Themes of Trauma and Political Reflections in the Novels of Mary Shelley

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Abstract— Most of Mary Shelley's novels have reflected the socio-political as well as the scientific aspects to her writings and ideas that we find while going through her novels. Her famous novels were written with a perception against the utopian ideas and deals with the critique beyond her father's, William Godwin's utopianism which occurred mostly in the form of narrative and metaphor. Sterrenburg says that Mary Shelley's stories have anti-Jacobin themes like grave robbing, the dead coming back to life, and creatures that kill their creators. In order to appropriate the political images, she gives us a new form which slightly subverts the utopian ideas about revolution. The present research focuses on the depiction of the generation of radicals and the regeneration of man in demonic terms and uses the subjective, complicated, and problematic term "new form" in her works and how Shelley tried to translate politics into psychology. She used revolutionary symbolism and wrote it in the post-revolutionary era when there were no political movements.

Keywords— Trauma, politics, revolution, reflection, horror

A myth about the French Revolution says that it was started by evil forces from outside of France. The word "*revolution*" was rhetorical as it acted as an external influence which had altered the human mind and invaded it and gave birth to the evils and monstrous horrors. She focused on the outside by only writing about the minds of certain fictional characters, like Frederick Fenton. Here, the French revolutionaries became victims of a double external assault. If all revolutionaries were not impervious to all prudence, "*I would propose that they contemplate the fact that no one in history, holy or profane, has ever been known to disturb the tomb and, by sorcery, summon the prophetic dead with any other outcome than the prediction of their own doom. This quote is from Edmund Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord.*"

In this section of Reflections on the French Revolution, Burke crafts a gothic melodrama that is externalized. He referred to democracy as a "kind of political monster" that has always consumed those who created it. He was alluding to the political system of democracy. According to him, the monsters were "radical and intrinsic" forces from the outer world. He hypothesized that anytime the spirit of evil possessed or inhabited new bodies and began acting in strange or novel ways, it was proof of his idea. During the French Revolution, he made the following remark: "*Vice adopts a new body. Instead of losing its essential quality of life as a result of the change in its external appearance, the spirit emerges from the process with the reinvigorated vibrancy of youthful activity in its newly acquired organs. When you gibbet the corpse or dismantle the tomb, it walks away and continues its destruction. It travels overseas and continues its destruction.*"

We read the story of Shelley's "*Frankenstein*" not as merely the spectators but from within and our own personal point of view, which discusses the political milieu

of the 1790s. Godwin and Burke both knew the location of the evil. Godwin believed that injustice, inequality, and poverty were rooted in social structures. Burke believed that it existed among the rebels and thinkers who refused to follow the hierarchy. The revolution of the 1790s is often considered as the Era of Enlightenment and world-view. Mary Shelley's *Lodore* deals with fairly quotidian issues like love relationships, family strife and financial issues. It includes elements of Gothic, where the catastrophic are absent. After the French Revolution (1789), the Napoleonic Wars, the American Revolution (1775), and the Industrial Revolution, which reflected a change in thought on long-established monarchy issues, Shelley participates in the sociopolitical discussion in *Lodore* as well as the position of women in nineteenth-century British society. After the French Revolution (1789), the Napoleonic Wars, and the American Revolution, this is especially true on a sociopolitical level (1775). The novel *Lodore* by Mary Shelley covers the life of a middle-class family, commonly known as the bourgeoisie, as well as the ideology associated with their hardships and problems. Shelley's *Lodore* brings to the forefront what transpired on the socio-political level of middle-class British society. In addition, the notions of a familial legacy, marriage, adversity, strained relationships, and some form of reconciliation all play significant parts in Shelley's *Lodore*: Nicholas William's article is titled "Angelic Realism: Domestic Idealization in Mary Shelley's *Lodore* that "The novel has been seen as less political than its predecessors and, as such, representative of Shelley's retreat into safety of propriety in the face of social and financial pressure, and that The novel has been seen as less political than its predecessors and, as such, representative of Shelley's retreat into safety of propriety in the face of social and financial pressure." Moreover, he sees connections between Lord *Lodore*'s upbringing of Ethel and Victor *Frankenstein*'s creation of the monster.

Melenic Asselmans wrote the article "Between the Lines: Reconsidering Gender Relations in Mary Shelley's *Lodore*. Mary Shelley's *Lodore* contains elements that can be linked to the silver fork gere that the nineteenth-century reader anticipated, and what it could reveal about Mary Shelley's personal life is that it could strip her not only of any autonomy but also of the ability to express socio political opinions in a manner suited to her personality. Examining *Lodore* demonstrates that the novel's veiled references to the ideology of domesticity and the ideal of feminine decorum criticize society's attitude toward women rather than the author's sociopolitical personality. The novel's title, which refers to the author as *Lodore*, makes this clear. Shelley places significant emphasis on the gendered and socially defined roles that nineteenth-century women were supposed to play. In-depth research of the novel demonstrates that the author of Mary Shelley's *Lodore* made a significant addition to the 19th-century British discourse on gender relations and women's standing in society. Unlike Victor Franknstein, *Lodore* talks about a creation scenario, but unlike *Frankenstein*, there is no scientific or alchemical basis for the debate.

According to Anne K. Mellor, she has "the deepest and most contradictory feelings towards her father." The story is loaded with profound feelings, but they are Shelley's. Like Manfred by Byron and Jane Eyre by Bront, the novella by Shelley was inspired by the author's personal experiences and imagination, regardless of whether those events were favorable or negative.

In his book, entitled *Materialistic Criticism of English Romantic Drama,* Daniel Watkins examines the link between language and power. He focuses on the ways in which characters use or are forced to use the power of language. According to Walkins, "rather than experience being the basis for...evaluations of linguistic expression, narrative becomes the basis for evaluations of experience." The dramatic autobiography written by *Mathilda* is a great illustration of the junction of "experience," also known as the truth, and linguistic representation, commonly known as the ability to tell a story. In writing published during the later part of the eighteenth century, the Gothic motif is quite popular. William observes that "*Mathilda* is principally concerned with the most prominent issues in English writing since the novelization of the genre in the seventeenth century — the investigation of the relationship between the individual sensibility and the demands made within the context of social existence." *Mathilda* is predominantly focused on the most common themes in English writing since the novelization of the eighteenth century.

Shelley recognized the human propensity for participating in imaginative fantasies, something she herself did frequently as a child. Like Mary Shelley's prior works, *Falkner* is concerned with the authority structures and political duties of the era in which it was written. Prior to the recent past, skeptics referred to *Lodore* and *Falkner* as proof that Shelley's reformists had moved away from the political world and into a separate home sphere. Like with *Lodore*, contemporary critics, including Belly Benett and Mary Poovey, regarded the novel as a romance. Nonetheless, they disregarded the novel's political undertones and moral dilemmas because the setting was exclusively domestic. According to Belly Bennet and Mary Poovey, Shelley wrote *Falkner* to reconcile her contradictory response to her father's combination of

libertarian radicalism and strict adherence to social propriety. Her father had been a significant influence in her life. Hence, Shelley's two works have been criticized for having underdeveloped characters.

Lodore and *Falkner* reflect fusions of the psychological social novel with an educational tone in Bennette's new work, which results not in romances but rather in narratives of destalinization.

According to Melisa Sites, the novel *Falkner*, written by Mary Shelley, has three interconnected goals. The first goal is to present a reformed model of William Godwin's novel "Things as They Are." The second goal is to present a reformed masculine romantic hero based on the education and improvement of the characters of Rupert Falkner and Gerard Neville. The third goal is to present a fully realized Wollstonecraftian in dependent Mary Shelley's *Falkner* is not a political, social, or scientific ideological compliment, nor is it a disguised Romantic ideology, nor is it a vehicle for a complementing ethos such as propriety, domesticity, or feminine Romanticism, according to Jonas Cope. Rather, *Falkner* is simply a work of fiction written by Shelley. In *Falkner*, Mary Shelley "decisively takes control of the male Romantics" and represents them in allegories moralized by her own experience of loss and disappointment, according to David Vallin's "Mary Shelley decisively takes control of the male Romantics. "Shelley's personal observations about Europe, which are documented in *The History of Six Weeks Tour*, foreshadow one of the primary themes of *Valperga*, which is the devastation and destruction caused by Napoleon's ascent to power in France. Specifically, *The History of Six Weeks Tour* focuses on Shelley's travels through Europe during the period in which the book was written. Shelley uses a wide array of gruesome methods to depict violence, struggle, torture, and sorrow throughout her novel *Valperga*. According to Leanne Maunu, "Shelley's *Valperga* is more than just an anti-war novel; it is a novel that asks readers to explore the connections between torture and war; between heroic ideology and tyranny; between pleasure and pain; and perhaps most importantly, between physical and emotional suffering between sanctioned and unsanctioned violence." (Shelley's *Valperga* is more than just an anti-war novel.) In his work on historical fiction, W.B. Whiltaker makes the following argument: "Mary Shelley's *Valperga* has been seen as a feminist version of the historical novel, which was often viewed as a masculine genre; however, it also has an interesting political and ideological framework that addresses the issues faced by post-Napoleonic Europe." A significant number of Mary Shelley's works feature characters who have experienced traumatic events or have been neglected. Mary Shelley examines the symptoms of

trauma, which are generally loneliness, despair, and isolation, in her writings. These symptoms are typical of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Mary Shelley's personal experiences, like those of a great number of other authors, served as a source of inspiration for the plots and characters in her writing. It's possible that Shelley's own life experiences are what make the traumatic events she writes about in *The Last Man*, *Lodore*, and *Mathilda* appear to be so intensely real. Yet, it appears that Shelley conveys the concept of loneliness in a number of ways, leading the reader to doubt her intentions when depicting characters that experience periods of being alone.

Mary Shelley was born in 1797, and her mother was Mary Wollstonecraft. Each woman was named Mary (marked by brevity). In addition, very few reviewers, if any at all, have written about *Lodore* and *Mathilda*, which is one of Shelley's works. Within the framework of Solitude, it is possible that it will be required to draw implications from criticisms of Shelley's other writings.

It is common knowledge that Mary Shelley's life was fraught with misery, and this is reflected in many of the works that she produced throughout her lifetime. Mary Shelley's harrowing experiences first began with the passing of her mother when she was quite young. Not only does she never get to see her mother, but she also loses her husband and her three children. All of her loved ones are taken from her. Shelley's connections (with her husband, her father, and her friends), which were supposed to bring her some consolation for the various losses she had suffered, did not turn out to be as promising as she had imagined they would be. In point of fact, the heartache and disappointment that she experiences in the course of her relationships eventually force her to seek solace at the grave of her mother. Ann Mellor states in her book Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fictions, Her Monster that "during her lonely youth, Mary visited the grave of her mother in St. Pancras Churchyard." Mellor's book is titled Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fictions, and Her Monster. "There, she studied her mother's works and found peace in nature and in her mother's spirits," the passage reads (Mellor 20). According to Shelley's biographers, the author discovered joy in the outdoors and solace in the cemetery where her mother was buried. A quick analysis of the meaning of the word "isolation" is perhaps in order before we proceed to our analysis of Shelley's portrayal of solitude. It may appear that "solitude" is an easy phrase to define, but scholars and critics have recognised various characteristics of the notion, making it difficult to pin down exactly what it means. Edward Engelberg agrees that solitude is a difficult concept, arguing that a person can actively seek and attain seclusion, but in the end, they will be forced to deal with the "its newly developing contradictions" of

other people's presence in their lives (Engelberg 2). In point of fact, after making a speech at the British Comparative Literary Association, Engelberg emphasises the ambiguities of the word because he has a sense of incompleteness when he reads things like "Solitude was such a big subject that it needed to be looked at on its own (Engelberg 2). The idea to write Solitude and Its Ambiguities in Modernist Fiction came to him as a result of this. In addition, Barbara Taylor presents several definitions of the term "solitude" as well as the history of western solitude in her book "Separations of Soul: Solitude, Biography, History." This book is titled "Separations of Soul: Solitude, Biography, History." Taylor approaches solitude from a theological standpoint, saying that it is common practice for religious leaders to withdraw from congregational life in order to seek refreshment on a spiritual level and closer communion with God. Taylor characterized still another aspect of solitary by using the term in the section titled "Philosophical Isolation," she paints an image of "Socrates standing on a lonely hillside in frozen thought" (Taylor 643). Taylor also argues that being alone does not necessarily imply that one is in solitude. Even if a person is alone in the physical world, their minds may wander to a place where they are with loved ones who have passed away or who are still living, with God (if they are religious), with heroes, or even with nature. An in-depth analysis of her descriptions of hopelessness reveals recurring motifs and ideas in her literature that are analogous to the author's own life experiences, on the one hand.

On the other hand, there are a few anomalies that give us reason to suspect that she did occasionally experiment with the way that she wrote. Shelley's works all have one thing in common, and that is the way in which she emphasizes isolation in relation to parental neglect (which was something she was intimately experienced with), loss, and suffering. This is a trait that is present in all of her works (the death of a loved one). In addition, the novel *Mathilda*, which was written in 1819, and the novel *Lodore*, which was written in 1835, both deal with the dual themes of mourning and the abandonment of children by their parents. Shelley's ability as a writer is illustrated by the fact that she recycled *Mathilda* despite there being a sixteen-year gap between the publication of both of her works. To be more specific, Shelley places a focus on some kind of trauma in each of the three primary works that are discussed in this essay. In the story "*Lodore*," the protagonist is let down by his wife, who decides she does not want to move to Illinois with him. As a consequence of this, while *Lodore* is still in Illinois, he thinks of his marriage to his wife in a variety of different contexts.

Ethel, on the other hand, is just as traumatized by her mother's disappearance as she is by her husband's inability to provide for the two of them financially. In the same vein, Shelley keeps the pattern of the absent mother in *Mathilda*, but she does it in a different way than she did in her other works. At an early age, Diana, who would later become *Mathilda*'s mother, would lose her own mother. 15 days after *Mathilda* was born, her mother passed away from natural causes. *Mathilda*'s father also experienced the loss of his own mother and wife. Shelley's projection of pain onto *Mathilda* is heightened by the fact that both she and *Mathilda*'s father appear to have committed suicide. The phrase "*The Last Man*" in Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man* already evokes feelings of fear because it is an obvious portent of an approaching catastrophe that indicates death. Shelley continues the projection of suffering through suicidal behavior (Perdita commits suicide by falling into the sea) as well as through heartache (Raymond's emotional links with Evadne), despite the fact that there is no obvious pattern for the absent mother due to the fact that nearly everyone dies from the epidemic.

With her representations of solitary moments of loneliness, Shelley employs imagery and metaphor to draw attention to the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of solitude. Shelley moves from portraying solitude in relation to trauma to depicting heroes who consciously seek aloneness for intellectual pursuits and/or personal emancipation. In Mary Shelley's novel *The Last Man*, the character Perdita has a conflicted connection with the main antagonist, Solitude. In one case, it is stated that Perdita is wallowing in depression and isolation, yet in another, it is stated that she actively seeks out alone time to dwell on her imaginative creations, in a manner somewhat similar to how Victor *Frankenstein* does. In *The Last Man*, Lionel describes Perdita as "cold and repulsive" and as having "permanent fog residing on her forehead." Here is an illustration of this point (Last Man 12). Lionel, the narrator, continues by stating that Perdita "would meander to the most unfrequented territory, climb treacherous heights in unvisited spots, so she might wrap herself in loneliness in these self-created wanderings." This means she "would meander to the most unvisited region, climb perilous heights in unvisited spots," which means she "would meander to the most unvisited region, climb perilous heights in unvisited spots" (Last Man 12). Lionel goes so far as to refer to his sister as "the visionary Perdita" to emphasise how passionate Perdita is about the world she has built in her thoughts (Last Man, 12–17). Shelley consistently employed the same figurative language throughout the piece to characterise *Mathilda*'s solitary existence. As a direct result of her increased independence, *Mathilda* was able to "ramble among the

wild landscape of the count...endlessly roving around these lovely solitudes." *Mathilda* was allowed to "ramble over the untamed countryside of the count" as a result (*Mathilda* 12). In "Solitude in *Lodore*," Shelley continues to use a variety of striking pictures.

In this section from the novel, the narrator recalls that Fitzhenry was frequently spotted on horseback, riding across forested or unfettered areas. His dark, enormous eyes were particularly expressive of love and melancholy, and grief resided on his forehead and in his gaze (*Lodore* 56).

Shelley's descriptions of "Alone" have a number of characteristics, one of which is that she describes times of being alone in a manner that suggests complete lunacy. This is one of the features shared by the various descriptions of "Alone." This is especially evident during the times when *Lodore* is holding his breath in anxious anticipation of a message from London. The narrator explains *Lodore*'s worry by posing the question, "Was change imminent? How long do you anticipate the world being at peace? While he was alone in the silence, he was startled by a voice that warned him of something; he looked around, but there was no one else in the vicinity, despite the fact that the voice had been so audible to his ears and nose (*Lodore* 69). Some academics have described *Lodore*'s apprehension as "ontic disconnectedness" or neurosis or psychosis. Notwithstanding the fact that Taylor refers to what occurs to *Lodore* in this scenario as an inside presence or an inner voice, this is the case (Bolea 110).

Shelley imbues Solitude with human traits, producing the idea that Solitude could be either a person or an inanimate thing.

Shelley does a great job of making the idea of loneliness real, even though she doesn't give it a personality. In "*The Last Man*," Lionel describes his father as having "buried himself in solitude among the hills and lakes of Cumberland." Lionel asserts that his father committed this act after "burying himself in seclusion." (From "*The Last Man*," paragraph 9, emphasis added.) This gives the idea that one can become entrenched in solitude, either as a person or a place. Raymond reportedly fled from public areas and "to the solitude that was both his bane and his salvation." This is equivalent to the preceding instance (*The Last Man* 98).

The fact that she is under this misconception is what prompted her to make the decision to write her account. *Mathilda* feels compelled to write down her experience, but in order for her to feel comfortable telling it to Woodville, she requires his solemn promise that he will not show the letter to anyone else. In order for her to

feel comfortable telling it to Woodville, she requires his solemn promise that he will not show the letter to anyone else. This suggests that she is self-conscious about the story she told. *Mathilda* uses writing as an outlet for her emotions in an effort to control them. In this scene, there is a significant emotional exchange as well as a linguistic one. *Frankenstein* receives momentary benefits from talking, in contrast to *Mathilda*, who receives temporary benefits from writing. Shelley elaborates further on the therapeutic significance of written language in his later work, *Lodore*, which was published in the year 1835. Not only does *Lodore* depend on reading (letters and books) to stay alive, but he also writes letters to keep in touch with people when he is alone and can't talk to them. As he cannot read, *Lodore* is unable to communicate with others in any other way. "He had liked literature, poetry, and the exquisite philosophy of the ancients," the narrator adds about *Lodore*. "He adored books." His mind was finally in the right place for him to seek peace in reading and find thrill in the quest for knowledge (*Lodore* 59). The enthusiasm for reading that *Lodore* possesses is similar to that shown by *Frankenstein*, who, in an effort to mimic the Delaceys' manner of speech, took up reading instead. The act of reading and writing brings a sense of companionship to *Lodore*'s otherwise isolated thoughts. Shelley paints a picture for us of women in *Lodore* who are extremely reliant on the mental and emotional stability of a male figure (such as a lover, a sibling, or a friend), and she does it by giving us visuals of these ladies. When there are no men in a woman's life in *Lodore*, she is more likely to become very depressed. Elizabeth, *Lodore*'s younger sister, is so distressed by the news that her brother is leaving England for "the stage of the world" (*Lodore* 86) that she wishes he would stay with her in England instead of leaving for "the stage of the world." *Lodore* refers to this location as "the stage of the globe." Her sudden realization of her aloneness, triggered by her father's death, meant that "her affections, her future potential, and her aspirations" (*Mathilda* 87) were immediately focused on *Lodore*'s company. This was due to the fact that her father had passed away. The narrator continues the account by stating that *Lodore* showed kindness towards his sister by "sacrificing one month to please her by reading and writing letters" when he was in "the most lonely locations." This was accomplished while *Lodore* was in "the most desolate locations" (*Mathilda* 87). In contrast to Elizabeth, *Lodore*is is likewise upset by his father's death; nonetheless, he is portrayed as preferring "to dwell in a fantasy than in the true world." Elizabeth is devastated by her father's passing. The persona of *Lodore*is gives the idea that she likes to "live in a dream rather than the real world" (*Mathilda* 86). On the other hand, *Lodore* can find comfort

in reading and writing letters, much as Elizabeth did. Ethel, who is completely dependent on the presence of a man, becomes unable to function and appears deranged when Villiers is absent. This also held true for Elizabeth. Ethel engages in a correspondence with Villiers in order to find a solution to the problem she is facing, just as *Mathilda* and Elizabeth do in order to repress their feelings. Ethel is so affected by thoughts of loneliness on one of the occasions when Villiers leaves that she begins to continually consider ways to convince him not to leave her. This occurs on one of the occasions when Villiers leaves. However, she makes the decision to avoid getting into a dispute with him and instead simply replies, "Write." In response, Villiers adds "everyday" (*Lodore* 284).

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