【原著論文】

Mathilda as the Realization of Repressed Female Voices in *Frankenstein*

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Abstract: In 1819, a year after the publication of her *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, Mary Shelley began writing a novella, *Mathilda*. This essay discusses *Mathilda*'s place in Shelley's ongoing literary career, from *Frankenstein* to her later novels, and examines it as the realization of repressed female voices in *Frankenstein*. In *Frankenstein*, female characters are described as obedient and subsidiary, and they either die or are killed with their own voices and thoughts not elucidated. The abundant studies of *Frankenstein* should be connected to examine *Mathilda*, and that is also what this essay aims at. Hypothesizing *Mathilda* as an attempt to recover the female voices of the earlier novel, I evince a strong connection between *Mathilda* and *Frankenstein* from the perspective of female victimization and monstrosity. Interpreting *Mathilda* as an attempt to recover the female voices in *Frankenstein* helps us deduce Shelley's motivation for writing *Mathilda* and discover its distinctive perspective on female victimization and monstrosity.

　要旨：メアリー・シェリーは『フランケンシュタイン，あるいは現代のプロメテウス』出版の翌年，1819 年に中編小説『マチルダ』を執筆し始める。本論文は『フランケンシュタイン』からその後の作品へと連なるシェリーの継続した執筆経歴における『マチルダ』の位置づけを議論し，『マチルダ』を『フランケンシュタイン』における抑圧された女性の声の解放として考察する。『フランケンシュタイン』において，女性登場人物は従順，従属的であり，自らの声や思いを明確に発することなく死ぬ，もしくは殺される。『フランケンシュタイン』については先行研究が豊富にあり，それは『マチルダ』の研究にも接続されるべきであり，このことは本稿の目的でもある。本稿では，『マチルダ』を『フランケンシュタイン』における女性の声を取り戻すための試みと仮定し，両者の密接なつながりを女性の犠牲と怪物性という観点から明らかにする。『マチルダ』を『フランケンシュタイン』における女性の声の回復への試みとして解釈することで，シェリーの『マチルダ』執筆の動機を導き出し，この作品における女性の犠牲と怪物性に関する特徴的な観点を発見することができる。

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Intrdocution

Between August and September 1819, a year after the publication of *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), Mary Shelley wrote *The Fields of Fancy*, an early version of her novella *Mathilda*[1] (1959), which was probably completed in February 1820 (Clemit 2). *Mathilda*, a tragic story of father-daughter incest, is now attracting Shelley students, who examine it through various approaches. However, the first edition of *Mathilda*, edited by Elizabeth Nitchie, was not published until 1959. Its publication was initially prevented by Shelley's father, William Godwin, who stated that its topic was "disgusting and detestable" (Gisborne 44).

The lurid elements of *Mathilda* are not limited to incest; written in the style of a memoir by its protagonist (Mathilda), the narrative focuses on Mathilda's rela-

tionship with her parents: the sudden death of her mother, her father's subsequent dejection and abandonment of his daughter, their reunion after 16 years, his confession of his unnatural affection toward her, and the psychological suffering they both experience as a result, which leads them to wish for death.

Although *Mathilda* has received less attention than *Frankenstein*, critics have given various accounts of the author's motivation for writing this story. Beginning with Nitchie[2] in 1943, when *Mathilda* was not published yet, early critics of *Mathilda* focused on its biographical aspects, and showed that the characters and certain parts of the novella evidently reflected Shelley's own social circle and experiences. The scandalous theme of incest also garnered psychoanalytic criticism,[3] which has attempted to situate *Mathilda*'s literary value in the psychological traumas of its author and characters. These theories have also inspired study of *Mathilda* from the view point of "Gothic Feminism."[4] Also, numerous literary allusions in *Mathilda* have stimulated analyses from the viewpoint of intertextuality.[5] The broad range of approaches to *Mathilda*, as also to *Frankenstein*, may encourage us to examine and compare the texts.

However, critics have not extensively discussed this novella from the viewpoint of the author's approach to writing, especially in connection with *Frankenstein*. This essay discusses the development of Shelley's literary concerns from *Frankenstein* to *Mathilda*, and reads *Mathilda* as an attempt to recover the repressed female voices in *Frankenstein*. Although female characters in *Frankenstein* are described as obedient and subsidiary ones, that does not prevent their voices from reemerging in Shelley's later fictions. We will investigate this problem beginning from the time of her composition of *Frankenstein*. Interpreting *Mathilda* in this way, we can deduce Shelley's motivation for writing *Mathilda* and discover its distinctive perspective on female victimization and monstrosity. This systematic comparison of the two novels shows us a novel and valuable perspective on Shelley's writing of *Mathilda*.

1. Repression of the Victimized Women's Voices

Unlike *Mathilda*, *Frankenstein* exhibits several strong homosocial relationships in its narratives. Female characters do not appear in the foreground of the story, as has often been pointed out; as Diane Long Hoeveler, who reads homoeroticism in the protagonist

Victor Frankenstein's circle, says, "women are subsidiary and inferior, both as intellectual and sexual companions" (181). Seemingly, the female characters in *Frankenstein* are obedient and powerless, and do not speak up with their own opinions. Behind their superficial, subsidiary roles, however, they have an indispensable function, providing a powerful motivation for the male characters through their deaths. We can see one example of this in young Frankenstein's determination to pursue natural philosophy; it is the death of his mother, Caroline, that accelerates his ardent but distorted and morbid interest in the secret of life and death.

Furthermore, *Frankenstein* presents successive female deaths. There is the execution of Frankenstein's family servant, "the poor sufferer" (1: 63)[6] Justine, after she is falsely charged for the murder of Frankenstein's younger brother, William. It spurs Frankenstein to pursue and take revenge against the creature. Another is the creature's female companion, who though nearly completed is destroyed by Frankenstein, who fears that their offspring will be a deadly threat to human beings. The destruction of this companion makes the creature furious enough to kill yet another woman: Elizabeth, Frankenstein's bride, who is characterized as "continually endeavouring to contribute to the happiness of others, entirely forgetful of herself" (1: 30). The death of Elizabeth is another spur to make Frankenstein further chase the creature. Their actual character and identity obscured by their subsidiary roles, the female characters drive the story's main plot by their victimization.

Shelley's own attitude at that time also seems to be within subsidiary one. As is widely known, Shelley composed *Frankenstein* as a response to a ghost story competition suggested by Lord Byron when she was staying at his Villa Diodati in Switzerland. As explained in Shelley's own introduction to the third revised edition of *Frankenstein* in 1831, surrounded by the male Romantics Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Polidori, and asked every morning "*Have you thought of a story*?" (1: 178; italics in the original), she developed *Frankenstein* based on a vision of "the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together" (1: 179). The actions and relationship of the male "student" and "the thing" constitute the main story and the narrative of *Frankenstein*, and direct female participation in the narrative is limited.

In addition, Shelley's own interaction with her male companions at the time was also quite passive, as she acknowledges in the introduction: "Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley, to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener" (1: 179).

Shelley's reserved behavior toward the male Romantics should be compared with that of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. As seen in her *Mary, A Fiction* (1788) and *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (1798), Wollstonecraft had put female characters in the center of her stories, and accused the patriarchy directly of tyranny and responsibility for women's inferior condition. This public attitude she took as an author is manifested in the "Advertisement" of *Mary*, which proclaims to the reader that this will be a work in which "the mind of a woman, who has thinking powers is displayed" (5).[7] In contrast, both Shelley's depiction of women in *Frankenstein* and of herself about its composition show them as obedient. This also presents a remarkable contrast with *Mathilda*, whose heroine's voice is placed at the center of its narrative.

The restrained female attitude of *Frankenstein* has drawn attention from feminist critics. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, for example, interpret *Frankenstein* as a parody of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) from Eve's view, reading "the part of Eve" in "all the parts" of *Frankenstein*, although it seemingly omits "any obvious Eve-figure" (230). They read female rage and terror underneath the superficial progression of events, suggesting that "Victor Frankenstein's male monster may really be a female in disguise" (237). That is, according to their interpretation, though the description of female characters and their narratives is quite subdued and they are often victims, strong female emotions and thoughts also take on a disruptive form as delivered by the monster. They say that "feelings of rage, terror, and sexual nausea, as well as idealizing sentiments, accrete for Mary and the monster around the maternal female image" (244). This indirect way of expressing female thoughts then reflects Shelley's struggles in her context. The deformed creature is a symbol of the restrictions she faces.

Even if we do not accept Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of the work as overtly, or barely covertly, anti-patriarchal and view Shelley as having a more conventional character, another influential feminist study by Mary Poovey interprets the triple-layered narrative

surrounding the monster as a strategy "to satisfy her [Shelley's] conflicting desires for self-assertion and social acceptance" (131). In this reading, like Gilbert and Gubar's, the narrative form of *Frankenstein* shows Shelley struggling to make her own thoughts public without being too improper.

These inexplicit and indirect ways may have preserved Shelley's and her female characters' real thoughts without violating the gender code of her age. However, was she really satisfied by the result? Did these indirect ways of representing women's voices resolve the author's desire to express what she thought? Perhaps not, it appears; if so, there would have been no impetus to change modes as we see in *Mathilda*. In fact, *Mathilda* not only alters but overturns the relationships and roles assigned to the female characters in *Frankenstein*. In the next section we present evidence that *Mathilda* is in part a rewritten *Frankenstein* meant to release Shelley's unfulfilled desire to express victimized women's voices directly.

2. Realization of the Victimized Women's Voices

In the previous section we discussed how female voices were suppressed and not satisfactorily expressed in *Frankenstein*. As for female voice in *Mathilda*, Susan Snider Lanser has already analyzed this novella comparing with *Frankenstein* suggesting that *Mathilda* is "a link between the 'feminized' Creature of *Frankenstein* and Shelley's own history" (168). She also says, "If *Frankenstein* uses male voices to write out a gendered anxiety, *Mathilda* uses female voice to write in a gendered history" (168–69). Lanser's discussion reveals the difficulty of expressing female voices in the age of male-centered Romanticism. Her discussion, however, does not consider the reasons Shelley chose to explore father–daughter incestuous feelings. This section examines the importance of similar episodes between *Frankenstein* and *Mathilda* in detail, and points out that *Mathilda* is the realization of victimized women's voices. The notion of the victimization of female characters is significant and related to Shelley's choice of father-daughter incest in *Mathilda*, which will be fully discussed in the next section.

The prototype of *Mathilda*, *The Fields of Fancy* has a frame narrative similar to that of *Frankenstein*. Visited by the spirit Fantasia in Rome, "I," a narrator mourning the death of her loved ones, meets "the Prophetess Diotima, the instructress of Socrates" (2: 353) in the

dreamy "Elysian Gardens" (2: 354). "I" sees a woman near Diotima and learns that it is Matilda, who relates her history, which would be the core story of *Mathilda*. The reason Shelley omitted this history in *Mathilda* is unclear; Margaret Davenport Garrett suggests that Shelley might have wanted to avoid using the same pattern as her previous novel (50). Garrett analyses the effect of the direct narration in *Mathilda* and concludes that the narrator has "more credibility" and that "the story now focuses on actions in the world rather than on a cosmic pilgrimage," as the content might otherwise lend itself to (51). Charlene E. Bunnell focuses on the theatricality of the novella and highlights the hints of Shelley's desire "to spotlight her protagonist and heighten the novella's dramatic quality by allowing Mathilda to recount her life to the audience directly" (86). What is certain is that the abandonment of the original frame narrative is more effective in enforcing the directness of the story, as Shelley leaves the indirect and inexplicit way of expression of female voice behind in *The Fields of Fancy*.

In this light, we should examine the narrative form of *Mathilda*, which has an important commonality with that of *Frankenstein*. *Mathilda* directly narrates the heroine's voice through a letter from Mathilda to her friend Woodville, a Percy Shelley-like poet eager to pursue a philosophy of idealism. This epistolary form is of course shared with *Frankenstein*, and like Robert Walton's epistles to his sister, Margaret Saville, *Mathilda* is narrated by the protagonist. The reader of *Mathilda* is put in the position of the addressee—together with, or identified with, Woodville, listening to her voice directly. Even without a frame narrative, which is one of the characteristics of *Frankenstein*, *Mathilda* retains the epistolary narrative that effectively delivers the protagonist's voice.

The continuity with *Frankenstein* can be perceived through several roles and experiences that make up elements of *Mathilda*, though they are rearranged and told through a female voice. Similar to the former, the latter includes the traumatic loss of a mother. In *Mathilda*, the heroine's mother, Diana, dies a few days after Mathilda's birth, reminiscent of Mary Wollstonecraft, who died soon after giving birth to Shelley. The difference from Frankenstein, who also loses his mother, Caroline, is that in the absence of Mathilda's mother, her father seeks his dead wife in his daughter in an unnatural manner, confessing that

in his view, "Diana died to give her [Mathilda] birth; her mother's spirit was transferred into her frame, and she ought to be as Diana to me" (2: 35). In *Frankenstein*, the death of Caroline serves as Frankenstein's motivation to discover the mysteries of life and death, and ironically, leads to the creation of new life from corpses. *Mathilda* extends this premise, as Diana's death creates another monster: Mathilda's father. Shelley reflects the father's monstrousness through his guilt about his incestuous feelings toward Mathilda. After being persistently questioned by his daughter, he desperately confesses his love:

> <u>Monster</u> as I am, you are still, as you ever were, lovely, beautiful beyond expression. What I have become since this last moment I know not; perhaps I am changed in mien as <u>the fallen archangel</u>. I do believe I am for I have surely a new soul within me, and my blood riots through my veins: I am burnt up with fever. But these are precious moments; <u>devil</u> as I am become, yet that is my Mathilda before me whom I love as one was never before loved: and she knows it now; she listens to these words which I thought, fool as I was, would blast her to death. (2: 28; emphases added)

"Monster" here naturally reminds us of Frankenstein's creature, who is also reproached as "devil." And "the fallen archangel" reminds us of Gilbert and Gubar's description of *Frankenstein* as a parodic *Paradise Lost.*

Shelley employs another technique in common in her treatment of her monsters—she does not disclose their names. The namelessness of Mathilda's father has been a point of discussion especially in criticism from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. Ranita Chatterjee, for example, explains his namelessness as follows: "he is the Father, the Law that attempts to hold up the patriarchal order," and not any longer a distinct individual (137). Hoeveler opines likewise that "he is less an individual than he is a role, the phallic embodiment of status and prerogative, privilege and patrilineal descent" (164). These two researchers reveal how the text uses the father's namelessness to illuminate psychological and social aspects of paternal, or patriarchal, role in the context of nineteenth-century patriarchal society. Furthermore, supposing that *Mathilda* represents an extension of the motivation to write *Frankenstein*, we can also say that the Mathilda's father's namelessness is an important element of his commonality with the creature. Monstrosity and namelessness are suc-

ceeded in the characterization of Mathilda's father, emphasizing the heroine as a victimized woman in the patriarchal society.

Of course, the standpoints of the two monsters are different. The creature in *Frankenstein* is a kind of child, artificially birthed by Frankenstein, while the "monster" in *Mathilda* is Mathilda's parent. This change is significant and necessary to convey Mathilda's psychological process effectively. The creature's suffering and hence the vengeance he wreaks on Frankenstein's circle are derived from the excess of Frankenstein's ambition to overreach the secret border between life and death. Frankenstein's guilt for the destruction caused by the creature also has traces in Mathilda's story. As Lanser points out, Mathilda's self-destruction is caused by "her (Romantic) need to know" (169); like Frankenstein, who transgresses the borders between the natural and unnatural to create an artificial life, Mathilda is eager to deeply know her father's forbidden desire—the monster in his heart. Framed this way, Mathilda, like Frankenstein, cannot avoid her responsibility as the creator of a monster. The creator's heavy consciousness of responsibility for his/her creation is thus a recurring theme in both *Frankenstein* and *Mathilda*.

There are numerous further instances that evince continuity from *Frankenstein* to *Mathilda*. Exhausted after listening to her father confess his unnatural feelings, Mathilda seeks him in a dream:

> When at [a] short distance from him I saw that he was deadlily [sic] pale, and clothed in flowing garments of white. Suddenly he started up and fled from me; I pursued him: we sped over the fields, and by the skirts of woods, and on the banks of rivers; he flew fast and I followed. We came at last, methought, to the brow of a huge cliff that over hung the sea which, troubled by the winds, dashed against its base at a distance. I heard the roar of the waters: he held his course right on towards the brink and I became breathless with fear lest he should plunge down the dreadful precipice; I tried to augment my speed, but my knees failed beneath me, yet I had just reached him; just caught a part of his flowing robe, when he leapt down and I awoke with a violent scream. (2: 31–32)

This episode is reminiscent of Frankenstein's dream after his creature is completed; horrified by his cre-

ation, he struggles to sleep and has a nightmare:

> I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (1: 40)

The dreams both not only imagine the deaths of the protagonists' loved ones but also evoke an incestuous image that seems to invite a Freudian reading. Although *Frankenstein* itself is not directly a story of incest, the passage quoted above certainly shows incestuous elements (Frankenstein's desire for his mother), which Shelley develops much further in *Mathilda*. Interestingly, Mathilda's dream cannot be regarded as incestuous in itself, but alludes rather heavily to and thus functions to remind us of Frankenstein's dream. If we read her dream as fulfilling her desire, to erase incestuous father is what she wants. What she hopes is his purification from incestuous feeling. That is reflected in her dream episode. Shelley's rewriting of the dream episode shows strong connection between *Frankenstein* and *Mathilda*, and, at the same time, it evinces Shelley's attempt to focus on female victim's thought, which is not satisfactorily expressed in *Frankenstein*.

We can cite another example of contrast, as well as commonality, between the two. Learning about her father's suicidal tendencies in his letter, Mathilda decides to pursue him; on the way, she has the following conversation with her old steward Gaspar:

> "Mark, Gaspar, if the next flash of lightning rend not that oak my father will be alive."
>
> I had scarcely uttered these words than a flash instantly followed by a tremendous peal of thunder descended on it; and when my eyes recovered their sight after the dazzling light, the oak no longer stood in the meadow—The old man uttered a wild exclamation of horror when he saw so sudden an interpretation given to my prophesy. I started up, my strength returned; with my terror; I cried, "Oh, God! Is this thy decree? Yet perhaps I shall not be too late." (2: 38)

Lightning and electricity also serve a key function in *Frankenstein*, of course. As shown in the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Shelley was stimulated

by Percy and Byron's talk about the experiment of re-animating the dead through galvanism. Electricity has a vital meaning in Frankenstein's career. Shelley uses the thunderstorm as young Frankenstein's turning point from alchemy to science:

> I remained, while the storm lasted, watching its progress with curiosity and delight. As I stood at the door, on a sudden I beheld a stream of fire issue from an old and beautiful oak, which stood about twenty yards from our house; and so soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump. (1: 27)

Here, lightning and electricity signify the spark of life; they encourage Frankenstein's creation of life. In *Mathilda*, however, the lightning does not signify the spark of life, but Mathilda's anticipation of her father's death. Thus, another motif of *Frankenstein* is reversed. Altering the literary genre, the narrator's gender, and the nature of the interaction of the narrative with life and death, but sharing the same concerns as *Frankenstein*, *Mathilda*'s narrative unfolds the voice of a female romantic protagonist.

Lastly, the victimization of a woman is further emphasized by the image of a monster. Mathilda is corrupted by the insidious monstrosity of her father:

> I believed myself to be polluted by the unnatural love I had inspired, and that I was a <u>creature</u> cursed and set apart by nature. I thought that like another Cain, I had a mark set on my forehead to shew mankind that there was a barrier between me and they. . . . Why when fate drove me to become this outcast from human feeling; this <u>monster</u> with whom none might mingle in converse and love; why had she not from that fatal and most accursed moment, shrouded me in thick mists and placed real darkness between me and my fellows so that I might never more be seen? (2: 60–61; emphases added)

Frankenstein's fear that "a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth" (1: 128) is realized here, as the father's monstrosity engenders a responsive monstrosity in his daughter. Mathilda and her father also relate to each other as a symbolic pair or doubles. In the final chapter of *Mathilda*, left alone by Woodville, who has rejected drinking poison with her and mutual destruction, Mathilda says, awaiting her death in sickness, "I go from this world where he is no longer and

soon I shall meet him in another" (2: 67). This denotes the ultimate, desperate hope to integrate the split double in death and also the utter impossibility of escaping from the monster who is part of oneself.

Mathilda rewrites *Frankenstein* from a viewpoint of a victimized female character. Several episodes reminiscent of *Frankenstein* are the proof of that. Now the victimized female character obtains her own voice to narrate her experience, feelings and thoughts. That was impossible in *Frankenstein*.

3. The Necessity of Incest

Mathilda, as we have seen, shares many episodes, or versions of them, with *Frankenstein*, but now they are narrated by a female protagonist whose role is totally different from the subsidiary one granted to women in *Frankenstein*. We can say that *Mathilda* supplies what is lacking in the previous novel; what it does not do, however, is to explain the necessity of the incest theme for the recovery of the victimized female voices. In Shelley's later novels, such as *Valperga: or, the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca* (1823), *Lodore* (1835), or *Falkner* (1837), she overtly expresses women's voices and thoughts in the genres of historical romance and proto-Victorian domestic novels, without incestuous episodes. We should clarify what underlays Shelley's need for writing about incest.

It is highly implausible to infer a literally incestuous relationship between Shelley and Godwin. Although she was affectionate toward her father, he was cold to her, particularly after she eloped to the continent with Percy Bysshe Shelley. When she was in Italy writing *Mathilda*, Godwin incurred extensive debts, and repeatedly asked for Percy's assistance. Moreover, when she lost her children—Clara in September 1818 and William in June 1819—and succumbed to depression, Godwin's words lacked sympathy (Nitchie 457–58).

To explain the contradiction between the forbidden desire between father and daughter in *Mathilda* and Shelley's own biographical situation, critics have attempted to theorize Shelley's feelings toward her father. For example, Anne K. Mellor states that the novella "both articulates her passionate devotion to her father and takes revenge for his cruelty toward her" (194), and the protagonist is an embodiment of Shelley's "desire both to sexually possess and to punish her father" (195). In addition, Tilottama Rajan compares *Mathilda* with Godwin's novel *Fleetwood*

(1805), wherein a 45-year-old protagonist, Casimir Fleetwood, marries a much younger orphan, Mary, and concludes that *Mathilda* is "on one level, Mary Shelley's revenge, a rewriting of Godwin's novel in which an incestuous patriarchy pays through death" (52). By portraying Mathilda's father as the cause of his daughter's distress and ultimately her physical and psychological destruction, Shelley may have indirectly expressed blame or anger toward Godwin. However, this motivation does not entail that she must write about incest; she could have used other ways to express her contempt. Rather, we should suppose that her condemnation of Godwin is incidentally contained in the episode of incest. To identify Shelley's direct motivation for writing *Mathilda*, I now examine her literary experience in itself, instead of hypothesizing about biographical facts.

When *Mathilda* was written, incest was a prominent topic among the Romantic poets, who do not always treat it as a hateful act. Percy Shelley's *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century* (1817) and Byron's close relationship with his half-sister Augusta Leigh reflected in *Manfred* (1817) are examples of innocuous incestuousness. On the other hand, incest was also used as a tragic and horrible theme, as seen for example in Horace Walpole's Gothic play *The Mysterious Mother* (1768). In *Mathilda*, incest is a tragedy; Mathilda describes her situation as reflective of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (2: 5).

The incest in *Mathilda* highlights the intertextual issues. Shelley's decision to write an incestuous story seems likely to have stemmed from her reading, in particular Italian dramatist Vittorio Alfieri's tragedy *Myrrha* (1785). According to her journal (226n4, 253n3),[8] Shelley was translating Alfieri's work in 1818 and 1819; moreover, *Myrrha* was a favorite of Byron and inspired his *Manfred* (Hoeveler 169).

Shelley draws elaborately on this tragedy in *Mathilda* to disclose Mathilda's father's guilt at his forbidden desire:

> I chanced to say that I thought Myrrha the best of Alfieri's tragedies; as I said this I chanced to cast my eyes on my father and met his: for the first time the expression of those beloved eyes displeased me, and I saw with affright that his whole frame shook with some concealed emotion that in spite of his efforts half conquered him: as this tem-

pest faded from his soul he became melancholy and silent. (2: 20–21)

Mathilda, unaware of her father's unnatural affection, innocently praises the tragedy, and he is undone because of its theme of incest.

Myrrha is based on an episode of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which Shelley had read and construed in Latin in 1815 (*Journals* 73–79, 89). However, in these works, it is the daughter, not the father, who has an incestuous desire, and who is described as the cause of the destruction of both. Although Ovid explicitly depicts Myrrha's incestuous desire and sexual union with her father in the dark of the night, Alfieri uses restraint, and only implicitly denotes incest through Myrrha's stabbing herself with a dagger:

> When I ask'd…
> It…of thee, … thou, … oh Euryclea, …then…
> Shouldest…have given… to my hands…a
>   sword:….
> I had died… guiltless;… guilty…now…I die!
> (353)[9]

Here, in the presence of her nurse, Euryclea, Myrrha obliquely confesses her incestuous love for her father and blames herself, stabbing herself to death. The theme of strong self-condemnation and confession is shared with *Mathilda*, but the latter moves the incestuous feeling away from the daughter to the father, and transforms the incestuous Myrrha into the incest victim Mathilda. This transformation suggests Shelley's wish to express the voice of victimized women, and to use *Mathilda* as a vehicle to revive their repressed voices.

Moreover, while writing *Mathilda*, Shelley learned about another woman who had been victimized in an incestuous relationship by her tyrannical father: Beatrice Cenci. In 1819, the Shelleys encountered a painting of Beatrice, a member of the Cenci family of sixteenth-century Italy, at the Palazzo Colonna, and were interested to learn her story. Percy Shelley who completed a drama called *The Cenci* (1820), had initially urged his wife to compose a tragedy about the family.[10] She did not do so, but did translate an Italian text concerning them, the "Relation of the Death of the Family of the Cenci" (1839). This text, like Alfieri's and Ovid's story of Myrrha, should have served as part of the inspiration for Shelley to write *Mathilda*. The story of Beatrice is particularly evident in the roles of Mathilda and her father as victim and seducer respectively.

Thus, attention to Shelley's reading and intellectual inputs in the period allows us to explain her motivation to work on an incest story without adopting a complicated psychoanalytical frame. Shelley's reading about incest was properly connected with her failure to express female victims' voices in *Frankenstein*, and that encouraged her to compose *Mathilda* as an opportunity to recover them.

Conclusion

Mathilda gives a new voice to victimized women, whose voices were suppressed in *Frankenstein*. Rather than incest itself, women's victimization and the value of their voices serve as Shelley's motivation to write *Mathilda*. Incest is certainly an attractive theme for scholars of Shelley to focus on due to its psychological interest, but Shelley's direct motivation to write this novella was unlikely to be any actual or imagined incestuous experiences on her part; rather, her reading and learning triggered her interest in incest, which functioned to allow her to express the women's voices. It appears that she was searching for a medium to express what was repressed and unrealized in *Frankenstein*, and that this incest story gave her the chance.

* This essay is an expanded and revised version of the paper "*Matilda* as a Female Creature in *Frankenstein*" presented at the Thirty-Eighth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts at Orlando Airport Marriott Lakeside, USA, on March 22, 2017.

Notes

1 In the manuscripts of this novella, Shelley used the spelling "Mathilda," but later she referred to it as "Matilda." Following the original manuscript and critics' custom, this paper uses the former.
2 See the essay by Elizabeth Nitchie in the Works Cited.
3 See, for example, Terence Harpold, Tilottama Rajan, Ranita Chatterjee, and Diana Edelman-Young.
4 See Diane Long Hoeveler.
5 Although there are several influential literary works on *Mathilda*, Judith Barbour's approach of comparing it with Italian literature, Graham Allen's discussion connecting it with Godwin's novel *Fleetwood* besides Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Robert Ready's analysis from a mythological literature perspective are notable.
6 Citations from *Frankenstein*, *The Fields of Fancy*, and *Mathilda* are based on *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*. 8 vols. Volume and page numbers are presented separated by a colon in parentheses.
7 This citation is from *Mary, a Fiction* in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*. Vol. 1.
8 Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert, the editors of *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814–1844*, opine that Shelley might have used a translation, *The Tragedies of Alfieri* by Charles Lloyd (1815), because she read Alfieri's works rapidly (226n7).
9 This citation is from *Myrrha* in *The Tragedies of Vittorio Alfieri*. Vol. 3.
10 See Mary Shelley's "Note on *The Cenci*" in her edition of *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1839) included in vol. 2 of *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, p. 283.

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