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The Narrator's Identity and the Pursuit of Trespassing Boundaries in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

"There is something at work in my soul which I do not understand. I am practically industrious – painstaking, – a workman to execute with perseverance and labour: – but besides this, there is a love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous, intertwined in all my projects, which hurries me out of the common pathway of men, even to the wild sea and unvisited regions I am about to explore."
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

The article focuses on the problem of the narrator's and the author's identity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. According to Charles Taylor's philosophy of subjectivity in order to have an identity we have to know what kind of good we would like to fulfil in our life. Such an orientation to the good (an orientation in moral space) and an endeavour after realizing this main value defines us as ourselves. In the paper it is argued that the pursuit of trespassing boundaries is constitutive to the narrator's identity in the novel as it is such kind of an aim without which they could not have been themselves. It is also the key to the author's identity. Through the medium of the stories of her male story-tellers she confronts her own demons, explores the territories of the subconscious beyond the bounds of understanding and depicts her struggle with the limitations she overcame as a woman in a patriarchal society and as a person who invented a new literary genre – science-fiction literature.

key words: identity, narrator, trespassing of boundaries, *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley

The aim of this paper is to focus on the narrator's identity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I would like to show that Mary Shelley's poetics of depicting space are not reduced to a purely decorative function,[1] but reflect the internal reality of her storytellers, their thoughts and feelings, and this way reveal the pursuit of trespassing boundaries that is constitutive to their identities. Moreover, in each of these life stories, one may find traces of the author's identity – she is shaped by the same type of endeavour.

[1] It is not only, as Sabine Buchholz and Manfred Jahn put it "a general background setting," like in "pre-nineteenth-century narratives." According to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's characterization narrative literature was treated earlier as an example of "temporal" art, as opposed to "spatial" arts, such as painting and sculpture (*Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* 551).

Who Are Mary Shelley's Narrators?

When talking about trespassing boundaries, we use a metaphor which itself has a spatial character. Borders separate something that is known, secure, normal, common, orderly, and "ours" from something distant, unknown, dangerous, abnormal, unusual, sometimes also marvellous, and, in consequence, provoking curiosity, enticing all types of searchers: travellers, creators, inventors, and discoverers.

As Charles Taylor writes, such spatial metaphors are very frequent in "our languages of self-understanding" (Taylor 111), of our identity or subjectivity, and they play an important, perhaps even key role. According to his views, "in order to have an identity, we need an orientation to the good" (47) or an orientation in moral space. In other words, in order to understand who I am, I have to know my "own place relative to the good at all" (47). I must know where I am coming from and what I want to achieve, what kind of good or which value I would like to fulfil in my life. This aim and endeavour, after realizing them, are something that defines me as myself – and although the most important and most desirable value for each individual may be entirely different, without such "an orientation to the good" and to self-understanding, acting and having an identity are not possible.

Moreover, as Taylor claims, "our modern notion of the self is . . . constituted by a certain sense . . . of inwardness" as well as by "the opposition inside-outside" (111). In consequence, we identify our self, our identity with the former – with our soul, heart, mind, our ability to think, to feel and imagine, with our consciousness (and sometimes also subconsciousness), in short – with our interior. As he adds further,

> We think of our thoughts, ideas, or feelings as being "within" us, while the objects in the world which these mental states bear on are "without." Or else we think of our capacities or potentialities as "inner," awaiting the development which will manifest or realize them in the public world. . . . We are creatures with inner depths; with partly unexplored and dark interiors. (Taylor 111)

When trying to grasp the most important good that is crucial for our own self-understanding, as well as for developing our inner ideas or reflections and communicating them to the public, the outside world, we are doing something which – in a metaphorical sense – shifts us from a secure, close, inner space, from some "here" to a slightly dangerous (because we never know how other people can react) place that is distant from our interior, to the unknown and strange "there." Every act of communicating our ideas, of telling our story, is also an act of trespassing a border which separates our self from the outside world and other people, and may also let us recreate a sympathetic experience which "allows the matching of perspectives" (Britton 9) of the person who is speaking and the person who is listening.

Our idea of what this outer world or outer space looks like, as well as what our or somebody else's inner space looks like, is always very closely tied to our own, particular point of view. As Kant claims in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, space does not exist as an independent being but is only "the form of all phenomena of the external sense . . . the subjective condition of the sensibility, under which alone external intuition is possible" (45).[2]

[2] See also: "It is therefore from the human point of view only that we can speak of space, extended objects, etc." (Kant 46). Such a correspondence between a subject on the one hand and an outer reality on the other is to some extent crucial for German transcendental idealism – thinkers such as Fichte, Schelling or Schopenhauer share an

Such a perspective corresponds well with Mary Shelley's romantic poetics of presenting space in which there is no possibility of accurately separating the inner "here" from the outer "there," and in which external phenomena – the environment, landscapes, nature, the weather – not only form the scenery but also play an important role in the narrative. They reflect inner feelings, thoughts, and experiences of heroes, thus becoming a part of their narrative identities.

Who are the storytellers in *Frankenstein*? In Mary Shelley's novel, which is a typical frame tale, there are three narrators: Captain Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein and the Creature himself. The book begins with a series of letters in which the first storyteller, Walton, tells his sister, Mrs Margaret Saville, about the subsequent stages of his journey to the North Pole. This first story includes Victor's account of his life, how he created a monster, the consequences of his experiment, and of the tragic circumstances in which he finally found himself on Walton's ship. His tale is also a frame for the third story in which the Creature, the third narrator, recounts what happened when he left the laboratory in which Frankenstein gave birth to him by constructing him from parts of dead bodies, and how he unsuccessfully tried to become a part of society and was rejected by all because of his hideousness.

All of the narrators in *Frankenstein* are travelling, they are constantly on the move. The first of Walton's letters to his sister in England is written from St. Petersburg, where the captain arrived a day before, on the 10th of December, with the aim to "depart . . . in a fortnight or three weeks" (Shelley 15). As he explains, Russia is only a stage in a much longer journey he wants to undertake in order to satisfy his youthful curiosity of seeing "the part of the world never before visited," to cross "a land never before imprinted by the foot of man," and to fulfil his dreams of "discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite" or "ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine" (Shelley 13-14).

Further parts of Walton's narration which – as a typical frame tale – opens as well as closes the whole novel, are very similar and consist of a series of reports from the subsequent days of his dangerous journey, full of extraordinary adventures in the course of which he meets the second traveller, Victor Frankenstein, and finally also the Creature. Victor's narration initially appears to be a typical biographical story which starts with a description of his family, his childhood and the circumstances of his birth. Apart from this very beginning, the story also consists of numerous journeys that he embarked on as a seventeen-year-old boy, a student, then a mad creator who comes home to be a witness of tragic events which are the effect of his scientific experiments, and finally as a person whose further life is devoted to the desire of catching the monster he created. In the end, the monster's life (and in consequence also his story) is nothing more than such a "never-ending" journey in search of himself and his own place on the earth. At the end of the novel, it changes into a pursuit of justice and revenge on those who have hurt him by rejecting all his endeavours after becoming a normal, joyful entity.

Moreover, there is a more or less explicit tendency in all those journeys to go further and further in order to entirely leave home and the familiar world in order to discover "a land never before imprinted by the foot of man" (Shelley 13). In other words, this "there" which they would like to get to is always out of their reach and is located somewhere in infinity. In *Frankenstein*, we simply deal with the poetics of sublimity – typical for romantic novels as well as for other types of art, such as painting – with its characteristic lack of harmony, well-defined, perceivable

opinion that outer reality is only a kind of objectivization of a subjective activity of the so-called transcendental self (Schelling) or of a transcendental subject (Schopenhauer).

boundaries[3] and mimetic form, similar to the organic one (Burke 73). Romantic poets and writers reveal a tendency to evoke strong, powerful emotions by laying stress on features such as ugliness, darkness, solitude, fear, danger or anything that "is in any sort terrible" (Burke 39). We can also observe this in Mary Shelley's work. The narration is open-ended, as evidenced by the last two sentences of the novel. After a passionate speech in which the monster confessed his sins, he "sprang from the cabin window . . . upon the ice raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance" (Shelley 170).

This pursuit of dark, solitary places distant from civilization and human society also characterizes Victor's earlier life, especially the part which is devoted to his hideous work, to the act of creating a monster. As he writes, "to examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death" (Shelley 41). This is the reason why he spends a lot of time in places like cemeteries, morgues, and graves, trying to obtain the knowledge necessary to create a living being and thus become an almost vampirical entity. As he says himself,

> darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to examine the cause of progress of this decay and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel-houses. (Shelley 41)

Such a situation occurs again when the monster asks him to form another Creature, this time of the opposite sex. In order to do this, he goes to Scotland, very far away from his house in Geneva, and chooses "one of the remotest of the Orkneys as the scene of [his] labours" (Shelley 125). As he explains further, "it was a place fitted for such a work, being hardly more than a rock, whose high sides were continually beaten upon by the waves" (Shelley 125). The hero admits that this wild, solitary, "desolate and appalling landscape," this "monotonous yet ever-changing scene" (Shelley 125) with its stony beach and roaring ocean is quite different from the "fair lakes" reflecting "a blue and gentle sky" (Shelley 125) he remembered from his native Switzerland. Being conscious of the differences makes it possible for him to have a very good idea of the distance that separates him from his native land, as well as – in a metaphorical sense – from his childhood when he was an innocent boy. By trespassing the sacred, "ideal boundary" between life and death[4] and constructing a living entity from dead parts collected in churchyards and morgues, he not only violated God's prohibition and broke more than the law of nature, but also destroyed the bonds which tied him to society and gradually started to realize that he chose a path of no return. That is the reason why he ultimately became an exile who began a wandering "which [is] to cease but with life" (Shelley 154) and who, forced by some strange "mechanical impulse" (Shelley 156), has to go further and further from civilization to the end of the world, being fully aware that he will probably never find a calm, peaceful place where he will finally be able to rest.

Such a resemblance between internal feelings and thoughts on the one hand and the external reality on the other may be found on almost every page of Mary Shelley's novel. The

[3] As for the role of infinity in the poetics of sublimity, Burke writes that "another source of the sublime, is *infinity* . . . Infinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime . . . But the eye not being able to perceive the bounds of many things, they seem to be infinite, and they produce the same effects as if they were really so" (Burke 73).

[4] As for this issue, refer to the following fragment: "[l]ife and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent creatures would owe their being to me" (Shelley 43).

vast and long descriptions of weather, landscapes and nature are not only an embellishment or scenery, but also an integral part of all the three main narratives. As Anne K. Mellor writes,

> The atmospheric effects of the novel, which most readers have dismissed as little more than the traditional trappings of Gothic fiction, in fact, manifest the power of nature to punish those who transgress her boundaries. The elemental forces that Victor has released pursue him to his hiding places, ranging round him like avenging Furies. (Mellor 123)

By doing so and breaking God's and human rules, Frankenstein initiates a process of self-destruction, of the disintegration of his former, "polite" and well-socialized identity. This hell that he bears inside, in his soul, is in perfect harmony with the wild nature and savage, uninhabited places in which he usually talks with his demonic child.

The text provides numerous examples that support such a thesis. When Victor came back home in order to take part in William's funeral, he felt full of grief and fear. As he himself recounted,

> night…closed around; and when I could hardly see the dark mountains, I felt still more gloomily. The picture appeared a vast and dim scene of evil, and I foresaw obscurely that I was destined to become the most wretched of human beings. (Shelley 59)

And it turns out that his presentiment did not mislead him. When he finally reached Geneva and went "to visit the spot where … William had been murdered" (Shelley 59), the weather changed rapidly, it became dark, cloudy and started to rain heavily, "the darkness and storm increased every minute, and the thunder burst with a terrific crash" (Shelley 59) over his head. All those dangerous circumstances – the darkness, rain, thunder – reflect Victor's moods, fears, and painful internal experiences. As a matter of fact, this storm is raging also in his soul because he knows that he is responsible for his brother's death.

The Creature lives practically the whole time in wild, uninhabited places, such as high mountains or forests. Although he is gruesome, he is "a being possessing faculties it would be vain to cope with" – he runs very fast, is very strong, he can "exist in the ice caves of the glaciers, and hide himself from pursuit among the ridges of inaccessible precipices" (Shelley 113). His story is full of sorrow because he makes real and sincere efforts to befriend people – the quite long episode with De Lacey and his children is especially significant, since it shows the Creature's endeavours to become a normal human being, a member of society – but with no success. This is the reason why he is searching for shelter far from civilized areas – paradoxically this is the only space where he can feel completely safe and comfortable, and this is the only type of landscape which fully corresponds to his inner nature and his true identity. After the departure of De Lacey family, he burns their cottage and dances around it with fury and anger, destroying all his earlier efforts to become a part of the community. He goes back to his previous, initial state of a savage, monstrous entity with no name and no well-defined place in human, domesticated space. In other words, he symbolically breaks all the bonds which tied him to people and for the first time realizes with such clarity his poor, pitiful condition and the lack of a possibility to change it. Nature, which he is a part of, reflects and arouses his violent feelings and emotions – as he describes, the wind which "tore along like a mighty avalanche" causes in his soul "a kind of insanity" that breaks "all bounds of reason and reflection" (Shelley 106).

In Mary Shelley's text, one may find numerous other examples of such a correspondence between the hero's inner experience and the outer reality. Victor talks with the monster in a very specific environment during his mountain journey when he climbs the summit of Montanvert. As

he describes it himself, this is a majestic, "tremendous and evermoving glacier," the view of which filled him with "the sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul" and caused him "to forget the passing cares of life" (Shelley 75). The place is solitary and uninhabited, and the landscape is quite similar to the one described at the end of the novel – it is covered in snow, divided by vast and dangerous precipices and, as the narrator says, rocks that overlook "the sea of ice" (Shelley 76).

As Fred V. Randel claims, Mary Shelley continued the long literary tradition of presenting mountains though reconstructs "from a new vantage point" its ingredients (Randel, 524). Frankenstein, who stands "high on an eminence" (517) in the nearest vicinity of Mont Blanc, resembles so many other Promethean, Byronic heroes of romantic poems – complex, tragic characters who are simultaneously divine and demonic, blessed and cursed. His endeavour to make unusual discoveries which may change people's destiny is valuable and worthy of admiration, even though he sustains a total defeat and in consequence becomes the most wretched and humiliated entity, a fallen "archangel who aspired to omnipotence" (Shelley 161). The following fragment may confirm such a thesis – in his speech to Captain Walton's sailors in which he tries to encourage them to continue their journey to the pole, he asks them:

> are you then so easily turned from your design? Did you not call this the glorious expedition? And wherefore was it glorious? Not because the way was smooth and placid as a southern sea, but because it was full of dangers and terror; because at every new incident your fortitude was to be called forth and your courage exhibited; because danger and death surrounded it, and these you were to brave and overcome. For this was it a glorious, for this was it an honourable undertaking. You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species; your names adored as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind. And now, behold, with the first imagination of danger…you shrink away, and are content to be handed down as men who had not strength enough to endure cold and peril; and so, poor souls, they were chilly and returned to their warm firesides. Why that requires not this preparation; you need not have come thus far …. Be steady to your purposes and firm as a rock. This ice is not made of such stuff as your hearts may be. (Shelley, 163-64)

This is the reason why all three narrators finally meet at the end of the world, near the North Pole. Their stories are entirely defined by such a pursuit of trespassing known boundaries, their secure "here" in search of some unknown and dangerous but at the same time great, marvellous and fascinating "there." In this sense of the word, "there" is the highest good or central value which marks out the horizon of their inner moral topography and at the same time shapes their narrative identities – as stories of an endeavour to make it real. The last question I would like to consider concerns the author's relationship with her characters and their efforts to trespass boundaries. Is she also moved by the same type of pursuit or not?

The Author's Identity?

Each narrator in the novel – Captain Walton, Frankenstein and the Creature – tells his own story and thus presents only his own perspective. There is no one omniscient storyteller in *Frankenstein* and in consequence no one privileged point of view that we may identify directly with the author's opinions. Certainly, this does not mean that there is no possibility of finding traces in the text of the author's own identity, even if they are far more indirect, uncertain and complex than one may expect. There are several facts which confirm such a thesis.

In the "Introduction" to the Standard Novels edition (1831), Mary Shelley calls her work "my hideous progeny" (Shelley 5). In other words, she treats her book as a baby, as her monstrous child. Let us try to analyze how she understands this metaphor.

As she writes in the "Introduction," she found inspiration for the whole story in a dream she had "one night after a discussion among Byron, Polidori, and Percy Shelley concerning galvanism and Erasmus Darwin's success in causing a piece of vermicelli to move voluntarily" (Mellor 40) in which she saw "a pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together" trying to animate dead matter and to stir "the hideous corpse" with "the slight spark of life" (Shelley 4). Then "he sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes" (4). According to Anne K. Mellor,

> in her dream, Mary Shelley lost her distanced, safely external view . . . Gradually her dream-work drew her into a closer identification with the student . . . At the end of her dream, nothing separates the dreamer from the student of unhallowed arts. Even though she continues to use the third person "he sleeps; he opens his eyes" – she has become the student; she is looking up at the "yellow, watery, but speculative eyes" of the "horrid thing. (Mellor 40-41)

Why does such an interpretation seem to be correct? Anne K. Mellor claims that this dream reveals some of the author's most "powerful anxieties" concerning "giving birth" related to the fact that she was a very young woman when writing her first book and it was a time in her life when she was "frequently pregnant":

> it gives shape to her deepest fears. What if my child is born deformed, a freak, a moron, a "hideous" thing? Could I still love it, or would I be horrified and wish it were dead again? What will happen if I can't love my child? Am I capable of raising a healthy, normal child? Will my child die (as my first baby did)? Could I *wish* my own child to die, to destroy itself? Could I kill it? Could it kill *me* (as I killed my mother, Mary Wollstonecraft)? (Mellor 41)

Especially this last question merits attention because of the tragic circumstances of Mary Shelley's own birth. She was the daughter of a famous English author, a moral and political theorist, Mary Wollstonecraft, who died a couple of days after little Mary was born. This is the reason why she identifies "with the orphaned creature" (Mellor 44), with a monster who is going to kill his parent – in the same way in which she, as Chris Baldick wrote, "was the unwitting agent of her own creator's death, and – again like the monster and like several other characters in the novel – a motherless orphan" (Baldick 31).

Marc A. Rubenstein also considers *Frankenstein* as strongly tied to its author's biography, as her metaphorical, symbolic journey in search of her lost mother. He distinguishes several narrative levels in the whole text or, as he writes, "the enfolding, circular narratives" (Rubenstein 178) which have their "vivid, precise and literal rendering in the architecture of Frankenstein's laboratory" (178) which resembles a womb, "as is the entire novel" (178). Every new narrator "repeats and re-establishes what had gone before . . . The participant in one tale becomes the observer . . . of the next" and "the observed scene becomes . . . a womb-like container in which a story is . . . developed, preserved, and passed on." This transforms storytelling into a "vicarious pregnancy" (173). According to his interpretation, the central point or the "pole" of such a complex, multilayer narrative structure is in the monster's story, especially in the passage in which the creature describes Safie and her mother, who "was a Christian Arab, seized and made a slave by the Turks" (Shelley 95) and who "born in freedom . . . instructed her daughter in the tenets of her religion and taught her to aspire higher powers of intellect, and an independence of

spirit forbidden to the female followers of Mahomet" (95). There is a clear analogy to Mary Shelley's mother, a famous feminist whose heritage was "probably part of Mary's earliest awareness of the world" (Rubenstein, 188) and shaped not only her views but also her own literary destiny to some extent.

Moreover, "in giving birth to a full-fledged novel, Mary Shelley was giving birth to her self-as-author" (Mellor 52) and at the same time she created a new literary genre – she invented science-fiction literature. This may also explain why she called her book "my hideous progeny," in this way partially identifying herself with the mad creator, Victor Frankenstein. When writing the novel, she could feel that she was doing something unnatural that violated borders which were treated as part of a natural order. This may have led to unforeseeable consequences because by doing so she broke the eighteenth-century

> decorum of the proper lady . . . so long established that it was considered a law of nature. Hence the very act of female authorship could be seen as an unnatural act, a perversion that arouses both anxiety and hostility in the male reader. (Mellor 56)

This explains one more thing, namely the fact that she as the author speaks only through the medium of male narrators and "would prefer to hide her own originality within someone else's imagination" (Rubenstein 182). As Anne K. Mellor suggests, by these means she was simply looking for male legitimacy for her literary ideas within "a culture that has historically suppressed the female voice" (Mellor 52). All of the three life stories – Walton's, Frankenstein's, as well as the monster's – are in various ways moved by the pursuit of something sublime, uncommon and at the same time extreme, unavailable in one's daily experience. Although she uses their voices to express her own ideas of widening our cognitive horizon and breaking established rules and our typical idea of what the world is like (also the traditional boundary between male and female; see Randel 531) – she does not do it in a direct, literal, "didactic" way. In order to reconstruct her point of view, one should pay attention to the multilevel structure of the novel, "often likened to Russian nesting dolls" (Benford 324) and the narrative polyphony related to it in which there is not one omniscient narrator or one privileged perspective. In such a type of narrative, the truth is an effect of confrontation and collision of various heroes and their points of view. This may help us avoid a reading that is too evident, stereotypical or ideological, and invites the reader "to confront the stakes of the . . . meaning-making simplifications inherent in the process of narrative sense making" (325).

According to Criscillia Benford, "each of *Frankenstein*'s first-person narrators uses rhetoric associated with different sociopolitical categories of identity in order to prompt his narratees to see him as he sees himself" (328). For example, the Creature who is "perhaps the best storyteller in the novel" (338) was seen as a representative of the self-educated and hence able to understand its social position English working-class. He is filthy and ugly but at the same time very eloquent. This last feature does not allow to see him as a true villain, an "alien" in the proper sense of the term. In other words, he is not as bad as he should be in order to be treated as an evil character. His ability to speak and to explain his point of view makes him human and lets us believe that he could have been a kind and valuable person in other circumstances.

In short, we – the readers – may share his point of view just because he is telling us his own story. The process of telling a story or of "the production and transmission of narrative" (Britton 3) in such a way becomes, as Jeanne M. Britton claims, an alternative, compensatory model of sympathy. According to her, "where sympathetic experiences may fail, narrative can succeed" (5). Through the medium of the story, we can approach somebody else's experience and

explain his or her motivations, feelings, understand why he did what he did and so on. By these means, we can cross the boundary between us and others, between our "here" and somebody's "there." We may take somebody's position and see reality from his or her perspective, in other words – imaginatively explore his inner world by analyzing his language, his or her narrative. Here, the monster's story also reveals the author's search for her own voice and her own creative identity in the literary discourse which was dominated by male writers. Through the medium of the novel she wrote that she too – like the Creature through the medium of his story – tried to compensate for a lack of sympathy from society, which did not accept her creative aspirations, and in this way wanted to break the limitations of the patriarchal world which she was living in.

In the other two narratives – Frankenstein's and Walton's - there are numerous traces of the author's identity, too. Their stories of trespassing boundaries in search of marvellous experiences overlap with her own story. Her work is in itself a kind of a monstrous child. By writing it, Shelley became the creator of a horror, the mother of a ghastly, terrifying book, one of those which, as Chris Baldick wrote, "behave monstrously towards their creators, running loose from authorial intention and turning to mock their begetters by displaying a vitality of their own" (Baldick 30). As a writer, she also trespasses boundaries – first of all by discovering herself, Mary Shelley, as an author. This could have been quite a new experience for a person who was earlier just Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, a typical Englishwoman. Secondly, she wrote for publication as a woman, that is to say as a person whose public voice was treated as something quite subversive, undermining the world's order. Thirdly, Shelley invented a new literary genre – sci-fi literature – and created the legend of a mad scientist and his monster, which became a living cultural myth, comparable "with the most telling stories of Greek and Norse gods and goddesses" (Mellor 38).

There is one more thing which seems to be important and worth mentioning. As Marshall Brown states, gothic novels as such are "transcendent epistemological fictions" (Brown 284) which act "on a region that lies . . . at the limits of experience" (277), hence they confront us "with a transcendent reality . . . of the thing in itself" (279) and ask, exactly as Kant in his philosophy, "what man is in himself" (280) and what is beyond the limits of possible experience. According to Brown, "Kant's imagination, like that of a gothic novelist, is haunted by a mysterious world beyond the limitations of understanding . . . this ghost of Kant's system is a presence somewhere in the mind, yet outside the bounds of experience" (281). The author describes her own efforts in investigating the wild, abandoned, terrifying side of herself through the novel's story. She depicts her struggle with dangerous enemies living in those unknown territories of the subconscious "beyond the limitations of understanding" (281) although she does it indirectly, that is to say, through the medium of her male storytellers. This way *Frankenstein* – the story about trespassing boundaries and exploring the undiscovered, horrible depths hidden in ourselves – becomes an excellent example of Brown's thesis.

To sum up, the pursuit of trespassing boundaries and searching the world beyond the limits of known experience is to some extent the key to the narrator's identities in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. It is revealed in the wild nature around them, in their journeys, types of activities, even in their relationships with other people. It is also fundamental to the author's identity – as a writer, she is shaped by the same type of endeavour. She confronts her own demons through the medium of their stories, explores the unknown territories of her own self and writes about the limitations she overcame as a woman in a patriarchal society and as the creator of science-fiction literature.

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