milligan's text cultivates a culture of carnival laughter and creates an inclusive space of marginalized voices, culture, dialects and styles, it is not free of certain regressive expressions. There are many

instances in the text which expose certain sexist, racist and derogatory views of the author. This aspect of Milligan's writing is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

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