"THE LAND OF MIST AND SNOW":
"THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER" IN FRANKENSTEIN

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"THE LAND OF MIST AND SNOW":
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# ABSTRACT

"The Land of Mist and Snow": "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in *Frankenstein*

This thesis will concentrate on allusions to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" found in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Recent criticism has alluded to connections between these texts, but the subject has not been fully explored. Much criticism focuses on other works of literature that influenced Shelley's writing of *Frankenstein;* however, few critics have acknowledged "Rime"'s influence. This thesis claims that "Rime" has an undeniable presence in *Frankenstein* that deserves further analysis. By citing *Frankenstein*, exploring relevant scholarly research and examining Shelley's journal, I aim to reveal the many possibilities of such a comparison.

At the onset of her novel, Shelly connects *Frankenstein* with Coleridge's poem as indicated by direct textual references. The narrator, Walton, writes to his sister that he is going to the "land of mist and snow," but he "shall kill no albatross." While Walton makes the first reference to Coleridge's poem, Victor and the Creature are also vehicles for allusions to "Rime." In addition, similarities in setting, narration, themes and characterization reveal that "Rime" offers a unique reading of *Frankenstein*. Such comparison also elucidates a slavery subtext present in *Frankenstein* that will be explored in this study. This thesis explores the following main subject areas: Shelley reading "Rime"; Characters reading "Rime"; and The Slavery Subtext.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## MARY SHELLEY READING "RIME"

*Introduction*

This thesis will examine allusions to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" present in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* These direct textual citations and thematic parallels introduce an intertextual study of how *Frankenstein* relates to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." These nearly contemporaneous texts initially appear to possess little in common. Coleridge's poem tells a story about a mariner who shoots an albatross and encounters supernatural occurrences while drifting alone on the ocean. After experiencing various hardships, he barely escapes his sinking ship and acquires a "strange power of speech" that forces him to wander the earth telling his story to others (591). Mary Shelley's epistolary novel chronicles the life of a young and zealous scientist who artificially bestows life on a creature and then spontaneously abandons it. The text chronicles the Creature's experiences as he relentlessly pursues his creator.

Shelley's novel appears different from Coleridge's poem in its form and subject matter; however, thematic and textual similarities present an interesting connection between them. Allusions to "Rime" must be cataloged and examined in order to fully understand the intertextuality of Coleridge's poem and Shelley's

masterpiece. These connections shed a unique light on *Frankenstein* that currently has not been fully explored by critics. The strong presence of "Rime" in Shelley's novel revolves around *Frankenstein*'s narrator, Walton, who sets in motion a series of parallels between his narrative and the Mariner's. In doing so, Walton presents an interesting interpretation of his own narrative by exposing it as a rewriting of the Mariner's experiences.

For the purposes of this study, Mary Shelley's 1818 version will be the primary source for citations from *Frankenstein*. The changes in the 1831 may have been motivated by criticism of the 1818 version or as "damage-limitation" (Butler 1). The 1818 version retains its originality and shows Shelley's text before it was altered by public opinion. The 1831 version is only referenced when noted and necessary to be used due to additions not present in the 1818 text. The 1817 version of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" published in *Sibylline Leaves* is the primary source for all references to his text, due to the addition of marginal glosses and the omissions of most archaic spelling.

*Mary Shelley's Journal*

Connections between Coleridge and Shelley took root in her early childhood, during Coleridge's friendship with her father, William Godwin. Emily Sunstein states that of all Godwin's friends, Coleridge had the greatest impact on Shelley. As a young girl Shelley read Coleridge's periodical *The Friend* and Coleridge was probably her "first living model of erratic genius" (Sunstein 51).

Her continued connection with Coleridge's ideas and theories, however, extended beyond her childhood, as shown in her journal entries.

Mary Shelley's personal journal includes references to Coleridge and "Rime" which substantiate her connection with the poem. Her journal chronicles her literary life beginning when she met her husband, Percy, and ending approximately thirty years later. Evidence in her journal confirms her exposure to Coleridge's "Rime" and reveals a comparison between her own feelings of loneliness and the Mariner's. In the later entries of her journal, Shelley records her feelings of isolation. While in London in February 1841, Mary Shelley records in her journal, "If only I could leave England if I could say farewell to my solitude...then I would be thankful- alone alone- always alone- It will drive me mad" (qtd Feldman 571). Shelley professes that her loneliness will drive her to madness; however, she does not explain the root of her loneliness. Instead, in the same entry she questions her future, "Have the storms and wrecks of the last years destroyed my intellect, my imagination, my capacity of invention- What am I become?" (qtd in Feldman 571). Shelley's use of water imagery in describing the "storms and wrecks" that diluted her imagination is ironic because her husband, Percy, had drowned years before. In asking "what am I become," Shelley reveals that she is no longer the same as she once was. In these later entries of her journal, Shelley questions her self worth.

In the same 1841 journal entry, Shelley writes about a visit to the lake of Como and how its beauty and "pristine fervour" made her happy and granted her

long awaited enjoyment and bliss. However, despite the beautiful landscape, her satisfaction is temporary. She writes, "I am happy when the sun shines-& mountains rear their craggy heights around & the moon dips between the peaks...I enjoyed hours of perfect bliss last summer & I think - did we go these might be mine again...But I have no society" (qtd in Feldman 571). When Shelley remembers the beauty of her trips and happy times in the past, her sadness deepens realizing she no longer enjoys such pleasure.

Shelley's confession, "I have no society," reveals her deep isolation from the world (qtd in Feldman 571). Despite spending time with her son, Percy, and friends, she still feels psychologically alone. The literary society that was once such a vital part of her life had passed, and she confessed in her journal that she no longer had a society to call her own. As Mary Shelley contemplates leaving England, and her son, her feelings of loneliness become more evident. In closing her entry dated 1841, Mary Shelley writes in stanza form,

> Alone-alone-all-all alone
>
> Upon the wide, wide sea-
>
> And god will not take pity on
>
> My soul in agony!  (qtd in Feldman 573)

Shelley's entry slightly misquotes this stanza from "Rime." By writing the quotation in stanza form, as it appears in Coleridge's poem, Shelley's reference indicates a conscious allusion to "Rime." Mary Shelley's "alone- alone- all - all alone" references the Ancient Mariner's words as he floats alone across the sea,

Alone, alone, all, all alone.

Alone on a wide wide sea

And never a saint took pity on

My soul in agony. (236-239)

Shelley's adoption of Coleridge's quotation differs little from the stanza in "Rime."

The only significant difference is that while the Mariner states that "never a saint

took pity on my soul in agony," Shelley alters the statement to read, "And God

will not take pity on my soul in agony." Shelley's replacement of "saints" with

"God" suggests her abandonment not only by friends and family, but by God as

well.

Why does Shelley allude to "Rime" in her personal journal? What

connection did she feel with the Mariner that caused her to compare her sorrow

and isolation to his? To compare Shelley's experiences with the Mariner's, we

must first analyze the Mariner's situation. When the Mariner makes this statement,

he has already killed the albatross and watched his shipmates die. He is alone on

the ship and forced to look at his shipmates' corpses. Only memories accompany

the Mariner as he drifts alone on the sea. The repetition of the word "alone" four

times in the stanza emphasizes his extreme isolation. Interestingly, when Shelley

quotes this stanza, she too feels alone and wishes for the past days when she had a

society to enjoy. In the same entry she mentions London social life, but states it

no longer pleases or satisfied her. She, like the Mariner, longs for the past when

she was surrounded by the company of her friends and enjoyed happiness. In

these last journal entries, rather than focusing on the success of her life, Shelley

envisions herself in the same emotional state as the Mariner.

Shelley's life was lived in the public eye, and she saw the personal events

of her mother's life, Mary Wollstonecraft, disclosed to the public. Shelley's

journal does not include details from which scandalous rumors could originate.

Therefore, Shelley must have been consciously aware that the future publication of

her personal journal was a real possibility. Shelley's reference to "Rime,"

therefore, becomes one of her last statements to her readers. This 1841 journal

entry is the last significant entry in her journal; she wrote only one additional entry

in 1841 and was buried three years later. Mary Shelley concluded a lifetime of

writing with a quote from "Rime," suggesting her strong reverence for Coleridge's

poem. This fact poses a question few critics have acknowledged in her writing. If

"Rime" plays such a crucial role in her journal, what role, if any, does it play in

her other works? To what extent does Shelley allude to "Rime" in her novel

writing? I will examine just this issue – the role that "Rime" plays in Shelley's

most famous text, *Frankenstein*.

*Mary Shelley Reading Coleridge*

Mary Shelley's early exposure to "Rime" and repeated reading of it in the

years preceding the writing and revision of *Frankenstein* influenced her allusions

to "Rime." Shelley was only one year old when "Rime" was first published in

1798, but during the formative years of her life up to age 17 when she wrote *Frankenstein*, "Rime" remained in wide circulation, being reprinted in 1817, a year before *Frankenstein* was published. She also recorded in her journal hearing "Rime" read prior to her writing *Frankenstein*.

Prior to writing *Frankenstein*, Shelley read the poem at lease twice. She records reading the poem on September 15, 1814, October 5, 1814, and again on February 22, 1821. The first two readings verify Shelley's reading of the poem prior to her writing *Frankenstein*. Shelley's childhood exposure to her father's literary circle undeniably impacted her knowledge of Coleridge's poetry. Coleridge was a close friend to her father, William Godwin, and often visited Shelley's house. According to Sunstein, on an evening Coleridge was to recite poetry at the Godwin home, Mary Shelley and a friend hid under a sofa just out of sight. However, when Mrs. Godwin discovered them and ordered the girls to bed, Coleridge himself intervened. Due to his intercession, Shelley and her friend were allowed to remain in the room where they listened to Coleridge recite "Rime" (40). William Veeder records that Mary Shelley recounted how as a child she watched breathless from a corner as Coleridge himself read "Rime" aloud (178). Growing up in the shadow of Coleridge's presence and writing equipped Shelley with exposure to and understanding of Coleridge's poetry.

In a journal entry dated January 18, 1824, Mary Shelley wrote that she had recently seen Coleridge, and his "beautiful descriptions, metaphysical talk and subtle distinctions" reminded her of conversations with Percy and inspired her.

Eight years before her 1831 revision of *Frankenstein*, on December 2, 1834, she cites Coleridge's "Kubla Kahn" in her journal.

> My imagination finds other vents -- that is my treasure -- my Kubla Khan-- my Stately pleasure house through which a mighty river ran down to a sunless sea -- down to the sunless sea of oblivion which drinks any aspiration, my butterfly winged dreams which flit about my mind, illumine its recesses – and finish an ephemeral existence, to give place to another generation. (qtd in Feldman 543).

By citing stanzas from Coleridge's work, Shelley personalizes his work in relation to her own life. Shelley personalizes Coleridge's theory of imagination by referring to her "other vents" as her own personal "Kubla Khan." What exactly are the "other vents" Shelley's imagination finds? She leaves her readers to wonder. This reference to "Kubla Khan" ends on an ominous note when Shelley states that the "mighty river runs down to the sunless sea of oblivion which drinks any aspiration." The powerful image of a river leading to nowhere and swallowing her aspiration further substantiates Shelley's feelings that she had outlived her prime. She even admits that her fleeting imagination will make a place for a new generation. Shelley states that the "other vents" are "my 'Kubla Khan'" (Feldman 543). Her use of the word "my" to personify "Kubla Khan" indicates a sense of ownership or, at the very least, a sense that she related to Coleridge's poetry on a very personal level.

Furthermore, Coleridge's prose selections were also a source for Shelley's journal writing. On March 11, 1835, Shelley quotes a long section of Coleridge's "Poetical Works" and briefly quotes "Aids to Reflection" (Feldman 546). Shelley's journal references to Coleridge and his poetry, along with allusions which appear in her novel, substantiate Coleridge's influence on her writing.

*Review of Literature*

Scholarly research has for years acknowledged that Coleridge and Shelley were acquainted first through Mary Shelley's father, William Godwin, and later through her husband, Percy. In addition, the two writers frequented the same literary circles. However, the connection between these two writers exists far beyond their casual acquaintance; their connection expands into parallels in their writing as well. The references to "Rime" in *Frankenstein* have been almost ignored by all but a few critics in past years. A few casual references to this subject appear in a small number of articles and books, but have failed to be the focus of much critical study. Although various authors make brief references to Coleridge's influence in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, few explore the concept deeper than simply stating that a connection exists.

One such critic, Emily Sunstein, devotes two sentences to Coleridge's influence on *Frankenstein*. Sunstein states that "the familiar differences between her father and Coleridge would be at the heart of *Frankenstein*. Godwin believed

that government in its largest sense formed the virtues and vices of its citizens, whereas Coleridge had deeper psychological insights" (51). Sunstein's suggestion acknowledges what many critics have acknowledged, that *Frankenstein* is greatly influenced by Coleridge's ideas; however, Sunstein fails to develop further analysis.

Critics tend to read intertextuality in *Frankenstein* in one of two ways. Many critics have commented on Shelley's strong use of other texts in *Frankenstein*. Various critics, such as Phillip Wade, have explored the influence of Milton's *Paradise Lost* on *Frankenstein*. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar agree on the importance of Milton, but argue that *Frankenstein* offers a female version of *Paradise Lost*. Others, such as A.D. Harvey, consider the text as an assimilation of her father's novel, *Caleb Williams*, in which one man pursues another over guilt while society participates in the chase. Johnson argues that Shelley had read Gothic works such as Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* which influenced her use of a Gothic genre (xii). But while many have argued for the importance of a particular text, few have explored the role of Coleridge's "Rime" in *Frankenstein*, and none have examined this connection holistically.

Various other critics mention, in passing, a correlation between these texts, but the references are usually limited to a few lines. George Levine finds that the confrontation with Victor's Creature leaves the reader, "like Coleridge's Wedding Guest, 'a sadder and a wiser man'" (201). Similarly, Diane Johnson states that

Coleridge's "Rime," may have been the source from which the "obsessive teller of a tale" originated (xii).

Of those who acknowledge that Coleridge plays some role in *Frankenstein*, most focus on a single image or idea. Griffin argues that Shelley's "miraculous synthesis" in *Frankenstein* is typically "Coleridgean." Griffin explains that Shelley "recalls Coleridge's enthusiasm for the reconciliation of elements opposed" (36). In his article "Fire and Ice in *Frankenstein*," he focuses solely on fire and ice imagery in *Frankenstein*, but does draw some brief parallels to fire and ice imagery also present in "Rime."

Other critics seem to acknowledge the relationship between the texts but don't articulate it to their analysis. For example, Dana Martin Batory in her article "The Rime of the Polestar" compares *Frankenstein* and "Rime" to Arthur Conan Doyle's early stories. However, her comparison never directly links *Frankenstein* with "Rime," and only appears to connect the two texts in how they both relate to Arthur Conan Doyle's plots and settings (Batory 223).

The only critic who has examined *Frankenstein*'s debt to "Rime" is Sarah Webster Goodwin, who considers the images of domesticity in both texts. In her article "Domesticity and Uncanny Kitsch in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and *Frankenstein*," Goodwin explores the role of the female and the anti-family elements that resonate through both texts. Femininity is associated with death in the powerful gothic figure of LIFE-IN-DEATH. Goodwin compares the role of LIFE-IN-DEATH with violent situations that erupt in *Frankenstein*. Asserting that

everything in *Frankenstein* appears "antithetical to everything in the Mariner's tale." Goodwin affirms that " the structural inversion is really a mirror image: in both works domesticity is marginal, threatened, seemingly inadequate to the powers of informing the central acts and mysteries that are narrated"(93). Goodwin's approach is indeed thought provoking, but it focuses on only one element of similarity in the texts.

## *Story-telling*

While Diane Johnson makes her assertion in passing that *Frankenstein* owes its story- telling structure to "Rime," her idea deserves further attention (xiii). In the following section I will consider the structural relationships Shelley creates which parallel her text with Coleridge's. At first glance the narration techniques used in "Rime" and *Frankenstein* appear to have only one element in common: the use of a storyteller. In "Rime" there is one story being told by the Mariner to the Wedding Guest. *Frankenstein*, however, tells four stories: 1) Walton's to Mrs. Saville through letters, 2) Victor's to Walton on the ship, 3) the Creature's to Victor on the mountain and 4) the Creature to Walton on the ship after Victor's death. Upon further study of the narration techniques, both texts clearly exhibit more in common than only a storyteller. The storytellers share common physical attributes in addition to passionately and obsessively telling a story.

*Frankenstein* presents three storytellers. Walton. Victor and the Creature. whose stories are layered through the novel. Victor listens to the Creature's story: Walton listens to both the Creature and Victor: and Mrs. Saville reads all the stories. However, according to Wayne Chandler, Mrs. Saville is not the only reader of Walton's letters. By reading Walton's letters to Ms. Saville, all the readers of the novel become auditors. The various voices that tell the story have the potential to cloud the events or at least to influence perceptions. Readers are privy to the stories from various perspectives, but all are filtered through Walton's story-telling through his letters. It is also unclear to what extent sections of the letters were authored by Victor. After all, Victor does edit Walton's notes to give the "life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy" (179). Knowing that Victor and Walton both engage in writing the story's narrative makes it difficult to distinguish Walton's interpretations from Victor's. The complicated narration techniques used in *Frankenstein* leave much room for misinterpretation and prejudicial voices.

But this complicated narration finds precedence in the seemingly simple narration of "Rime." Similarly, "Rime" presents various voices in the story telling-structure. The poem's narrator tells a story about a Mariner who tells a story to a Wedding Guest. During the poem the reader hears the narrator, the Mariner and the Wedding Guest speak. Further through the poem three spirits speak to each other while the Mariner rests. Then, as if the narration of "Rime" is not complicated enough, Coleridge adds marginal glosses in the 1817 edition of

"Rime," adding yet another voice to the poem, a scholarly interpretive one. The voice of the glosses sounds stilted and instructive. Some critics claim that Coleridge added the marginal glosses so the text would resemble sea travelogues of the ancient times. But whatever their purpose, the glosses add another voice that has the potential to obstruct the reading of the poem.

The story-tellers in both texts become obsessed with telling their story. After the Mariner is rescued from his sinking ship, a "woeful agony" seizes him, his heart burns and he is forced to tell his tale to others (583). The Mariner must tell his "ghastly tale" (588) at "an uncertain hour" (586). He wanders from land to land with a "strange power of speech," encountering men who must hear his tale. This compulsion consumes him, and the Mariner has no other purpose than to tell his tale. His explanation of this obsession to tell his tale is cloaked in supernatural descriptions. The Mariner has no control over his actions; instead a strange power seizes him, and his heart burns with agony until he has finished.

Likewise, Walton's obsession with Victor's story becomes his entire purpose in writing to his sister, Ms. Saville. The letters that begin the novel are of a casual nature and contain personal recollection from Walton directly to his sister. However, once he meets Victor, the subject of his letters shift. Nothing in the letters pertains to Walton; instead they become a story entirely about Victor. Walton thoroughly records details about Victor and his Creature to the extent that the letters consist of nothing but Victor's recitation to Walton. The letters conveniently shift to chapters to more fully organize Victor's story. For Walton to

be able to remember and record Victor's story in such great detail reveals Walton's obsession with the tale. At one point Victor discovers that Walton made notes about their conversations and endeavors to see them. In an attempt to ensure posterity an accurate recounting of the story, Victor edits Walton's notes (179). Therefore it becomes clear that Walton was taking notes all along. He then uses the notes to construct his letters to Ms. Saville. With such a long narrative to reconstruct, Walton must have spent endless hours writing. Victor's statement that he does not want a "mutilated" version of his story to be passed to posterity indicates that he thinks Walton will share the story with others. Like the Mariner, Walton does share the story with others. His obsessively detailed letters ultimately become a travelogue for posterity to read.

*Listening to a Monster: Physical Descriptions*

In addition to sharing an obsession with story-telling, the narrators of "Rime" and *Frankenstein* share a striking physical appearance that gives them the ability to seize unwilling listeners. For example, the physical descriptions of the Creature when he tells his story to Victor bear remarkable similarities to the description of the Mariner. Both the Creature and the Mariner seize their listeners in the same manner, by placing them in a semi-hypnotic state. While the Mariner seizes the Wedding Guest and entices him with his "glittering eye" to hear his tale, the Creature seizes Victor and states, "I entreat you to hear me" (77). Neither the

Wedding Guest nor Victor is initially willing to hear the story; instead each must be enticed to listen. The Mariner entreats the Wedding Guest to "Be calm" (350), the exact words the Creature uses when he tries to convince Victor to listen to his story. Victor attempts to strike the Creature, but the Creature eludes him and says "Be calm" (77). The use of these words at parallel times in the text suggests similarities in the Wedding Guest's and Victor's responses: both are initially hostile and in need of being calmed. Fearful of the physical appearance of the Mariner, the Wedding Guest asks, "by thy long grey beard and glittering eye/ Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?" ( 3-4). The physical appearance of the storytellers inspires fear in the listeners. The Wedding Guest states blatantly his fear of the Mariner's physical condition, "I fear thee and thy glittering eye/ And thy skinny hand, so brown" (232-233). Likewise, Victor appears fearful of the physical condition of the Creature and because of this hesitates to hear his tale. When the Creature approaches him, Victor describes his "unearthly ugliness" and tells his Creature to "Begone, vile insect!" (77).

Fearful of the Mariner's glittering eyes, the Wedding Guest resists listening to him based on that physical attribute. The Wedding Guest becomes more resistant stating, "Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon" (11). However, within a stanza the Wedding Guest is listening docilely "like a three years child" (15) and learns that the "Mariner hath his will" (16), suggesting that the Mariner has the supernatural power to hypnotize. John Livingston Lowes discusses the "pair of terrible eyes that from the end of the eighteenth century haunt English fiction"

(252). Suggesting that the literary source of the powerful eye descends from the "baleful eyes" of Milton's Satan, Lowes states that historical factors contribute to the image as well. Lane Cooper, however, looks to cultural sources other than literary influences for the eye. Shelley and Coleridge may have had knowledge of the mesmerists and animal magnetizers common in London in the 1780's (qtd. in Lowes 252). The Mariner's ability to entrance the Wedding Guest suggests his ability to engage in ocular hypnosis. Initially, the Wedding Guest does not want to be detained by the "grey-bearded Loon," but becomes calmed by the Mariner's "glittering eye" (17,24). The Wedding Guest is entranced by the Mariner's eye, as indicated in the following lines from the 1798 version of "Rime":

'Marinere! thou hast thy will:

For that, which comes out of thine eye, doth make

My body and soul to be still.' (363-365)

According to the Wedding Guest, whatever "comes out of thine eye" has the power to make the Wedding Guest a still and steady listener.

In contrast, the eye in *Frankenstein* inspires fear. Victor's attitude towards his Creature changes from love to hate when he sees the "dull yellow eye of the Creature open" (39). But while both texts focus on the eye and its power to instill fear, the results of that fear differ. Once he sees the Creature's eye open, Victor grows fearful and flees the apartment (38-39). The Creature's horrible "watery eyes" echo the "glittering eye" of the Mariner, and both eyes have the power to motivate behavior (39; 17). Victor explains that the Creature's eyes "seemed

almost of the same color as the dun white sockets in which they were set" (39).
The Creature's eyes are scary, colorless and drab, rather than hypnotic like the
Mariner's. Victor flees as a result of observing the Creature's eye, but the
Wedding Guest becomes motionless while looking into the Mariner's eyes.

But the eye is not the only physical similarity between the Creature and the
Mariner: their complexions also connect them. Victor describes the Creature's
"yellow skin" that barely covers the muscles and arteries that pulsated underneath
(39). The Wedding Guest describes the Mariner's "long and lank and brown" hand
(218). Victor's Creature has a "shrivelled complexion and straight black lips" (39),
while the Mariner also has "black lips" after he suffers without water on the
drifting ship (149). The brownish color of the Mariner and the Creature associate
them with the working class or perhaps with slaves. Each character that
encounters Victor's Creature reacts to his physical characteristics in a negative
way. The young William calls the Creature an "ugly wretch...an ogre," and even
the Creature, in accepting society's opinion, compares himself to the "arch fiend"
(17,111). In the same manner, the Pilot's boy says that the Mariner has a "fiendish
look" (571). The Mariner's skin appears "ribbed as the sea-sand" (231), while the
Creature wears a "shrivelled complexion" (39). These descriptions of "ribbed"
and "shrivelled" skin indicate the Mariner and the Creature have similar skin
textures. In both texts the foci of the narrative, the Mariner and the Creature, are
strikingly similar in their appearances.

Shelley's beginning place for her novel brings haunting memories of the setting in "Rime." The Mariner states that "A good south wind sprung up behind" and guides the ship while the albatross follows (87). Likewise, Walton writes that "this breeze, which has traveled from the regions toward which I am advancing gives me a foretaste of those icy climes" (5). Walton's personification of the wind seems reminiscent of the wind that pushes the Mariner's ship onward. Walton even writes that " the phenomena of the heavenly bodies undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes" (5). Walton appears to be referencing the "spirit...nine fathom deep" that follows the mariners from the land of mist and snow. Walton's descriptions of the wind, spirits, and icy climate all parallel the setting of "Rime."

The iceberg settings are also important in how Coleridge and Shelley frame their narratives. Moreover, the cold settings provide a stark contrast to the pleasure the characters are fruitlessly seeking. When Coleridge's poem begins outside a wedding festival where the Mariner stops the Wedding Guest, the setting appears festive and jovial, indicated by the "merry din," "loud bassoon" and "merry minstrelsy" (8,32, 23). However, when the Mariner tells his story to the Wedding Guest, the setting shifts from the merry rural setting of a wedding feast to the cold barren setting of the sea. The setting of the story is one of "both mist and snow" where the weather is cold and "ice, mast high" floats by the ship (51,53). The rest of the poem takes place on the cold sea; however, by the end of

the poem Coleridge returns the characters to the place of beginning, the wedding feast. Coleridge begins and ends in a temperate climate, while the major actions of the story occur in an iceberg setting.

Shelley begins and ends her novel in an iceberg setting, while the major actions of the story occur in a temperate climate. *Frankenstein*'s structure, therefore, is the reverse of "Rime." The setting begins at sea in the cold climate of Russia. When Shelley introduces Victor into the novel, the setting shifts away from the iceberg setting to the rural and urban settings of Victor's life in Europe. By the end of the novel, Shelley returns to the iceberg setting of Walton and Victor on the ship. The story is told within the framework of the iceberg setting. Even though most of the actions of the story take place in another setting, the reader is constantly aware that Victor is on the ship in the Arctic recounting his experience to Walton. At the end of the novel, Walton resigns himself to returning the ship southward upon the urging of his shipmates. Andrew Griffin writes that at the end, Walton "sails for home, away from the world of Romantic poetry, toward the native regions of the Victorian novel, a temperate zone where one can tell hot from cold and where, for better or for worse, human relations flourish" (Griffin 51).

Perhaps the most intriguing element regarding the iceberg settings is found in what happens to each ship as the albatross and the Creature appear. In both "Rime" and *Frankenstein*, the ice actually dissipates and the ships are freed from the constraints of the icebergs after the appearance of the albatross and the Creature.

While the Mariner's ship and its mariners experience many aspects of nature while drifting, their initial experience on the sea involves a dangerous encounter with icebergs. The Mariner explains, "And now the storm-blast came, and he /Was tyrannous and strong:/ he struck with his o'ertaking wings, / And chased us south along" (41-44). As the ship is driven southward by a powerful storm, the mariners encounter a colder climate.

>      And now there came both mist and snow,
>
>      And it grew wonderous cold:
>
>      And ice, mast-high, came floating by.
>
>      As green as emerald.
>
>      And through the drifts the snowy clift
>
>      Did send a dismal sheen:
>
>      Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken-
>
>      The ice is all between.  (51-58)

The Mariner portrays the icebergs as lifeless formations threatening the ship. The frozen environment is desolate, and no animals or humans are present.

The Mariner describes the all-encompassing ice: "the ice was here, the ice was there/ The ice was all around/ It cracked and growled, and roar'd and howl'd/ Like noises in a swond" (58-62). Suddenly, emerging through the ice and fog, the albatross approaches the ship. The mariners hail it in God's name; they feed the bird; it flies around the ship and then miraculously, the ice dissipates.

> It ate the food it ne'er did eat,
>
> And round and round it flew.
>
> The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
>
> The helmsman steer'd us through. (67-70)

This stanza indicates that the Mariner associates the bird with the splitting of the ice. When the albatross eats and circles above the ship, the iceberg breaks away and the ship is free.

The initial setting of *Frankenstein* also occurs within a similar setting. Walton writes that he wants to travel to "icy climes" and to feel a "cold northern breeze" (5). Walton's experiences with Victor and the Creature all occur on a ship that, like the Mariner's, is traveling in arctic conditions. His fourth letter indicates that the ship has encountered icebergs, and it is within the iceberg setting that Walton encounters Victor and hears the story of the Creature.

Mary Shelley's introduction of the Creature bears a remarkable resemblance to the introduction of the albatross, in "Rime." Walton writes that "we were nearly

surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides, scarcely leaving her the sea room in which she floats. Our situation was somewhat dangerous, especially as we were compassed round by a very thick fog" (12). Walton states that the ship is encompassed by ice and unable to maneuver out of the confines of the frozen structures, when he catches his first glimpse of the Creature which will be the subject of his narrative. The mist clears away and then "a strange sight suddenly attracted our attention...a low carriage...passed on towards the north"(12). The Creature streaks across the ice, and ironically in the moments following the Creature's appearance the "very thick fog" relapses (12). That night the sailors hear the "ice ground" and break, freeing their way out of the confines of the iceberg (12). The appearance of the creature coincides with the ship's freedom from the icebergs.

In summary, just as the Mariner's ship is set free from the ice after the appearance of the albatross, so is Walton's ship freed from the ice after the Creature's first appearance. To fully examine this similarity in the text, one must examine the role of both the Creature and the albatross. Initially the Creature and the albatross appear drastically different. One is the product of a scientific experiment that kills innocent people; the other is a sea-faring animal that brings good fortune to the mariners. However, upon further examination, it is clear that both are Creatures rejected by mankind. The Mariner kills the albatross for no apparent reason, while Victor abandons his creation for no apparent reason. Both the Creature and the albatross are martyrs to humankind's inconsistency. The

Mariner's arbitrary killing of the albatross sets in motion a series of events which involve death and powerful acts of nature, in the same way that Victor's rejection of his Creature sets in motion a series of murderous acts due to his act against the natural laws of creation.

Ironic also is the setting in which Victor first encounters his Creature. While traveling with his father and Elizabeth, Victor travels alone to the summit of Montanvert. After overlooking the "sea of ice," he "descended upon the glacier...that was uneven, rising like the waves of a troubled sea" (76). The pristine beauty of the ice-covered river and the glacier penetrate through Victor's description. The setting is one of coldness, desolation and, for a few moments, peace.

> I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice...I was troubled: mist came over my eyes, and I felt a faintness seize me; but I was quickly restored by the cold gale of the mountains. I perceived, as the shape came nearer, that it was the wretch whom I had created. I trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach, and then close with him in mortal combat. (76)

The Creature possesses "superhuman" speed and size as he bounds over the icebergs. His supernatural quality fits within Victor's supernatural description of the icebergs. The power of the Creature as he easily streaks across the ice is harmonious with the cold stark environment he inhabits. It is in the cold setting of

the ice that the Creature convinces Victor to listen to his tale. Victor states that he "determined at least to listen to his tale" (79).

Likewise, the albatross also appears to be an extension of the environment. The albatross literally comes out of the fog. The mariners believe that the albatross causes the wind to blow, and they also blame it for the fog and mist. The albatross follows the ship despite the mist or clouds. When the Mariner blesses the sea creatures, the albatross falls from his neck and sinks into the sea. Even in death, the albatross appears linked with the other sea creatures. By sinking into the water, the dead albatross becomes one with the sea. Both the albatross and Victor's Creature are associated with positive results upon their first appearance and are supernaturally tied to the iceberg setting in which they spend much of their time.

### Fire and Ice

Both authors juxtapose images of fire with the iceberg settings that are so pivotal in each story. Discussing Mary Shelley's use of fire and ice in *Frankenstein*, in "Fire and Ice in *Frankenstein*." Andrew Griffin draws much attention to the interplay of these conflicting elements. (55). This "miraculous synthesis," as Griffin terms it, is typically Coleridgean, and Shelley's use of contrasts between hot and cold create a balance between the discordant qualities. Griffin states this influence comes from the fire and ice imagery in "Kubla Kahn," yet one should not forget that "Rime" constantly demonstrates the same contrasts.

"Rime" is justly in "miraculous synthesis" with the fire and ice present in *Frankenstein.* In "Rime" the water burns " a still and awful red" (275). The western wave is described as "all a-flame," while the "bloody sun" hangs solemnly in the cold night sky (171,112). Throughout the iceberg setting, the sun contrasts with the cold environment. Griffin explains that Coleridge's "Kubla Kahn" takes place in a dichotomous "sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!" (36). Also, in "Frost at Midnight" fire and ice imagery contrasts the warmth inside the house and the coldness outside. However, Griffin fails to connect fire and ice in *Frankenstein* with imagery in "Rime."

Likewise, throughout *Frankenstein,* fire and ice are contrasted in reference to the Creature. For instance, when the Creature entices Victor to his hut on Montanvert, Victor states, "seating myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale" (79). The ice outside the Creature's hut contrasts with the fire within. Griffin highlights the Creature's use of fire while living outside of the De Lacey's home. The Creature gathers wood for his hosts; he watches the De Lacey's as they gather around the fire. This warmth inside the house serves as a contrast to the cold hut in which the Creature resides. Once he is driven from the De Lacey's home, the Creature is doomed to the icy glaciers. The Creature also demonstrates the contrast between fire and ice in his own suicide. He tells Walton that he will travel to the earth's most northern corner and burn himself on a funeral pile. The Creature chooses a cold environment for his death, yet chooses fire as the mechanism. He states that he will "exult in the

agony of the torturing flames" and "my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds" (191). By exulting in the flames, the Creature views his death as a triumph. As the novel ends, Walton watches the Creature leap from the ship onto his ice-raft and disappear into the darkness. According to the Creature's prediction, he will soon commit suicide. The inevitable image of the Creature's burning body floating aimlessly across a cold northern sea is the last image given to the readers of *Frankenstein*.

## *Water and its Creatures*

When the Creature decides to commit suicide, he equates himself with the sea and its creatures by setting a "funeral pile" at sea (190). His last resting-place becomes the sea, in much the same manner as the Mariner's albatross. Both Coleridge and Shelley use water imagery throughout "Rime" and *Frankenstein*; however, beyond the obvious similarity that both settings occur at sea, there are also pivotal moments in both texts associated with water creatures. At a pivotal moment in the text of *Frankenstein*, just after Victor's marriage to Elizabeth as they walk across the lake, Elizabeth states, "Look also at the innumerable fish that are swimming in the clear waters, where we can distinguish every pebble that lies at the bottom. What a divine day! how happy and serene all nature appears" (161). Victor's response to Elizabeth's nature-centered comment is, "Thus Elizabeth endeavored to divert her thoughts and mine from all reflection upon melancholy

subjects" (161). While Elizabeth is sensitive to aspects of nature, Victor is oblivious to them, consumed instead with fear of his Creature.

Creatures of the water also play a role in a pivotal moment in "Rime." After the Mariner kills the albatross and watches his shipmates die as a result, he is alone on the sea with only the creatures of the sea as company. While he watches the sea creatures, his disdain for them melts into admiration.

I watched the water-snakes:

They moved in tracks of shining white,

And when they reared, the elfish light

Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship

I watch'd their rich attire:

Blue, glossy green and velvet black,

They coiled and swam, and every track

Was a flash of golden fire.  (276-288)

In this stanza the Mariner's attitude towards the sea creatures shifts. The negative qualities he first sees as "hoary flakes" and "elfish light" change to "rich attire" that invokes in him a "spring of love." It is at this pivotal moment that the Mariner learns to love the sea creatures, and in turn the albatross falls from his neck. The Mariner begins with an attitude like that of Victor's -- lacking

appreciation for nature -- but he ends the poem with an attitude like that of Elizabeth's -- one of noticing the beauty in nature.

When the Mariner blesses the sea creatures, the albatross "fell off and sank like lead into the sea" (294-295). Even his ship sinks "like lead" after he narrowly escapes. Coleridge describes both the dead albatross and the ship as "lead" when they sink. The powerful water overtakes both with little resistance. The water literally overtakes the physical evidence of the Mariner's experience at sea. Likewise, when Victor disposes of the remains of the female Creature, he "determined to throw them into the sea" (142). During the middle of the night, he gathers the pieces of his creation in a basket, sails out four miles from shore and throws the basket into the sea. He "listened to the gurgling sound as it sunk" (143). Victor buries the evidence of his experiment at the bottom of the sea. Ironically, Victor himself dies while at sea on Walton's ship. Even the Creature chooses the sea as his deathbed. The Creature foretells that "my ashes will be swept into the sea" and Walton watches the Creature as he is "borne away by the waves" (191). In both texts, the evidence of a secret crime is buried in the water.

Shelley uses Coleridge's "Rime" as fertile ground for images in constructing *Frankenstein*. The parallels between setting and narration in the two texts suggest that Shelley's reading of "Rime" influenced the writing of her masterpiece; however, Shelley is not the only one to be influenced by "Rime." Throughout *Frankenstein*, characters' attitudes and behaviors are structured in response to their own reading or misreading of "Rime."

# SECTION II

# CHARACTERS READING COLERIDGE:

## *Walton Reading Rime*

In both the 1818 and 1831 publications of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* Walton writes to his sister that he is going to "unexplored regions, to the land of mist and snow; but I shall kill no albatross, therefore do not be alarmed for my safety" (10). Walton's prophecy that he "shall kill no albatross" directly alludes to Coleridge's "Rime" and compares his own situation with the Mariner's. This allusion sets up a series of references throughout *Frankenstein* where characters in the novel show a knowledge of "Rime." Walton keeps his word and does not "kill an albatross," but other characters in his story do. This reference to the Mariner's murder of an innocent albatross foreshadows the eventual death of innocent people in *Frankenstein*. In setting up the novel with a reference to the killing of an albatross, Walton creates an expectation that events in *Frankenstein* will be similar to events in "Rime."

So important was the allusion to "Rime" that Shelley added another reference to Coleridge's poem in her 1831 version. Shelley retains the full text of the letter but adds five additional sentences suggesting a stronger reference to Coleridge and the Mariner.

If I should come back to you as worn and woeful as the 'Ancient Mariner', you will smile at my allusion, but I will disclose a secret. I have often attributed my attachment to, my passionate enthusiasm for, the dangerous mysteries of ocean to that production of the most imaginative of modern poets. (7)

In the 1831 version Walton writes that his sister will "smile at my allusion," indicating that Ms. Saville will recognize the reference to the Mariner. Therefore Ms. Saville has obviously read or at least been exposed to Coleridge's "Rime." Walton expects his sister to "smile," indicating that she will find his allusion entertaining. But why would she smile at such an allusion? Perhaps Ms. Saville perhaps shares some of Walton's admiration for Coleridge because she would be entertained by such a reference. Her smile indicates a maternal attitude towards Walton's frivolous sea-faring adventures.

If Walton will return home as "worn and woeful" as the Mariner, as his letter to his sister predicts, Walton also expects to undergo a saddening and life-changing experience. Walton's use of the word "worn" indicates something that has outlived its prime and has a battered appearance. To return "woeful," Walton must be saddened by some event. From this statement, clearly Walton desires to find life changing and saddening experiences on his expedition to the seat of frost. Walton writes that he has "often" credited his interest in the ocean to Coleridge. The use of "often" indicates that Walton has connected his own behavior with the Mariner's on more than a few occasions, hinting that Walton's life resembles the

Mariner's. From this statement, and through the events in his narrative, it is clear that the Mariner is a controlling metaphor in Walton's life.

While Walton often thinks of the Mariner, he first confesses that interest in his letter to Ms. Saville when he states that he "will disclose a secret" that he attributes his interest in the dangers of the ocean to Coleridge's poem (7). Perhaps there is much in Walton's life that resembles the Mariner, and despite what Walton calls his secret, Ms. Saville will probably not be surprised by his confession. Why does Walton attribute his enthusiasm for the ocean to "Rime"? After all, the Mariner's experience on the ocean is far from a positive one. The Mariner encounters various obstacles, including the death of all his shipmates, and barely escapes his sinking ship. Far from a positive role model, the Mariner commits an atrocious act by shooting the albatross, but even this does not deter Walton from identifying with the Mariner. What does this tell us about the narrator of *Frankenstein*?

Walton's reading of "Rime" borrows a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy: Because of his interest in "Rime," Walton places himself in situations that make him parallel the Mariner's experiences. Like the Mariner, Walton thrives on adventure. Both the Mariner and Walton experience much of the same hardships. Both are sailors who encounter life-threatening icebergs. Both face famine, thirst and inclement weather during their journey. During one of Walton's expeditions, he "voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep," the same

experiences the Mariner undergoes (7). After the Mariner shoots the albatross, his shipmates suffer from severe thirst,

> There passed a weary time. Each throat
>
> Was parched, and glazed each eye.
>
> A weary time! a weary time!
>
> How glazed each weary eye!...
>
> With throat unslacked, with black lips baked
>
> Agape they heard me call.  (143-146, 162-163)

The Mariner describes the shipmates' throats as dry and their lips as baked by the sun and extreme thirst.  Both the Mariner and Walton are at some point ostracized by their fellow sailors. The Mariner's fellow sailors believe that  the Mariner's act is a "hellish thing, and it would work'em woe" (91-92). They call the Mariner a "wretch" for killing the albatross, which they mystically believe was a bird of good luck. Walton's ship is immured in ice and the sailors rebel against Walton's authority, threatening mutiny, but Walton recognizes that the sailors "make a demand, which, in justice, I could not refuse" (182).  They insist that Walton commit to a solemn promise that once the ship is free from the ice, the journey will terminate and the ship will sail for home. Despite *Frankenstein*'s impassioned plea from his deathbed that they continue the journey, Walton determines not to lead his sailors into more danger and consents to the sailors' request. This difference at the end of the novel is significant;  rather than act in such a way as to destroy the others, Walton chooses otherwise. In this way, Walton has become like

the Wedding Guest, who listens to a story and learns from it, becoming wiser at the end.

In addition to the physical hardships the Mariner and Walton endure, mental hardships also plague them on their journey. Both speak of feeling isolated despite the presence of other sailors. Walton professes that he never found a "friend on the wide ocean" (9). Likewise, the Mariner professes that he is "alone, alone , all, all alone/ alone on a wide wide sea" (236-239). The Mariner temporarily enjoys the company of fellow sailors, but becomes physically alone after they die. In contrast, Walton is surrounded by other men, but he is psychologically alone on the ship, until he befriends Victor. Their loneliness becomes a hardship as real as any iceberg or famine.

Walton borrows from "Rime" in describing his own adventures to arctic landscapes, suggesting his own misreading of Coleridge. In the first letter of Shelley's novel, Walton describes the "cold northern breeze" and the "icy climes" he inhabits (5). He directly alludes to "Rime" when he writes "I am going to unexplored regions, to the land of mist and snow" (10). In "Rime," the Mariner meets the albatross in a land where "both mist and snow" follows his ship (51). He also states that a spirit from the "land of mist and snow" followed his ship (134). Walton's reference, however, shows enthusiasm, not weariness as a result of the Mariner's story. To the Mariner the land of mist and snow brought danger and death, but to Walton it suggests excitement. The Mariner tells the Wedding Guest about his visit to the land of mist and snow as a warning. Yet, Walton does

not read the poem as a warning. Instead he uses the Mariner's experiences as a justification for his own dangerous expeditions.

Walton's comparison between his experiences at sea and the fictitious account of sea life in "Rime" reveals his naiveté during the first few letters of the novel. In Walton's first letter to Mrs. Saville, he writes that he is "far north of London" where he will "tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man" (3). His excitement in the journey northward is evident in his first letter where he states that "inspirited by this wind of promise, my day dreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost, and desolation, it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight" (3). Walton himself admits that his daydreams are "fervent and vivid" and even compares his joyous adventure in arctic climes to the "joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river" (6). His drastic understatement in comparing arctic sea travels and child's play in a boat indicates his true naiveté. He states that the present time is the "most favorable period for traveling in Russia"(7). Walton believes he is embarking on an adventurous expedition where he will discover a "region of beauty and delight"; but his own allusions to "Rime" indicate that what he discovers may not be beautiful as he expects, nor will the experience be delightful.

Walton appears to construct his own narrative on the Mariner's life. To credit his love of the ocean to a fictitious character such as the Mariner reveals that

Walton blurs the lines between reality and fiction, framing his own life and his narrative around a fictitious poem. If Walton uses "Rime" as an inspiration for his adventures, then he clearly misreads Coleridge's poem. Walton views the Mariner's adventures with childlike optimism, apparently without seeing the seriousness of Coleridge's tale. Walton fails to learn from the Mariner's mistakes and does not realize that Coleridge's poem is a fictitious account of the sea. Walton's expectations of his sea-faring adventure and the story that follows become extended metaphors of the Mariner's story.

*Victor Reading "Rime"*

Walton's reading of "Rime" influences not only his own behavior, but also the manner in which he narrates Victor's story. But Walton is not the only character who references "Rime." Victor also references "Rime" in comparing his own fear of the Creature with the Mariner's fear of the supernatural beings which direct his ship. Victor flees his apartment immediately following the awakening of his Creature and spends the night wandering aimlessly. While Victor recounts this experience, he states that his "heart palpitated in the sickness of fear and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me" (40). Next Victor cites in stanza form a quote from "Rime" as indicated below,

Like one who, on a lonely road,

Doth walk in fear and dread,

And, having once turn'd round, walk'd on,

And turns no more his head;

Because he knows a frightful fiend

Doth close behind him tread. (41)

When the stanza occurs in Coleridge's poem, the Mariner has just explained

that the dead mariners "All fixed on me their stony eyes, / That in the moon did

glitter" (430-441). Just as the Mariner fears the "stony eyes" of the dead mariners,

Victor fears the approaching Creature's eyes. In "Rime" the Mariner dares not

look back because he caused the death of his shipmates and fears to look again on

their faces. The Mariner fears the grotesque look of their decaying bodies and

feels that their spirits are lurking behind him.

Victor, when he quotes this stanza, is trying desperately to get far away

from the Creature he has created and rejected. Victor passes the streets with

"quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the

street would present to my view" (40). He too fears the Creature's grotesque

appearance and views the Creature as an evil spirit lurking behind his every step.

Victor fears the frightful fiend might attack him; even on his wedding night he

walks the passages of the house, "inspecting every corner that might afford a

retreat to my adversary" (165).

It is unclear whether Victor actually makes this allusion or if the allusion is

inserted by Walton. Given Walton's earlier confessions, this allusion sounds more

like something he would say. Furthermore, why does Walton record the allusion

in stanza form? This allusion is cited in stanza form as it appears in "Rime." By setting this allusion apart from the rest of the text and using stanza format, the allusion is given more merit as a direct citation from Coleridge's poem. It is also set apart from the rest of the narrative and made more conspicuous. The use of this allusion indicates a conscious aim to connect the Mariner's experiences with Victor's plight. It serves as one of the many allusions that Shelley consciously inserts into Walton's narrative, blending the line between Walton's reading of "Rime" and our reading of Frankenstein. However, Victor continues to compare his own situation with the Mariner's throughout his story, perhaps nowhere more perplexing than in reference to his own marriage.

## The Fearful Bridegroom and Absent Wedding Guest

As Victor approaches the festival of his own marriage to Elizabeth, he comments on the contrast between what his emotions ought to be and what they are. Rather than feeling joy, he envisions himself in the same emotional state as the Mariner after killing the albatross. Victor asks himself, "Could I enter into a festival with this deadly weight yet hanging round my neck, and bowing me to the ground" (126). In light of his upcoming marriage, this comparison to the Mariner's story seems untimely. William Veeder explains that Victor's allusion establishes "the permanence of Victor's alienation, of his irrevocably unsocial nature. Like the Mariner, Victor can never be a bridegroom" (106). Veeder also

states that an "erotic hatred of marriage" is expressed in *Frankenstein*. Victor, himself a bridegroom, connects himself, not with Coleridge's bridegroom, or even the Wedding Guest, but instead with the solitary Mariner (106). This presents a puzzling dichotomy regarding marriage in *Frankenstein* which will be studied in this chapter.

Victor's thoughts of his potential bride reveal the anti-marriage elements present in the text. He dreams of Elizabeth the night he bestows life on his Creature, foreshadowing the deathly result of his actions. What he anticipates as a life-giving moment of creation turns into fear, and Victor flees the room and retreats to his bedchamber. Victor falls to sleep and is disturbed by wild dreams.

> 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 though that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling into the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror.
>
> (39)

Elizabeth's healthy appearance shifts to death as Victor kisses her, suggesting Victor will be to blame to her eventual death on their wedding night. That Victor dreams of his bride turning into his dead mother suggests his problematic attitude towards marriage. At the beginning of the novel, even before the Creature threatens him, Victor shows apprehension towards marriage.

Victor's refusal to create a female companion for the Creature also exhibits anti-marriage sentiments. Victor initially rationalizes that if he constructs a female, he will be able to marry Elizabeth free from the Creature's threats. He states that he must create a female Creature before he can "enjoy the delight of a union" (126). His motivation for creating a female companion is to prevent further destruction to his family and to marry Elizabeth. However, after several months of working, he changes his mind, fearing that the Creature and its mate would someday desire children. Victor states, "a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror" (138). He then tears to pieces what he had created so far as the Creature watches from outside the window. Victor rationalizes against the Creature because he fears its union would result in reproduction of the species. This action represents anti-marriage elements because it denies the Creature the ability to mate. In retaliation the Creature threatens, "I will be with you on your wedding night" (141). Victor marries Elizabeth, but never consummates the vows. At a time that should be joyous and festive, Victor instead finds his murdered wife sprawled across the wedding bed. Victor's wedding precedes a deathly event rather than the joyful occasion normally expected.

Marriages are associated with adverse events in *Frankenstein*. Victor states blatantly that "to me the idea of an immediate union with my cousin was one of horror and dismay" (126). Not only does he dread his marriage, but the union

itself fills him with "horror and dismay." The Creature threatens Victor saying, "I shall be with you on your wedding night" (140). Victor construes this as a threat on his own life and expects to be murdered on his wedding night. He marries with the expectation that Elizabeth will be widowed on her wedding night. If Victor expects to be murdered, then why does he continue with the marriage? His decision to marry suggests his own death wish. On the day of his wedding, Victor says to his bride, "This night is dreadful, very dreadful" (165). The wedding is cloaked in dread and fear for Victor. However, it is Elizabeth who is murdered on their wedding night. The juxtaposition of Elizabeth's marriage and her murder presents a fatalistic view of marriage.

In the same manner, anti-marriage sentiments in "Rime" are an important aspect of Coleridge's text. Coleridge juxtaposes the Mariner's sad story with the merriment of a wedding festival by choosing a wedding festival as the pivotal beginning place for "Rime." The bride passes into the hall, and "red as a rose is she" (34). The "merry minstrelsy" nod their heads as they enter the wedding festival (35-36). The setting of a wedding festival appears merry, and it seems ironic that Coleridge chooses such a setting for his sad tale. As the Mariner stops the Wedding Guest and begins his tale, the wedding -guest "beat his breast" because he could "not chuse but hear" (18). Coleridge's Wedding Guest asserts, "the Bridegroom's doors are open'd wide" in a vain attempt to escape the Mariner and join the wedding festivities (5). However, his plea does not free him from the captivating storyteller; instead it only emphasizes irony because the doors are open

wide. and yet the Wedding Guest is never allowed to enter. In the background, the merriment of the wedding festival continues on, but in the foreground the mood of the poem takes a different turn. Both the Mariner and the Wedding Guest do not partake in the ceremony, but are figuratively transported from the wedding festival to the land of mist and snow. Despite initial opposition, the Mariner has his will and the Wedding Guest, "listens like a three years child" (15). The last stanza of "Rime" reveals that the merriment felt by the Wedding Guest at the beginning of the poem has faded into a somber mood.

> He went like one that hath been stunned,
>
> And is of sense forlorn:
>
> A sadder and a wiser man,
>
> He rose the morrow morn.  (626-629)

Describing the Wedding Guest as "stunned" seems perplexing, because it alludes to someone being bewildered or dismayed. The Wedding Guest experiences a negative reaction and rises the next morning a sadder, not a happier man. He had expected to attend a joyful festive wedding, and yet he leaves dismayed and somber. It seems, for the Wedding Guest, that being wiser came at the expense of being sad.

Rather than exemplifying the unity and joy usually associated with a wedding, the wedding in "Rime" brings up issues of separation. Despite his intentions, the Wedding Guest is not allowed to join in the premarital bliss and remains outside with the Mariner. "The Bridegroom's doors are open wide," but

neither the Mariner or the "next of kin" enter into the wedding festivities (5-6). The image of the solitary Mariner contrasts with the unity usually associated with a wedding. The Mariner exemplifies the epitome of a solitary because he has no relationships with human women. The only contact he has with a female figure is with a supernatural mother image. "Mary Queen" visits the Mariner on the ship and quenches his thirst, while Life in Death, also a female figure, spares the Mariner's life. Both of these female figures are supernatural beings. There are no real women in Coleridge's poem, except for the bride and her attendants, who are barely mentioned. Even the bride is cloaked in some suspension when the narrator states, "What loud uproar bursts from that door?/ The wedding guests are there;/ But in the garden-bower the bride /And bride-maids singing are" (595-598). The narrator states that the bride and her maids were in the garden-bower singing, not in the room where the celebration occurred. The wedding celebration was taking place in the absence of the bride, therefore juxtaposing a dark element of separation against the wedding.

In dealing with the weddings in both texts, Shelley and Coleridge both place emphasis on the "next of kin." In "Rime" the Wedding Guest had every intention of attending the wedding festivities and asserts that he "is next of kin" (6). Detained from the ceremonies, he is taken figuratively to a land of mist and snow, transported from the wedding festivities to the icy climes of the Mariner's tale. The "next of kin" in Coleridge's poem never joins in the wedding festivities. The "next of kin" in *Frankenstein* is Victor's step-sister Elizabeth. Interestingly,

Victor is on a trip with Elizabeth and his father when he sneaks away alone and encounters the Creature. Instead of returning to his sister and potential bride, Victor joins the Creature in a hut where he sits by a fire and listens to the Creature's tale. Both the Wedding Guest and Victor are prevented from going to their "next of kin" by the unnerving tale that they must hear.

## THE SUBTEXT OF SLAVERY AND IMPRISONMENT

The many allusions to "Rime" in *Frankenstein* draw attention to many comparisons possible between the texts. They allow for a new analysis of characters and setting, alerting readers to common threads that link the texts. Additionally, comparing these texts brings to light an underlying theme of slavery that may explain why "Rime" has such a presence in *Frankenstein*. Critics have acknowledged slavery issues in "Rime," but few have explored slavery in *Frankenstein* and none have examined slavery in the the texts, simultaneously. The following section will propose that Shelley calls upon "Rime" to incorporate the slavery issue in *Frankenstein* and will argue that understanding the slavery subtext is crucial in understanding her text.

The iceberg settings of "Rime" and *Frankenstein* are not likely places to expect stories about slavery. A solitary mariner and seabird seem to have little to do with the issue, nor are a sailor, scientist and so-called monster likely characters to represent the horrors of slavery. At first glance these texts appear to have little to do with this controversial issue. However, masquerading behind these seemingly opposite stories, a series of subtle references create a slavery subtext.

The first evidence supporting the slavery subtext in *Frankenstein* occurs very early in the novel. The sailors rescue Victor from the iceberg and bring him

safely aboard their ship. The lieutenant addresses Victor and asks why he was so far from civilization. Victor responds, "To seek one who fled from me" (14). Victor's statement expresses a sense of ownership of the Creature, alluding for the first time to the subtext of slavery throughout the novel. Victor's relentless pursuit of the Creature paints the picture of Victor as slave owner and the Creature as the fleeing slave. He feels that because he brought the Creature into the world, it belongs to him.

However, Victor did not always pursue the Creature. In the events leading up to when Victor is rescued from the iceberg, he considers himself the slave. When he begins fashioning the Creature, Victor asserts, "I appeared rather like one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines" (38). He compares himself with the doomed slave who must work out of obedience to a superior and compares his own work in the laboratory to the laborious work of mining. Victor further states that his obsession drives him into abject slavery: "I was the slave of my Creature, I allowed myself to be governed by the impulses of the moment" (127). Once again Victor associates himself with a slave, which is ironic because Victor has become a slave to his own creation.

When he commences building a mate for the Creature, Victor rents a hut that exhibits "all the squalidness of the most miserable penury" (136). The hut located in a row of three was decaying and aging, but Victor was thankful for his humble place stating, "so much does suffering blunt even the coarsest sensations of men" (136). Victor's explanation of the row of huts resembles descriptions of

slave quarters. He describes his living arrangements as "suffering" that blunted his senses, much like the living conditions of slavery. While living in the hut, he describes his work as monotonous labor, but he works because he "feared to meet my persecutor"(137). His "persecutor" could be equated with a slave owner who pitilessly watched over the slaves' labors. Because Victor viewed himself as a slave to his Creature, he had to labor selflessly for the Creature's desire, despite his own unwillingness to do so. When he destroys the half-formed female Creature, Victor places the "relics" of his work in a basket and casts it in the sea (142). The remnants of the female Creature sinking in the solitary sea is not only reminiscent of the albatross's sinking "like lead into the sea" but also suggestive of stories of slaves being thrown overboard from slave ships (294-295).

After Victor destroys the female Creature and is accused of murdering Clerval, he becomes ill and finds himself "as awaking from a dream, in a prison, stretched on a wretched bed, surrounded by gaolers, turnkeys, bolts, and all the miserable apparatus of a dungeon" and "barred windows," suggesting that Victor associates his quarters with those of a prison (149). After Victor's father dies, he feels as if he is living in chains (168). Later he states he is "chained in an eternal hell" (180). These figurative images of chains cast Victor as the victim in this novel. He portrays himself throughout his tale as the slave who must flee from the Creature. When Victor decides to marry Elizabeth, he views the pristine beauty of Mont Blanc and decides to leave his native country. He says he will leave the "insurmountable barrier to the invader who should wish to enslave it," referring to

the Creature as the master of the mountain and himself as the slave who must flee (163).

Throughout the novel, Shelley utilizes images associated with slavery to describe Victor's plight, and Victor himself asserts that he is a slave to the monster; however, the Creature asserts the same. There are clearly two slaves in *Frankenstein*. When the Creature pleads for a female mate, he proclaims that "mine shall not be the submission of abject slavery" (119). The Creature refuses to be treated like a slave and states that instead of being a slave to his creator, he will bring destruction to his creator. Yet, in the ending of the novel, it is the Creature who asserts boldly that, "I was the slave, not the master of an impulse" (188). Declaring that his own actions have enslaved him, the Creature associates himself with a slave.

To analyze Shelley's text in terms of slavery imagery, the question must be pondered, who is the slave and who is the master in her novel? Victor becomes a slave to his creation, while the creation becomes a slave both to his creator and to his own barbarity. Both characters, like the Mariner, are slaves to their sin. The Creature may be free to roam the land and ice, but he does not possess liberty. Events in the story constantly show the Creature hiding and running, much like the images and stories, that would have been available to Mary Shelley, of runaway slaves in America. The Creature must remain in the dark to hide from a society that names him a monster.

The rejection of the Creature, first by his creator and then by society, can be viewed as a racial crime. In addition to the many references to slavery throughout the novel, the Creature is rejected from society based solely on his physical appearance, indicating that he is a victim of prejudice. When he sees the Creature, Walton describes it as something physically different from his accepted view of mankind.

> Over him hung a form which I cannot find words to describe; gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions as he hung over the coffin, his face was concealed by long locks of ragged hair; but one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy…Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome, yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes involuntarily (187).

Walton highlights the Creature's skin color and texture, his long hair and wild appearance, all of which are descriptions handed down from settlers about the Native Americans. Shelley cast her Creature in the image of Native Americans and of enslaved Africans who were ostracized for their physical differences.

The Creature's murder of Victor's brother, William, also suggests the racial themes that underline Shelley's text. When the Creature sees William in the woods he sees a "beautiful child" who was "unprejudiced," and he decides to befriend the boy (116). The Creature's assumption that someone "beautiful" would be incapable of prejudice suggests that he has adopted society's standards of discrimination. However, when the boy sees the Creature, he covers his own eyes

and calls him "monster" and "ogre" (117). Despite William's aggression, the Creature does not murder him until he learns of his heritage. William's murder is a result of hate and prejudice against the Frankenstein family, suggesting that genetics has the power to seal a person's fate.

Like *Frankenstein*, "Rime" also contains various subtle references to slavery. Some critics interpret "Rime" as a poem about the horrors of slave trading. J.R. Ebbatson postulates that the theme of the poem is "maritime expansion, and the guilt of the Mariner is the guilt of the European powers in their treatment of newly discovered people -- or rather the belated consciousness of guilt after the event." Coleridge was an active abolitionist throughout his career and participated in the movement that raged in England at the turn of the century, at the same time "Rime" was written (Ebbatson 176). Ebbatson asserts that the killing of the albatross is a symbol for colonial expansion and the enslavement of native people. Furthermore, he asserts that the punishment inflicted on the Mariner is a symbolic retribution for the racial crimes of slavery (198). After all, the mariners are foreigners who enter into the albatross's native territory, the sea. After briefly treating the albatross kindly, the Mariner arbitrarily kills it and in essence claims the sea as his own. However, as a result he must suffer hardships until he learns to love the sea Creatures he once thought were grotesque. Such a scenario could substitute as a didactic allegory for colonial expansion and the killing or enslavement of native tribes.

Physical descriptions in "Rime" also support the subtext of slavery. The Wedding Guest states that the Mariner is "brown, as is the ribbed sea-sand" (231). The Mariner's brownness depicts much. It shows sun exposure caused by years at sea. It also reveals the Mariner's status in working class society. Yet, when reading this poem as a criticism of slavery, the Mariner's brown skin becomes vital. His brownness may be emphasized to alert readers to the racial content of the poem. The physical condition of the Mariner's shipmates also bears references to slavery. According to Debbie Lee, yellow fever was associated with mariners who often traveled to foreign lands. Often the mariners were slave traders who caught yellow fever during their slave-trading expeditions. The description of the Mariner as being "long, and lank, and brown" also associates him with sailors who had been yellow fever victims (Lee 680-681). His sickly physical condition indicates he may have been exposed to diseases such as yellow fever while at sea.

The ships in "Rime" also contribute to the slavery subtext. The Mariner never states where his ship was headed or what their purpose was in sailing. Their ship may represent a slave trading expedition common during the time Coleridge wrote the poem. Also, the spectre-bark which the mariners encounter at sea is described as a prison. When it approaches, the "sun was flecked with bars" (177). The ship appears to be a skeleton with ribs that look like bars on the setting sun. This deathly description of a ship resembles a prison, but it also may represent a ship carrying slaves to their death, either a death at sea or in slavery.

In *Coleridge's Submerged Politics*, Patrick J. Keane examines "Rime" as a response to the "tragic question of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade" (1). Coleridge's poem in a historical context becomes a "political work of 'pure imagination' ...as both an inscription and a reflection of its general milieu -- the decade of the French Revolution and of Coleridge's own dangerous political voyaging" (3). Keane focuses on Daniel Defoe and Coleridge, but does suggest that *Frankenstein* also embodies post revolutionary tendencies. By citing similar stanzas in "Rime" and *Frankenstein*, Keane connects these two works with his concept that England is portrayed as a dungeon in much Romantic literature (Keane 315). The continued allusions to slavery in both "Rime" and *Frankenstein* reinforce the presence of a slavery subtext and present an interesting correlation that extends into the historical context of each work.

# CHAPTER IV

## CONCLUSION

When Shelley penned the first allusion to "Rime" in Walton's second letter, she initiated a comparison between her text and Coleridge's; nonetheless, a discussion of the topic has been long delayed. For years these allusions have been relegated to footnotes; however, what were dismissed as merely allusions are in fact essential elements in understanding the complexity and artistry of *Frankenstein*. In evaluating her text and her journal entries, Shelley's debt to "Rime" becomes unequivocally clear. "Rime" in *Frankenstein* extends beyond the obvious textual citations. Its rears itself in the iceberg setting of Walton's story, the ill-fated wedding, the wandering story-teller and the uncanny appearances of the Creature and the Mariner. Even the slavery subtext connects these works via these subtle thematic and symbolic parallels.

With so many references to "Rime" etched into *Frankenstein*, readers must ponder Shelley's purpose in allying her text with Coleridge's. Shelley's use of "Rime" in *Frankenstein* cannot be a fortuitous act, nor can such references be dismissed as merely allusions. "Rime"'s presence is rooted too deeply in *Frankenstein*, sometimes covertly and sometimes obviously, not to suggest an artful purpose in doing so. While Shelley's purpose can only be theorized, I conclude that her personal fondness for "Rime" was the initial motivation. As shown through her journal entries, she related to the poem both as a child and an adult. In addition to "Rime," Shelley referenced many other texts in *Frankenstein*,

so her allusions to "Rime" may have initially been an attempt to validate her novel with literary allusions to already successful works. However, as *Frankenstein* took on a life and energy all its own, "Rime" became a perfect mirror for her text. What began as a literary allusion in the first chapter of her novel became a guiding power for her characters' behaviors and words. By the time Shelley concluded her last edits, "Rime" had become a vehicle for deeper psychological insights into her novel.

Shelley's reading of "Rime" shaped the characters, events and themes contained in her text. The murdered albatross finds itself reborn in Victor's Creature; the solitary Mariner becomes the arctic explorer and narrator; and the wedding festival becomes the wedding murder. Futhermore, both texts echo the slavery debate that permeated the culture and society that produced these texts.

Such a comparison yields both understanding and complexity to the reading of *Frankenstein*. It reveals Coleridge's influence on Shelley and her fondness for "Rime," as well as validates the universality of the Mariner. However, by allying her text with "Rime," Shelley plagued her text with unanswerable questions about human nature, the supernatural and the solitary man. Like the Wedding Guest, Frankenstein's readers are left "stunned" with a "sense forlorn" pondering the events of Walton's story. Like "Rime," the end of Frankenstein brings no resolution, only contemplation and unrest. Shelley successfully transformed the Mariner's "ghastly tale" into her own ghost story and created an image that far outlives the Mariner in popular culture.

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