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EDUCATING THE OTHER
THE POLITICS OF SOMATIC DIFFERENCE IN *FRANKENSTEIN*

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Abstract

The dissertation engages in a postcolonial reading of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. It argues that *Frankenstein* and the education of Frankenstein's creature are both deeply rooted in colonial discourse, the nature of the colonial other and the place of this other within Western society. By charting how this discourse functions in the construction of physical alterity, this paper argues that through his exposure to language and society Frankenstein's creature becomes complicit in this process of imposition in which he is placed as the object of a discourse which construes him as other.

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:______________________________ Date:____________________

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“A thing such as even Dante could not have conceived”

> I am as free as Nature’s first made man,
> E’re the base Laws of Servitude began,
> When wild in the woods the noble Savage ran.
> (Dryden, *The Conquest of Granada,* I. I. i. 201-9)

In his book *Emile: Or Education*, published in 1762, Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote that “God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil.”[1] Rousseau’s principle concern was that people, through social convention, destroy and corrupt themselves. He argued that, “He [man][2] destroys and defaces all things; he loves all that is deformed and monstrous; he will have nothing as nature made it, not even man himself, who must learn his paces like a saddle-horse, and be shaped to his master’s taste like trees in a garden.”[3] Rousseau contends that it is only through a reformed system of education that humankind can avoid this socially imposed auto-corruption. In a review of Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* in 1818, her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote,

> In this the direct moral of the book consists; and it perhaps the most important, and of the most universal application, of any moral that can be enforced by example. Treat a person ill, and he will become wicked. Requite affection with scorn; - let one being be selected, for whatever cause, as the refuse of his kind – divide him, a social being, from society, and you impose upon him the irresistible obligations – malevolence and selfishness.[4]

While Shelley’s sociological understanding of the text may be unusual for its time, his views significantly mirror those espoused by Rousseau in *Emile*. It is a preoccupation with this socially dictated corruption of the individual which drives this reading of *Frankenstein,*[5] similarly

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[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: Or Education*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1933), 5.
[2] The generic masculine is used here in order to provide consistency with its use by Rousseau.
[3] *Ibid,* 5.
[4] Percy Bysshe Shelley, “On *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus*”, in *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed., E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 283.
[5] Although generally in relation to his *Second Discourse,* see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality”, in *The Social Contract and the Discourses,* trans. George D. H. Cole (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1913), there has been a large body of work produced which argues that the works of Rousseau play a central role in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. See, most significantly, Paul Cantor, *Creature and Creator: Myth-Making and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 120-122; Anne K. Mellor, “Making a Monster”, in *Mary Shelley: Her Life Her Fiction Her Monsters* (London: Routledge, 1988), 38-51; James O’Rourke, “’Nothing More Unnatural’: Mary Shelley’s Revision of Rousseau”, *ELH* 56:3 (1989): 549.

informing this reading of Frankenstein's creature as well as the system by which he is educated within the novel.[6]

This process of socialised exclusion is made apparent in Mary Shelley's text nowhere more strikingly than in Frankenstein's creature's own presentation of his situation. In book X of the novel on the slopes of Montanvert Frankenstein's creature asks him, "[h]ow can I move thee? Will no intreaties (*sic*) cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion?"[7] For, he claims, "I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity; but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow creatures, who owe me nothing?"[8] The creature's identity, while beginning in a state of "love" and "benevolence", departs from this as the narrative progresses and he is driven from a society who spurns and hates him.[9] He is not born a monster, rather as he relates to Frankenstein, "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend."[10] It is his isolation which breeds this discontent. For, as he says to Frankenstein, "Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy to misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded."[11] If it is this irrevocable exclusion from society which drives him from "joy to misdeed", then the creature's process of moral degeneration[12] is contingent, as I shall argue in this dissertation, on his experience and knowledge of the world and society, an experience informed by his physical alterity.[13] It is Frankenstein's creature's exposure to language and education, however, which

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[6] See Lawrence Lipking, "*Frankenstein*, the true story; or Rousseau judges Jean-Jacques", in *Frankenstein*, ed. J. Paul Hunter (London: W. W. Norton, 1996), 313-31; Mellor, "Making a Monster"; Alan Richardson, "From *Emile* to *Frankenstein:* the education of monsters", *European Romantic Review*, 1:2 (1991): 147-162. Although Richardson draws parallels between Rousseau's *Emile* and Shelley's text he is concerned more with an interpretation of the text in feminist terms. The education of Frankenstein's creature is, therefore, for Richardson, a critique of female education as presented in contemporary domestic fiction as well as the female Gothic novel (*ibid,* 149), a critique in many ways of Rousseau's presentation of the education of women.

[7] Mary W. Shelley, *Frankenstein* (London: Penguin, 1994), X, 96. (Henceforth referred to as *F.*)

[8] *ibid*, 96.

[9] *Ibid*, 96.

[10] *Ibid*, 96.

[11] *Ibid*, 96.

[12] Which is to say, his change from an essentially benevolent being to one capable of murder.

[13] It must be noted that this term is used subjectively, that is to say, his alterity is understood in relation to European physical identity and his physical divergence from the European norm. This is not to say that his

brings him into contact with the systems of thought which inform this exclusion, systems which describe, define and categorise him as existing outside of this self-same society. He is understood within these systems, as he is made to understand himself, as non-European and because of this an extra-social being. His linguistic and social education is, in this way, the site of the creature's alterity, implicating him in the system and discourse which names him a monster.

By naming his creation from the beginning of his life, "the daemoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life … A mummy … a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived",[14] Frankenstein is conceptually creating his creature as just this: a monster. Frankenstein's creature is construed in the text as being *somatically* different, a difference which underwrites his monstrosity. He is monstrous in the text as a result of his inability to adhere to European physical norms. His somatic distancing from this norm extends to the extent that he is placed inevitably somewhere between the living and the dead by Frankenstein.[15] He is as Frankenstein claims, a "mummy" and his physical nature suggest this. As Walton describes him, he is not only "of gigantic stature",[16] but also his skin is "yellow … his hair a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness ... and straight black lips."[17] His lips and skin hint if not at death, at, as Ann Mellor suggests, "jaundice or yellow fever".[18] The creature is, however, more than this. He is constructed within the text, not merely as a corruption of the West, diseased, dead or otherwise, but also in a manner suggestive of racial colonial discourse. He is, as Joseph Lew argues, an actively racialised construction, a being understood by Shelley's contemporary

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difference does not have any other points of reference for as the creature himself says, "when I looked around I saw and heard of none like me" (*F.*, XIII, 116), but rather in the context of the novel as well as the creature's own experience and eventual understanding of the world, he can be best understand, as he does himself, in relation to Europe.

[14] *F.*, V, 56.

[15] He is described, once Frankenstein has brought him to life in book V, in keeping with this by Frankenstein who relates, "[h]is yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness; but these luxurancies 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" (*F.*, V, 55).

[16] *ibid*, letter iv, 23.

[17] *ibid*, V, 55.

[18] Anne K. Mellor, "Making a 'monster': an introduction to *Frankenstein*", in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed., E. Schor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 22.

readers through the wealth of racial stereotypes available to them within Western colonial discourse at the time. This is not a surprising assertion, for while the British Empire was not yet at the height of its influence, this period witnesses the beginnings of what has been often termed the "Second"[19] British Empire.[20] *Frankenstein* is a novel situated at the heart of a time period, categorised not only by the French Revolution, but so too by the formation of this "Second" Empire; a period which sees Britain losing the American colonies but subsequently expanding rapidly into the rest of the world.

According to Saree Makdisi, between the years 1790 and 1830 "over a hundred and fifty million people were brought under British imperial control."[21] With the solidification of British rule in India through William Pitt's India Act in 1784, on-going debates regarding the abolition of slavery,[22] and increasing contact with China[23] and the African interior,[24] Shelley's novel is

[19] See Vincent T. Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire, 1763-1793* (London: Longman's, 1952); and David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). It must be noted here that the distinction between what has often been termed the "First" and "Second" Empires is, however, problematic, for as David Armitage argues, "the two overlapped in time […] they shared common purposes and personnel, and the differences between the maritime, commercial colonies of settlement in North America and the military, territorial colonies in India have been crudely overdrawn" (Armitage, *Origins of British Empire*, 2).

[20] This is a period, which following the Peace of Paris in 1783 and the acknowledgement of the independence of the American colonies, signals a move in British influence eastward towards India and Pacific Ocean. See Armitage, *Origins of British Empire*, 2; and Harlow, *Founding of the Second Empire*, 64. It has alternatively been argued that this period begun in 1757 with the British East India Company's victory at the battle of Plassey. This is not surprising considering the foundations of British colonial power in the second half of the eighteenth century lay, for the most part, in India. See Ernest A. Benians, Arthur P. Newton, and John H. Rose, eds., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 61; and Wm. Roger Louis, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 99.

[21] Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), xi.

[22] For *Frankenstein* and contemporary writings on slavery and race, see Harold L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain", in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Updated Edition*, Harold Bloom, ed. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007), 61-94; Anne K. Mellor, "*Frankenstein*, Racial Science, and the Yellow Peril", *Nineteenth Century Contexts,* 23 (2001): 1-28; Debbie Lee, *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvanian Press, 2002); and Joseph W. Lew, "The Deceptive Other: Mary Shelley's Critique of Orientalism in 'Frankenstein'", *Studies in Romanticism*. 30:2 (1991): 255-82. Malchow argues that Shelley drew on contemporary attitudes to non-whites in her construction of Frankenstein's "monster", arguing along with Lee that she is drawing particularly on the issues regarding the debate around the abolition of slavery in the West Indies. Lew however asserts that the creature is Bengali, while Mellor takes this a step further contending that any specific source for the creature is less important than the fact of his basic alterity.

[23] While the McCartney's embassy to China in 1793 did not ultimately achieve its goals in relaxing the Canton commercial system of trade, it remains significant in its role in exposing Qing dynasty China to the British public.

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situated in a time period when the British were becoming rapidly and increasingly aware of the rest of world. In many ways the creature's physical make-up comes to embody just this as he is ambiguously situated within a set of racial stereotypes which distances him from the European ideal; his somatic identity functions as "a marker of his racial otherness."[25] The creature is seen, as described by Walton, as "a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island."[26] He is perceived by others within the text as monstrous and savage, a position which is justified through their understanding of him as racially other.[27] While Frankenstein's creature may, for all intents and purposes, be a unique being, he is nevertheless able to stand in for the unfamiliar racialised non-European other. Along these lines, Mellor is prompted to write that,

> Mary Shelley's literary purposes are primarily ethical … she wants us to understand the moral consequences of our ways of reading or seeing the world, of our habit of imposing meanings on that which we cannot truly know. In *Frankenstein*, human beings typically construe the unfamiliar, the abnormal, the unique as dangerous or evil, a construction given form in their language.[28]

I would venture to take this a step further, arguing that through his exposure to language and society, Frankenstein's creature becomes complicit in this process of imposition in which, through his physical alterity he is placed as the object of a discourse which construes him as abnormal, dangerous and evil. He is, however, not merely a passive object of this discourse but, as I hope to demonstrate, quite significantly an active participant in his own subjugation.

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[24] A process signalled in many ways by Mungo Park's first expedition into Niger in 1795. See Mungo Park, *Travels in the interior districts of Africa: Performed under the Direction and Patronage of the African Association in the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797*, ed. Kate Ferguson (London: Duke University Press, 2000).
[25] Mellor, "Introduction to *Frankenstein*", 22.
[26] *F.*, letter iv, 24.
[27] Which is to say, he is cast as not only different but also inferior to those that perceive him. See Myra Jehlen, "Why Did the Europeans Cross the Ocean?", in *Readings at the Edge of Literature* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001). He is conceived in the same terms as the colonial other who Myra Jehlen writes is rendered through "mere negative qualities defined by an opposition to which they do not contribute" (Jehlen, "Why Did the Europeans Cross the Ocean?", 150). As I will however argue in greater length, Frankenstein's creature diverts somewhat from this understanding of the term through his active participation in the process of othering.
[28] Mellor, "Introduction to *Frankenstein*", 22.

"Not, as the other traveller seemed to be… European"
Constructing the Other

It is my contention that *Frankenstein* and the education of Frankenstein's creature are both deeply rooted in colonial discourse, the nature of the colonial other and the place of this other within Western society. Writing on *Frankenstein, Jane Eyre* and *The Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1985 Gayatri Spivak called for a move towards a recognition of global interconnectivity and Imperialism as crucial aspects of nineteenth century British Literature. She wrote that,

> It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored. These two obvious "facts" continue to be disregarded in the reading of nineteenth-century British literature.[29]

Spivak's argument begs for a reading of Frankenstein's creature informed by an understanding of how imperial discourse functions in the creation, or "worlding" of what we now term the "third world".[30] Joseph Lew has seized upon this approach, arguing that Oriental narratives and Orientalism form an integral part of *Frankenstein*.[31] His approach is not unusual when dealing with eighteenth and early nineteenth century texts. Indeed, much has been made of the use of the Orient as a category which serves as a validation of Occidental identity and culture. While this dialogic approach may seem somewhat outdated, even naïve in its simplicity, it continues to carry, I believe, valence in the reading of nineteenth century British literature. Ros Ballaster certainly makes much of this in his influential work, *Fabulous Orients*[32] in which he charts the

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[29] Gayatri C. Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism", *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 243

[30] *Ibid*, 243-4. See also Ania Loomba, "Overworlding the 'Third World'" *Oxford Literary Review* 13:1-2 (1991); and Gayatri Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives", *History and Theory* 24:3 (1985). Ania Loomba writes that this "worldling of the 'Third World' by [the] imperialist and colonial plunder and its intellectual co-ordinates, […]is meant to disallow a romanticizing of once colonized societies" (Loomba, "Overworlding the 'Third World'", 184) as what Spivak terms "distant cultures"(Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur", 247). For as Spivak explains, it is these cultures, "exploited but with rich intact heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized in English translation [which] helps the emergence of "Third World" as a convenient signifier that allows us to forget that "worldling" even as it expands the empire of the discipline" (*ibid*).

[31] Lew, "The Deceptive Other".

[32] Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orients: Fictions of the East in England 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

influence of "the Oriental tale" on British Literature in the period immediately preceding but also during the Romantic literary movement. His argument is predicated on the idea that Oriental narratives were, as he puts it, "instrumental in constructing the very categories of Orient and Occident and marking the boundaries between the two."[33] This is important through how this understanding of the Orient as inherently inferior to the Occident functions as a demonstration of how the power structures within the discursive process of othering function. In keeping with this, for Makdisi, the Orient became at this time "a space defined by its 'backwardness,' its retardation […] The Orient, in short, became a backward, debased, and degraded version of the Occident."[34] In much the same vein, Edward Said's *Orientalism*[35] serves, though he was more concerned with the latter part of the nineteenth century, as a useful text in this regard. His development of a discursive understanding of colonial othering highlights how Spivak's imperialism functions in the cultural representation and understanding of both Frankenstein and his creature in Shelley's text.[36] He writes that, "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'",[37] a distinction informed by the type of inequality highlighted by Makdisi. Said is drawing here on the Foucauldian notion of discourse in which power circulates within the structures of language that constitute an area of "knowledge". Said cites Lord Cromer's 1908 discussion of "subject races" as a means of explaining that "Once again, knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control."[38] Power gained through knowledge is the founding principle for Said in the profitable subjugation of the colonial subject. A point

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[33] *Ibid*, 8.
[34] Makdisi. *Romantic Imperialism*, 113.
[35] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978).
[36] See Said, *Orientalism*; and *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994); and in relation to *Frankenstein* see Elizabeth A. Bohls, "Standards of Taste, Discourses of 'Race', and the Aesthetic Education of a Monster: Critique of Empire in *Frankenstein*", *Eighteenth-Century Life,* 18:3(1994): 23-36; Lew, "The Deceptive Other", 274, for an understanding of *Frankenstein* in light of Said's Orientalism. Lew's paper is, however, more concerned with the influence of Oriental narratives within Shelley's text, paying specific attention to the Oriental poetry produced by Percy Bysshe Shelly and Lord Byron at the time and the Oriental interests of Walton and Henry Clerval within the text.
[37] Said, *Orientalism*, 2.
[38] *Ibid,* 36.

which he makes in reference to Arthur James Balfour's address to the House of Commons on June 13, 1910 concerning "the problems with which we have to deal in Egypt".[39] The logic which underpins Balfour's argument is as Said succinctly charts it

> England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows; England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government; England confirms this by occupying Egypt; for the Egyptians, Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs; foreign occupation therefore becomes "the very basis" of contemporary Egyptian civilization; Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation.[40]

The logical fallacy inherent in Balfour's circular reasoning aside, this remains nevertheless significant in its demonstration of the exercising of colonial discourse through the assumption of superiority on the basis of knowledge. On the one hand, what Balfour is demonstrating is how knowledge of the Orient produces a discourse which functions as what Said terms "Orientalism": a system of thought which exists as a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[41] What his argument also highlights is how colonial discourse is monologic in nature through its lack of consideration for the voice of the Oriental. In the mind of Balfour, Occidental power over the Orient becomes both logical and necessary for "they [Egyptians] are a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves",[42] a sentiment which

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[39] Said's use of Balfour is pertinent in a discussion of *Frankenstein* for while the British occupation of Egypt significantly postdates the text, spanning from 1882 to 1953, Napoleon's earlier expedition in Egypt between 1798 and 1801 resulted in increasing interest in Egypt and the Orient in Shelley's day and gave rise to similar debates concerning foreign governance in the region. Most notable were the some 167 scholars and scientists who accompanied Napoleon's campaign. This is significant for it represents, in action, this process of knowledge creation which Said sees as being so integral to the colonial enterprise. Napoleon's expedition is for Said "the very model of a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another, apparently stronger one" (*ibid*, 42). Said sites Napoleon's *Description de l'Egypte* and the founding of the Institut d'Egypte as being instrumental in the construction of the modern concept of the Orient. For him, Napoleon's occupation "gave birth to the entire modern experience of the Orient as interpreted from within the universe of discourse founded by Napoleon in Egypt, whose agencies of domination and dissemination included the Institut and the *Description*"(*ibid*, 87). Balfour's understanding is, in light of this, predicated on an earlier understanding of Egypt perpetuated in the West through Napoleon's expedition and is contingent on an experience of Egypt which sees its origins in the early nineteenth century.

[40] *Ibid*, 34.

[41] *Ibid*, 3.

[42] *Ibid*, 35.

is based on the active propagation of a knowledge that Egypt is "past".[43] From Balfour's perspective this is an ontological fact based on a knowledge of their past and one which has in turn been expanded on in the vein of his abovementioned "England knows Egypt" logic. Nevertheless, while his logic may be flawed, the construction of a system of knowledge in this way becomes an ontological act, a construction of the Orient, but very importantly, a construction within English parameters and one which in turn is designed to serve the English imperial imperative. For this reason, it is a construction which is predicated on the establishment and perpetuation of difference, a difference which becomes through the subjective nature of its construction necessarily inferior. This imperative thereafter serves as a tool for the construction as well as a validation of Occidental identity through the inferior nature of the perceived other.

Colonialism is therefore in Said's mind a system which was preoccupied with the production of knowledge. "The object of such knowledge is", Said contends, "inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; this object is a 'fact' which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable".[44] What the production of knowledge of a people does then, is to wrest ontological agency away from the subject of this knowledge. This knowledge becomes therefore something which stands "in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth",[45] but something which nevertheless retains, or even constructs, a certain truth value within the defining discourse. In light of this, Peter Hulme argues that, in keeping with this predominantly Foucauldian framework, "what counts as truth will depend on strategies of power rather than epistemological criteria".[46] Truth is therefore contingent on the idea of discourse. Truth is not

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[43] Balfour knows implicitly that "Their great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turned them into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies" (*ibid*, 35).
[44] *Ibid*, 32.
[45] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 118.
[46] Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), 6.

something which is objectively attainable but something which is subjectively constructed by those in power of the discourse in which that truth is situated. Hulme thus writes that,

> Underlying the idea of colonial discourse, in other words, is the presumption that during the colonial period large parts of the non-European world were *produced* for Europe through a discourse that imbricated sets of questions and assumptions, methods of procedure and analysis, and kinds of writing and imagery, normally separated out into the discrete areas of military strategy, political order, social reform, imaginative literature, personal memoir and so on.[47]

Truth about the non-European world is therefore, in this light, ontologically constructed by and for Europe. It is thus known and made within a discourse which is able to label its constructions as true. Colonial discourse is therefore contingent on a set of truth values dictated in many ways by it, meaning that colonial discourse is defined in opposition to a set of values which it dictates. In keeping with this, once something is known within a discourse it is constructed and defined, even made from the perspective of the owners of the discourse. It becomes, within that discourse a stable ontological construction, a construction which denies any authority or agency on the part of the subject. For, "[t]o have knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means "us" to deny autonomy over it – the Oriental country – since we know it and it exists, in a sense, *as* we know it"[48]. In the case of Balfour and Said's Egypt this is particularly pertinent and it serves as a good example of the interrelationship between power and knowledge, a relationship which Said expands upon in this way:

> Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world. In Cromer's and Balfour's language the Oriental is depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in zoological manual). The point is that in each of these cases the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks.[49]

Discourse, in the shape of Orientalism, has then the power to confine through knowledge, but only if that knowledge is grounded in a power drawn from cultural strength. Thus Foucauldian discourse is, when deployed by Said as Orientalism, grounded in Gramscian hegemony. In other

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[47] *Ibid*, 2.
[48] Said, *Orientalism*, 32.
[49] *Ibid,* 40.

words Orientalism endures, and only has the strength it does as a result of the cultural hegemony of the West. The power garnered through this interplay between hegemony and knowledge serves then to fuel the process in which "they", the Orient, are described and subsequently known as inferior to "us", the Occident. Said's contention then is that "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self".[50] This in turn speaks to his assertion that one of the main features of "Oriental-European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination".[51] By defining, understanding and knowing the Orient in such a way as to place it as being inferior to the West, the West was able to use the Orient as a justification for the superiority of Western culture. In turn, it is with this understanding, as Said highlights in his citing of Balfour and Cromer, that the West is able to justify a more active deployment and propagation of Occidental hegemony, both culturally and otherwise, over the Orient. Thus, "the traditional Orientalist [conceives] of the difference between cultures, first, as creating a battlefront that separates them [the Orient and Occident], and second, as inviting the West to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other".[52]

Frankenstein as a text is caught up, as I hope to demonstrate, in the operations of the type of colonial discourse proposed by Said. Elizabeth Bohls argues, in keeping with this, that aesthetics and colonialism are inseparable in the text. She writes that "Her [Shelley's] critical deployment of aesthetics reveals it to be an imperial discourse - one of the languages of high culture, seemingly far removed from the practical tasks of empire, but actually helping produce imperial subjects to carry out those tasks."[53] In much this way, from the very outset of the novel Frankenstein's creature is placed within the physiological system which defines him as being non-European, as being, from a European perspective, other. He is described, on his first appearance in the text, as "a being which had the shape of man, but apparently of gigantic

[50] *Ibid*, 3.
[51] *Ibid,* 40.
[52] *Ibid*, 47-8.
[53] Bohls, "Standards of Taste", 25.

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stature”.[54] He is not described by Walton as a man but rather only has “the shape of” one, he is “a being” described, not through the personal pronoun “who”, but rather through recourse to the impersonal interrogative pronoun, “which”. There exists even a lack of authenticity in the scale of his suggested shape. More than this, the creature’s physical stature is understood from the outset by Walton in racial terms. Walton, following his sighting of the creature seeks to understand him; describing him as seeming to be “a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island.”[55] His savage nature within this context is, however, contingent on the fact that he is perceived by Walton as non-European. He is defined in opposition to Frankenstein himself, who is described from the outset through a negative comparison with his own creation. Frankenstein is “*not*[56], as the other traveller [Frankenstein’s creature] seemed to be”,[57] he is rather, “European”.[58] By being placed in opposition to him, the creature serves to validate and assert Frankenstein’s European identity much as Frankenstein’s European identity conversely places his creature as “savage”. In much the same way as Walton understands Frankenstein in opposition to his creature; Myra Jehlen writes that colonial discourse posits the “other” as a means “to cast the speaker’s cultural interlocutors in an inferior position by rendering them mere negative quantities defined by an opposition to which they do not contribute.”[59] The establishment of a binary in these inherently unequal terms thus serves to justify the superiority of Jehlen’s “speaker”, in this case the Frankenstein figure.

Othering becomes here, within the colonial regime, the basis of the power structure within which it functions. For Margaret Greer, Walter Mignolo and Maureen Quilligan, although they are speaking here in religious terms, racialised discrimination owes its beginnings in some part to “the privileged position in which Christianity found itself to create a classification in which Christians were one of the groups classified and, simultaneously, possessors of the privileged

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[54] *F.*, letter iv, 23.
[55] *ibid*, 24.
[56] My emphasis
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] Jehlen, “Why did the Europeans cross the Ocean?”, 150.

discourse that created the classification."[60] Racial colonial discourse owes its authority then, not only to the classification of peoples and the power this grants the classifiers within their established discourse, but also to the preservation of the distance between the classifiers and the classified. Harry Garuba writes that the key to the power of colonial discourse lies in the "division of the world into subject and object with all the dualisms involved in this process (e.g. mind/matter; nature/nurture; civilized/savage) and then by a configuration or mapping of space to consolidate this visual authority."[61] In this understanding of the ontological process through which the text is able to construct the respective identities of the two characters (Frankenstein and his creature), one cannot know what it is to be civilised unless one knows what it is to be savage. Thus Frankenstein cannot be understood as European until one is able to place him in opposition to that which is savage, in this case his creation.[62] What this highlights above all is the need for the existence of the perceived other as a means of defining and coming to terms with European identity. This theme is played out with tragic consequences for Frankenstein's creature as the text progresses, as he is educated into understanding the impossibility of his own existence within the European idiom and society, which constructs him through his exclusion from it.

The creature's construction as other is made evident from Frankenstein's first account of his physical appearance. Frankenstein relates,

> I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in

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[60] Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo and Maureen Quilligan, "Introduction", in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires,* eds., Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2.

[61] Harry Garuba, "Mapping the Land/Body/Subject: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies in African Narrative", *Alternation*, 9:1 (2002): 88.

[62] See Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power", in *Formations of Modernity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (London: Polity Press, 1996); and David Scott, "Colonial Governmentality", in *Social Text* 43 (1995): 191-220. Hall writes, in keeping with this, that the idea of the 'West' or in this case 'European', "functions as a part of a language, a 'system of representation' (I say 'system' because it doesn't stand on its own, but works in conjunction with other images with which it forms a set)" (Hall, "The West and the Rest", 277). For, what begins to become apparent as the text progresses is, as David Scott expresses it, how "the rule of colonial difference is a rule of exclusion/ inclusion (and all power may be said to operate through the construction of such a principle of difference)" (Scott, "Colonial Governmentality", 196).

> proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful? Great God! His yellow skin scarcely 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 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.[63]

In this moment Frankenstein does not merely give life to his creation but in Said's sense of the word truly *knows* and creates his "creature". He is, in Frankenstein's eyes, a monster. He is something both of and not of this world. His yellow skin, pale watery eyes and black lips suggest at first apprehension exactly what he is at the most basic level, a reanimated corpse. More than this, however, the creature can be seen, as Harold Malchow asserts, to have been "constructed out of a cultural tradition of the threatening 'Other' – whether troll or giant, gypsy or Negro – from the dark inner recesses of xenophobic fear and loathing".[64] He is through his physicality, a blank slate suggestive of this racial otherness and onto which this understanding has been regularly and assertively inscribed. Joseph Lew, for instance, suggests that, "His "yellow skin" physically links him to scores of millions of Bengalis, whom the British rulers called "niggers." Like the creature's, their "lustrous black, and flowing" hair and "pearly white" teeth strongly contrast with each other and with their "yellow" complexion."[65] Lew's assertion seems here to agree, in his racialised understanding of the creature, with that of Mellor who claims that "most of Mary Shelley's nineteenth-century readers would immediately have recognized the Creature as a member of the Mongolian race."[66]

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In light of these assertions of the creature's racial physicality, it is perhaps profitable to ground the text within a contemporaneous framework. We know from her diaries that Mary Shelley read widely and diversely. For the sake of this argument, her reading of travel literature and other colonial texts in particular, both fictional and not, between 1814 and 1817 begs attention. Over the period, both immediately prior to and while she was writing *Frankenstein*, Shelley read William Beckford's *Vathek*, Jean-François Marmontel's *Incas*, Sydney Owenson's (Lady

[63] *F.*, V, 55.
[64] Malcow, "Images of Race", 70.
[65] Lew, "The Deceptive Other", 273.
[66] Mellor, "The Yellow Peril", 2.

Morgan) *The Missionary: An Indian Tale* and reread Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; all works of fiction which are grounded, to varying degrees, in the expansionist colonial British enterprise. More tellingly, however, she read over the same time, Sir John Barrow's account of the Macartney embassy to China in 1792-4, Bryan Edwards' *History of the West Indies*, Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa*, Thomas Pennant's *View of Hindoostan* and William Robertson's *History of America*.[67] In Shelley's reading material during this period one can see plainly reflected a development of the types of racial stereotypes which are utilised by both Lew and Mellor. Mungo Park's[68] descriptions of the various tribes living around the Gambia for instance clearly mirror Frankenstein's creature in both his physical construction and personality in the text. Park writes, for example, of the Foulahs, a pastoral West African tribe, that "such of them at least as reside near the Gambia, are chiefly tawny complexions with soft [black] silky hair."[69] While, of the Feloops, another tribe residing in the region, Park relates that "[t]hey are of a gloomy disposition, and are supposed never to forgive an injury […] This fierce and unrelenting disposition is, however, counterbalanced by many good qualities: they display the utmost gratitude and affection towards their benefactors".[70] Robertson and Edwards display a similar preoccupation with the violent and savage nature of the "Negro" as well as with his physical alterity. The diaries of Christopher Columbus, on which both Robertson and Edwards draw strongly, are telling of this. He writes of the Americans that they were "all of good stature – very handsome people, with hair not curly but straight and coarse, like horsehair, and all of them very wide in the forehead and head, more so than any other race that I have seen so far."[71] While Frankenstein's creation may not be handsome, he was by Frankenstein's own admission intended to be so, after all Frankenstein claims to have "selected

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[67] Mary W. Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844*, eds., Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 5-189.
[68] Mungo Park was a Scottish explorer who led two expeditions into the African interior, modern day Mali and Nigeria, in 1795 and 1805 and is credited as being the first Westerner to discover the Niger River. Both the account of this first expedition drawn up by Bryan Edwards for the African Association as well as his own account of the expedition published in 1799 where immensely popular and widely read at the time and were instrumental in the opening up of Africa to the West.
[69] Park, *Travels in the interior districts of Africa,* II, 78.
[70] *Ibid*. II, 75-6.
[71] Christopher Columbus, "Christopher Columbus (c.1450-1500)", in *The Faber Book of Exploration: An Anthology of Worlds Revealed By Explorers Through the Ages,* ed. Benedict Allen (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), 27.

his features as beautiful."[72] Passing this it is not difficult to find similarities between the creature and the savages presented by the likes of Columbus and Park. These tropes can already be seen developing in literature long before Shelley's novel. Defoe was certainly marshalling these stereotypes as early as 1719. In *Robinson Crusoe*, Crusoe relates the following of Friday:

> His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead was very high and large… The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not of an ugly yellow, nauseous tawny; as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are; but of a bright kind of dun olive colour that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat like the Negroes', a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and white as ivory.[73]

While Friday's skin colour may differ slightly from that of Frankenstein's creature, the formulation of Defoe's description and categorisation of him within a very definitively racialised somatic discourse is striking in its similarity to Frankenstein's own description of his creation. The creature mirrors Defoe's Friday in much the same way he does Columbus's Americans. What is perhaps one of the more striking results of the physical construction of the creature in the text is just how wide and diverse the resultant racial origins which he has been attributed are. Indeed Malchow notes of the creature:

> The monster, it will be seen, is not merely grotesque, a too-roughly cobbled together simulacrum of a man. He is first, larger and more powerful than his maker, and, secondly, dark and sinister in appearance. This suggests the standard description of the black man in both the literature of the West Indies and that of West African exploration.[74]

He traces Shelley's influences through Park, in much the same way Mellor's Mongolians or Lew's Bengalis can be traced through contemporary representations of the orient as diverse as Beckford's *Vatheck*, Owenson's *The Missionary: An Indian Tale* or Pennant's *View of Hindoostan*. I would however argue that any attempt to narrow down any specific source for the racialised construction of Frankenstein's creature is not necessarily as useful for the

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[72] *F.*, V, 55.
[73] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: Penguin, 1994), 202.
[74] Malchow, "Images of Race", 69.

purposes of my argument as the fact that these stereotypes existed and are to varying degrees utilised throughout the text.

Malchow argues that this construction of Frankenstein's creature through nineteenth century racial stereotypes is so pervasive that it extends so far as to inform the creature's diet. He cites as an exemplar how "Mungo Park commented on the largely vegetable diet of many Negroes."[75] Frankenstein's creature's first meal in keeping with this consists of berries[76] followed almost exclusively by more berries as well as nuts and roots[77] which he roasts.[78] The colossal vegetarian myth, while seeming attractive, is however balanced by stereotyping in contemporary writings and in many readings of Shelley's text by that which argues in favour of the savage, or in this instance, Frankenstein's creature, as a cannibal. William, Victor's younger brother, certainly levels this accusation when he encounters the creature, exclaiming, "Monster! Ugly wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre."[79] Frankenstein himself describes him as "my own vampire."[80] This presentation of the savage as cannibal was at this point firmly established as a trope, not only in exploration narratives, but also embedded in the collective popular consciousness of the time through its appearance in literature. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, interestingly the text prescribed by Godwin to be used in the education of children, abounds with examples of cannibalistic savages. At one point early on Xury, telling Crusoe to remain in the boat while he goes ashore, says, "If wild mans come,

[75] *ibid*, 71
[76] *F.*, XI, 98. See also Timothy Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: the Body and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 47-51. Morton discusses the creature's diet in relation to contemporary discussions surrounding vegetarianism, grounding the text, as he presents it, through Shelley's presentation of the creature's diet, in the antislavery, women's and animal rights movements.
[77] *F.*, XI, 100.
[78] That however having been said, Park's account abounds with just as many examples of the largely meat-based diet of many "Negroes". While he does write in a moment of frustration that, "The long use of vegetable food, creates so painful a longing for salt, that no words can sufficiently describe it" (Park, *Travels in the interior districts of Africa*, XXI, 251), examples of a diet which consists of meat are if anything more frequent in his narrative. He writes, of a particular tribe that "The present inhabitants, though they possess both cattle and corn in abundance, are not over nice in articles of diet, rats, moles, squirrels, snakes, locusts, &c. are eaten without scruple by the highest and lowest" (*Ibid*, VI, 117). He also relates that the average supper "Consists almost universally of kouskous, with a small portion of animal food, or Shea butter, mixed with it" (*Ibid*, XXI, 251), as well as accounts of the general consumption of "Fish", "Guinea-fowls, partridge and pigeons" (*Ibid*, XXI, 252). The accreditation of the vegetarian savage to Park, I would thus pose as being somewhat misleading.
[79] *F.*, XVI, 137.
[80] *F.,* VII, 74.

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they eat me, you go wey." To which Crusoe replies "we will both go, and if the wild mans come, we will kill them; they shall eat neither of us."[81] More so than mere suspicion of cannibalism Crusoe later relates that on a certain beach following battles in their canoes, "[the savages], having taken any prisoners, would bring them over to the shore, where, according to their dreadful customs, being all cannibals, they would kill and eat them."[82] This myth and its contemporary presentations are placed in parallel to Frankenstein's creation's eventual double murders and destruction of the De Lacey's home. While his diet may not reflect that of the cannibalistic savage, he is presented as adhering metaphorically to this mould. A parallel is drawn by Malchow here between the creature's behaviour and that presented by Bryan Edwards in his depiction of the West Indians. Edwards writes of a slave uprising that,

> They surrounded the overseer's house about four in the morning, in which eight or ten White people were in bed, every one of whom they butchered in the most savage manner, and literally drank their blood mixed with rum … [they] then set fire to the buildings and canes. In one morning they murdered between thirty and forty White, not sparing even infants at the breast.[83]

The burning of the buildings and the murder of children certainly mirror the crimes committed by Frankenstein's creature. Presentations of Frankenstein's creature in this light are, however, misleading and despite both Victor and William's accusations, the creature cannot fairly be charged with cannibalism. In fact, despite his later violent nature and the murders he commits, he, as far as diet goes, displays far more in common with the peaceful "colossal vegetarian savage". An argument in favour of his presentation in this light would explain why his diet may not strictly adhere to that described by Park. Perhaps it is with this in mind that Malchow argues that the creature presents a striking parallel to the picture painted by many apologists for slavery, who "defended a subsistence slave diet of maize and water with the claim that the Negro race did not require the white man's luxuries of meat and drink".[84] Frankenstein's creature's diet can certainly be argued to reflect this viewpoint.

[81] Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 30.
[82] *Ibid*, 162.
[83] Brian Edwards, *History, Civil and Commercial, of the West Indies,* 2 vols. (Dublin: Luke White, 1793), II. 60-1.
[84] Malchow, "Images of Race", 70.

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> This draws on a long European tradition which imagined wild men or natural men of the wood as (like Frankenstein's monster) colossal vegetarians, images which the eighteenth-century naturalists helped to merge with that of the more primitive races of men abroad far down the ladder of racial hierarchy.[85]

What this diverse understanding of the creature demonstrates, is not that the creature is either strictly a "colossal vegetarian" or a cannibal, American, Bengali or African, but rather it highlights the extent to which he has become a vehicle for these stereotypes. It is certainly difficult to argue against any of these readings of the creature, although the cannibalistic tendencies are to a large extent metaphorical. Rather what becomes apparent is the extent to which these various racial stereotypes were current in the early nineteenth century.

The racialisation of the creature places the text, in keeping with Spivak's assertion of the import of imperial discourse in reading literature of the time, within this imperial discourse of racial othering. So much so, that purely on the basis of his physical appearance, Frankenstein asserts what he sees to be an innate evil in the creature, exclaiming "[a]bhorred monster! Fiend that thou art! The tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for thy crimes. Wretched devil!"[86] This perception of evil is, however, informed, initially at least, as a result of his appearance rather than any innate evil in his nature.[87] Indeed, the creature understands this saying to Frankenstein, "[t]hus I relieve thee, my creator"[88] before placing his hands over his eyes and entreating him to listen to him. This highlights one of two possibilities, either the text is here "cautioning us lest our own acts of perception prove faulty",[89] or following the popularly held belief that there exists a connection between physiognomy and one's nature.

> Johann Casper Lavater's physiognomical theory, for example, held that a person's inner soul or moral character produces his or her outer appearance, while Spurzheim and Gall's phrenological theory held that the contours of the skull determines character and moral nature[90]

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[85] *ibid*, 71.
[86] *ibid*, 95.
[87] Importantly Frankenstein sees the creature as an evil monster even before he murders his brother, displaying a prejudice based not on fact, but merely on his interpretation of the creature's physical being.
[88] *ibid*, 97.
[89] Mellor, "Introduction to *Frankenstein*", 21.
[90] *Ibid*, 20-1.

These theories, if nothing else, seem to explain the reactions of the various characters in the novel to the creature. Throughout the text he is predominantly judged as being evil on the basis of his physical appearance. The old blind man De Lacey does, however, raise the possibility that by removing visual perception, Frankenstein's creature can be viewed as European, human, educated and even virtuous. Indeed even Walton, despite seeing the creature, by closing his eyes, is able to recollect himself so far as to engage with him, "Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome, yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes voluntarily, and endeavoured to recollect what were my duties with regard to this destroyer. I called on him to stay."[91] This approach by no means resolves the issue of the nature of the creature for Walton's closing of his eyes and De Lacey's blindness, if anything, only serve to reinforce an understanding of the creature as somatically other. The text demonstrates here the possibilities of overcoming prejudice based on somatic difference by presenting the creature's acceptance in a context where this alterity is not immediately apparent. It is just this, however, which serves to further emphasise his physical difference, for it is only in such a context where his difference is removed that he is able to be accepted by society.

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[91] *F.*, XXIV, 211.

Barbarus

Establishing Difference

Partha Chatterjee, writing on the First Indian War of Independence in 1857,[92] argues that "colonial power", existed in its true form as "a modern regime of power destined never to fulfil its normalizing mission because the premise of its power was the preservation of the alienness of the ruling group."[93] In keeping with this, Anne Mellor argues that,

> In *Frankenstein*, human beings typically construe the unfamiliar, the abnormal, the unique as dangerous or evil, a construction given form in their language. As Foucault suggested in *Madness and Civilization*, language is an instrument of power, establishing and policing a myriad of boundaries between "us" and "them," in a desperate effort to protect human societies from the terrors of the unknown.[94]

The other becomes here a tool not only in the process of self-definition but similarly through the definition of and exclusion of this self-same other, a tool for the assertion of the supremacy of the defining party. Walter Mignolo writes that "[r]acism emerged as a discourse to assert the superiority of Western Christians and as a justification for land appropriation and exploitation of supposedly lesser human beings."[95] This holds valence for it becomes only through the categorisation, definition and exclusion of an other that this concept of collective superior identity can be achieved. More simply, "we" cannot be a "we" unless there is a "them" against whom to define "ourselves", a distinction which requires an implicit imbalance between the said parties in order to function as a vehicle for the type of imperial discourse inherent in *Frankenstein*.

[92] The issues inherent in the colonial administration of India discussed here by Chatterjee are issues which, for the most part, find their root in the late 18th century. While historically later, the Revolt of 1857 was in many ways the product of the misrule in India of the East India Company in the late 18th and early 19th century as well as the initial rapid expansion of the Company Army by Warren Hastings in 1772.
[93] Partha Chatterjee, "The Colonial State", in *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 18.
[94] Mellor, "Introduction to *Frankenstein*", 22.
[95] Walter D. Mignolo, "Afterword: What Does the Black Legend Have to Do with Race?", in *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, eds. Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo and Maureen Quilligan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 314.

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In this light, one can begin to see in *Frankenstein* how within this discourse, the barbarian, the monster, the other, more specifically, that which is not what we are, is formulated ideologically as an important model of comparison against which the idea of European society can be formulated and evaluated.[96] In 1589 in an essay provocatively titled 'Of Cannibals,' the French essayist, Michel de Montaigne, called attention to the relativism and, by implication, the ideological tenor of this impulse to identify an inferior opposite, writing that "[e]ach man calls barbarism whatever is not his own practice."[97] Perhaps what is more telling is that in Latin the word *barbarus,* means foreign, strange or even a foreigner or a stranger.[98] The colonial project alluded to by Chatterjee and its inherent racism highlighted by Mignolo is, in keeping with this, predicated on the idea that the foreigner functions through their encoded barbarism to validate, in this instance, the European system, its identity, morals and above all superiority. Written two centuries after Montaigne Shelley's novel creates a scenario which is able to bring the mechanics of this system to light and through doing so bring it, to some degree, into question.

The creature is thus construed from early on in relation to Frankenstein. The significance, therefore, of Walton's description, "not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island." should not escape notice. His description functions, though subtly at this point, as an allusion to this binary understanding of the other within the text as well as an assertion of the difference between the two. It is, however, not an empowered assertion of difference on the part of the creature but rather one informed by his perceived inferiority. As Myra Jehlen charts it, the notion of "difference" allows for a break with the traditionally monologic encounter between the subject of colonial discourse and the European centre in which cultural agency can be reclaimed by the subject of this discourse through an assertion of just this: difference.[99] I would like to suggest that through his exposure

[96] While he is looking at the formation of the idea of 'the West' and thus approaching the topic from a different, if not unrelated angle, see Hall, "The West and the Rest", 277, for a fuller exposition of this idea.
[97] Michel E. Montaigne, "Of Cannibals", in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), I(31), 152.
[98] Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, eds. *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907) 222.
[99] Jehlen, "Why did the Europeans cross the Ocean?", 150.

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to a European cultural education, Frankenstein's creature internalises, through his observation of the De Laceys, the Western aesthetic conception of self, positing himself as the other of the encounter as a result of his physical alterity. Once he recognises himself as different, he immediately positions himself as inferior to the perceived "perfect form of [his] cottagers."[100] He understands his difference from them as a "miserable deformity,"[101] convincing himself that this difference casts him as "monster",[102] a "miserable, unhappy wretch."[103] This is not to say that Frankenstein's creature passively accepts this deformity. He, as the story progresses, attempts to assert his "difference". His active distancing of himself from humanity begins to come to the fore in his demand for the construction of a mate. He reflects at this point, "I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the *same species*[104] and have the same defects."[105] His revelation at this point is that he is, just he has previously lamented, "not even of the same nature as man."[106] By at this moment asserting his "difference", being not even of the "same species" as man, he is able to in some sense partake actively in this discourse, forcing a shift towards dialogical exchange. In much this way, Jehlen writes that by describing "oneself or one's kind as 'other,' one would not only represent the very meaning of alienation but be incapable of further self-definition and even speech; while to declare oneself 'different' leads logically to self-description, even monologue."[107] The assertion of difference enables the introduction of a discourse which is dialogic. This allows for some semblance of agency on the part of the Frankenstein's creature who, through this claim to difference, is able to position himself as an active participant in the process of self-definition. It introduces the possibility of dialogic subjectivity[108] into the discourse. In other words he should be able to

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[100] *F.*, XII, 109.
[101] *ibid*
[102] *ibid*
[103] *ibid*, XIII, 116.
[104] My emphasis
[105] *ibid*, XVI, 139.
[106] *ibid*, XIII, 116.
[107] Jehlen, "Why did the Europeans cross the Ocean?", 150.
[108] See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the novel", in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austen: University of Texas Press, 1981), 259-422; and Michael J. Sider, "Dialogic Approaches", in *A Companion to Romanticism*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001). The term dialogic finds its origin in Bakhtin's writings on language and textuality. He contends that language is inherently dialogic in nature, relying on social

move away from a one sided understanding of "I" and "you", towards a situation in which the "you" can become the "I" within the discourse and *vice versa*.

I would, however, suggest that in *Frankenstein*, this dialogism is infelicitous, as, the establishment of this "difference", is problematic in a context in which the identities of the carriers and objects of colonial discourse have become so intricately linked that in many instances it becomes impossible to extract a distinct sense of self untarnished by the imposition of Western colonial ideals upon the colonised subject. Frankenstein's creature's assertion of "difference" and his distancing of himself from humanity can in this way be seen as an inevitably doomed enterprise. His identity is so couched in an understanding of himself as other, and thus inferior, that he is destined never to fulfil any act of empowered ontological self-definition.[109] He is unable to exist outside of his initial defining discourse; a discourse which, from the European perspective at least, functions as a means of validating and justifying their cultural superiority and consequently their, perceived, righteous conquest of the "other". Importantly the difference which becomes for Jehlen integral to the construction of European identity is an enforced difference perpetuated by the West. While an active invocation of "difference" should, in Jehlen's terms, allow for dialogism, the difference inherent in colonial discourse restricts it, serving to justify the objectification and degradation of the colonial subject as "other". It is this difference therefore which categorises, or forms an understanding at least, of the position of Frankenstein's creature within his society, for it is his difference which serves to justify his persecution. It is his otherness which consistently informs his

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context in its construction of meaning. The meaning of any word therefore is dictated not merely by the object it relates to but so to by its interaction with what he terms "alien words", which in turn impinge on the direct relationship between the word and its object, affecting its representation. The object of any word is thus "overlain with qualifications [by] alien words that have already been spoken about it" (*ibid*, 276). This process of imposition of meaning in dialogic exchange functions as Michael James Sider describes it, "just as speakers shape their words in dialogue as rejoinders to what has been said and what they anticipate will be said" (Sider, "Dialogic Approaches", 431).

[109] See Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984); and Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1-27. By ontological self-definition I am speaking to the Foucauldian concepts which he terms the axes of knowledge and power and what he calls "the historical ontology of ourselves" (Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", 53). What this is referring to is, for Foucault, both "the truth through which we constitute ourselves as objects of knowledge" and "the power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others" (*ibid*, 54).

interactions with society and eventually his own understanding of self. In many ways this precludes the possibility of his inhabiting a sense of self informed by "difference". While he at times troubles this binary both through active attempts at asserting his difference and through his intellectual nature, as I hope to demonstrate, his physical otherness is so ingrained in his understanding of self that he is unable inevitably to move beyond this.

The binary understanding of Frankenstein and his creature in the text is informed by this difference and is made apparent from reasonably early on.[110] Interestingly, however, immediately after this binary is set up Frankenstein is portrayed in the text as wild and savage. It is, however, a savageness which inevitably serves to emphasise rather than destabilise the binary. Walton relates of Frankenstein that, "[he] never saw a man in so wretched condition."[111] For two full days he is unable to even speak. Not only does Walton initially believe him to have been deprived of understanding,[112] but his descriptions of Frankenstein become increasingly animalistic. He writes,

> I never saw a more interesting creature: his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness, but there are moments when, if any one performs an act of kindness towards him or does him any the most trifling service, his whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence and sweetness that I never saw equalled. But he is generally melancholy and despairing, and sometimes he gnashes his teeth.[113]

Frankenstein is depicted by Walton as a "creature", who not only looks wild or even mad but behaves as such, gnashing his teeth but also reacting to acts of kindness in a very animalistic fashion. He is even afforded Dryden's epithet by Walton, who wonders that "he must have been a noble creature in his better days".[114] This must certainly strike one as somewhat strange considering the all-pervasive likening of Frankenstein's creature, and not Frankenstein himself, with both the idea of the Noble Savage as well as the more developed figure of Emile presented by Rousseau. It is certainly conspicuous that such a reversal of the idealistic European takes

[110] A relationship which becomes increasingly questioned and tested by Shelley's text as the novel progresses.
[111] *F.*, letter iv, 24.
[112] *Ibid,* 25.
[113] *ibid*
[114] *ibid*, 26.

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place so soon after the establishment of the definitive negation of savage identity through the creature in Walton's initial description of Frankenstein as being "not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European."[115]

Quite significantly, however, Frankenstein's *savage nature*, when he is found by Walton, is not natural, being brought on rather through intense and prolonged exposure to the elements. "His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering."[116] Walton continues, describing how they "restored him to animation by rubbing him with brandy."[117] Frankenstein is in fact in so severe a state that he is even deprived of speech for two full days. This episode serves to foreshadow the relation of his creature's comments with regard to the differences which he had perceived between himself and the other people he has come into contact with. The creature relates, "I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs."[118] As Malchow has highlighted, the key to this understanding of the creature is that "beyond size and repulsiveness, the most striking physical attributes of the monster are his ape-like ability to scamper up mountainsides and his endurance of temperatures which European man would find intolerable."[119] The creature is thus able to easily survive the same extreme temperatures which render Frankenstein first unconscious then crazed and finally dead. Upon catching sight of him moving across the ice, Walton even remarks of his rapid progress, with little or even no perceived difficulty.[120] The text plays upon the widespread belief that "Negroes" were not only physically stronger than Europeans but also were able withstand the extreme temperatures of the tropics which had in some circumstances the power to kill Europeans.[121]

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[115] *ibid*, 24.
[116] *ibid*
[117] *ibid*
[118] *ibid*, XIII, 116.
[119] Malchow, "Images of Race", 70.
[120] *F.*, letter iv, 23.
[121] See John Davis, *Travels of Four and a Half in the United States of America; During 1789, 1799, 1800 and 1802* (New York: H. Holt and co., 1803), Davis makes just this point in his *Travels in the United States of America* (Davis, *Travels in the United States of America*, 95).

Though postdating *Frankenstein* Nikolai Przhevalsky writes of the Mongolians that while accompanying tea caravans, they could withstand temperatures in excess of -20 degrees Fahrenheit. They are in his estimation "Endowed by nature with a strong constitution and trained from early childhood to endure hardships."[122] Shelley's own father even wrote that "In their extreme perhaps heat and cold may determine the character of nations, of the negroes for example on the one side, and the Laplanders on the other."[123] While Frankenstein's creature was not brought up in these extreme temperatures nor conditioned to withstand them, he is nevertheless endowed with a similar racial constitution to that alluded to by both Godwin and Przhevalsky. He is, larger, faster, stronger and more resilient to the elements.

Frankenstein relates, on sighting his creation following his descent from the summit of Montanvert beneath Mont Blanc, "I suddenly beheld a figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices of ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature, also, as he approached seemed to exceed that of man."[124] This would certainly reinforce an understanding of Frankenstein and his creation in increasingly racialised terminology stereotypical of the time. One can see how, just as the ancient barbarian was anyone who was not Greek, the creature is construed here as being extra-European. In this light, for the West, the problem of self-definition is predicated on the exclusion of all who differ in any way from the perceived European norm. Frankenstein's creature becomes therefore the vehicle through which one can explore how these formulations function, as he is faced in the text with the difficulty of reconciling his seemingly contrary physical and intellectual identities.

What does however become apparent is a certain degree of development with regard to this particular prejudice. This is particularly pertinent once the creature is able to recognise himself physically within these binary terms. From the perspective of the creature there exist no

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[122] Nikolai Przhevalsky, "Nikolai Przhevalsky (1839-88)", in *The Faber Book of Exploration: An Anthology of Worlds Revealed By Explorers Through the Ages*, ed. Benedict Allen (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), 217.
[123] William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (London: Penguin, 1985), 151.
[124] *F.*, X, 94.

knowledge structures at the beginning of his life which place him as different. Once however he has spent some time observing the De Laceys he perceives his reflection in a pool of water and recognising its difference from that of the De Laceys, who he has at this point begun to establish an emotional connection with, is revolted by it. The creature recollects how he was,

> terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I stared back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensation of despondence and mortification[125]

The creature is shown here to only begin to see himself as a monster once he has actually physically seen himself. Importantly however he is only revolted by his appearance because he has begun at this point to form a connection with the De Laceys, thus identifying with their appearance. This moment of self-awareness begins the process by which the creature eventually comes to the full knowledge of his alterity. This solidification of the creature's racial identity is only, however, made apparent through his eventual internalisation of European aesthetic ideals, an education which comes at the hands of the unknowing De Lacey family. He relates, "I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers – their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions."[126] That this understanding of their physical form comes simultaneously with his process of positive identification with the De Laceys, is telling. He establishes an emotional connection with them through his first winter: "when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys."[127] This emotional connection in turn informs his imagined idea of self and his eventual horror upon catching sight of his own reflection in a pool of water, as his imagined self is at odds with the reality of his own physical appearance. Having seen himself, the creature is confronted with an "ideal ego", which falls short, significantly outside of the gestalt representing his experience and understanding of physical identity and norms. He relates that "when I looked around I saw and heard of none like me",[128] he cannot but understand his own somatic make up as existing outside of these norms. On

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[125] *ibid*, XII, 109.
[126] *ibid*
[127] *Ibid*, 108.
[128] *ibid*, XIII, 116.

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seeing his reflection, he says that, "[a]t first I stared back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification."[129] Unlike Lacan's mirror stage, however, the disjuncture or fracturing of the imagined and real egos is for Frankenstein's creature different in that his imago, rather than representing an ideal unified ego, fractures his already largely developed sense of self which has been developed through identification with the De Laceys. His "mirror stage" represents therefore an act of ontological violence as he is forced to come to terms with his physical identity which exists outside of his own imagined community which he has formed vicariously with the De Lacey family. He becomes in this moment aware of his somatic divergence from the European norm, established in his mind by the De Laceys. The creature "becomes fully convinced that [he is] in reality a monster".[130] He partakes at this point in an active ontological fracturing of his identity, a process which is only furthered once he is exposed to literature and becomes, through this, to a large extent, "educated" in the Rousseauean sense of the word[131] and is able to place his physical difference within the context of European history and thought.

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[129] *ibid*, XII, 109.
[130] *ibid*
[131] This is meant in reference to the project of education set out by Rousseau in *Emile,* an education which is for Rousseau a tool through which one can, to some degree, begin to mitigate the corrupting influences of society.

Discourse and Language

Franz Fanon writes of the "comic books" so avariciously devoured by the local school children in the Antilles in the early 1950s that "in the magazines the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage are always symbolized by Negroes or Indians".[132] He argues that "since there is always identification with the victor, the little Negro, quite as easily as the little white boy, becomes an explorer, an adventurer, a missionary 'who faces the danger of being eaten by the wicked Negroes.'"[133] He writes, in a continuation of this initial argument,

> The black schoolboy in the Antilles, who in his lessons is forever talking about "our ancestors, the Gauls," identifies himself with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages – an all-white truth. There is identification – that is, the young Negro subjectively adopts a white man's attitude… Little by little, one can observe in the young Antillean the formation and crystallization of an attitude and a way of thinking and seeing that are essentially white.[134]

Through this construction of an ideologically "white" black Antillean school boy Fanon is arguing here against popular culture for its ontological role in the formation of racialised identity from an early age. Comic books become in this way as dangerous to the local cultures as the more obvious, active forms of cultural imperialism employed under the guise of civilisation, religious and moral teachings and education in general. The reason why comic books are isolated here by Fanon as an important example of this cultural imperialism is that they differ in a significant manner from the above mentioned tools of overt imperialism,[135] that is, that the imperialism represented by comic books is consumed voluntarily by the local populous. The child is actively shaped therefore through his consumption of media which

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[132] Franz Fanon, "The Negro and Psychopathology", in *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 2008), 146.
[133] *ibid*
[134] *Ibid*, 147-8.
[135] By overt imperialism, I am referring to the more active forms which imperialism takes as opposed to the subtle less obvious "softer" or oblique options, such as that represented by the effects of things like comic books, which are consumed freely by the local populace who participate in this process voluntarily. It must however be noted that these categories become to a large extent contingent on the manner in which all of the above mentioned forms of imperialism; education, literature, religion, etc., are employed, or just as importantly not, consciously at least, employed. It can, in some ways, be said that the terms overt and oblique become therefore dependent not on the form which they take but rather the intention, or lack thereof which underlies the deployment of that self-same form.

promotes sympathy and identification with the white man and just as importantly, the devaluation of "Negro and Indian" culture and somatic identity. This is not to claim that *Frankenstein* as a text fits into this vein of cultural imperialism, rather that Frankenstein's creature in many ways mirrors Fanon's eight year old Antillean child in his subjection to the self-same oblique form of imperialist discourse through his education.[136] Both language and education become therefore key to this reading of the text. In *Frankenstein* the power of language is made increasingly apparent as the text progresses, most obviously, for it is through language that the creature is exposed to the various power structures and definitions which make up this discourse: a discourse which labels him as other. Nevertheless the realisation of his alterity in turn fuels his desire to master language, which he sees as having the power to transcend his somatic difference, a desire he relates to Frankenstein. He tells him,

> I easily perceived that, although I eagerly longed to discover myself to the cottagers, I ought not to make the attempt until I had first become master of their language, which knowledge might enable me to make them overlook the deformity of my figure; for with this also the contrast perpetually presented to my eyes had made me acquainted.[137]

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The creature wants here to learn language, much as the Antillean young boy wants to read Western comic books. He is actively attempting to insert himself into European language and consequently European culture. As he sees it, at this point in the text, language has the power here to "make them overlook the deformity of my figure."[138] Peter Brooks argues in line with the creature himself that "the Monster needs language to compensate for a deficient nature."[139] As the novel progresses, however, his exposure to language, rather than addressing this deficiency in the eyes of society, only serves to further highlight, in his mind, the creature's own otherness. The text demonstrates how the creature's hunger for language becomes integrally linked with his somatic difference. His physical makeup prompts his initial learning of language but just as importantly, once he has acquired it, as John Bugg highlights, "language

[136] Initially linguistically then later through literature and culture.
[137] *F.*, XII, 109.
[138] *ibid*
[139] Peter Brooks, "'Godlike Science / Unhallowed Arts': Language, Nature, and Monstrosity", in *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*, eds. George Levine and U. C. Knoepflmacher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 210.

itself [becomes] the site for the creature's alterity."[140] What Shelley's novel demonstrates here is the implicit connection between language, as the vehicle for discourse, and the process of othering that underlies the power structures of the colonial system.

On seeing his reflection in a pool, the creature becomes, in his words "convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am."[141] The creature is thus aware of his alterity before the acquisition of language, indeed, as already alluded to; this realisation prompts his desire to "become master of their language."[142] It is only later, however, as he learns from Constantin-François Volney's *Ruins of Empires*, "of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, decent, and noble blood",[143] as well as "the possessions most esteemed by [his] fellow creatures […] high and unsullied descent united by riches",[144] that he begins to reflect on his own nature and his place within society. His initial understanding of the world serves here as a bridge into his reflection on his physical nature, prompting his previously discussed observation: "I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature of man… When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?"[145] His declaration of his own monstrosity is described in importantly epistemological terms. It becomes knowledge of the facts of his existence not the fact itself which becomes in the creature's mind important. He relates, "I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge."[146] The questions which beg attention thus become, as articulated by Frankenstein's creature, "Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?"[147]

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[140] John Bugg, "'Master of their language': Education and Exile in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68:4 (2005):659.
[141] *F.,* XII, 109.
[142] *Ibid*
[143] *ibid,* XIII, 115.
[144] *ibid*
[145] *Ibid*, 116.
[146] *ibid*
[147] *ibid*, XV, 124.

The playing out of this epistemological enquiry on the creature's part mirrors in many ways Rousseau's *Emile*, for, we are, according to Rousseau, "born capable of learning, but knowing nothing, perceiving nothing. The mind, bound up within imperfect and half grown organs, it is not even aware of its own existence."[148] What this aphoristic appreciation of human knowledge displays on the part of Rousseau, is a philosophy or understanding of epistemology and, in *Emile*, education which is strikingly similar to that put forth in *Frankenstein*. It represents a philosophy of knowledge predicated on a markedly Lockean empiricism.[149] That is to say, that for Rousseau, people are born in many ways free of what one would generally refer to as human nature, as moral and intellectual *tabulae rasae*. Rousseau justifies this through a thought experiment in which he postulates the existence of a being who is brought into life, much like Frankenstein's creature, as a fully developed adult. He speculates:

> Suppose a child born with the size and strength of manhood, entering upon life full grown like Pallas from the brain of Jupiter… he would see and hear nothing, he would recognize no one, he could not turn his eyes towards what he wanted to see; not only would he perceive no external object, he would not even be aware of sensation through the several sense organs. […] all his sensations would be united in one place… he would have only one idea, that of self, to which he would refer all his sensations; and this idea, or rather this feeling, would be the only thing in which he excelled an ordinary child.[150]

Rousseau's philosophical Pallas Athena exhibits here a marked similarity to Frankenstein's creature: if in no other way, through the similarity with Rousseau's Athena's first experience of the world, characterised here by sensory confusion. This initial experience is not dissimilar to the description of Frankenstein's creature's first moments.[151] In his account of what the creature terms "the original era of my being"[152] he describes how, he "felt, heard and smelt at

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[148] Rousseau*, Emile*, I. 28.
[149] See John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); and John Dunn, "Knowledge, belief and faith", in *Locke: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). For Locke, all knowledge is contingent on empirical observation and experience of the world and men (Locke, "*An Essay concerning Human Understanding"*, 106 and 310-12) mediated through rational interrogation of this sensory experience of the world (*ibid*, 100, 264 and 704) . His emphasis on sensory perception is predicated in some sense on his religious conviction and disbelief, as expressed by John Dunn, "that a good creator would not have endowed men with senses which systematically deceive them" (Dunn, "Knowledge, belief and faith", 81). Locke's empirical understanding of knowledge will, however, be discussed in greater length in due course.
[150] Rousseau, *Emile*, I. 28.
[151] See Richardson, "From *Emile* to *Frankenstein*", 150.
[152] *F.,* XI, 98.

the same time."[153] His birth is an explosion of sense perception so profound it would seem that he is not able to distinguish between the different senses for some time. It is perhaps for this reason that the creature relates that "[i]t is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being; all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct."[154] For, as the creature relates, "a strange multiplicity of sensations seized me [...] and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses."[155] His world-view is created initially then through empirical observation. A number of pages are dedicated to the description of the creature subsequent coming to terms with his world through sight, smell and touch in particular. He has it would seem, in this presentation, no innate qualities or discernible nature other than his being both inquisitive and driven by base needs such a hunger[156] and freedom from pain.[157]

What Rousseau's account of his Athena's first experience of the world displays, then, is a similarity to *Frankenstein* in many ways more important than that of content. It suggests a social understanding of epistemology and perhaps more tellingly of morality. This fundamentally empirical morality suggested by Rousseau forms the basis of Frankenstein's creature's account of his "process to intellect" as well as the process of his moral development.[158] In this vein, Chapter XIII of *Frankenstein* begins with the creature's words, "I NOW hasten to the more moving part of my story. I shall relate events that impressed me with feelings which, from what I had been, have made me what I am."[159] This marks a development from his description of his original experience of the world. The move is one from an understanding of the world on purely sensory terms to one characterised by a more abstract understanding of the world; one with the beginnings of a world view, premised not merely on sensual perception but rather an emotive one.

[153] *ibid*
[154] *ibid*
[155] *ibid*
[156] *ibid,* 99-101.
[157] *ibid,* 100 and 101.
[158] I use development rather than the generally favoured degeneration here on the basis of an understanding of the creature as coming into the world as an amoral creature.
[159] *F.*, XIII, 112.

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His empirical understanding of the world is extended from the creature's first experiences of it into his education. This is perhaps most evident in his early experience of the De Laceys and informs his early understanding of language. His first sighting of the family teleologically hints towards the manner in which he will consequently learn language. He observes Agatha, noting "she looked patient yet sad"[160] and Felix, "whose countenance expressed a deeper despondence."[161] He is able on the basis of this to understand, although in a very rudimentary fashion, something of Felix's subsequent speech. He can recognise, on the basis of their apparent emotions, that the sounds which Felix is making are being uttered "with an air of melancholy."[162] Old De Lacey is understood in similar terms, the "benevolent countenance of the aged cottager won my reverence" and of Agatha, "while the gentle manners of the girl enticed my love."[163] His observation of the De Laceys is, in light of this, couched in the creature's perception of emotion and his emotional understanding of the cottagers. It is significant that during his first day of observing them, the old man, on playing and singing is able to illicit not only strong emotions from his children but also from the creature.

> He played a mournful air which I perceived drew tears from the eyes of his amiable companion, of which the old man took no notice, until she sobbed audibly; he then pronounced a few sounds, and the fair creature, leaving her work knelt at his feet. He raised her and smiled with such kindness and affection that I felt sensations of a peculiar and over-powering nature; they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I had never before experienced, either from hunger or cold, warmth or food; and I withdrew from the window, unable to bear these emotions.[164]

Through his experience of the old man's musical performance the creature first observes the emotions of the cottagers and then vicariously participates in this self-same emotional interaction. Through this he begins to form a connection with the family. It is telling therefore that he is exposed to language through song at an early stage for it serves as a more potent, in his eyes, carrier of emotion and thus aids his later understanding of language. Indeed, this

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[160] *ibid*, XI, 103.
[161] *ibid*
[162] *ibid*
[163] *ibid*
[164] *ibid,* 103-4.

passage contrasts with the creature's observation of Felix's reading later in the day. Felix's speech becomes for him, "monotonous, and neither resembling the harmony of the old man's instrument nor the songs of the birds."[165] By varying degrees however he is able to begin making connections between these sounds and their meaning. In Saussurean terms he is able to make the connection between the signified and the signifier. His empirical observation and to some degree his vicarious participation in the cottager's life prompts an understanding of language in which the concepts are signified by objects first, but then later by various emotions. Through constant repetition of sound patterns he is subsequently able to link the audible aspect of the words which denote said signified emotions. The creature thus relates "I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds."[166] This presents a significant movement in the mind of the creature in which he is able to move from a phonetic understanding of language[167] towards a locutionary one. He relates "By great application, however, and after remaining during the space of several revolutions of the moon in my hovel, I discovered the names that were given to some of the more familiar objects of discourse."[168] This prompts his learning of the names of the cottagers as well as those of some of the more basic objects which they interact with on a daily basis. "I learned and applied the words, 'fire,' 'milk,' 'bread,' and 'wood.' I learned also the names of the cottagers themselves, but the old man had only one which was 'father.' The girl was called 'sister' or 'Agatha,' and the youth 'Felix,' 'brother,' or 'son.'"[169] The creature then relates that "I cannot describe the delight I felt when I learned the idea appropriated to each of these sounds and was able to produce them."[170] While he struggles at this point to understand some more complicated concepts, he can identify nevertheless the "melancholy" for instance in Felix's language.[171] It does however take him a little longer to come to terms with the more

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[165] *ibid*, 105.
[166] *ibid,* XII, 107.
[167] In other words a lack of associative signified and resultantly a lack of meaning attached to sound patterns. Language cannot therefore strictly exist at this point, at least in the creature's understanding of it, for without the system of signification which underpins it, language becomes a mere phonetic exercise. It therefore becomes at this stage merely empty sound patterns devoid of meaning.
[168] *F.*, XII, 108.
[169] *ibid*
[170] *ibid*
[171] *ibid*, XI, 103.

abstract words: "I distinguished several other words without being able as yet to understand or apply them, such as 'good,' 'dearest,' 'unhappy.'"[172] That being said he does understand the concepts which are denoted by words like "good" and "unhappy". Perhaps more telling is his understanding at this early phase of the possibility of language to effect these same emotions. He experiences this as early as his first day in his observation of the old man's song and its effect on both his children and himself. While he is not perhaps aware that the denotive content of the language may have been responsible for this reaction in the children, he has observed that the sounds which the people are producing can have strong emotive effects. Indeed soon after this he articulates this observation. The creature is, at this point, aware of a slightly more sophisticated aspect of language: "I perceived that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers."[173] One can see how he displays an awareness here of the performative aspect of language.[174]

> [The old man] would talk in a cheerful accent, with an expression of goodness that bestowed pleasure even upon me. Agatha listened with respect, her eyes sometime filled with tears, she endeavoured to wipe away unperceived; but I generally found that her countenance and tone were more cheerful after having listened to the exhortations of her father.[175]

Language has the power to effect and indeed affect feelings and emotions. This understanding of language prompts him to proclaim "it was a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it."[176] Language becomes understood by the creature here as a denotive system but also one which has the potential to change things. He has a reasonably full

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[172] *ibid*, XII, 108.
[173] *ibid*, 107-8.
[174] See John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, eds., Marina Sbisà and J O. Urmson (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); and *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Generally credited as the founder of "speech-act theory", Austin distinguishes from speech acts which describe things, statements, which he terms constative utterances and performative speech acts which, given the correct social context, have the power to perform actions through their articulation. This concept of performativity is, however, developed by Searle, who, by placing emphasis on the rules of language which enable a speaker create specific meaning or perform a speech act, significantly changes the focus of Austin's original theory in its movement away from his emphasis on social context.
[175] *ibid*, 108.
[176] *ibid*

understanding in other words of the distinction between Saussure's *langue* and *parole*. This perception of language is the very thing which prompts his urgent desire to learn it. It has, he believes, the power to change his position as an outcast in society. Language or a knowledge of language has the ability, as the creature sees it, "to make them overlook the deformity of my figure."[177] This combined with his vicarious but still strong emotive connection with the cottagers pushes the creature to further his understanding of language.

It becomes for the creature an important bridge between himself and the emotional states of the De Laceys. Similarly this connection in turn becomes important in his further learning of language. He, upon learning words like "good" and "unhappy", emotional words in themselves, begins to highlight his emotional connection with them. Bugg however highlights the short-lived nature of this connection. "This affective identification is soon complicated as the Creature begins to perceive a power imbalance between himself and the De Laceys, a sense of inferiority that emerges as he becomes aware of his physical difference."[178] This process of positive identification thus only becomes a problem with the creature's realisation of his physical difference and subsequent realisation that within Western discourse this places him as being inferior to the De Laceys.

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The process of confinement through knowledge becomes integral therefore in this reading of the text for its central position in the shaping of the creature's self-awareness and in this way his alterity. An understanding of how social othering, on the basis of physical difference, functions in this way informs this reading of Frankenstein's creature. It is I believe, in true Platonic fashion,[179] profitable therefore to turn to Jeremy Bentham as a means of highlighting

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[177] *ibid*, 109.
[178] Bugg, "Master of their Language", 659.
[179] See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin, 2007). I am referring here to Plato's methodology, if not necessarily the reasoning behind it, in *The Republic*. Plato writes, after a number of failed attempts at understanding Justice, "This is a very obscure subject we're inquiring into, and I think it needs very keen sight. We aren't very clever, and so I think we had better proceed as follows. Let us suppose we are rather short-sighted men and are set to read some small letters at a distance; one of us discovers the same letters elsewhere on a larger scale on a larger surface: won't it be a god send to us to be able to read the larger letters first and compare them with the smaller, to see if they are the same?" (Plato, *The Republic*, II, ii, 368d). This is not to say that this is necessarily sound logic as it presupposes a certain outcome (the similarity of the letters perhaps)

how the creature's process of self-definition can be placed within the larger power structures which come to define him as other. Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, aptly a prison design, becomes a powerful allegory for the demonstration of the nature of these power dynamics at play in the text, in which surveillance and knowledge are key to their functioning. Bentham's prison was designed so that every cell would be visible from one central surveillance tower; Foucault writes of it that "one can observe from the tower… the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualised and constantly visible."[180] This concept then functions in much the same way as the process of colonial subjugation: it "consolidates containment and control by a spatial arrangement in which the observed is firmly placed within the visual power of the observer".[181] The "mapping" and defining of the other thus becomes important in an attempt to gain control over him. By defining and describing the other within a language which places him as being at once distant but also inferior to the West, one is able to place the subject of this projected definition or mapping within a discourse in which he becomes known by the owners of the discourse and understood as such. Fanon's Antillean boy who learns about the "savage negroes" in Africa, is therefore, in some sense participating, in much the same fashion as Frankenstein's creature, in his own ideological subjugation:

> as long as he remains among his own people, the little black follows very nearly the same course as the little white. But if he goes to Europe, he will have to reappraise his lot. For the Negro in France, which is his country, will feel different from other people. One can hear the glib remark: The Negro makes himself inferior. But the truth is that he is made inferior.[182]

The "Negro" in Fanon is made inferior by the West, through this process of confinement through knowledge. The Antillean boy, comes to understand first the savage African in the terms dictated, in Fanon's example, by popular culture, or his comic books. He understands

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before any sort of inquiry has been made into the subject. It is restrictive through the rather close minded teleological assumptions it imposes on itself. That being said, in *Frankenstein*, we are faced with an example of how the identity of one single individual is very directly affected by Society as a whole. It becomes useful therefore, I believe, to employ the Platonic structure of argumentation, if not necessarily agreeing with the premise of his methodology.

[180] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 200.

[181] Garuba, "Mapping the Land/Body/Subject", 88.

[182] Fanon, "The Negro in Psychopathology", 149.

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himself in light of the characters which he comes to symbolise, "the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage."[183] Secondly, as with the creature's catching sight of himself in the pool, once the boy becomes aware of his physical difference from the largely white cultural base in which he has become educated, by in Fanon travelling to Europe, he begins to realise that he is, within the discourse, that self-same savage. In this way he is "made inferior" by the West. In *Frankenstein,* the creature does not, however, remain blameless in this process, through his participation in the discourse which is in some sense, subjugating him. Thus, although in a slightly different sense to that proposed by Fanon in which "[t]he Negro makes himself inferior",[184] he is made so by Western ideological discourse, for he has come, through his participation in this discourse, to define, to map and know himself as such.

Harry Garuba argues, very much in keeping with Fanon's suppositions, that colonialism, "as a regime of power was largely organised though spatiality and subjectivity."[185] The creature in *Frankenstein,* in light of this, only becomes fully aware of the extent of his alterity once he has come to view himself within the discourse of the West. As this becomes his own dominant discourse, he is able to recognise and define himself as other. His education thus becomes the vehicle for his difference. For, though he understands initially that he is different, it is not until he becomes educated that he is able to define himself as being "not even the same nature as man."[186] He becomes in his own mind a monster, beginning a process of self-deprecation in which he ceases to recognise himself as human: "was I, then, a monster, a blot on the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?"[187] The use of the neuter pronoun "which" becomes here emblematic of the degree of this animalisation, in that he has begun from very early on in his education to see himself as not human. This realisation as a moment of self-definition becomes key as it is not any other person, Western or otherwise, who defines himself as such but rather himself operating within the western discourse. It becomes this self-knowledge which allows for his "mapping" and finally defining of himself. He laments, "I cannot

[183] *Ibid,* 146.
[184] *Ibid*, 149.
[185] Garuba, "Mapping the Land/Body/Subject", 87.
[186] *F.,* VII, 116.
[187] *ibid*

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describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge."[188] The creature thus through this self-realisation places himself as the object of the power relation, defining himself in such a way that relinquishes power to the owners of the discourse.

The colonisation of the creature becomes in this context different however from physical colonisation, moving rather towards a colonisation of the mind[189] or at least towards his subjugation by means of a "discipline directed at the mind or soul."[190] For the concepts signified by the word colonisation here suffice to describe the special brand of ontological imperialism which the creature is subjected to. It certainly fits with Said's definitions, in which he argues that "'imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; 'colonization' [...] is the implanting of settlements on distant territory."[191] If this can then be applied to the shaping of the creatures self, colonisation becomes in this context a word denoting cultural subversion and mental exploitation. However, what begins to become apparent as the text progresses is how in *Frankenstein* language becomes the carrier of this mental colonisation or as Jeyifo terms it the "colonization of the psyche".[192] This is ironic considering the creature's perception that language is a possible source of deliverance from his monstrous form. This process of linguistically informed colonisation is perhaps not surprising though. Indeed, for as Ngugi claims, language becomes a form of cultural imperialism through its propensity as a vehicle for culture.[193] For him "language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we perceive ourselves and our place in the world."[194] The import of this assertion lies in the ability for Ngugi, of language to very directly

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[188] *ibid*, XIII, 116.
[189] A process characterised, not by the physical domination of a people but through cultural domination, the subversion of their original cultural identities and eventual complete domination by the colonizing identity of the oppressor. See: Said, *Culture and Imperialism* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Lagos: Heinemann, 1986).
[190] Janet Semple, *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 9.
[191] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 8.
[192] Biodun Jeyifo, "In the Wake of Colonialism and Modernity", *Anglophonia/Caliban*, 7 (2000): 83.
[193] Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind*.
[194] *ibid*, 16.

affect our perceived place in the world. In this way through the creature's learning of language he assumes, within Ngugi's understanding of it, a European cultural identity.

Frankenstein presents an interesting take on this dilemma through the creature's belief that he has the means of moving beyond his physical difference through language. The creature thus relates,

> I looked upon them as superior beings who would be the arbiters of my future destiny. I formed my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted until, by my gentle demeanour and conciliating words, I should first win their favour and afterwards their love.[195]

What seems to have happened by this point in *Frankenstein* is that Frankenstein's creature is aware of a power imbalance between himself and the De Laceys. Importantly however, he believes in the possibility of superseding this inequality through recourse to education. He says that "[t]hese thoughts exhilarated me and led me to apply with fresh ardour to the acquiring the art of language."[196] He reaches therefore towards the European ideal. He experiences, and from early on begins to notice, a difference between himself and the De Laceys. As a result of the creature's perception of their aesthetic, physical difference, they become "superior beings"[197] in his mind,[198] a conceived superiority which rises from his acknowledgement of his own physical alterity when judged in relation to them. By his own admission, however, he "did not yet know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity."[199] Thus, one is presented with a striking similarity between Fanon's Antillean child and Frankenstein's creature in their inability to fully conceive of the implications of their physical difference as viewed by the European centre which they are striving to emulate. This becomes in many ways the tragedy, for while both are able to approach a level of education and civilisation which supersedes that of the vast majority of Europeans, they are never able to ever fully embody the European identity which

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[195] *F.*, XII, 110.
[196] *ibid*
[197] *ibid*
[198] An interesting judgment considering he is judging them within the European aesthetic and in many respects from an increasingly European perspective even from this early point in his existence.
[199] *F.,* XII, 109.

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they are striving for. The creature, however, has not made the Fanonian "Senegalese connection".[200] Much as the Antillean recognises his physical difference, "he does not think of himself as a black man... The Negro lives in Africa."[201] For while Frankenstein's creature recognises his physical difference this does not, in his mind, define him as savage as he believes he possesses the possibility of moving, through language beyond this. Mellor here argues that Shelley, through *Frankenstein,* anticipates "the insights of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault: human knowledge is the product of invented or linguistically constructed forms or grammars which societies have imposed over time on the unknowable … ontological being".[202] This is important as it ties the creature's self-loathing and othering in with colonial power and displays the influence which discourse has over epistemological and indeed ontological conceptions of self. It brings to the fore that which Mellor sees as being Shelley's primary literary purpose, "she wants us to understand the moral consequences of our way of reading or seeing the world, of our habit of imposing meanings on that which we cannot truly know."[203]

As Frankenstein's creature interestingly has no original culture or language, his initial seemingly void cultural state thus allows for him to be seen by society and defined almost purely, initially at least, on the basis of his physical difference. What this in turn allows for is an interrogation of the very concept of racial inequality. Thus, in his own words, as has already been discussed, the creature asserts his own innate goodness, displaying how his identity becomes governed by society rather than any inborn nature. For this reason *Frankenstein* presents an interesting study here for the creature becomes a personification of the Lockean *tabula rasa.*[204] Indeed, he laments that,

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[200] See Fanon, "The Negro in Psychopathology". Fanon puts it this way: "The Negro lives in Africa. Subjectively, intellectually, the Antillean conducts himself like a white man. But he is a Negro. That he will learn once he goes to Europe; and when he hears the Negroes mentioned he will recognize that the word includes himself as well as the Senegalese" (*ibid*, 148).
[201] *ibid*
[202] Mellor, "Introduction to *Frankenstein*", 22.
[203] *ibid*
[204] Malchow, "Images of Race", 77.

> No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I was in height and proportion.[205]

In this sense his mind becomes, in Locke's words a "white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas."[206] His identity and knowledge of the world become, it would seem, based entirely on experience. In fact the creature holds with this claiming that this has shaped his identity and has potential to do so again, "misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."[207] His description of his education also seems to conform to this and the corresponding Lockean ideal that knowledge comes "from experience; in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives from itself."[208] While later he becomes shaped by his exposure to literature as well as his interactions with other people his initial state of being and experience of learning is perhaps more fundamentally in keeping with the above expressed Lockean ideal.

In this mode of thinking, if indeed the creature is a blank piece of "white paper", on his arrival into the world, or as he claims, he "was benevolent and good"[209] before being corrupted by society, this certainly informs how he should be read as a character. For his initial state of living in communion with nature becomes it would seem a vehicle through which the text is thus able to expound upon Rousseau's assertion that, "Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains."[210] Through the presentation of Frankenstein's creature's early existence, Shelley's text highlights, in keeping with Rousseau, that "it is to this corruption, and not to the original nature of man, that we owe the injustices of society and the wickedness of individual men."[211] The text would seemingly, from this perspective, place the corrupted virtues of the West as being the reason for the corruption of the creature and similarly the colonial subject. At a most basic

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[205] *F.*, XII, 116-7.
[206] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1953), II, i, 2, 42.
[207] *F.*, X, 96.
[208] Locke, *Civil Government*, II. i, 2, 42
[209] *F.*, X, 96.
[210] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract", in *The Social Contract and the Discourses,* trans. George D. H. Cole (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1913), 181.
[211] John C. Hall, *Rousseau: An Introduction to his Political Philosophy* (Plymouth: Macmillan, 1973), 21.

level, one can see the beginning of this process in his early naïve, empirical understanding of the world which only becomes corrupted once he is exposed to language and consequently European social and cultural *mores*.

Emile or, the Modern Prometheus?

As *Frankenstein* progresses Frankenstein's creature begins to represent something close to the mantra on which Rousseau predicates *Emile*: that man existing in a natural state as a morally ambivalent creature, once exposed to society, has the potential to become corrupted. The creature moves in the text, from beginning life in a strikingly similar state to that of Rousseau's Natural Man,[212] towards what could be termed educated and civilised:[213] although he remains in Rousseauean terms corrupted to an extreme degree. Shelley's text, through Frankenstein's creature thus presents a thought experiment which becomes I believe in a sense more poignant than that put forward by Rousseau in *Emile* through its demonstration of the failure of education in the face of overwhelming social convention. For, education becomes for Rousseau a means of shaping a person who can to some degree resist the influences of society. For, as he puts it, "Plants are fashioned by cultivation, man by education"[214] and while he condemns the corrupting influence of society and acknowledges the imperfect nature of his educational program, he argues that "things would be worse without this education."[215] The extent of the creature's corruption stands out therefore against his Rousseauean education. In many ways

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[212] See Rousseau, *On the Origins of Inequality*, 163. In his discussion of the "Natural Man", Rousseau is preoccupied with the philosophical process of stripping humanity of social convention in order to better understand human nature; with, in other words, the progress from man's natural state towards civil society. He cites observation of the "savage man" as a means by which one can begin to understand this process of human progression from nature towards society. He argues that an observation of what he terms "primitive tribes" can yield empirical evidence to support his theory. Even if the premise of his argument does not place much import on it, Rousseau does draw on a largely racialised set of exemplar in order to define his Natural Man. His term thus becomes contingent on an understanding of the "negroes and savages" and "the Caribs of Venezuela"(*ibid*, 165) on which he predicates the term. Thus while it is not made explicit, Rousseau's Natural Man becomes couched in the discourse of racial othering of his time and it becomes difficult to, as a result of this, understand his Natural Man within a strictly European framework. Frankenstein's creature for this reason can in some way be said to ideologically mirror, while perhaps not as Rousseau intended it, the Natural Man, in among other things their dual construction on the basis of early racial stereotyping. What does however prove more striking a similarity, is the lack of inclusion in society contingent on the existence of both, or at least in the case of Frankenstein's creature, contingent on the development of his nature as depicted in the text. Rousseau's Natural Man is stripped of society and thus social convention. Frankenstein's creature in many ways never has a society and is rejected by that which he seeks.

[213] Rousseau, *Emile*, I, 5.

[214] *ibid*, 6.

[215] *Ibid*, 5.

Frankenstein's creation serves, through his rejection by society, to highlight the failure of this education.

In *Emile* Rousseau argues that through education it is important to reconcile the individual and society. For it is only through harmony between the two that one can attain self-reliance and move away from dependence on others.[216] He divides humankind into two classes: the Natural Man and the citizen, "[t]he natural man lives for himself; he is a unit, the whole, dependent only on himself and on his like. The citizen is but the numerator of a fraction, whose value depends on its denominator; his value depends on the whole, that is, on the community."[217] It is for Rousseau the disjuncture between these two aspects of our education which gives rise to many of the contradictions which define humanity and which in turn become a major obstacle to human happiness.[218] The education of Emile is thus formulated in such a way to remove these contradictions. This is perhaps where one can see the education of Frankenstein's creature failing so spectacularly, for the creature becomes educated, as has been discussed, into and within an idiom which actively rejects him. He is taught to aspire to a set of standards and a community which is grounded in its active exclusion of him. His corruption would seem to be, in Rousseauean terms, the product of his inability to reconcile his personal and public identities and education, or perhaps more crudely, the disjuncture which exists between his physical, non-European nature and his world view as construed through his largely European education.

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While in some senses correct, it is I believe worth challenging, therefore, the established Rousseauean reading of *Frankenstein*. It is not generally a complicated one. Paul Cantor writes in defence of just this reading, that "[o]ne could undertake a fairly simple interpretation of the monster's story in Rousseauean terms. The monster as originally created corresponds to Natural Man ... The story would then show how civilization corrupts an essentially benevolent

[216] Robert Wokler, *Rousseau: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press , 2001), 115.
[217] Rousseau, *Emile*, I, 7.
[218] *Ibid*, 9.

being into a demon."[219] This understanding of the creature fails on two levels. Firstly with regard to the creature's education and secondly, which is in no way unrelated, his incorporation, or lack thereof, into society. What Cantor fails to demonstrate is that the creature's education conforms to a large extent to that suggested by Rousseau, an education which is expressly designed to defend against the very process of socially induced corruption embodied by the creature in the text. I would argue that this therefore places the text, to a degree, in opposition to Rousseau's through the complete failure of the creature's education.[220] Secondly as James O'Rourke rightly highlights, "he [Cantor] does not address the fundamental Rousseauean paradox of how 'essentially benevolent' beings, when grouped together, become malevolent."[221] This socialised malevolence is important for it informs the process by which the creature becomes corrupted and holds the key to why Shelley's story is somewhat more complex than Cantor's presentation of it. While supposedly the creature does correspond to the Rousseauean Natural Man, his eventual corruption by society diverts somewhat from Rousseau's framework. The creature, though rejected by society because of his physical difference, through his education further rejects his own position in society, in essence excluding *himself* from society and its established codes of behaviour. By educating the creature within a European framework Shelley gives him the agency to distance himself from it. For this reason Shelley's text becomes all the more tragic for the creature's complicit inclusion in the process whereby he becomes corrupted. The text thus highlights the overwhelming failure and fallibility of Rousseau's Natural Man when confronted with the education proposed in *Emile.* Indeed what *Frankenstein* and perhaps more specifically the education of Frankenstein's creation present is the failure of this 'enlightened' education[222] when confronted with a subject who falls outside of the established Eurocentric norms of the time. The creature's racialisation and subsequent physiological difference become in light of this more than incidental or even superficial and become significant in their influence not merely on

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[219] Cantor, *Creature and Creator*, 120.
[220] This could, however, be viewed conversely as the success of a codified colonial education in preservation of the exclusivity of the ruling class and thus the exclusion of the creature from European society. See Chatterjee, "The Colonial State", 14-34.
[221] O'Rourke, "Nothing More Unnatural", 540.
[222] See Godwin, *Political Justice*, and Rousseau, *Emile.*

his rejection by society but more importantly on his eventual naturalised self-loathing and rejection of himself. For this reason *Frankenstein* becomes interesting in its demonstration of the destructive effects which both language and through education, imperialist ideologies have on the colonial subject.

The creature's historical and literary curriculum is thus very pertinent and would seem to represent a form of the education which Shelley herself would have been exposed to at the hands of her father, William Godwin.[223] Maureen McLane suggests that "with his exposure to Goethe, Milton, Plutarch and Volney, the creature receives a highly specified course inflected by concerns both revolutionary and romantic". She continues saying that "The monster's political and aesthetic education suggests that he serves as an experimental subject for what Godwin called 'the science of education'".[224] This education certainly plays a prominent role in the development of his sense of self as well as his eventual ideas with regard to morality and justice.

His historical education comes, at this point, through Volney's *Ruins of Empire* which Felix is using to teach Safie[225] how to read. As Pamela Clemit argues, Volney operates on a more global scale exposing the creature to "the mixed nature of humankind and into systemised social inequality",[226] while the books he finds "complement Volney's historical overview by focusing

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[223] See Maureen N. McLane, "Literate Species: Populations, 'Humanities,' and *Frankenstein*", in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Updated Edition*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007), 105. It is interesting to note here, that if one is to accept the parallel suggested with Rousseau, this would suggest a rejection of this self-same education by Shelley's mother (see below).
[224] *ibid*
[225] A name of some import, at once deriving from the Greek word "to learn" but also suggestive of Rousseau's Sophie in *Emile*. An interesting parallel for it is Sophie who Shelley's mother attacks so vehemently as an example of everything which was wrong with the then current attitudes towards women in, "Animadversions on some of the Writers who have Rendered Women Objects of Pity, bordering on Contempt", the fifth chapter of *A Vindication of the Right of Women*. See Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (London: David Campbell Publishers, 1992), 84-123. Significantly it is also through Sophie that Wollstonecraft attacks the system of education advocated by Rousseau for women, an education which Richardson (Richardson, "From *Emile* to *Frankenstein*", 1991) argues mirrors that of Frankenstein's creature.
[226] Pamela Clemit, "The legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft", in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed. Esther Schor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 35.

on issues of individual morality at different stages of Western civilisation."[227] Perhaps more importantly, however, he gains the ability to recognise the extent of his exclusion from the culture he now possesses, a point brought home poignantly in both *The Sufferings of Young Werther* and *Paradise Lost*. The creature sees in these texts parallels with his own experience. His own experience of the De Lacey family, for instance, mirrors that of Werther's, who on his return from Weimar is subsequently excluded from the relationship between Charlotte and Albert. The texts become, for the creature, emblematic of his own situation, prompting him to relate of the Goethe novel that it "accorded well with my experience among my protectors and with the wants which were forever alive in my own bosom."[228] This is an important admission considering the discovery of the novels comes almost immediately after a similar expression that "benevolence and generosity were ever present before me, inciting within me a desire to become an actor in the busy scene where so many admirable qualities were called forth and displayed."[229] He is in just the same position as Werther, forced to, as John Beer writes, "look on at a family happiness he knows he can never share."[230] Milton's *Paradise Lost* is all the more important in light of this. The creature claims,

> But *Paradise Lost* excited different and far deeper emotions. I read it, as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hand, as a true history […] I often referred to the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect […] I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan a fitter emblem of my condition, for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me. [231]

What Milton does here, is move the creature's perception of his place in society beyond the domestic sphere. His identification with Satan is telling of a sense of rejection far more profound and on a far larger scale to that expressed in *The Sufferings of Young Werther*. Satan becomes emblematic of his positioning of himself in relation to European society. This likening

[227] *ibid*
[228] *ibid*, 124.
[229] *F.*, XV, 123.
[230] John Beer, "Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*", in *A Companion to Romanticism*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 232.
[231] *F.*, XV, 125.

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reflects, in some ways, the moment in which he comes to internalise the discursive system of othering presented initially through Volney in which, when he learns of "the discovery of the American hemisphere", he relates that he "wept… over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants".[232] His identification with the outcast is taken through Milton to the extreme as he comes to see "Satan as a fitter emblem of [his] condition."[233] Brooks relates therefore, that the creature's education and mastery of language fail "to gain [him] entry into the 'chain of existence and events,'" rather serving to make "him fully aware of his unique and accursed origin".[234]

As the creature becomes, therefore, fully aware of his place within the imperial tradition, he becomes the object of the colonial examples put forward by Volney. He becomes, to a large degree, powerless within the Eurocentric colonial ideology which he himself, through his education, becomes complicit in. Frankenstein's creature operating within this colonial discourse recognises himself as other and subsequently feels the need to define and know himself as such; placing himself firmly as the object of the "West and the Rest"[235] binary. Indeed, while it may not be true, discourse in this context allows for validation of this ontology for it is "power, rather than the facts about reality, which makes things 'true'"[236] because, in these terms, "those who produce a discourse also have the power to make it true".[237] Thus it becomes only the European concept of aesthetic which places the creature as inferior to the De Laceys in his mind, rather than any natural inferiority. Knowledge and power thus become intimately linked. Foucault, in keeping with this view, in part one of "Discipline and Punish" asserts the belief that it is necessary to abandon traditional epistemological beliefs, stating that

> We should admit rather that power produces knowledge… that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field

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[232] *F.*, XII, 115.
[233] *ibid*, XV, 125.
[234] Brooks, "Godlike Science/ Unhallowed Arts", 211.
[235] Hall, "The West and the Rest".
[236] *ibid*, 293.
[237] *Ibid*, 295.

> of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.[238]

Establishing a knowledge of himself thus becomes integral to the creature's self-realisation as other, which in turn places him within the power of the owners of his defining discourse. Indeed, "the knowledge which a discourse produces constitutes a kind of power, exercised over those who are 'known'. When that knowledge is exercised in practice, those who are 'known' in a particular way will be subject (i.e. subjected) to it".[239]

This power becomes however increasingly potent as the creature internalises it. The creature thus moves from a position in which he is attacked because of his physical difference by some villagers[240] to a point of self-loathing in which he perceives himself in the same way the villagers did, as a monster. The creature thus becomes subject to the very dynamic from whence colonisation derives its power. The education of the creature demonstrates therefore a very pertinent critique of colonialism in which the civilising premise of the system functions rather to establish an even more imbalanced power dynamic between the coloniser and colonised. Thus, as Malchow argues, "the monster's 'education' has taught him self-contempt just as the little education given the plantation black or freed slave served merely to reinforce his own awareness of inferiority."[241] Colonialism's very justification, its civilising mission, serves in this way merely as another tool for the exploitation of the colonised, indeed one can see how despite setting out "with pretensions to 'civilize' the colonised… what it actually achieved was to brutalize and 'de-civilize' both the colonizer and the colonized."[242] Colonisation thus induces cultural imperialism through this process of civilisation, or normalisation from the European perspective, which through the redefinition of a people within a foreign discourse results in "the destruction or deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture"[243] and in this case identity.

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[238] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27.
[239] Hall, "The West and the Rest", 295. Hall is, for the most part, presenting here a summary of the arguments proposed by Foucault in, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.
[240] *F.*, XI, 101.
[241] Malchow, "Images of Race", 81.
[242] Jeyifo, "In the Wake of Colonialism and Modernity", 81.
[243] Ngugi, *Decolonizing the Mind*, 16.

Indeed one can thus see that the very act of civilisation, so dear to the colonial ideology, is fundamentally flawed.

This leads to the strange juxtaposition whereby the colonial power seems to suggest, as Samir Amin argues, that "the imitation of the Western model by all peoples is the only solution to the challenges of our time",[244] while at the same time stressing the unattainability of this for the colonial subject. In this way the colonial subject is subjected to a form of cultural imperialism which asserts the ideologies and beliefs of the coloniser at the expense of those of the colonised, while at the same time excluding him from the very discourse which is supplanting his own culture. This process is however important within the framework of colonisation as through this process of ideological and cultural colonisation the coloniser is able to far more effectively affect control over the subject.

The creature's racialisation is thus important for it becomes in many ways the key difference between himself and Rousseau's Emile and demonstrates just why his education fails. Despite Rousseau's glorification of the Natural Man and his assertion in man's innate goodness and need to return to a more natural state, he does not concern himself with the racial aspect, so integral for instance to Dryden's concept of the Noble Savage. While humans are seen as initially good, humanity is for Rousseau contingent on civic society and the idea of the social contract,[245] but importantly this idea remains rooted very strongly in Europe and in European social conventions. Indeed as Malchow quite rightly highlights, "Rousseau's innocent savage was located within the European psyche itself rather than in the interiors of Africa or the Americas."[246] The fact that the creature is physiologically distinguished from European society becomes the major departure therefore from the Rousseauean framework and allows the text to place the creature in opposition to this same society. He exists outside of the social contract, yet is educated within it. It becomes through the creature's physical alterity and his subsequent

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[244] Samir Amin *Eurocentrism*, trans. Russell Moore (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988), vii.
[245] Rousseau, "The Social Contract".
[246] Malchow, "Images of Race", 63.

education that one is able to explore this paradox in the text, which in turn becomes key to understanding just how the novel functions within colonial discourse.

Frankenstein, through the education and growing self-awareness of Frankenstein's nameless creation, thus becomes a pertinent critique not only of the colonial state but also of the society which gave rise to it. Shelley's text demonstrates the flawed nature of society's racial prejudices which operate on a purely somatic level with no perceivable moral justification. It brings the European conception of humanity itself into question, while making it apparent just how the established European discourse functions in its ability to seemingly arbitrarily grant or deny a person humanity purely on the basis of their physical appearance. Frankenstein's creature becomes increasingly tragic through his own self-loathing, becoming in turn a depiction of the fate of the other within a society which cannot come to terms with that which it does not understand.

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